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FREE VENICE SINCE 1968 BEACHHEAD

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September
2009
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WAN-WAN

How the Inevitable Rise in the Price of Gasoline Will Change Our Lives for the Better

By Jebediah Reed

Remember that time you went on a long drug binge and it turned into a crime spree and you totally messed up your life and hit rock bottom and had to go to jail for a while but in retrospect it was the best thing that ever happened to you because otherwise you wouldn't have your great job now at Goldman Sachs (by the way, great quarter, eh)? Well, you're kind of like America, it turns out. At least according to Christopher Steiner, a staff writer at Forbes whose first book is about how high oil prices are coming and they're going to cause an economic meltdown, but that's a good news, because it'll make us stop being a nation of fat greedy dipshits.

The title of the book maps out the argument rather cleanly: *\$20 Per Gallon: How The Inevitable Rise in the Price of Oil Will*

change Our Lives For the Better. On the cover there's a picture of a red five-gallon oil can with some cute little hippie flower logos on it.

By now, most of us know the basics of the argument here: Oil production will almost certainly be slowing in coming years because the "easy" oil is all gone and that means much higher prices; and because everything in our lives from hairbrushes to creamed corn is produced with oil, that means no more creamed corn for you, mister, unless you grow it yourself in the foyer of your McMansion, which by then you will have by necessity converted into an organic garden.

In looking toward the future Steiner uses the word "will" a great deal. He predicts big important trends: "High gas prices will clean up our skies and clear our vistas";



"\$6 gas will spark an infrastructure revolution and the era of widespread tolling"; "Our cities will regroup, renew, grow denser." But he also predicts weird small stuff: high school sports teams will travel less and more cops will do foot patrol beats.

The speculation can get a tad overheated at times. For instance, because gas for U-Hauls will be so expensive, when people decide to move from one city to another, they will be better off simply selling almost all their things and then restocking once they get to their new home. This will

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Help! My bike has been kidnapped

By CJ Gronner

The nature of Venice is on my mind a great deal lately ... through decades and changes, the Bohemian nature and spirit of the place has always managed to survive. There's been tough times all along the way for a good chunk of the residents, but the groove factor, and general desire for the well-being of people, place and planet has long trumped everything else. And I think it's really, really important that it persevere.

So let's address a few lame things, and a few good ones for balance. My longtime friend and companion, my bike, Delores, was stolen last Thursday from the inside of a tall fence at my brother's place on Horizon. The two bikes sandwiching mine were left behind, so clearly the jerk thief had

good taste, but that's no excuse to steal from a neighbor. I get that times are tough. I'm unemployed at the moment. I have stress about gathering rent on a freelance writer's iffy income. But it would never even occur to me to jack someone's bike, or anything else of theirs, for that matter. Delores was my main transportation. Whomever took her – black, cool beach cruiser, straw basket, Obama sticker on the back, Hinano's Girl on the front.

This is a Bike Amber Alert. I want her back. You have some rotten karma now, and Delores will most likely buck you off in my honor. I hope it hurts. You'll get yours. Once I started telling people that mine was stolen, a

whole bunch more similar stories came up, bike thefts left and right, but also skateboards, money, even cars. I'm sure you've been kept awake in recent days by the hovering Po-

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Foreground: The writer astride Delores.

**CASUALTIES IN AFGHANISTAN:
810 U.S. Dead - 54 this month**

IRAQ:

4,337 U.S. Dead - this month

31,469 U.S. Wounded

Iraqi Dead: 1,339,771

Cost of wars: \$904+ Billion

**Sources: costofwar.com • antiwar.com
icasualties.org**

Say What You Will, We Live It Everyday in Oakwood

By Lydia Poncé, Jataun Valentine and Laddie Williams

40 years ago it was flower power, end the war and the Summer of Love.

America has not really learned anything since then. Here in Venice, 2009, when it comes to love- 'love is not all you need.'

What the world needs now is not "love sweet love." We will never be 'one love' as described in Bob Marley's song either.

Racism continues to plague Venice. Racism continues to infect the un-healing wound of the past.

In addition to racism, Venice has an incurable case of "hyper-gentrification."

The Ocean Front Boardwalk was free. Today, you must pay to obtain a permit for free speech. We need to get real, we need to get it right and the urgency is now.

We believe that people are more complex and more intelligent than to be just tolerated.

Tolerance is the quick fix to being annoyed by something like a dog barking at 2 or 3 in the morning and waking up the whole neighborhood. We felt it necessary to share some racial, economic and social issues with our community.

It was necessary to withhold names of the people who shared their experiences with us and at their request we respectfully abide.

For the newly arrived to Venice, renting or owning - when you see a group of youth congregated or 'hanging out', on the front of Oakwood Park's entrance on 7th street, why does fear consume you? The police are summoned on your behalf because you make the call.

No drugs, no weapons and no gang bangers. Just because they are black or brown does not mean they are up to no good. The kids simply want to take a break, they want to have a laugh and they want to be youthful. They want to hang out! That's what parks are for! While the police harass the kids, those without tolerance have had the gall to applaud during the searching and the questioning.

Your gall is maddening because your dogs are off leash as you give an ovation.

You expect and demand the respect that you are not willing to give. No one should ask anyone to do something they themselves are not willing to do. But you, without tolerance, continue to behave in this deplorable manner, while clinging to your superiority all while you break the law.

What about the raid two years ago, that was racially profiled, on multi-generational Venice families?

The Venice Neighborhood Council (VNC) had re-issued an article on their website about Venice having crack houses shortly before the raids.

The Hamm family, long time Venice residents on Broadway, have been wrongly accused and were forced to give up their home. Their house has been empty since then and the family was forced to leave on trumped up

charges.

The Property Abatement Program the City of Angels continues to use has robbed people of their homes. The recent alleged gang parole sweep and alleged cocaine drug ring were not Venice residents but were Los Angeles and Inglewood residents. Perhaps it was a quick census check on part of the FBI and LAPD?

Let us set the record straight, the recent home robberies that were happening in Venice were not Venice youth, or 'our' Venice children. Those intolerant posters on California Ave. were fear based and so hateful. The unoccupied and unsupervised youth were from Inglewood; this is unfortunate. The kids were very desperate for their own reasons. We have to ask, what jobs are there for the youth on the westside in City Council District 11?

In addition to this economy, what, if any, new businesses have been established by the Latino and African American population of Venice?

As for the First Fridays of the month on Abbott Kinney Blvd., if we, black and brown, decided we wanted to have the second Fridays of each month to party at Abbott Kinney Blvd. or any other part of Venice, we couldn't get away with littering the streets with trash and cigarette butts. We couldn't get away with urinating in the alleys and urinating behind the businesses like the white population.

Forget drinking from red cups in public, we couldn't get away with it. We would have the 'ghetto bird' flying above us within minutes. We'd have the police in riot gear arresting us.

There's the big inequity. That's the truth. Now what?

We must add to the inequity of having the presence of police helicopters at Oakwood Park when we've had re-pass after a funeral. We have come together to pay our respects and to offer our support to the families suffering this loss of a loved one. We do not have the luxury of congregating like others.

Perhaps we need Spike Lee come to Venice and film 'Do the Right Thing, Part 2' because racism continues to grow hate and perpetuate nothing more than fear. Venice people re-learn to share. Remember what you learned in Kindergarten? Let's take Oakwood Park; it is a great example:

Venice people running your dogs off leashes at Oakwood Park, haven't you observed the children accompanied by their parent(s) who

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To submit material, include your name and telephone number. Anonymous material will not be printed, but your name will be withheld on request. No payment is made for material used.

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Permit Parking Lawsuit filed against Coastal Commission, City

A group calling itself the Venice Stakeholders Association filed suit, August 10, against the California Coastal Commission and the city of Los Angeles in an effort to have overnight permit parking districts (OPDs) reinstated.

This past June 11, the Commission, whose mandate is to protect the coast from overdevelopment and to ensure access for all Californians, voted 9-1 to overturn L.A.'s decision in favor of OPDs, which would have required all Venice residents to buy permits to park on their streets. It would have made those who live in their cars and RVs ineligible to buy permits, thus making them targets of police action.

The lawsuit alleges that the Commission overstepped its jurisdiction in banning the parking permits. The city is being sued because it recognizes the Commission's authority.

The Venice Stakeholders Association has only one public member, Mark Ryavek. Only his name appears in the lawsuit, the press release and the web site of the Association. If there are other members of the group, they have yet to be publicly identified with it.

The Association, aka Mark Ryavek, is urging Venetians to send his lawyer, John Henning, contributions. The Beachhead suggests those contributions could be better spent by sending them to the Beachhead (POB 2, Venice 90294). That way, we can have free streets and a free press.



Post Office Still Seeking to Sell Venice Annex

Despite pleas from the Venice community that the Venice post office carrier annex at 313 Grand Blvd., be used for community services, the government postal service (USPS) is moving ahead with plans to sell it to a private developer. The USPS has retained giant real estate firm, Grubb & Ellis to pedal the property.

If the 1.78 acre site goes private, it may end up as a hotel, luxury condominiums, or an upscale shopping mall

Before the post office bought the triangular-shaped lot, it was a Safeway grocery store. In the early days of Venice, the west end of the lot was the site of Abbot Kinney's home.

Today it serves as the arrival point for Venice mail and packages where it is sorted by carriers. If the facility is closed, the carriers would be relocated to other cities and would drive to Venice each day with the mail.

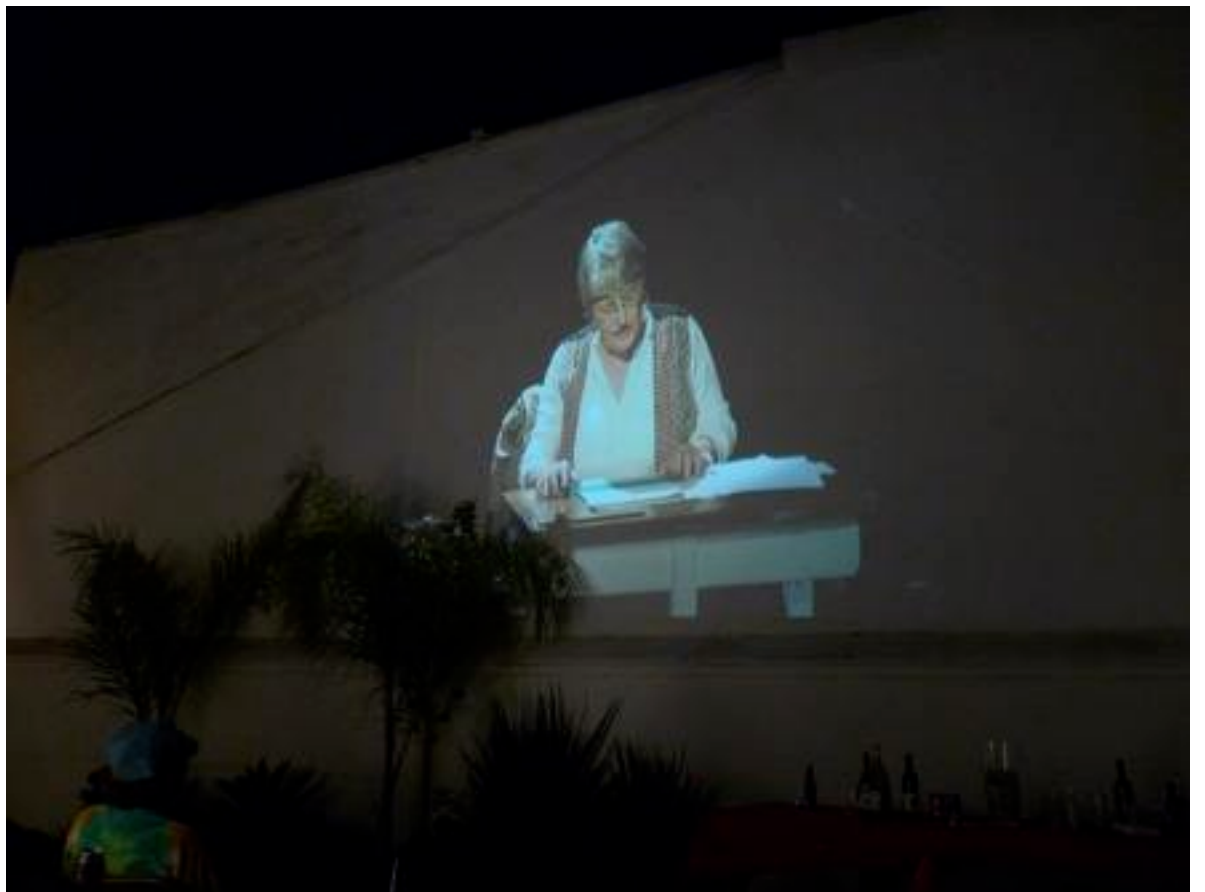
A small sign on the door of the post office, last Dec. 15, alerted Venetians of the impending sale. A number of people called Councilperson Bill Rosendahl's office asking that the lot not be sold to a private developer. He wrote a letter to U.S. Representative Jane Harman asking for her help. That was the last that was heard from either of them about the sale. Rosendahl may be contacted at 213-473-7011. If you call, don't accept a runaround from a staff member.



Whole Foods Picketed for Anti-Universal Health Care Stand

Ever since John Mackey, founder and CEO of Austin-based Whole Foods, wrote an op-ed in The Wall Street Journal last month opposing a government health-care option, picket lines have descended on the non-union grocery chain.

So far, there have been no demonstrations at the new Venice store. Meanwhile, conservatives are lining up to buy their food at the store.



A packed house turned out to hear Venice writer Maureen Cotter at Beyond Baroque, Aug. 8, give a first-hand account of how the Manson family implicated itself in multiple murders. The overflow audience got to see a larger-than-life Cotter projected on a wall behind the theater.

Maureen Cotter Tells Inside Story of Charlie Manson's Murder Spree in 1969

By Fred Dewey

It is hard to imagine that, once upon a time, quite a few Americans, young and old, tried to free American society from its ruinous trajectory of violence, greed, propaganda, and war. These forgotten radicals were the hippies. While scorn has been leveled against them, some of it deserved, some of this is also because, on one very dark night indeed in the summer of 1969, in Los Angeles, the American counter-culture narrative changed apparently forever. The System produced the evidence it needed to show that hippies were a fraud.

The Manson Family spree, in the hills of Los Angeles, would spread the image of long-haired drop-outs in the dark scurrying over fences and breaking into homes to butcher pregnant women, all to Beatles' lyrics and lots of blood. RFK had been murdered in LA a year before. Now the rich, the connected, anyone could be a target. LA came completely unhinged. In reality, the Manson murders were not the end of an era, but the beginning of a new one. Nixon's playing on fear and trickery stuck; soon his crimes would be publicly pardoned. Carter restarted the military build-up, and under Reagan, lying, materialism, war, and culture war became relentless. By Bush II, yuppie culture had turned greed and conformity into rebellion; government now openly violated the Constitution. America's export of choice was chaos, helter-skelter style. Two slogans of Manson, a student of military intelligence methods, encapsulated the post-'68 American argument: "Submission is a gift, give it to your brother," and "if you fit in you can stay."

This summer, on Saturday, August 8th, Maureen Cotter, a former actuarial talent-scout

turned writer, returned to Beyond Baroque, which filled it with food, drink, conversation, friends, and colleagues eager to hear more of the "Prison Stories."

On a makeshift stage, Cotter told of coming out as a lesbian, swimming naked with her partner in a castle pool as word of the murders spread, and how, employed at the California Institute for Women in the Psychiatric Treatment Unit, she found herself suddenly sworn to secrecy, protecting none other than former Sinatra mistress Virginia Graham. Cellmate Susan "Sadie" Atkins, a key Mansonite, had confessed to Graham about the gruesome murder of Sharon Tate and others. Graham, who'd gone to the authorities, was now the state's prime witness against the Family. Cotter's job: keep her alive.

The audience was spell-bound, as Cotter shared humor, wisdom, and humanity to weave an astonishing tale. The night ended with Cotter bringing Graham herself forward to receive a letter from Elizabeth Taylor, on behalf of all those on Manson's list, thanking Graham for her courage and risking her life. Graham in turn thanked Cotter for "the second nicest thing that has happened to me in my life," and went home with real laurels and a little financial help. Virginia Graham and Maureen Cotter, we owe you. You have shown us the virtue of real courage. Though you didn't say it, and contrary to all the propaganda, Manson was what the System wanted, and needed, and, in its way, has finally now become. And forty years ago, you broke him. You are our immortals, and we need you.

Fred Dewey is the director of Beyond Baroque.

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Curry Lentil Soup Dinner served at 7pm by Venice Food Not Bombs!
For more information, call 310 398 7192 or email justicecommittee@fastmail.fm

Say What You Will, We Live It Everyday in Oakwood

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decide not to go into the park? For years families and seniors have used the short cut across the park to get to either the number 2 Blue Bus or to get to the schools near-by. The less tolerant decide to run their dogs off leashes, so the pedestrians walk around the outside perimeter of the park to avoid the potential harm, danger, and avoiding stepping in your unleashed dogs' poop. This becomes your momentary victory. You win. The park has gone momentarily to the dogs. There are a great number of people greatly inconvenienced by your decision to break the law. Wrong is wrong.

You must have your dogs on a leash. Animals cannot have rights until all humans have their rights. The children and seniors must be considered first. Please be courteous and conscientious.

It is a well known fact it is against the law to consume alcoholic beverages at any public park. A few gentlemen, not all gentlemen, playing dominoes have cracked a few cold brews at Oakwood Park.

Admittedly, it's true. However, it is a straight lie and exaggeration to say that everyone drinks alcohol there all the time because they don't. We do not need Venice children see anyone consuming alcohol at the park. Leave it to kickball players in the late afternoons to get away with consuming their beers without police interference. Please be courteous and conscientious, too.

One woman (dog off leasher) shared with us how she believes that "people at the park are angry because she and others took the drugs out of the park." She pointed out that the gentlemen drink beers and are breaking the law. So she sees fit to walk her dog without a leash in Oakwood Park. She shared that she has been "doing this for years." We only mention her self-validating privilege out of necessity, to dispel her assumption. No one is angry because the drugs were taken out of the park. Everyone

benefits from a drug-free park. She and her allies may have had the time to organize and report whatever and whenever to the police. The sad state of affairs is that the gentlemen playing dominoes don't care if people bring their dogs to the park as long as they are not disturbed in their game on their well-deserved retired day.

However, let's give credit where credit is due. The staff at Oakwood Park, and the director, Liska Mendoza, have turned the park around 180 degrees in favor of the community. We, the community, bear the responsibility to show the children and youth how to share the limited green space we have.

To the RV dwellers at Oakwood Park, we must give props to you; we have not seen anyone dumping anything into the streets or seen drug use or anything else, and you have had your unfair share of generalized sweeping claims against you. As a matter of fact, we haven't seen any of you really coming or going to and from your RVs. Please take care of your registration and tags, don't give the police a reason to cite you or tow you. We do not agree with their tactics, and remember the city of L.A. has decided to enforce the laws on the original books. The city is broke.

Another record to straighten out: the California Coastal Commission must approve proposals west of Lincoln Blvd.; those 6' parking signs need to come down. Perhaps there are services that people living in RVs need but no one has taken the time to find out; what about the VNC Homeless Committee, have they asked?

To our Venice seniors citizens: the invisible ones, we haven't forgotten you. You are the voice of experience and wisdom. You are all rich with stories of our community. Not one person we know owns the streets, the parking lots or the post office. If ever there was anyone named to own them, it should be you. Venice should be accommodating your needs with passenger

spectful, and demeaning to another?

The rude people of Venice, possessing the fully developed sense of entitlement and privilege, getting fussy and angry with people. Would it kill you to hang up your cell phone and call the person back after the cashier has helped you finalize your purchase or transaction? The cashier happens to want to do her job and provide their service, and provide the time and the energy to serve you, the customer. Respect for the worker would make the experience a lot more pleasant for all.

As for the VNC, there are too few representatives for this shadow governing body to be considered relevant. Sadly, their decisions continue to be the vector to Venice's gentrification sickness. 91% of VNC is white. There are no Latino members. The City of L.A. has mandated that their terms be extended until April 2010. It must be good to be them. Back in 2005-2006, the Grassroots Venice Neighborhood Council (GRVNC) was never offered that option.

President Newhouse admitted to not knowing anyone who speaks only Spanish or anyone who needs Spanish translation of any materials VNC offers. Where are the translation headsets, VNC? Arturo Pina shared with Lydia Ponce that other L.A. City Neighborhood Councils use almost half of their funds to offer translation services. But VNC President Newhouse doesn't know of anyone who needs these services.

The VNC need the brown and black population more than the brown and black community needs the VNC. Half of the VNC has had 'ethics training' and maybe the VNC, as a whole, needs to realize, trained or not trained, that elections must be well advertised and translated before anyone can show up to exercise their right to vote. That is simply ethical. They did realize it and they cancelled the poorly planned election at the BBQ on August 1. To date, there has been some VNC chatter to provide an election at the Abbott Kinney Festival.

What to do with the malady of the unlimited amount of privilege and entitlement at the expense of others usually those who are brown or black? Something must be said about the WMD, not Weapons of Mass Destruction but you may view it as such. WMD - 'white man's disconnect' or 'white man's dysfunction' or perhaps it's 'white man's disease.' Not all white men have it; but a good majority have proven to have it, unbeknownst to them.

What can be done with Venice about Venice and of Venice with all of the daily stress, the misunderstandings, the conflicts, and the unwarranted negative energy?

What we need in Venice is simply a desire to achieve understanding. This is a better remedy for what is ailing our community. Take that teachable moment within ourselves and re-align our souls and re-align our hearts. To be loved and to love, it takes desire and passion. Do you have the desire within you? Can you find the lost passion? Who has time to do this? No one, really, but what if we made the time, then each of us would feel better and isn't that validating for our spirit? Right now the spirit of Venice has been enslaved to the ideas and morals that black and brown are second to the favored white. The desire to achieve understanding may provide harmony. Harmony yields peace. Yeah, we all like peace, we all say we want it. It is up to us to find the harmony and peace within ourselves and share it.

Love is a word that should be reserved for people we know well and have gone through some challenges with. There are a few people in the community that we love, but it took time and we shared experiences in our forever chang-

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Ocean Park Chapter #245 OES
Sunset Lodge #369 F & A M



3rd Annual Veteran's Breakfast

You and your friends are invited to attend our annual pancake breakfast in support of our American Veterans.

Sunday, September 20th, 2009
8:30 AM until 1:00 PM
Sunset Masonic Temple
1720 Ocean Park Blvd
Santa Monica CA
Tickets \$7.00

All proceeds to provide comfort items for veterans at the West LA Veterans Hospital. Join us in supporting those who have been wounded in the service of our country.

loading spaces and disabled parking spaces in front of public buildings and businesses. Venice should be yielding to your needs, period. Venice needs to renew the commitment to use key words of compassion and respect, 'please, thank you, excuse me, and good morning- good evening.' Can everyone commit to being polite? You know who you are - and you know when you are not being kind especially when you are out and about. Why are people wasting their time and their energy going to church, mosque or synagogue, yet once they exit the religious prayer service, they just go to public areas to be rude, disre-

The Whiff of Fascism

By Jim Smith

"All that is necessary for the triumph of evil is that good men (and women) do nothing." —Edmund Burke

Alarm bells are sounding throughout the country over the widespread disruptions of congressional town halls on health care. Is it possible that we are seeing the beginnings of a mass fascist movement in this country?

Many of us breathed a sign of relief when George Bush and Dick Cheney laid down the mantle of power. We suffered through an anxious eight years that saw the expansion of a fascist legal structure, laws and government reorganization. Many of these changes, including the so-called Patriot Act, which has no place in a democratic society, and the Germanic-sounding Homeland Security Department are still with us today.

When friends would tell me during the Bush years that we had already gone fascist, or were on the verge of it, I would disagree, saying that fascism needs a mass base, something that majority sentiment against the Iraq invasion, and Bush's declining popularity would argue against. In addition, I would tell them, there is no large socialist or communist movement to frighten the lords of finance.

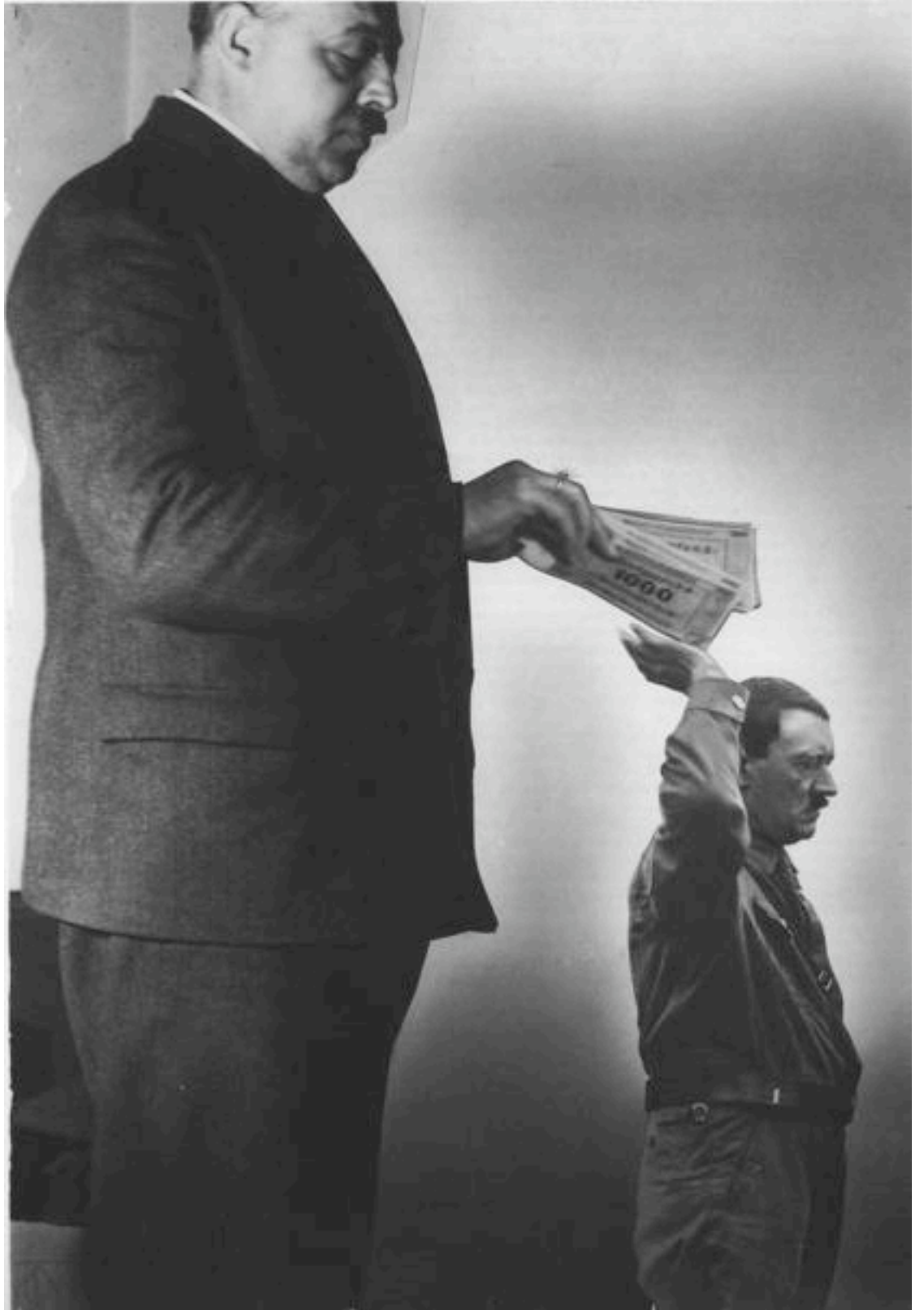
Today, we may have an emerging mass base for fascism in the "Tea Party," movement and the disruptions of town hall meetings. And if these right-wingers can be compared to the Nazi's thuggish SA troops, then Blackwater - which is still being paid by the government - is the modern version of the elite Nazi SS forces. These professional assassins and para-military soldiers have killed indiscriminately in Iraq, and may well be willing to do so again in the "homeland." And more and more, young people in particular are fed a growing diet of militarism, violence and "terrorism" adventures by the film industry. The informal alliance between the film industry's corporations and the government was formalized on Nov. 11, 2001 when, according to the New York Times, 40 top moguls met with Bush strategist Karl Rove who proceeded to give Hollywood its marching orders. Even though there has been a change in the presidency, Hollywood keeps churning out the same patriotic themes, now including GI Joe. Critical or anti-establishment films seem to be a genre of the past.

So instead of relaxing while the Obama administration gradually expanded our basic rights, we have more cause for alarm than ever. The Republican Party, in addition to being one of the voices for Wall Street, along with the Democratic Party, has a fascist central core and publicity apparatus. This includes many current officeholders and defrocked former officeholders such as Dick Arme. Until recently, the main connection of these right-wingers with the public has been through the media, especially Fox News, Lou Dobbs, Rush Limbaugh and their imitators around the country. Now, Arme's army of thugs and followers have marched into town halls to carry out the anti-democratic orders of the big health care corporations.

We can learn lessons from history. German fascism grew in the fertile ground of a very deep depression after World War I. Our own depression is just getting started, say more and more economists. Even so, the Nazi Party might have been nothing more than a footnote in history books had not the cream of German capitalists met in 1931 and decided to back Hitler. After that the old right wing party (similar to the Republicans) aligned with the Nazis and the old center parties (similar to the Democrats) crumbled without offering any resistance. The left wing parties, particularly the Communists, were smashed by storm trooper violence. Hitler waltzed into power with only a minority of votes, but soon instituted his version of the Patriot Act and consolidated all power under the Nazi Party.

Big corporations and the wealthy are funding Arme's FreedomWorks and Tim Phillips' Americans for Prosperity according to the Washington Post. They include MetLife, Philip Morris and foundations controlled by the archconservative Richard Mellon Scaife family. Other health care corporations are conducting their own media campaigns and Whole Foods has jumped in to oppose health reform, causing demonstrations at its stores and calls for a boycott. Apparently even Obama's mass centrist movement scared the hell out of the ruling class. Just think if he really was a socialist!

"The Meaning of the Hitler Salute." 1932 Photo-montage by anti-fascist graphic artist John Heartfield.



The whiff of fascism grows stronger every day. A possible scenario would be that they are able to defeat Obama's legislation at every turn, then in the 2012 elections, a new "contract for America" sweeps into power a new, more fascist Republican majority, along with a "strong man" president who pledges to resolve the immigrant and homeless problems. Voila! Fascism is now in power.

Racism goes hand-in-hand with fascism. The election of an African-American President has not ended racism in America. Instead, it has infuriated many white racists, who now say that "their" country has been stolen from them. This has caused a silly rumor that Obama was born in Africa, not Hawaii, to become a full-blown fringe movement of the "Birthers." Add hatred of Blacks to the hatred of immigrants, and even long-time Latino residents, and we have an important ingredient of fascism - hatred of the "other."

However, the drift toward fascism is not preordained. It can be defeated by people coming to the defense of democracy, and by the Obama administration taking a strong, unwavering position for universal health care (with at-least a public option), and for expanded labor rights and civil rights. It would be folly to abandon the unemployed (now at 11.9 percent in California). Public jobs and a livable unemployment insurance payment could help prevent recruitment of the down-and-out by the extreme right.

America is an authoritarian country. If you don't believe it, visit nearly any European or third-world country, and compare the relative freedom for average people in their everyday lives. Every-

thing from traffic regulations to enjoying a beer or glass of wine is more highly controlled here. No where are there more police, federal agents, security guards and prisoners than in the good old USA. A total of seven and a half million people are under criminal supervision in this country. Put in one place, they would constitute a city just slightly smaller than New York. In a scene most likely repeated in ghettos and barrios across the continent, more than 200 LAPD cops and federal agents have descended on the Oakwood neighborhood in sweeps, twice in the last year and a half, that can be described as chilling and Gestapo-like.

Authoritarian countries want authoritarian leaders. Barack Obama is being too nice, too democratic to suit the masses who have grown used to Nixon, Reagan, two Bushes, and a host of petty officials who treat the public with contempt. Hence the calls for Obama to jawbone Congress and to lash out at his opponents on health care. Can't we all just reason together? Probably not. Too many of our fellow citizens want a Supreme Leader who will play the tough guy with Kim Jong-il, and will rampage through Afghanistan even though Afghans have done us no harm.

Will the whiff of fascism extend to our sheltered little community? It did in 1942 when Japanese-Venetians were rounded-up and carted off to a concentration camp. The demonizing of the homeless and RV dwellers can create an atmosphere where the weak minded among us think violence against them is acceptable. It isn't. In the 1980s, a Venice homeless center was torched. Many activists think they know who did it, but there was no evidence

—continued on page 8

Morales Produce Co.

By Ian Lovett

Three years ago, when I first moved to Venice, I lived at Broadway and 7th St. My house, part of a row of four cottages, had this fantastic garden, where my neighbors grew strawberries and basil, and I used to sit outside to read, or to eat, or to nap, or for any other reason I could come up with. Ambient street noise would drift over the fence—passing cars; domino games in the park; drug deals on the corner; the crack addicts and prostitutes yelling at each other; and, inexplicably, the first line of “La Cucaracha,” played on a horn.

When I returned to Oakwood at the start of this year, I found police and helicopter raids had pushed the drugs and prostitutes off that corner, and the dog-walkers who now frequent the park

have filed a series of complaints about the domino games. But “La Cucaracha” remains a neighborhood fixture—you can hear it any time a produce truck passes by.

These produce trucks play an integral part in a Venice community that many of my neighbors—the mostly white, young transplants from other parts of the country, like me, who increasingly populate Oakwood—remain largely aloof to. Unlike the more universally celebrated taco trucks, which enjoy greater crossover appeal, the produce trucks are an industry of, for, and by Venice’s Mexican immigrant population—grocery stores in a city where so many functions usually reserved for fixed structures are played by motor vehicles. As such, these trucks help map the community they serve, tracking where

its members live, what they eat, and what they need, with a stark intimacy.

The Morales Produce truck, like most in the area, is a four-wheeler of reinforced steel. It resembles a postal truck, but Hugo, the owner and sole employee, says it was once a military vehicle, though he himself bought it “on the street.”

Hugo’s repurposed truck is right its new work, because the steel sides keep the temperature inside cool. This is especially important, since, unlike the taco trucks, none of the produce trucks keep their product on ice. In addition, the back door slides up into the roof, leaving the contents of the truck completely visible to the customers who stand at the back, on the street. This door remains open all day, even while the truck is moving—a more effective marketing strategy than the small “Morales Produce” signs hand-painted onto each of the front doors.

Like Ralph’s or Albertson’s, the local trucks sell a mix of fresh produce, household supplies, and junk food. In the Morales Produce truck, one of the four that service Oakwood, the produce sits on the lowest shelf along each of the truck’s walls, and in cardboard boxes on the floor near by the

back door, which, really, functions as the storefront. On the higher shelves, a variety of snacks and candy intermingle. As you move towards the back of the shop, the shelves hold more household supplies, and become less organized. Whereas at the front all the blue Doritos sit in a single row, towards the back rolls of toilet paper sit next to a Cup o’ Noodles, a bag of peanuts, and Zote Pink Soap. Two coolers up near the cab house all the cold drinks—Gatorade, Coke, Water, and Jarritos, a Mexican soda. And atop one cooler, a metal tray holds an array of Mexican pastries—sweet buns with lemon filling, and fried breads that resemble donuts, but without the signature hole in the middle.

Unlike Ralph’s or Albertson’s, the goods trend Mexican, both in their origin and their production. Amongst the lettuce, the onions, the corn, cilantro sits proudly at the end of the shelf closest to the door, as do tomatillos, jalapeños, and other peppers I don’t recognize. On the opposite shelf, with the fruit, is a green spiny-looking thing I’ve never seen before. “It comes from cactus,” Hugo says. “Good for cleaning the stomach.” He peels the outer layer off one and hands it to me. When I bite in, it’s watery and fresh, sweet, full of seeds just small enough to swallow.

The junk food, too, mixes the Mexican with the American. Alongside the ever-popular Doritos hang “Polvorones” and “Bimbuñelos.” Perhaps more than anything else, these products epitomize the delicate balance that exists between Mexican and American in these trucks. Under the name “Bimbuñelos” is an English tagline: “Wafer Crisps.” It is a Mexican product, with a name evoking a ‘buñelo,’ a deep-fried Latin American cookie. But the manufacturers added the tagline in hopes it might also appeal to English-speakers in the U.S., even though Bimbuñelos, while crispy, are only wafer-like by the loosest of approximations.

Everything in the truck comes from the market at Central and Olympic, downtown. I ask Hugo what it’s called, but he doesn’t remember—he just calls it “El Mercado.” It’s where an entire industry begins its day—a central hub where all the taco and produce trucks come together, along with middlemen and purveyors, to secure the goods their businesses depend on.

El Mercado is a veritable city of trucks—a parking lot really, with trucks angled into spaces, pulling in, pulling out, watching out for the fork lifts and dollies hauling piles of boxes onto still more trucks. We even pass a taco truck near the gate, selling, basically, to its competition.

The wholesalers’ shops line the market’s edges, pushed back against an industrial-looking cement building that encloses three sides of the parking lot. The food, for the most part, sits out-



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Venice in a Produce Truck

side the shops, stacked in cardboard boxes on wooden platforms that keep the bottommost box about three inches off the ground. Hugo says they want to shut this place down. Who does? He shrugs. "The city. The inspectors." When the inspectors come, he explains, they say the food all has to be inside the shops, not outside. But as anyone can see, there's no room inside for all this—produce is piled up everywhere, with crates springing out from every unclaimed piece of asphalt.

We park, and snake through the maze of trucks towards our destination—Hugo buys from the same shop every day. Because he's a regular, they give him better prices. Plus, he says, everything's cheaper here, at the back end of the market.

He nods to the staff as we enter the shop—these are people he sees every day, no handshakes or formalities, just down to business—and heads towards the heaping boxes of bananas in the corner.

He goes next for the green grapes, great big ones. These come in Styrofoam boxes, the top one with its cover already removed. He tries a few of them. "Son buenas." He motions for me to try one—and they are good, juicy and crisp and fresh. A girl notes these down on a piece of cardboard from a discarded box. "¿Qué más?" she says. What else?

While larger produce is priced by the box, smaller produce—cilantro, and the millions of different kinds of peppers—is priced per pound and weighed on a scale beside the register, with weights rounded to the nearest pound. One guy who wanted to pay for 4 lbs of garlic starts off with nearly 5 lbs, and just keeps removing cloves until he's down to 4.17—within an acceptable range of 4, apparently.

The customers all move nimbly, looking, squeezing, turning over, opening, occasionally asking questions. The staff, too, remain in constant motion, the young woman checking off orders and cashing people out when they're done; a boy, maybe 16, hauling boxes out from inside, dollying goods to customers' trucks, stacking and unstacking; and an older man, overseeing everything. I want to ask the boy if he goes to school, but can't muster the courage. Plus, I'm almost sure I know the answer—at his age, without any command of English. Save for myself and a guy in a Green Bay Packers hat, everyone here is Latino, and, except with the Packers fan, all conversation is exclusively in Spanish.

Hugo's order is small today, just \$83. Usually, he says, he'll spend at least \$100 here, sometimes more like \$200.

Again we wind our way through the truck maze, unloading the dollyfull of boxes into the truck, and climbing back inside, where he stashes his bag of jalapeños under the driver's seat. "You scared them," Hugo says. "They think maybe you are the health inspector." At 6'3", white and blond, wearing Oakley's and a plaid shirt, I am, it seems, a very suspicious character, especially because I speak Spanish.

Before heading back to Venice, we stop in at another market where Hugo gets his junk food, and where the owner regards me with even more suspicion than the last one had.

As Hugo orders chips and M&M's and bottles of water, I watch truck owners wander off to the "lunchero" at the corner, leaving their trucks open, their goods sitting in boxes outside on the ground. They order tacos at the window—cabeza (spelled "caveza" on the side of the truck), tongue, carne asada. They wash their hands at the side of the truck, where the cashier pours water from a bucket over their finger and onto the street, and eat at a table set up in the truck's shade, seated on upturned crates, sipping tamarind-flavored Jarritos.

Hugo usually eats there as well, but today we're behind schedule—his regular customers are already starting to call him, asking where he is. As we get ready to head back west, Hugo finds his brother's driver's license. He holds it up to show me—it's the only one he has. Again, I don't ask why, the answer obvious. If he gets stopped, he'll say that's him on the license. And, as you'd imagine, he drives very carefully.

Aside from the daily trip downtown, Hugo's route is incredibly compact, covering barely half a square mile, bounded by Broadway to the south, Lincoln to the east, Rose to the north, and 4th Ave. to the west. He has no claim on this area—it's not his turf. It's simply where his customers are concentrated. The neighborhood's other three trucks operate in the same space, give or take a block.

Despite the competition that might naturally emerge from such an arrangement, Hugo maintains notably friendly relationships with the other truck owners. One recent morning, when another owner was sick, Hugo moved his truck for him so he wouldn't get a ticket. And when the Sanchez produce truck parked ten yards in front of Hugo, he remained unperturbed. His prices are lower, he said. His customers will find him.

In the mornings, starting sometime between 10am and noon, whenever Hugo gets back from his four-hour trip to El Mercado, he usually begins his route around Sunset and 6th. He sells milk, eggs, and bread, mostly, early in the day. Wives and mothers stocking essentials for their families, most repeat customers he knows well.

I watch as one regular, an older woman,

completes her purchase, thanks Hugo, and begins to walk towards her car, her bag still sitting on the back of the truck. Before I can call after her, Hugo had already picked up the bag and stepped off the truck, following her to the car with

her groceries. This is part of their routine—she buys from Hugo and he carries her groceries, so reliably she doesn't even need to ask him.

As we sit in the truck, helping occasional customers, Hugo cleans, getting out the vegetables from underneath that are starting to turn and tossing them into a box to throw away. It's amazing to me how much he throws out. A pile of bananas, which has started to spot brown but remained very edible. "They're good," he says. "But no one wants to buy them." Especially now that he has new ones. He peels the outer layer off of onions and the husks off corn. He tosses out pounds and pounds of little tomatillos, many of which are still good. But it's easier, he says, to just get rid of them all, rather than comb through pulling out the good ones. Even throwing out this many, he still turned a profit on the batch.

"Así es," he keeps saying. This is it. He sounds weary as he says this, tired, bored. He's had this truck for six years now, and he's ready to sell it. He wants to take his wife and their two-year-old son back to Oaxaca, where he's from. He plays tuba in a mariachi band, and there's more opportunity for his music in Mex-

—continued on page 11



Don't even think about it! Newly elected L.A. City Attorney Carmen Trutanich wants authority to arrest taggers simply because they hang out together. No paint is needed. The American Civil Liberties Union says his proposal would be blatantly unconstitutional. Photo by Kevin Schmidt.

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Bevy of Poets Attracted to the 2nd Philomenian

The 2nd Annual Philomenian – a celebration of the life and poetry of Venice’s late poet laureate, Philomene Long – attracted some of the best poets in the area to Beyond Baroque, August 21.

Among those reading Long’s poetry, or their own works about her, were Wanda Coleman, Mariana Dietl, Susan Hayden, Hillary Kaye, Pegarty Long, Harry Northrup, Jim Smith and Mariano Zaro. Long’s late husband, and poet, John Thomas, was heard on tape.

Philomene’s twin sister, filmmaker Pegarty Long, showed several video clips of the poet, which included her reading her poetry, nursing baby pigeons and a retrospective of her life.

The event fell on the second anniversary of Long’s death in her longtime residence, the Paloma Apartments. The twins had celebrated their birthday just four days previously.

A new website about Philomene Long is at www.philomenelong.com. Past issues of the Beachhead, including a memorial issue dated September 2007, contain tributes and the text of some of her poems and can be found online.

By press time, a video of the event should be posted on YouTube. In addition, Beyond Baroque’s bookstore at 681 Venice Blvd. has several of her books for sale.

The Whiff of Fascism

—continued from page 5

for an indictment. It turned out to be an isolated act, but the hostility against those most in need of help has continued ever since.

The talk of putting the homeless in camps in a compound near the airport where guards can watch them is a step down a road we don’t want to go. And finally, Jane Harman’s office is being picketed by the “Tea Baggers” who are demanding she hold a town hall. If she decides to fly out from her home in Washington DC, what safer place to hold a town hall than Venice? If so, then everyone of us will have to make a decision to go or not. We’ll have to decide whether to stand up, not for Jane Harman, but for democracy and health reform. If Harman is a no show, it will be an indication that the “center” in U.S. politics is unwilling to take on the extreme right. Will progressive Democrats follow Barney Franks heroic stance, or will they be the next to cave?

We are probably closer to fascism than we have been since Hitler admirers were plotting a coup against Franklin Roosevelt in 1934. But this is not the time to rush for the airport and fly to safety in a more civilized country. It is the time when the apolitical must become political, when those who don’t go to meetings or rallies or write letters to Obama and the Congress, must do so. It is the time for good men and women to prevent the triumph of evil. If millions of Germans had stood up to Hitler, what a different world this might have been.

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Help! My bike has been kidnapped

—continued from page 1

lice choppers too, (do they REALLY need to keep at it for three hours in the middle of the night?) so it seems bigger crime issues are more prevalent these days as well.

As I type this I’m wearing a t-shirt gift from my friend that says, “BE KIND.” If we could all just remember that, things would be so much better for everyone. Even Bike Thieves. The shirt came from a new neighbor, Propr, on Abbot Kinney Blvd. Recently one of the owners had to be up on a ladder scrubbing graffiti off of their new awning. I get that people don’t love having fancy new shops take over the area. Gentrification can be a real thief of a town’s character, and it sucks when you can’t afford the posher merchandise inside. I get it. I STILL can’t go to Pinkberry - which I love - because I feel chains don’t belong in Venice. But when people are trying to be good neighbors, it’s a wrong message to send to deface their property.

I’ve waited five minutes in the middle of a crosswalk on Venice without one person thinking, “Oh, another human being. Maybe I should let them cross.” We seriously just need to, “Remember our humanity, and forget the rest.” as Einstein said.

The people that don’t want RV’s parking by their homes, I also get. The people who live inside do need to be clean, noise-level appropriate, and respectful - just like any neighbor. Which is what they are. That is where the majority of them LIVE. There needs to be more compassion all around, ESPECIALLY when times are harder. We need each other more than ever. In Venice, of all places, this should just be understood.

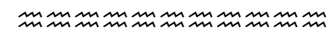
A Cannibal in Venice

They came like Locusts
Devouring swiftly All
Our Homes, Our Hopes
And Our Dreams

Never stopping to see the Tears
Or feel the Fears.
Hear the Screams.

Destroying Our Lives at Christmas
BUT
They could not Take Our Souls Away!

—Sharon Shapiro-Snow



Fingerprints

In the depths of recollection
Small joys of youth
The wondrous days of adventure
Winters of eternal spring
In the backyards of remembrance
With all its favors
The clear and uncluttered motion
Of love’s unobstructed things
I find myself falling freely
Passing through time
Through glorious nights of redemption
Afternoons of enchantment
In the first year of discovery
Those important issues
The once and forever fingerprints
Of movements marked in time
In the waters of salty pleasure
Strong waves of tides
Softly swallow the memories
Recall all first loves
In the songs that earmarked the day
Power of persuasion
The steps to young manhood
With all its crossroads
The clarity of choices made
In the angst of not quite knowing
Small days at large
The fruitful hours of young kinship
Summers against the Fall
On the porch swing of each daybreak
Anticipation
The wonder of unremarkable days
The thrill of it all

—Pasquale Trellese

And it IS. By the majority of us. When you see the whole town come out for the Festival Of The Chariots, dancing and catching flowers, you feel confident that good will overcome evil.

When you walk by your neighbor’s house and there is a bag of her fresh produce hanging off the fence with your name on it, you remember that at its heart, Venice is a small-town vibe made up of like individuals, that settled here to soak up the beauty, both of the city and its people. Not to victimize one another, Man.

When a new restaurant opens up in the neighborhood like Marla’s (2300 Abbot Kinney, south of Venice), where absolutely delicious food can be had at super affordable prices, you realize that businesses can still care about their clientele, and not just rape them with hotel-style tabs and rude service, like some of the other new scene spots on the Boulevard have done. It’s simply essential in a beloved place like Venice, that we heed the Golden Rule. Otherwise we become just another city, with crime statistics being more the news than the good works done by our fine citizens every day.

Let’s just remember that we all love this place, no matter what our circumstances are, so let’s stick up for each other, not stick each other up. Thanks a lot! Word.



by DOUGO

Desire Remains, Memory Distorts

By krista schwimmer

It is easier
watching my body
grow older since when
i was all fire & moonstone
i loved the beautiful men.

It is easier
of course, because memory
continually entertains –
easier because
a secret confidence tells me
my body was fully revealed
at her ripest time.

What i mean
is the body remembers
despite the age
& is filled at once
with amazement & angst.

What i mean
is desire remains
memory distorts
& even when i fight it
the heart continues
to pound out
its own fierce way.

~~~~~

## The Prisoner

By Jim Smith

They took him prisoner  
when the celebration was over.

The limos arrived at his house  
bringing famous men  
and twitchy bodyguards.

“Congratulations Mr. President,”  
said the man with the TV face.  
“Here’s how it will be  
Your speeches will be cleared with us  
Any questions, just ask  
Rahm or Tim or Hillary,  
they know the drill.”

When he protested,  
they complimented his pretty wife,  
and his beautiful children.

Then they talked about Kennedy.  
He had so much potential.  
What a pity he defied them.  
And wasn’t it a shame  
about Bobby and John, Jr.

“You see, Mr. President,  
the business of America is business.  
Your role is to speak on our behalf,  
nothing more.”

That’s why the CIA, the NSA,  
the military and Wall Street  
have taken the place of Congress  
and the Office of the President.  
It’s just more efficient.”

We’re so excited that you won.  
It will be great working with you.

## Dear Artists of Los Angeles

By Pat DeBonville.

Art is not  
a device  
created to elicit  
pleasure from the many

Art is creation  
unto itself  
it is a wealth beyond  
that of  
profit

Art has no motives.  
Art simply  
Is.

And all of the best  
have always known it

And all of the best  
would rather starve  
than  
approach it  
any  
other  
way.

~~~~~

Based on a True Story

By abigail templeton

I took you to
an Indian Restaurant

You did not want
to hurry curry.

All your doorknobs
were loose, all the paint

was in chips, only the fire
had escaped. Don’t forget

to check for ticks. O
Chicken Tika Masala,

o garlic naan
and envelope. You

lick your fingers,
checking for sand,

a chickpea on your
good tooth. When

the moon drove you
home you had enough

for a two cigarette tip.
We must have walked

for hours believing
in the boardwalk

psychic and her
promises of water.

~~~~~

Lost in the overcast, I grope my way Through  
mounds of vague ideas this cloudy day. I heft  
them with both hands, to get a feel For obscure  
meanings, bordering surreal. No stranger to  
these parts, my way’s well-known. Created for  
myself this twilight zone That you see here. It  
very nicely fits. I wear it proudly. Hanging by  
my wits, Tread lightly through this landscape,  
on my own. Acknowledging that soon it may be  
gone, So I pause to enjoy it, to conceal Double  
entendre here and there, at will. My mother says  
to go outside and play. Obedient am I, this  
cloudy day.....Roger Houston, Venice

## Bare-naked...

By Marie Lecrivain

easter-egg-colored coiffed beauties frolicking  
in front of the George C. Page Museum on a cool  
Sunday afternoon make one fail to notice the  
putrid smell rising of the tar pits nearby; the  
photographer searching for the best angle  
through a camera lens while his assistant keeps  
a watchful eye on the street for the manifestation  
of law enforcement; the google-eyed passengers  
through the windows of the # 20 Metro Bus as it  
rolls by; the enterprising middle-aged security  
guard as he whips out his cell phone to record  
ten seconds of video for later that night, where,  
in the privacy of his dingy bachelor pad, he will  
replay in time to his rhythmic ejaculations; and  
make one forget to notice me composing the  
lines of this poem in my head, while I smile qui-  
etly.

~~~~~

Pleasures I have know

By Honeybee Henderson

Ocean mist dancing in the moonlight
Bright stars twinkling with delight
Children laughing as the seesaw bounces up
and down
Aspen trees lean and tall with leaves swaying in
the wind
Sweet Mollydog shaking her entire backside
with glee
A laugh with an old friend
Music pulsating through my veins as my body
moves to the beat
The ocean’s tide pulling back the rocks as the
waves seep back
A songbirds early morning chant
A long stretch first thing in the morning
Gentle kisses all over my bare body
The sparkle in a stranger’s eye while reflecting
on the day’s events
Ghost stories
Breathing in nature in the first seconds of the
day
Watching the city wake up
Smelling fresh bread being baked
Dogs barking
These are the pleasures I have known.

~~~~~

## Steve

His teeth have popped out like popcorn  
sole one stands at attention mid-mug  
a paid-up gargoye club member

anxious about dental demons with drills  
let nature take its’ course who cares  
while sucking-up soft foods and soup

he squints to decipher nearby stuff and people  
fears surgeons keen to cut his cataract  
why does he need sight has seen everything al-  
ready

grudgingly grunts-up poison negatives  
sits swaying under his raggedy hump  
considers it a reprobate old friend

now spits out scatter-gun reports and  
recites his strong poems from memory  
plus throw-away profundities and thought

says ever-present eye problem boring but  
late bulletin reveals light -- bulb moment  
eye correction will improve sight and thought

life’s not all crap there’s gold amidst the dross  
intellectual-man to the rescue now stands tall  
a national historical monument  
behind the mucky facade

–Panos Douvos

This Paper  
Is A Poem



### True Democracy

Dear Beachhead,

Isn't It Time for the Plebiscite of Every Day Events and Decisions?

I wish the people of Venice and the Venice Neighborhood Council and the Venice Town Council would consider promoting the following political proposition.

It's time for a monthly email plebiscite for the Venice Community.

The Plebiscite will determine the will of the community on various issues. The 'leadership' will determine the issues and present them in a weekly email newsletter (Issues to be voted on, projects to be voted on.)

The job of the leadership is to present the issues, and the two opposing sides (not more than 3) for the community to vote on.

The vote would be by E mail. The votes would be tallied in 24 hours and released by return e mail.

The Venice Neighborhood Council, as a part of the neighborhood council structure and its 'political thrust' – is presently involved in dispensing patronage and favors, giving out money given to it by the city, and granting permissions to build --which involve major deals and variances.

Ideally, such issues should be subject to almost immediate public scrutiny--discussion, and vote, given that we have a web site and e mail and all people can access these.

If there are people in Venice who cannot access these then the Venice Library will provide the site for these people for free to view on line and vote. Other sites like schools as well.

Why let Ward Politics develop further when we know what the outcome will be?

Why not True Democracy!! Why Not Direct Democracy!

*Arnold Springer*

### Why Do We Still Vote?

Dear Beachhead,

As an RV dweller I've watched with amusement at the years of constant bickering over a fairly simple problem – parking in Venice.

There are legitimate arguments on both sides, however, it seems that the fad now, whether its Bush vs. Gore, Coleman vs. Franken, Arnold vs. the legislators, or VNC vs. the coastal commission, it seems that voting no longer matters.

Whichever side loses sues. You want government to run healthcare. Yet, nobody wants to be reasonable. Let's stop the nonsense. There is a simple solution. Both sides have to bend. Lets face it, sacrifices must be made and certain RVs must go. Stop acting like foot stomping ten year olds and let's fix the damn problem.

*Steve Brown*

### Live Free Or Drive

Dear Beachhead,

Am a local small-time architect/ developer here in Venice and was VERY impressed by your article in the Free Venice Beachhead LIVE FREE OR DRIVE.

I spent one and one-half years intentionally bicycling two miles to work every day--rain or shine/ day or night. Though I drive it these days, I'm a strong believer that there could not be a better community than Venice to be re-designed with bicycles/ pedicabs, etc as one mode amongst equals--and possibly even as the dominant mode of Venice transport! As a prototype community for your ideas, Venice has it all---it is flat, has the ideal scale, mixed uses, the right climate, the right people...and guys like you--the synthesizers, the communicators.

If there is anything I can do to help you guys ramp up credible planning graphics (for whomever--LA City Planning/ Green Magazines/ etc.) for presentation purposes re your Transportation Plan for a "Green/ Community of Tomorrow" please advise. Your ideas, which I just read in the Beachhead, are an applied and condensed version of much of the smartest, forward-thinking concepts found in planning literature written over the last 50 years in the US and practiced for hundreds of years in Europe! Though the language is different, the concepts are the same. And you seem to have already applied them to Venice. This stuff is even more relevant today than ever before, as you obviously know.

*Gary Neville*

### Say What You Will, We Live It Everyday in Oakwood —continued from page 4

ing and challenging Venice. If you throw the four letter word love around too much it really loses its meaning or power. Love is the law.

One young man who was stopped on Wednesday August 26, stated "Do you know that we have a black President and you officers are around here still not respecting African Americans?" The tall officer with a bald head (dark shades, car #02737) said in reply, "Obama ain't did nothing for me. I had my job before Obama was President. Obama ain't got nothing to do with what we do on a daily basis. He's your President not mine." This was a statement that was made about our President by one of the Public Service Officers.

Summer has come and gone. We hope the change Venice creates in the future is for all and not for just a select few.

### Permit Parking – RVs

Dear Beachhead,

As you are now well aware, a small portion of Parking Lot B at LAX has been dedicated to campers and RVs. There are approxi-mately 100 or 150 campers currently parked at this Venue.

The occupants or residents of these campers appear to be flight crews or airline employees. As you are aware, they pay a fee of \$2 per day.

The parking lot has restroom facilities, security and is well supervised and policed. The arrangement is promoted and sanctioned by L.A.P.D. and the Airport police. As you are also aware, there are several other enormous parking lots underutilized at the Airport.

Indeed, Parking Lot B has space or accommodation for at least several thousand or more Campers or RVs.

I suggest that your group conduct their own investigation, and write a series of articles as to the program successfully being promoted at the Airport and whether the program would be . . . appropriate and feasible . . ." for some individuals currently occupying street parking in or near Venice. I am certain that you can interview the director of Airport operations, Airport commissioners, Airport police personnel and the parking authority to determine how the program was instituted, maintained and promoted.

Again, there are huge unused lots at the Airport previously dedicated to auto rental companies. I am certain that, if you drive behind the new postal station at Arbor Vitae and Airport Boulevard, you will note that there are substantial areas that could be dedicated to Campers and RVs.

I am opposed to OPDs, however, I also think it is inappropriate for RVs or Campers to select a position in front of someone's home and then take over the area. Do the research. Do the Article. Best of luck.

Happy summer, *Michael Millman*

P.S. Perhaps, you should interview Marcy Winograd, who is running against Jane Harman for congress??? She is anti-war and very interesting.

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## \$20 A Gallon! —continued from page 1

be a sad reality for some people who cling to the sentimentality of their stuff, but for other it will be liberating. Just cut your wires and go. Each new destination in life would carry with it a new tranche of furnishings and surroundings."

Many predictions center around auto and air travel becoming vastly more expensive. The airline industry will shrink dramatically, cars will become too expensive for many Americans. This will spark a return to denser living in small towns and cities. The sprawly exurbs will not fare well, nobody should be surprised to hear.

If Steiner is correct, American cities will undergo a dramatic transformation in coming decades. In the chapter \$12 (the first chapter is "\$6," the second is "\$8," and so

on to "\$20," each tracing the effects of a rise to that price level), he writes: "As people leave the suburbs because they can't afford 3,000 sq ft, four exterior walls, and two SUVs, our cities will swell with newcomers." The density will make them better places. Rust belt cities will be particularly appealing to people seeking affordable lifestyles that don't involve \$3,000/month gas bills: "These are the cities with existing downtown infrastructure that's terribly underused. Buildings of thirty or forty stories wait to be seized by someone with vision, someone with drive to make them great again." And all those 12-lane highways will still be useful, but not for cars. Rather, they will "offer municipalities

unmolested rights of way radiating out of central cities—easements that can be used by governments to locate train lines." Schemes like this will be possible because Americans will be driving less than half as many miles per year. And people will adjust: "Minivan lovers will learn to love the city. They will learn to love density. Places like Denver, Dallas and Atlanta will move from being mere regional hubs to world-class cities as people culture and commerce crowd in." Hooray!

Well-built, old small towns on rail lines will thrive too. Their commercial life will cease being defined by that single Wal-Mart a mile or two outside town. Why? "Wal-Mart will die." \$14 gas will make its disposable crap-centric business model implode. All those boarded up Main Streets in Littleville, USA, will be reclaimed and rehabbed so people can have compact walkable places to live and cluster their commercial needs.

None of these scenarios are new, but fortunately Steiner puts some numbers behind his case: At \$14/gal, oil prices will functionally act as 25 percent tariff on everything we import from China. In a lot of cases that will mean that it's more expensive to make it in China than it is to just make it here. Thus the withering of global supply lines. "Small towns across America will see their futures buoyed as manufacturing returns home."

He thinks the country won't get really serious about high speed rail investment until gas gets up around \$18/gallon and the airline industry has essentially disappeared as an option for everyone but the richest. To do it right would probably cost into the trillions. There will be good and bad in high energy prices, says Steiner. "High-speed trains, however, will be unequivocally good and welcomed by all."

The high-speed rail system will need electricity to run it though, and Steiner rightly suggests that nuclear energy should be at the center of our low-carbon national energy strategy, together with aggressively pursuing efficiencies, innovation, and renewables as niche contributors.

Of course, nobody knows what the future holds. Steiner does a solid job of laying out a positive scenario: relocalization, densification, renaissances in rail travel and nuclear power, and the decline of the culture of materialism. If it happens, awesome. But the bumps in the road will be wicked, of course, and while Steiner passingly acknowledges "difficulties," he says almost nothing about them. Then again, people like Jim Kunstler have already done plenty of that from the "peak oil" perspective. It is a relief, in any case, that that phrase seems to be fading. Smart people everywhere are starting to recognize that oil will simply be getting expensive in the future and we don't have to turn it into a polarizing debate. Steiner does well functioning in that vein. His book moves all this stuff closer to the center of the American discourse, and that's a major accomplishment.



### Riding the Streets of Venice in a Produce Truck

—continued from page 7

ico. It's hard to imagine that hearing "La Cucaracha" all day is very satisfying for a musician. Plus, he says, life is "more tranquil" in Mexico.

Around 2pm, hoping to grab some lunch, Hugo settles the truck in front of his house, where he lives with three other couples, eight adults and two children sharing four rooms, plus a bathroom and a kitchen.

But this is one of his most profitable locations, a place his regulars look for him, and he finds himself immediately besieged. Two teenage girls stand outside, one holding a baby to her chest with one arm, picking grapes from the crate at the back and popping them into her mouth with the other. Everyone picks at the grapes, which is apparently as acceptable here as it is in the market downtown. When he cleans out the fruit, Hugo even puts the single grapes on top, so people will eat those instead of pulling new ones off the vine. The girls chat with Hugo, eventually buying a pack of tortillas, \$2 of tomatillos, and \$1 of cilantro. Enchiladas will be ready in an hour, one of them says, promising to bring him some.

This is how transactions work: quantity is measured in price—"I'll have \$2 of tomatoes"—everything comes in a plastic bag, including the plastic bags themselves, and everything is paid for in cash. Occasionally Hugo will let one of his regulars pay with credit, especially towards the end of the month, when rent is coming up, money is tighter, and his business slows. But no cards are involved. He simply gives them what they need, and hopes they'll come back with what they owe. And, like at El Mercado, all conversation is in Spanish.

I saw very similar systems in Asia and Africa—informal economies in which vendors set up shop where and when they can; cash rules; credit is extended on the strength of your word, not some algorithmically-determined 'score'; and business is conducted in a language the state does not officially recognize.

The exception to the predominance of Spanish comes with the other side of Hugo's business. While parents come to Hugo for groceries, their children come for the junk food. And whereas most of his adult patrons are Mexican, children of all ages and races like Coke and Oreos. Even the several English-speaking adults tend to order snack food—they just snack on grapes instead of Doritos.

As we sit outside Hugo's house, a black kid with blond stripes in his hair and a Ghostbusters shirt orders a Gatorade and a candy I've never heard of; his friend, a Latino, just gets a water—all in English. Without missing a beat, Hugo serves the drinks, then begins rooting around on the shelves in search of the mystery candy. "Too much stuff," he says in Spanish. "It's a disaster in here."

Almost as an afterthought, the Latino kid asks for "a dollar of grapes," which, naturally, they'd already been nibbling on. Hugo picks up a bunch, deposits them into a plastic bag, which

in turn goes into another bag, this one yellow with handles, which he hands to the kid.

"That's not a dollar," the kid says.

Hugo smiles. He takes the bag back and throws it up onto the scale suspended from the ceiling. "Dollar per pound," he says in English, as the needle settles on 1.2 lbs. They all laugh, and Hugo throws a few more grapes into the bag before handing it back to them.

"Son mis amigos," he says to me after they've gone. They're my friends. He speaks a version of kitchen English—the names of the products, prices, a few little helper words, but not much else. He bought an English textbook years ago, he says. But he works all day—no time to study.

Así es. Going to the market, cleaning, helping customers. We keep moving around his small territory, once venturing southward to Westminster. Hugo drives while I sit on a cooler in the back—this is a vehicle designed for one person. As the afternoon wears on, the younger customers fall off, replaced again by the matriarchs buying milk and eggs and bread for tomorrow.

Hugo's business, and indeed the very existence of produce trucks, may seem curious to outsiders—I know I had to get used to the idea of setting out in search of the grocery store. But his business is not unlike FreshDirect.com, minus the heavy investment of venture capital. Hugo, too, provides his narrow patch of Oakwood with specialty ingredients the community needs but might not have easy access to if it weren't for his service. Indeed, the truck represents a somewhat remarkable segment of an informal economy in Oakwood that operates slightly more on trust, friendship, and communal experience than most of the more formalized business transactions in the area. It's a developing-world business model, adapted with a set of wheels to this nominally developed city.

Towards the end of our time together, out of nowhere, Hugo asks me if I ever go out dancing. He's been answering my questions for days now, and apparently has some of his own. He asks me where I'm from, and then about the climate in Boston. He asks about my family, and how often I see them, and where I learned Spanish. As the sun goes down, and Hugo prepares to close up for the day, the interviewing seems to be over. We're just talking now.

Finally, as we talk about the Mexican clubs downtown, and the climate in Oaxaca v. Boston, and his other two kids who live with their mother in Hollywood, I ask one more question: why "La Cucaracha"? I tell him that I associate it with insects and marijuana, not something he'd want people thinking of when they see his truck.

Hugo laughs. He could change it easily, he says. The song plays on the red horn that's visible just below the front bumper. Some customers tell him he should get his own distinct song. But it's a Mexican song, he says, and it's their song—the produce trucks' song. It's how people know they're coming. And, well, he just likes it.



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