A book arrived this month that sent a chill into my marrow. The author's face on the dust jacket was different from the one I remembered. Its hair was cropped in a severe feminist do, its skin pulled tight from an apparent lift, its eyes artificially lit to give off a benign sparkle. But I could still see the menace I knew so well underneath. It was a holograph of the darkest period in my life.

I first met her in June 1974, in a dorm room at Mills College, an elite private school for women in Oakland. The meeting had been arranged by Huey Newton, leader of the Black Panther Party and icon of the New Left. For almost a year before that I had been working with Newton, developing a school complex in the East Oakland ghetto. I had named it the Oakland Community Learning Center and was the head of its "Planning Committee."

The unusual venue of my first meeting Elaine Brown was the result of the Panthers' odd disciplinary notions. They were actually Huey's notions because (as I came to understand later) the Party was an absolutist state where the leader's word was law. Huey had "sentenced" Elaine to Mills as a kind of exile and house arrest. "I sent her to Mills," he explained to me, "because she hates it there." 

Elaine was a strikingly attractive woman, light-skinned like Huey, but with a more fluid verbal style that developed an edge when she was angry. I had been warned by my friends in the Party that she was also crazy and dangerous. A festering inner rage erupted constantly and without warning wherever she went. At such times, the edge in her voice would grow steel-hard and could slice a target like a machete.

The summer of 1974 was disastrous for Newton. Reports had appeared in the press locating him at the scene of a drive by shooting at an "after hours" club. He was indicted for pistol-whipping a middle-aged black tailor named Preston Callins with a .357 magnum, for brawling with two police officers in an Oakland bar, and for murdering a 17 year old prostitute named Kathleen Smith. When the day arrived for his arraignment in this last matter, Huey failed to show. Assisted by the Panthers' Hollywood supporters, he had fled to Cuba.

Elaine had the two characteristics necessary for Panther leadership. She could move easily in the elegant outer world of the Party's wealthy liberal supporters, and she could also function in the violent world of the street gang, which was the Party's internal milieu. Elaine was being punished in her Mills exile by Huey, because even by his standards her temper was explosive and therefore a liability. Within three months of our meeting, however, his own out-of-control behavior, would force him to make her supreme.
LETTER OF THE MONTH

MARCH 1993

MARCH 1993

Dear Sirs:

I am in a feminist Nightmare. This is supposed to be a men's penitentiary - yet most of the top administrative positions are held by prejudicial feminists.

Christianity and homosexuality, I do not feel men that who have committed these crimes (and not killed anyone) should be punished more than murderers. This is the policy this prison where the deputies (supervise-vice-warden or vice-principal) is a hateful feminist. She routinely clears bank robbers, murderers and homosexual sex offenders for lesser offenses over any inmates that may have, for instance, beat their wives.

Meanwhile, the manager of the four main cell blocks is a blatant lesbian and the woman that chairs the classification board is a dyed-blonde, gun-shewing, tramp wearing female sergeant. A man who was caught participating in a near-by prison. She was then transferred here to scrutinize sex offenders - with whom she is particularly severe.

I am requesting that you cease sending this trash to me again. I'm an admirer of John Crewdson, but his claim that the "maps" of HIV and AIDS are "virtually the same" is incorrect because of course the great majority of people who are HIV positive (over 90 percent) do not have AIDS. At the same time, we also have many cases that look like AIDS, but in which no trace of HIV has been found. Whether or not they are AIDS cases depends on which definition of AIDS we use. (CDC has expanded the definition at least three times in the last decade.)

Ed. This is a result of a comedy of errors, the author of the following letter, Ed Crewdson was misidentified in the last issue as a reporter for the Oakland Tribune. Ed Crewdson is in fact a private investigator targeted for AIDS cases do not naturally overlap, they are virtually the same. There's a lot of HIV in San Francisco, and lots of AIDS, but not much HIV in North Dakota (or Iceland), and not much AIDS. There didn't used to be much AIDS.
ICE LEGAL PHILOSOPHY: That distinguished thinker Ice-T has been touring college campuses this spring delivering lectures on free speech and law enforcement in a free society. Speaking before portraits of robed jurists at Harvard Law School he sold a capacity crowd a never-thought his lyrics, "Die, die, die, pig, die" would offend people. "I thought everybody hated the police," the visiting lecturer said. Ice-T went on to boast "I've got my thumb on the pulse of 20,000 killers." He has founded a group of gang members in Los Angeles called Hands Across Watts — "basic killers," he called them, "getting ready to move on the police."

MICHAEL JACKSON'S PENIS: In the second week of February, this year, the College of Humanities and Social Science at the University of Californi-a at Riverside held a conference on "Unnatural Acts." The program included "Taking on the Phal-lus," "Beyond the Bathroom Door."" "Boys Will Be Girls," "Dreaming Arnold Schwarzeneggers," "Fucking (with Theory) For Money," "Michael Jackson's Penis," "Lesbians Who Kill," and "Amelia Earhart in Drag." Conference papers will be published in book form by the University of Indiana Press.

THE UNIVERSITY OF NEWSPEAK: Applying for the position of Professor of Law at the United States Air Force Academy received a letter from Bettie L. Den Herder, the "Equal Employment & Staffing Specialist Affirmative Employment Division" which contained the following instruction: The Federal Government is an equal opportunity employer and in support of that effort we ask that you voluntarily complete the Standard Form 181 Race and National Origin Identification (Attachment 3).

MR. OLLIE BUILDS HIS DREAM HOUSES: Anti-capitalist, anti-American film director Oliver Stone has made the March issue of Architectural Digest, along with his "weekend retreat" in Santa Barbara, which is part of a complex of homes that includes property in L.A. and Palm Springs, along with a 16,000 square foot home sitting atop a mountain in Colorado. When Stone's wife Eliza-thabeth's view on the project is eminently in the article, she says that her power in their homes centers on "kitchen implementation. Flowers. Bedding." All the Stone houses come with a little Buddhist shrine where the auteur meditates and contemplates what he calls the "Western Christian trip" that makes people guilty for having material possessions. Now we know the source for his character Gordon ("Greed is Good") Gekko in Wall Street.

HAT SPEECH: Ferrum College is a small Methodist liberal arts college, located in Franklin County, Virginia. Last fall, black students at Ferrum responding to Spike Lee's fashion statements began wearing X hats around campus. The hats were a word in edgewise in the article, the feeling of struggling alone; the pain of being closed out; constantly being "the other;" the pain of isolation; the pain of victims of insensitivity and bias; the pain of being tolerated; the pain of being closed out; the pain that comes when you feel no one cares. Fear was another message. The fear that it might happen again. To you... Let me say this for myself. From sit-in's in the '60s to authorship of the Smith Design for Diversity, we have always worked to extend civil rights in the Smith community... And I resolve now that I will not tolerate the brutishness of bias, and I will work to reconnect our community. The only pain she forgot was pain in the ass.

RACIAL JUSTICE: Five days before the start of Black History Month, three racial slurs against blacks written on pieces of notebook paper were found posted on the door of the Black Student Union's building on the Williams College campus in Massachusetts. Williams has not had a racial incident in two years. The messages were quickly denounced by a chorus of campus activists. Three days later, Gilbert Moore Jr., a black student, told administrators that he had posted the messages as part of a project for a course on anarchism he was taking. His intention he said was to promote more campus discourse on race relations. Moore was suspended for a semester. The Black Student Union supported the suspension. "We denounce all racist activity;" their statement said.

PLANTATION POLITICS: Black students at Johns Hopkins University staged a sit-in at the Milton S. Eisenhower library to protest an abolitionist display case in the library's Black History Month exhibit. The case — one of these in the exhibit — featured James and William Binyon, who abolitionists who had released their slaves to demonstrate their anti-slavery belief. "This stuff will not be tolerated," said Paul Brown, a senior at the sit-in. "There are plenty of resources in the library if you just made a half-ass attempt to find something." Library Director Scott Bennett, who had failed to make the half-assed attempt, apologized in an abject letter to the protest-

 Connecticut (“Personally, I deeply regret any offense given by the exhibit of abolitionist material.”)

A FOOL FOR A CLIENT AND AN ASS FOR AN ATTORNEY: Dear Masters Collier and Horowitz, I represent Dr. Marilyn J. Guy who is the unwarranted recipient of your publication entitled Heterodoxy. The subscription that has apparently been sent out in her name was done without her knowledge or consent. Dr. Guy considers her existence on your mailing list to be defamatory. Accordingly, we insist that you take the following action immediately:

1. Delete Dr. Guy from your list of subscribers to Heterodoxy (a photocopy of the mailing label is included).
2. Cancel the subscription and refund any unearned balance to the person who paid you; and
3. Advise Dr. Guy of the name of the person who initiated this subscription (if that is not possible, provide a copy of the subscription form).

YES: "The whole area of ideology is a theater of illusion, and doctrines can affect the minds of beings in remarkable ways, turning the peacefully inclined to aggression, the tolerant to dogmatism, and so on. How else can it be explained that the almost Stalinist regimentation of political correctness can posture as tolerance and sensitivity, or the rigid uniformities of multiculturalism exploit the rhetoric of diversity? Unless one is aware of the different types of reasoning in this cultural attic of endlessly recycled mo-
tions, one will be hopelessly adrift." — Kenneth Minogue, Professor of Political Science at the London School of Economics.

BAD TASTE: At Stanford University, in celebration of their annual Condom Week, the school's Ye Olde Condom Shoppe, held a condom drive. With a display table set up in the middle of White Plaza, the school-funded organization handed out bags of condoms accompanied with a questionnaire. Students were asked to compare each condom in a number of different categories, including taste.

STAYING ABREAST WITH VANDY: The avant garde at Vanderbilt University has painted itself into a corner. Art professor Donald Evans, while giving a slide show on the controversial Robert Mapplethorpe, slipped in a few nude photos of himself and his wife. A female student in Evans' class promptly filed a sexual harassment complaint. In his defense, Evans said that his work with women's breasts was one of the main reasons that Vanderbilt hired him in the first place.

OOPS: The December issue of Heterodoxy contained a Reductio item about the Women's Studies Department at Wellesley College. The item stated that the Women's Studies Department sent letters to Modern European History majors elucidating them for perpetuating "dominant white male" attitudes. This has been denied by the Women's Studies Department since we have been unable to authentically the item, we accept the Department's denial and regret the error.

THE FINAL SOLUTION: According to Donald Kao, the director of Project Reach, a New York City diversity consulting firm, "If you are feeling comfortable or normal, then you are probably opposing someone, whether that person is a woman or a gay or whatever. We probably won't rid our society of prejudice until everyone strives to be abnormal."
on January 31, 1993, the Dallas Cowboys ran over the Buffalo Bills in a Super Bowl game whose half-time extravaganza featured Michael Jackson pawing at his crotch at the same time that he was singing lullabies to the children of the world. A sober moment in NBC's day of super programming came with what looked like an ordinary public service announcement. In the spot a slender middle-aged man looking nervous and unhappy, fiddles with his glasses while sitting in icy solitude. A voice-over describes his guilty thoughts:

ACTOR: I can't believe this is happening. We were just having an argument. I guess I lost my temper. I didn't mean to hurt her. What's going to happen now? I didn't think you'd go to jail for hitting your wife.

ANNOUNCER: Domestic violence is a crime. The final shot revealed the man inside a jail cell. An 800 hotline number appeared on screen.

The public service announcement was not an isolated moment of concern about a pressing social problem. In the weeks before the game, the term "day of dread" to describe women's fears about the Super Bowl Sunday had been repeated throughout the media in the process Tom Wolfe dubs "journalistic muck." Calling football "a mean sport, Anna Quindlen had written in the New York Times that "the greatest public health threat for many American women is the men they live with." Readers of the paper's sports pages found columnist Robert Lipsyte condemning the "Abuse Bowl." The Los Angeles Daily News supplied female readers with a "How To Survive" tip list, as if the Super Bowl were a hurricane. The Los Angeles Times, in a story headlined "The Super Bowl and 'domestic violence' and proposed "a public relations campaign to get the public service announcement on the air. FAIR and its allies in public relations campaign to get the public service announcement on the air. FAIR and its allies in women's shelters promoted the "facts" used by The Times' Anna Quindlen and other columnists. The wire service report clashed with his experiences with the police. So we're trying to help people prevent that kind of violence from happening because we know of the links between the football game on Super Bowl Sunday and a man who will already be battery using violence against his wife and sometimes his children as well.

By the time the announcement was shown on Super Bowl Sunday, the link between the Big Game and the Big Crime had attained the certitude of a geometric equation and the momentum of critical mass. The only problem was that the whole thing was a hoax, based on cooked sociological data, hidden political agendas, and a clever campaign of disinformation.

A n informed observer might have smelled the fishiness of the equation of violence against women and the "red meat" sport of football in the "Good Morning America" segment. Appearing as an "expert" along with psychologist Leonore Walker was Laura Flanders, coordinator of the "women's desk" at the organization FAIR (Fairness and Accuracy in Reporting). FAIR claims to be a "national media watch group," but its official self-description reveals a bias that neutralizes any claim to objectivity. FAIR says it seeks to call attention to the "narrow corporate ownership of the press," and believes the media reflect the corrupt ideology of its capitalist owners. It takes as a given "the media's allegiance to official agendas and their insensitivity to women, labor, minorities and other public interest constituencies."

The FAIR board includes long time anti-American leftists like Noam Chomsky, Roger Wilkins, Dolores Huerta, and Helen Caldicott, along with sympathetic Hollywood stars like Ed Asner, Jackson Browne, Darryl Hannah, and Casey Kasem. FAIR's executive director, Jeff Cohen, is a former ACLU attorney who studied at something called the Los Angeles Volunteer Law School. He was especially struck by the fact that FAIR had organized the two-month long public relations campaign to get the public service announcement on the air. FAIR and its allies in public relations campaign to get the public service announcement on the air. FAIR and its allies in women's shelters promoted most of the "facts" used by The Times' Anna Quindlen and other columnists. It also supplied what FAIR executive director Jeff Cohen calls "anecdotal evidence" to NBC claiming that the Super Bowl witnessed a rise in "domestic violence."

At the same time that this juggernaut was moving forward, however, a solitary journalist had begun to pull together pieces of social research that would undermine all of FAIR's work. On the Thursday before the Super Bowl, Washington Post reporter Ken Ringle happened to be looking through Associated Press wire copy for tidbits that might be interesting to readers of his paper's Style section. He came across a story about a press conference in Pasadena where speakers had charged that Super Bowl Sunday was a "day of dread" for women and cited a study linking home game victories with increased domestic violence. Ringle was immediately suspicious. While he had gotten his share of inside-the-beltway scoops during his 30 year career in journalism, nothing had prepared him for the Congresswoman Jim Wright employing a known murderer on his staff which helped bring down the former Majority Leader), Ringle had also once been assigned to the Post's Metro desk, where he became familiar with Washington's hospitals, police stations and hotlines. The wire service report clashed with his experiences covering the dark side of local news and also with his own perception that Sunday victories for the home team Redskins tended to tranquilize the nation's capital.

Ringle had a hunch that he had stumbled on to something. He checked the facts by the fact that this news conference had been organized by a group with such a name as Fairness and Accuracy in Reporting. "When I hear an acronym like FAIR," he said later on, "my first reaction is to count the spoons."

First, Ringle called the DC Rape Crisis Center and asked them if they had a rise in cases after the Super Bowl. When they told him their busiest months were in the summer, Ringle decided to keep asking questions. He called the House of Ruth, a DC women's shelter. When he asked them for their busiest time, he was told to call the DC Women's Coalition on Domestic Violence. They told him they couldn't release their figures, that he'd have to call national headquarters in Denver, Colorado and ask for psychologist Leonore Walker, the spokesperson for the theory about the Super Bowl who had appeared on "Good Morning America."

Ringle recalls, "As I was calling, I said to myself, why do I have to call Denver about the House of Ruth in DC?" He never managed to get Walker on the phone, which raised his suspicions further. The AP wire story which had first triggered his interest in the story had cited a study by researchers at Virginia's Old Dominion University. So Ringle called the sociology department there. Professor Janet Katz, an author of the cited study, told him the most important thing was not what the researchers found but what they didn't find. There was no link between the War on terrorism and the playing of football games per se, although there was a slight increase in women's hospital admissions when the home team won. The study counted all hospital admissions for trauma, and did not investigate the causes of each case, although it did speculate that "domestic abuse" might be a factor. Katz said her findings were extremely "tentative" and she did not want to make any claims.

Ringle talked to the editors of the Post and to other colleagues, some of whom had other material on this issue which suggested a pattern. One reporter gave him a press release from Dobbsky Associates, a New Hampshire based public relations firm, tying Charles Patrick Ewing's book Battered Women Who Kill to the Super Bowl. Another told him that FAIR was collecting money for a Super Bowl domestic violence phone bank at a local Washington movie theater. Still other agreed that they had seen mentions of the link between domestic violence and the Super Bowl on CBS News as well as "Good Morning America."

Feeling that he might have stumbled onto a concerted campaign, Ringle kept on calling, following leads, trying to find some evidence for the "day of dread." No one he talked to seemed able to come up with hard data substantiating the claim. "Everywhere I called, they weren't there or they couldn't come up with studies."

A Nexis search revealed some articles in which women at shelters said they believed there was an increase in battering around the Super Bowl, but there were no hard data. However, Ringle did find a 1990 UPI story calling the Super Bowl battering claim, already being spread at that point, a "myth."

And he found a 1987 AP story which Ringle thinks may have started the legend, the story of Rana Lee of Matin (California) battered Women's Service, who left her husband after a fight during the Super Bowl. Lee was later featured in a 1987 Mother Jones article charging that football led to "domestic violence," and also in a 1987 NBC News story where she appeared with none other than Denver psychologist Leonore Walker. This segment had been cut by Robert Lipsyte, now a sports writer at the New York Times, who had just written a column endorsing FAIRS 1992 to probe that football caused wife beating.
Ringle saw that everything "seemed to funnel back to Leonore Walker." The Denver psychologist, author of a book called Terrifying Love, which purports to explain why women kill their abusive husbands, still refused to return his phone calls. Instead, Walker's office referred Ringle to Michael Lindsey, another Denver psychologist, who initially promised to find him some studies substantiating the claim about Super Bowl Sunday and then, in Ringle's words, "called back after about four hours to say he was shocked, but the studies didn't exist."

On Friday and Saturday, Ringle called Sheila Kuehl, the California Women's Law Center spokeswoman who had been one of those at the Pasadena press conference reported by the AP. There was nothing firm from her. He talked with staffers at the Boston Globe, which had carried a story claiming that women's shelters receive more calls on Super Bowl Sunday than any other day of the year, but couldn't substantiate the claim. Ringle heard that CBS was flacking this story in promos on Saturday for an item to run on Monday and he called network correspondent Bob McNamara in Dallas to tell him about his troubles pinning down the statistics FAIR and other groups had used and ask if McNamara had anything that he didn't know about. The answer was no. (Perhaps because of this conversation, the CBS story merely concluded that domestic violence is "always" a problem, a proposition with which Ringle agrees wholeheartedly.)

After failing to verify the charges, Ringle concluded that the hysteria over the Super Bowl was the result of "the twin phenomenon of media convergence and media orchestration, in which "causists" show up wherever the most TV lenses are focused, "hoping to piggyback their message to a global audience of millions." His story in the Post was headlined "Debunking the Day of Dread" for Women — Data Lacking for Claims of Domestic Violence Surge After Superbowl."

FAIR's reaction to the piece was shrill and defensive. On February 10, Laura Flanders took up the cudgels against Ringle and the Post on her "Counterspin" radio show carried by the leftwing Pacifica stations. "The Post story, by a man, Ken Ringle, who according to our database search had never written on domestic violence ever in the Post before, seized on the comments of one domestic violence expert on a study he'd read linking battering with alcohol and managed to condemn a whole community of people who've argued for years that a connection exists between violence against women and male sports." FAIR made many of the same points in a letter to the Post ombudsman, Joann Byrd, which FAIR also distributed as a press release. (Byrd said FAIR's decision to fax their complaint to "supporters across the country" before she had a chance to investigate the charges was unprecedented.) However, Janet Noddleman of the San Francisco Family Violence Prevention Fund inadvertently confessed to Flanders on the February 10 broadcast that Ringle got his story right. "I'm not going to try to defend the statistics that they tried so hard and put such an inordinate amount of energy into trying to debunk," she said. What Noddleman wanted to do was change the subject: "I just want to make the point that what we were trying to do was to raise the issue of domestic violence. That's the real point. We could have done that around the Christmas Holidays, or New Year's, or Thanksgiving, or any of the other days during the year that hotlines experience an increase in calls, when emotions are running high, when there's a prevalence of alcohol abuse."

As another part of their damage control campaign, FAIR forwarded a syndicated newspaper column under the byline of the organization's executive director Jeff Cohen attacking Ringle and those who sided with him. "These journalists, mostly men," Cohen wrote, "seemed to have a visceral reaction against all the attention being focused on domestic violence, and the link to football. 'Where's the evidence?' they scoffed—as if the testimony of scores of women was irrelevant!" The FAIR piece cited Susan Faludi and her belief that "progress for equality for women often results in a journalistic backlash." It concluded, "This Super Bowl, women finally had a hearth of domestic violence. It was too much for some journalists to accept."

FAIR had reason to try to discourage journalists from looking closely at their campaign. Ringle's case was even stronger than he himself had imagined. Further investigation suggests that not only was the data not there to support charges linking the Super Bowl and "domestic violence", but that NBC violated its own rules and regulations for Public Service Announcements in order to air the disputed spot on the Super Bowl. In an act almost as irresponsible as its news department's faking reports of exploding fuel tanks, the network placed capitalization to a politically correct pressure group above its own journalistic integrity.

NBC gave away 30-seconds of airtime valued at over $600,000 on the most-watched day of the year to run a spot it did not subject to anything like the scrutiny most public service announcements receive. Curt Block, NBC spokesman, says the network felt the anti-wife-beating message was "a good cause." Although PSAs are routinely submitted for broadcast through Roz Wyman, head of Standards and Practices, in this case the submission was made directly to NBC Sports President Dick Ebersol. The request was made by FAIR about a month before the Super Bowl, says Block. Ebersol consulted with Betty Hudson, NBC's senior vice president for corporate communications. Hudson was in favor of airing the spot, according to Block. The public service announcement, which was supplied to NBC by FAIR according to Block, was not cleared by NBC Standards and Practices Department. One of the reasons networks have a Standards and Practices Department is to protect themselves against charges of deception and fraudulent advertising. The Philadelphia Coalition Against Domestic Violence, which produced the spot, is not a registered charity, nor is it listed in the Philadelphia phone book. The 800 number aired on the PSA has been disconnected. It reportedly was staffed for less than 36 hours. The phone bank itself was located in the Washington DC Bar building, a lawyer's organization which had donated space and was staffed not by psychologists or clinicians, but by volunteers who had two hours of "training." The DC Coalition Against Domestic Violence, which reportedly managed the phone bank on Super Bowl Sunday, is not listed in the Washington phone book. The city's Department of Consumer Affairs said it was not registered. Donna Edwards, who said she was its president, was finally tracked down at Ralph Nader's Public Citizen. Although she said she did have Washington DC registration, she would not permit heterodoxy to come down and see it.

Despite all of this, Betty Hudson, senior vice-president for corporate communications and a fourteen-year veteran of NBC, defends the peculiar way the public service announcement got onto NBC's airtime. She says "occasionally we do show PSAs that come from outside the system, and this was outside."

On February 28 Washington Post Ombudsman Joann Byrd published an analysis of Ken Ringle's piece, undertaken in response to complaints filed by FAIR. Although she indulged in some liberal self-flagellation by saying that "all of us—the ombudsman included—deserve a scolding" for not paying enough attention to the issue of domestic violence, she backed up Ringle on the particulars. Byrd observed perceptively, "Discounting the claims of people representing a good cause cannot be equated with discounting the cause, nor can claims be sacred because they come from people supporting good causes." She added that checking on statistical claims was part of a reporter's job. To their credit, several newspapers did exactly that in the aftermath of the Super Bowl wife-beating hoax. New York Newsday reported on January 31 that directors of shelters in Manhattan, Brooklyn and the Bronx said that no more women seek help on Super Bowl Sunday or the Monday that follows than on any other day of the year. The Boston Globe said on February 3 that "advocates for battered women reported little or no evidence of a surge in domestic violence during or after the Super Bowl!" and noted that in Buffalo and Dallas, the cities whose teams were in the game, police reported "no unusual increases." The Globe, which had initially supported the charges, described the findings as "an embarrassing setback for the campaign against domestic violence — and for the news media."

That is the saddest part of this hoax: the perpetrators damaged the interests of battered women facing real dangers from truly abusive men by focusing their attention on a phony media event. As Harvard Law professor Alan Dershowitz concluded, "It was a frightening story and it was highlighted all over the nation, on television, in the newspapers and on radio talk shows. There was only one problem: It is entirely false!" Dershovitz took a swipe at groups like FAIR by observing, "The time has come to stop pandering to zealots who misuse social science to serve their own personal likes and dislikes. They must be exposed for the dangerous charlatans they are. Nor are their good intentions or the importance of the cause of preventing violence an excuse for sounding false alarms."

Larry Jarvik is the Washington director of the Center for the Study of Popular Culture.
New Yorkers are so accustomed to sorrow, lies, rampant corruption, unsafe streets, and unresponsive bureaucracy that it has led some observers to worry that they have lost their capacity for outrage. They can stop worrying. A few weeks ago, indignant parents from around the five boroughs forced the departure of the city's Schools Chancellor Joseph Fernandez, the highest paid public official in New York City. They were upset by the continued decline in the schools. But New Yorkers, like other Americans, have become resigned to poor academic performance by their students. The issue that brought Fernandez down—and created the beginnings of a unique grass roots movement to “take back the schools”—was not administrative incompetence but rather his insistence on imposing a radical “multicultural curriculum” on students from the first grade onward.

Led by a 70 year old grandmother from Queens named Mary Cummins, parents drew a line in the sand at the propaganda for homosexual lifestyles which was the centerpiece of the Rainbow Curriculum. Mad as hell, they said they wouldn’t take it anymore, and at the end of a bitter battle against long odds they were still standing and “Rubber Joe” Fernandez, as the school chief was known because of his obsession with condoms, was history.

This skirmish in the culture war was played out against a shabby backdrop of intellectual chaos and moral decay. New York City’s public schools are a shambles. The dropout rate is over 17%, SAT scores are more than 100 points below the national average, and the violence is such a serious problem that a security force larger than the Boston police department has been employed. Yet the city’s education bureaucracy gets some $7 billion every year, more than the annual total budget for many states. And too little of this money, in some $7 billion every year, more than the annual total budget for many states.

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Fernandez came to town in 1990 with a reputation for hard-nosed reform and a mandate to do something about the education system’s free fall. Under different circumstances, he might not have responded with an ideological program. But Fernandez was a political animal and he knew about the power arrangements in New York. He knew that his boss, Mayor David Dinkins, had actively courted the city’s influential homosexual lobby in his primary against former Mayor Edward Koch four years earlier. Although it meant signing on to a radical gay rights agenda, the strategy was successful, and the school chief was known because of his obsession with condoms, was history.

Joseph Fernandez was well received not only by the education establishment, but by parents desperate for educational reform. They might have felt differently if they had known that after Fernandez’s appointment by the Board of Education, Dinkins immediately set up a meeting for him with various gay groups interested in getting their ideas into the public schools. Among other things, Fernandez agreed to have regular meetings between gay representatives and the administrators in the Board of Education who were responsible for devising new multicultural and sex education curricula.

If they had known of this compact, parents would have been less shocked when the new Chancellor announced his first major initiative in February 1991—to distribute free condoms in the high schools. Fernandez defended the measure as the only realistic way to fight the spread of AIDS among sexually active teens. His claim that they represented a growing “at risk” group was backed by the medical establishment, although in fact teenagers make up less than 1 percent of all AIDS cases and even this small percentage is on the decline. It was just not Fernandez’s ideas about condom distribution that caused alarm, however, but rather his high-handed way of proceeding. Despite the fact that New York State law requires parental consent in any sexed instruction, Fernandez proposed to bypass parents on the grounds that any consent requirement would undermine the program. In a dramatic episode which involved backroom pressure from Dinkins and others, the central Board of Education, made up of 7 political appointees (including two Dinkins appointments), narrowly backed Fernandez in a vote of 4-3.

For the most part supported by the media, which portrayed his opponents as puritanical hysterics, Fernandez had achieved a major victory for the gay agenda. Only later did some parents become aware that there were reasons for condoms in schools that had nothing to do with public health. In addition to the apocalyptic classroom discussions demonstrating the fine points of using a condom, the Chancellor was distributing a pamphlet called “Teens Have a Right...” which instructed the kids to “Use a latex condom for any sex where the penis enters another person’s body. That means vaginal sex (penis in a woman’s vagina), oral sex (penis into the mouth), and anal sex (penis into the butt)...Use a dental dam (a thin square of rubber), an unrolled condom on one side, or plastic food wrap for oral sex (mouth on vagina) on a woman. Hold it over her vagina to keep her fluids from getting into your mouth.” Under the guise of protecting high-schoolers from AIDS, Fernandez was giving a lesson, uncompromised by any moral second thoughts, primarily in homosexuality but also in unorthodox (for 9th graders, anyhow) sexual practice.

The controversy over condoms dragged on during the first months of Fernandez’s tenure. But resistance to his ideas did not begin to consolidate until last February, when the 32 locally elected school boards received copies of the new “multicultural” curriculum for first grade teachers entitled Children of the Rainbow. The “Rainbow Curriculum” (as it became known) was originally commissioned by Fernandez’s predecessor in 1989 for the ostensible purposes of fostering tolerance and respect among students for other cultures and ethnic groups. But by the time it appeared in the spring of 1992, what had begun as an exercise in multicultural relativism had become an exercise in moral relativism as well.

Here are some examples of way in which the Rainbow Curriculum, initially targeted at first graders, discussed families:

“Teachers should be aware of varied family structures, including two-parent or single parent household, gay or lesbian parents, divorced parents, adoptive parents, and guardian or foster parents. Children must be taught to acknowledge the positive aspects of each type of household...Children may live with lesbian/gay parents, grandparents, foster parents or adoptive parents. Each of these settings has its own strengths and challenges...Many children have lesbian/gay relatives. According to statistics, at least 10 percent of each class will grow up to be homosexual. Because of pervasive homophobia (the irrational fear of homosexuals) in society, lesbian/gay teens are more likely to drop out of school, commit suicide, abuse drugs/alcohol, or get pregnant[.]”

Not surprisingly, Dinkins proceeded to make gay issues a high priority in his administration. From extending the legal benefits of married couples to gay partnerships to siding with gay activists excluded from the St. Patrick’s Day Parade, he kept his part of the bargain in advancing a radical homosexual agenda. One of the most important parts of that agenda, outlined as early as 1972 in the Gay Rights Platform, is the promotion of homosexuality as a valid lifestyle by means of the public schools.

Although a “search committee” of prominent citizens was set up to find a new Chancellor, Fernandez had actually been recruited for the job by Dinkins aides, and was the choice of the United Federation of Teachers, New York’s powerful teacher’s union. He was known primarily for his efforts to reform schools in Dade county Florida, where he had previously served as school’s chief. He was offered a salary of $195,000 a year, a $ 10,000 expense account, a $400,000 pension, along with a million-dollar brownstone in Brooklyn which was renovated with $25,000 in public funds.

The choice of Fernandez was well received not only by the education establishment, but by parents desperate for educational reform. They might have felt differently if they had known that after Fernandez’s appointment by the Board of Education, Dinkins immediately set up a meeting for him with various gay groups interested in getting their ideas into the public schools. Among other things, Fernandez agreed to have regular meetings between gay representatives and the administrators in the Board of Education who were responsible for devising new multicultural and sex education curricula.

If they had known of this compact, parents would have been less shocked when the new Chancellor announced his first major initiative in February 1991—to distribute free condoms in the high schools. Fernandez defended the measure as the only realistic way to fight the spread of AIDS among sexually active teens. His claim that they represented a growing “at risk” group was backed by the medical establishment, although in fact teenagers make up less than 1 percent of all AIDS cases and even this small percentage is on the decline. It was just not Fernandez’s ideas about condom distribution that caused alarm, however, but rather his high-handed way of proceeding. Despite the fact that New York State law requires parental consent in any sexed instruction, Fernandez proposed to bypass parents on the grounds that any consent requirement would undermine the program. In a dramatic episode which involved backroom pressure from Dinkins and others, the central Board of Education, made up of 7 political appointees (including two Dinkins appointments), narrowly backed Fernandez in a vote of 4-3.

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When the Rainbow Curriculum reached Mary Cummins, a widowed grandmother and president of the School Board in Queens District 24, she decided that enough was enough. Friends counseled caution in getting into the struggle over curriculum, but she replied to one of them, "I cannot compromise with evil." Mrs. Cummins decided to put Children of the Rainbow up for a vote, and her board rejected it 9-0.

This was not merely a straw vote. Because of racial strife in the late 1960s, the community school board of District 24, one of 32 districts in New York City, had real constitutional power—not only over curricula, but over the way funds were spent locally and over personnel, including the hiring and firing of district superintendents and school principals. Taking on the Central School Board was getting involved in a David and Goliath struggle, but the parents of District 24 had more than pebbles in their sling shot.

Mrs. Cummins had excellent reasons to draw the line where and when she did. In addition to the Rainbow Curriculum, District 24 and the other local boards had also received a draft version of an updated "AIDS/HIV curriculum" for kindergarten through sixth grade. It included classroom demonstrations on the use of condoms and guidelines for detailed discussions of anal, oral and vaginal sex; dental exams; and gels and lubricants to make sex more comfortable for students in grades 4-6. A glossary to be made available to students included definitions of sexual terms ranging from "barrier method" and "bisexual" to "frottage" and vaginal fluids. Counseling agencies whose services were to be offered to fourth graders included ACT-UP, the Gay Men's Health Crisis, and Planned Parenthood, and there was no stipulation parents must consent to their children being put in contact with one of these groups. In fact, although parents are required to sign a consent form before children can take the course, no mention was made of any of these specific groups or curricular materials, only vague reference to a "Family Life" program or an "AIDS program." It was clear to Mrs. Cummins that there was some serious deception going on, and that parents needed to be made aware of it. For her part, she was not about to permit any mention of homosexuality unless children brought the subject up themselves. It appeared that Fernandez would have to back down.

Instead, on December 2 Fernandez suspended the entire board of District 24 and sent some of his lackeys to Queens to implement the Rainbow curriculum. Technically, he had no authority to do this, but by this point he understood that he had gone too far to back down, and his only maneuver was to go after Cummins and ignore the revolt going on in the other districts.

Fernandez might have succeeded even at this late date if it weren't for some strange revelations from his forthcoming autobiography, Tales Out of School, which were leaked just before the Board of Education voted on the suspension of District 24. In the book, Fernandez revealed his heavy heroin use as a teenager, including two overdoses that almost killed him. But even more damaging in light of the upcoming vote, he attacked members of the Central Board (calling one a "political prostitute") and also took some swipes at Governor Mario Cuomo and Mayor Dinkins — heretofore his solid supporters.

For Fernandez to attack the very people who would soon vote on whether to renew his contract was so bizarre that some speculated that this was his way of kissing off New York for a job in the Clinton administration. More likely, it was a case of invincible arrogance. Whatever, his remaining support on the Central Board now vanished, and it voted 6-0 to re-instate the members of District 24. In February, the Board of Education decided not to renew his contract. Fernandez was left with the royalties from his new book and a $300,000 pension, and the board was left with the task of choosing a new Schools Chancellor.

New York City parents, unfortunately, were left with declining academic standards, unsafe schools, a mayor dominated by radical gay activists, and an education establishment more interested in changing children's values than teaching them to read and write. For Fernandez to attack the very people who would soon vote on whether to renew his contract was so bizarre that some speculated that this was his way of kissing off New York for a job in the Clinton administration. More likely, it was a case of invincible arrogance. Whatever, his remaining support on the Central Board now vanished, and it voted 6-0 to re-instate the members of District 24. In February, the Board of Education decided not to renew his contract. Fernandez was left with the royalties from his new book and a $300,000 pension, and the board was left with the task of choosing a new Schools Chancellor.

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I woke up early one morning. I showered and shaved before the sky outside my bathroom window had filled with light. I splashed cologne on my cheeks and sprinkled talcum powder on my toes. I dressed in a grey suit and a red tie with little blue dots. I drank my coffee and watched the television on my kitchen counter sitting in my shirtsleeves, my suit jacket behind my chair, the thing just raring to get going and start the business of impressing people.

I waited until the news had finished newscasting itself and then called Leland Sturtz at the Deputy Medical Examiner's Office in Oakland.

A bored sounding woman with a New York accent answered the telephone querulously: "What?"

"This Leland Sturtz' office?" I asked.

"That depends."

"On what?"

"On who's calling."  "It's his broker. Tell him I got a terrific deal on frozen pork bellies."  "Very funny."  "I give up," I said, "Tell him it's Aaron Asherfeld."

"This here's someone named Asherfeld, isn't it?"

"That's right," I said.

"I point to the picture of Beethoven."

"Me? I'm black," I said.

"No idea," he said. "Sometimes it happens."

"You a medical examiner? It's not my job to be informative."

"I guess," I said.  "Sometimes it happens."

Something must have bothered Sturtz. "How come you don't ask me why I won't sign on the report?"

"I give up. How come you won't sign on the report?"

"Sturtz coughed another one of his fat man's coughs. "I won't tell you that either."  

He meant the Dean.  "The Dean doesn't tell me what to think."

"That a fact?" said Sturtz. He didn't sound angry anymore, just tired of it all and distracted. Then he said abruptly: "So what do you want?"

"You could tell me what caused Richard Montague's death."

"Heart stopped beating," said Sturtz.

"Why?"

"No idea," he said. "Sometimes it happens. Man's heart stops beating. Just like that."

"Just like that," I said. "No underlying coronary artery disease, no myocardial ischemia, no spasming in the coronary arteries, no barbiturates, blood chemistry normal?"

"You a doctor?"

"No."  Sturtz snorted happily.

"Didn't think so," he said. "There was post-mortem lividity the base of the man's neck. It's in my report."

"Meaning what?"

"No idea."

"Mind if I read your report?" I asked.

"Of course I mind. Material confidential."

"One more thing," I said.

"What's that?"

"There's a rumor going around that Montague's body was mutilated. Tell me anything about that?"

"No."

"You've been a terrific help, Doctor. Gold mine of information."

"I'm a medical examiner. It's not my job to be informative."

"I guess," I said.  "Sometimes it happens."

I paused to look at the picture. A tall goofy looking kid wearing high top sneakers and a silk baseball jacket came clattering into the corridor from the stairwell; he was wearing earphones and banging a baseball bat on the ground. He saw me and stopped.

"You off limits," he said. "Ujaama House for people of color."

"I'm a people of color," I said.

"The kid looked at me blankly for a moment. "You putting me on. You don't look like you colored. What color are you?"

"Me? I'm black."

The kid leaned forward a little and almost squinted his eyes.

"You black?" he said incredulously.

I pointed to the picture of Beethoven. "He's black, I'm black."

The kid leaned back.

"You dissing me?" he asked.

"Absolutely."

The kid tried to figure it all out. He had a sad open sweet face with a lot of white teeth showing.

"Hey," he finally said.

"Hey yourself Know where I can find UB?"

"You mean the tall guy, dreadlocks, Spike Lee beard?"

"I guess."

"No idea. Haven't seen him around since before Kwanzaa. You a cop?"

"Absolutely. Library's got word UB's late returning two books, sent me right over. You can't do the time, don't do the crime."

"That was too much for the kid; he rocked back on his heels and said: "You crazy, man. You know that?"

"It's racism that did it to me. It affected my inner ear. Anyone around tell me something about UB?"

The kid thought for a moment, all the while tapping the tip of his bat on the ground. Finally he said: "You not black. You just some white dude wants to nail UB's ass."

"That's right," I said.

"So why should I tell you anything then?"

"Think of this way: I don't nail UB's ass, I can always nail yours."

"Hey," said the kid, "I didn't do nothing."

"Makes it all the sweeter."

The kid took this all in, then he said: "Check out Carol-Lee. Second floor."

"That his girl friend?"

The kid shrugged his shoulders; he was pretty goofy looking.

"What he do? UB, I mean?"

"I don't know that he did anything. I just want to talk to him."

The kid nodded and smiled his sweet bright smile. "That's cool," he said.

Then he banged his bat on the ground, spun on
Mike Dottenberry liked to leave a lot of himself in his office. There was a little red rug on the linoleum floor, and an easy chair with an ottoman in the corner of the room, and an ornate coat rack by one side of the door, and an elephant's foot umbrella stand by the other side of the door. A poster on the cinderblock wall depicted a hard faced Indian woman a kerchief over her head. She was carrying a banner that read: Support the Shining Path. She didn't look much as if she'd enjoy drinks after dinner.

I sat down in the easy chair and put my feet on the ottoman. At a little past eleven, Dottenberry himself showed up at his office. He stood at the door, his shabby briefcase in hand, and looked at me sitting in his chair with my feet on the ottoman.

"Hope you don't mind," I said.

Dottenberry closed the door and gave me a shapeless smile.

"No, not at all," he said, crossing the room to his desk. "Dindle told me you needed a place. It'll give us a chance to dialogue."

He was a pleasant looking man, with a narrow face and narrow shoulders. He was wearing a polo shirt that said NOMAS on the front.

Dottenberry caught my look.

"National Organization of Men Against Sexism," he said.

"Sounds like a fun group of guys."

"It's a start," Dottenberry said.

"So is lung cancer."

Dottenberry opened his briefcase and extracted a framed picture of a Golden Retriever and placed it on his desk. He turned slightly to face me and placed his hand gently over his heart.

"I used to think the world had to change, but now I know the change has to come here," he said solemnly, vibrating his middle finger on his breastbone as if he were playing a cello.

"Sure," I said, "that's just what my wives always told me. They were beating up on me, and I had to do the changing."

"That's your woundedness talking," said Dottenberry. "You've got to process through some of the anger that's threatening your relationships. When you don't have to run around dominating people, life gets a lot easier."

I figured Dottenberry should know: He didn't look as if he could dominate a housefly.

"I'm working on it," I said. "Only thing is every time I cut back on my primal rage one of my wives puts the arm on me."

Dottenberry nodded. "Sometimes it's hard," he said. "The thing you have to understand is that the women in our lives are victims."

That was too much.

"Dottenberry," I said, "the women in my life are victims the way sushi is a food. Hell, one of my wives used my fraternity bat for kindling. She called me right up and said: 'Asher, you hear that crackling? That's your precious fraternity but going up in flames.' I let down my guard with these women next..."
thing you know I'll be shuffling up Union Street in San Francisco selling The Homeless and asking for spare change.

Dottenberry looked at me with a milky expression. "I honor that," he said, "I really do. But I think you need to clear a space for your grieving."

I got to my feet and said, "You're probably right." I was getting tired of it all. Dottenberry got the message; he sat himself down at his desk and began fussing with a few papers.

"What is it you're trying to find out about Richard Montague?" he finally asked in a calm neutral voice.

I walked over to the narrow window and looked out at the quadrangle; it was empty in the high morning light.

"You've got a lot of rumors flying around. The Dean asked me to sort through some of it. That's all."

"Don't you think this is something the university should handle by itself?"

"Man is dead, Dottenberry, and as far as I can tell only the university is worried about is keeping the story out of the papers."

Dottenberry nodded carefully. "The university's a pretty special place," he said. It was the second time someone had said that to me.

"I know, I know. It has its own rules. The Dean told me."

"It's true nonetheless."

I walked back to Dottenberry's desk and hung over it, slapping my hands on the top.

"Dottenberry, that's what they say about prisons, too. It's no great recommendation."

I straightened up and walked back to the door to get my windbreaker from Dottenberry's ornate coat rack.

"You going to the meeting?" I asked.

"What meeting?"

"Meeting about Montague. Violet mentioned it to me."

A sly smile spread over Dottenberry's face.

"That's a GLA meeting."

"GLA?"

"Gay and Lesbian Alliance."

"So? I'm not fussy."

Dottenberry looked at me for a moment with the slight smile still playing on his lips. Then he said: "You go ahead. I've got too much work to do."

"I know, I know. It has its own rules. The Dean told me."

"You've got a lot of ru-

I wandered down from the entrance to the basement Someone had put a lot of money into those curved marble steps and a lot of money into the smooth mahogany banisters by the wall. The stairs gave way directly onto double doors leading into a large lecture room. The sign by the doors said: Meeting Reserved for Members of the GLA.

There was a stage in the front of the amphitheater and red plush seats rising toward the back in tiers. Spotlights above the podium. Recessed lighting along the seams where the walls met the ceiling. An enormous chart of the periodic table hung from the ceiling at the rear of the stage.

David Berlinks' first Asherfeld novel, A Clean Sweep, was recently published by St. Martin's Press. The Academic Asherfeld will be published by St. Martin's sometime next year.

"RIMBAUD DOESN'T SPEAK TO MEN."

I decided that I didn't really need to hear whatever it was that the GLA was going to say about Richard Montague.

When I got back to the office, Dottenberry was sitting with his hands splayed over his knees. He looked like he might be concentrating on a difficult problem, like mastering the square knot "I thought you were going to the meeting," he said peevishly.

"I did. I got jumped by the Amityville Horror."

Dottenberry nodded knowingly. "You're talking about Rimbaud, right? I tried to warn you."

"What is this, you keep this bull dyke in the closet, spring the trap when a stranger comes along? I could have been killed."

"Come on Asherfeld, Rimbaud is just Rimbaud."

"You can say that about Genghis Khan, too. Doesn't mean I want to feel his breath in my face."

Dottenberry chuckled. He had a pleasant musical baritone. "It's what happens," he said. "What happens when?"

"It's what happens when you hold on to that anger."

I edged into the room and sat back down on the easy chair and lifted my feet onto the ottoman.

"Sure," I said. "I knew that."

Hectorbrand. Rimbaud bent over to impart another message into Hectorbrand's ear.

"Any more than a Jew would speak to a Nazi," she added.

I looked at the Giantess in her leather jacket for a moment and turned toward Hectorbrand. "Move her up to cruiserweight and I figure I can get her an exhibition with George Foreman."

Rimbaud shuffled on her feet and took a step toward me. I knew what she was going to do but I wasn't fast enough to get out of her way. She stuck a foot behind my leg, and pushed me over by punch-ing me in the chest.

I landed heavily on my hands and haunches. A few people stopped gos-siping to look at what was happening. Some of the seated women hissed and rustled their feet.

Rimbaud turned toward Hectorbrand for the last time.

"Get out," Hectorbrand said. "Rimbaud wants you to get out now."

I got to my feet and dusted off my pants.

"Maybe you're just too much woman for George;" I said. But Rimbaud had already lost interest in me; she hitched up her leather pants, lowered her shoul-ders, and shuffled to the back of the amphitheater.

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With Huey gone, Elaine took over the reins of the Party. I was already shaken by Huey's flight and by the dark ambiguities that preceded it. As a "politically conscious" radical, however, I understood the racist character of the media and the repressive forces that wanted to see the Panthers destroyed. I did not believe, therefore, all the charges against Huey. Although disturbed by them, I was unable to draw the obvious conclusion and leave.

My involvement with the Black Panther Party had begun in early 1967. I had gone to Los Angeles with Peter Collier to raise money for Ramparts, the flagship magazine of the New Left which he and I co-edited. One of our marks was Bert Schneider, the producer of Easy Rider, the breakthrough film of the Sixties which had brought the counter-cultural rebellion into the American mainstream. Schneider gave Ramparts $5,000, and then turned around and asked to meet his friend Huey Newton.

At the time, Newton was engaged in a life and death feud with Black Panther Eldridge Cleaver. Cleaver had fled to Algiers after a shoot-out with Bay Area police. (Elbridge has since admitted that he ambushed them.) Schneider wanted us to take Eldridge's name off the Ramparts masthead where he was still listed as "International Editor."

Huey's attraction to the Left had always been his persona as "Minister of Defense" of the Black Panther Party, his challenge to revolutionary wannabees to live up to their rhetoric and "pick up the gun." Huey had done just that in his own celebrated confrontation with the law that had left Officer John Frey dead with a bullet wound in his back. Nearly everybody in the Left seemed to believe that Huey had killed Frey, but we also wanted to believe that Huey — as a victim of racism — was innocent. Peter's and my engagement with the Panthers was more social than political, since Ramparts had helped the Party become a national franchise. Their military style had left me cold, but now, a change in the times prompted the two of us, and especially me, to be interested in the meeting.

By the early '70s, it was clear that the "Movement" had flamed out. Bert had recently designated the end of the military draft, the "anti-war" demonstrations stopped and "anti-war" demonstrations stopped and "anti-war" demonstrations stopped and the protesters disappeared, marooning hardcore activists like myself. I felt a need to do something to fill the vacuum. Huey Newton was really alone among Movement figures in recognizing the change in the Zeitgeist and making the most of it. In a dramatic announcement, he declared the time had come to "put away the gun" and, instead, "serve the people," which seemed sensible enough to me.

Our meeting took place in Huey's penthouse eyrie, 25 floors above Lake Oakland. The Eldridge faction, which had condemned Huey for "selling out the armed struggle," had made much of Huey's lavish lifestyle in its intra-party polemics. But the apartment itself was sparsely furnished and I was ready to accept Schneider's explanation that it was necessary for "security." (A TV screen allowed Huey to view entries to the building, 25 floors below.) Not only J. Edgar Hoover's infamous agents but also the disgruntled Cleaver elements might very well want to see Huey dead. There had been several killings already. One of Huey's East Coast lovers had been shot and dosed with gasoline, and set on fire. Somehow, because of Huey's sober pronouncements and his apparent victory in the military draft, the "anti-war" demonstrations stopped and "anti-war" demonstrations stopped and "anti-war" demonstrations stopped and the protesters disappeared, marooning hardcore activists like myself. I felt a need to do something to fill the vacuum. Huey Newton was really alone among Movement figures in recognizing the change in the Zeitgeist and making the most of it. In a dramatic announcement, he declared the time had come to "put away the gun" and, instead, "serve the people," which seemed sensible enough to me.

The Learning Center began with more than 100 Panther children. Its instruction was enriched by educators like Herbert Kohl whom I brought in to help. I took Kohl to see Huey in the penthouse eyrie, but their meeting went badly. Within days, Huey's spies had reported that Kohl (who was street smart in ways I was not) was telling people that Huey was using cocaine. When I confronted Heribert, he said: "He's sniffing. He was sniffing when we were up there."

I had not been part of the Sixties drug culture and was so unfamiliar with cocaine at that time, that I had no idea whether Kohl was right. Huey's ready nose, his ability to stay alert despite the fifth of Courvoisier he daily consumed, the sleepless nights at Schneider's Beverly Hills home where (after Bert and his girlfriend Candice Bergen had gone to bed) Huey talked endlessly to me about politics and the millions the Party had squandered on bail - all these were tell-tale signs I could not read. I presumed the innocent possibility that Huey was "sniffing" because he had a cold, which is what I told Kohl, who must have thought I was shining him on. After the incident, Huey banished Kohl from the penthouse, but let him continue to help on the Learning Center. The Center was operated by a front I had created called the Educational Opportunities Corporation, a California tax-exempt 501(c). It was imperative — or so I thought — to keep the books of the school in order and to file appropriate tax returns. The authorities would not be given a pretext to shut us down. This proved to be only another aspect of my politically induced innocence.

Long after I had gone, too, I watched the Center operate illegally, without filing proper tax returns, and while Huey and Elaine were diverting large sums of money — received as government grants — to themselves and their Mann to keep them in fancy cars and clothes and, when necessary, out of jail. Unable to conceive such a possibility for a Party everyone knew was targeted for destruction by J. Edgar Hoover, I engaged the services of our bookkeeper at Ramparts, Betty Van Patte, to keep the Learning Center accounts. Virtually my entire relationship with Huey and the Party was through the activities of Bert Schneider. In the months following the purchase of the building on East 14th, it became apparent to me that things were not proceeding as planned. In particular, it was still exclusively a Party operation.

I had never been enthusiastic about the Party as such, which accorded me merely an ideological sect whose time had passed. I had conveyed these views to Huey at the outset of our acquaintance, and he had pretended to agree. He had even promised that if we purchased the facility and built an educational center, it would gradually be turned over to the East Oakland community and not become just another Party institution.

Six months had gone by, however, and there were only Panthers in attendance. The impoverished black community around the school remained aloof, as did the black intellectuals (like Berkeley sociology Professor Troy Duster), with whom I periodically approached to help out with the operation, and who would come up to the penthouse to see Huey, but after a while would back through or come back. Adding to my dismay was the fact that the school head, Brenda Bay, had been replaced by Ericka Huggins, a prominent Party figure and in my view an individual who was mentally unbalanced. (I did not improve my dim view of Ericka when I saw her punch a child by commanding the 9 year old to write 1,000 times, "I am privileged to attend the Black Panther Party's Learning Center because...") My concerns about the school came to a head on May 19, 1974, which was Malcolm X's birthday.

A "Malcolm X Day" celebration was held in the school auditorium, which I attended. One after another, Bobby Seale, Elaine Brown, and other Panthers mounted the podium to proclaim the Party as "the only true defender of the legacy of Malcolm."

Looking around at the familiar faces of the Panthers in the hall, I felt depressed and even betrayed. Huey had assured me that the Center would not become the power base Schneider had even excluded Bobby and Elaine from its operation to make me a believer. And yet now I could see that's all that it was. At the next Planning Committee meeting in Huey's apartment, I braided myself and launched into a passionate protest. On a day that all black Oakland should have been at the Center, I said, the occasion had been turned into a sectarian promotion for the Black Panther Party. My outburst was met by a tense silence from the others at the table. But Huey seemed unfazed and even lended some support to what I had said. This duplicitous impression of yielding was almost a performance art with him.

E laine had a similar talent for seduction when it fitted her agenda. In our first encounter at Mills, she had strategically brought the Malcolm X incident into our conversation. In that manner, she related how Ericka Huggins had reported to her and other members of the Party, after the meeting, that "David Horowitz said that the Malcolm X Day celebration was too black.

It was a shrewd gambit, reminding me of my precarious position, as a white radical, in the Panther environment, while at the same time making her appear as a friend and potential protector. My reasons to ingratiate herself with me then, because she knew that somehow I had Huey's ear, and she wanted desperately to end her exile. A month later, Huey kicked Bobby out of the party and her wish was granted. She became the new "Chairman." A month after that, Huey was gone to Cuba. When Huey left, all the Panthers whom Huey had assigned to work with me — all the members of the Planning Committee except Ericka — fled too. They left, suddenly, without warning, in the middle of the night. A
week earlier, which was the last time I saw them, they had worried about Elaine's new ascendance. When I asked why they were afraid of Elaine, they said "She's crazy." Now they had disappeared, and I had no way of contacting them to question them further.

Although I had been warned about Elaine's dark side, I had only recently become aware of it. After she took charge of the Party, she revealed another dimension of her personality that was even more attractive.

Where Huey had pretty much ignored the Learning Center after its creation, Elaine threw herself into its every detail, from curriculum to hygiene. She ordered it scrubbed from top to bottom, got proper supplies for the children, and made the Center's needs a visible priority. Soon, the first real community event was held on its premises. It was a teen dance attended by 500 youths from the neighborhood. I could not have asked for a more concrete sign that things were going to be different. And these efforts continued. Eventually Elaine would recruit Oakland dignitaries to the board of the Center, like Mayor Lionel Wilson and Robert Shetterly, the president and chairman of the Oakland Council for Economic Development. How could I not support her efforts in behalf of a project that had seemed so worthy and to which I had dedicated so much effort of my own?

There were other seductive aspects to her leadership as well. The Black Panther Party—the most male-dominated organization of the Left—was suddenly being led by an articulate, take charge woman. And not just one woman. Elaine's right and left hands in the Party organization—Joan Kelley and Phyllis Jackson—were also female, as was its treasurer Gwen Goodloe. With Huey gone under a dark cloud, Elaine and the Center were facing formidable odds. My leftist conscience was constantly reproving me a way out of these difficulties (as my leftist conscience was constantly reproving me). How could I face myself, if I abandoned them now?

I stayed. And when the Party's treasurer, Gwen Goodloe, fled a week later, and Elaine became desperate over who would manage its finances, I suggested a solution. Betty Van Patter, who was already doing the books for the Learning Center, might be of help in handling the general accounts.

This was to be my last act of assistance to the Party. The crises of the fall had plowed on one after another in swift succession, that I was unable to assist the toll they were taking. But in November, an event occurred that pushed me over the edge.

There had been a second teen dance, and this time there was a shooting. A Panther named Deacon was dead. His assailant, a black youth of 16, was in the county hospital. When I phoned Elaine to ask what had happened, she said, "There was a shooting. A Panther named Deacon was dead. But in November, an event occurred that pushed me over the edge.

When I walked into the school auditorium where Deacon lay in state (there is really no other term for the scene in front of me). I suddenly saw the real Party to which I had closed my eyes for so long. Of course, the children were there, as were their parents and teachers, but dominating them and everything else physically and symbolically was the honor guard of Panther soldiers in black berets, shotguns alarmingly on display. And, added to this spectacle, mingling with the mourners, there were the unmistakable gangster types, whose presence had suddenly become apparent to me after Elaine took over the Party—"Big Bob," Perkins, Aaron, Ricardo, Larry. They were fitted in shades and Bogarts and pinstripe suits, as though waiting for action on the set of a B crime movie. In their menacing faces there was no reflection of political complexity such as Huey was so adept at projecting, or of the benevolent community efforts like the breakfast for children programs that the Center provided.

Underneath all the political rhetoric and social uplift, I suddenly realized, was the stark reality of the gang. I remember a voice silently beating my head, as I sat there during the service, tears streaming down my face: "What are you doing here, David?" It screamed at me. It was my turn to flee.

Betty did not attend the funeral, and if she had not have been able to see what I saw. Moreover, she and I had never had the kind of relationship that inspired confidences between us. As my employee, she never really approved of the way Peter and I ran Ramparts. For whatever reasons — perhaps a streak of feminist militancy — she didn't trust me. Just as a precaution, I had warned Betty even before Deacon's funeral not to get involved in any part of the Party or its functionings that she didn't feel comfortable with. But Betty kept her own counsel. In one of our few phone conversations, I mentioned the shooting at the dance. She did not take my remark further.

Later it became obvious that I hadn't really known Betty. I had counted to some extent on her middle class background. But Betty did not attend the funeral, and if she had would have been the one to tell me. Her assailant, a black youth of 16, was in the county hospital. When I phoned Elaine to ask what had happened, she said, "There was a shooting. A Panther named Deacon was dead. But in November, an event occurred that pushed me over the edge.

I had failed to understand. My ignorance was dangerous to me. How could I face myself, if I abandoned the Party? I had tried to warn me about Huey through similar signs, and yet I had not realized that it would not be okay for me to voice such oppression.

There was another reason I did not express my doubts to Betty. The more fear I had the more I realized that it would not be okay for me to voice such criticism, having been so close to the operation. To badmuth the Party would be tantamount to treason. I had a wife and four children, who lived in neighboring Berkeley, and I would not be able to protect them or myself from Elaine's wrath.

There were other considerations. What I had seen at the funeral, what I knew from hearsay and from the press were only blips on a radar screen that was highly personal, dependent on my own experience to read. I had begun to know the Panther reality, at least enough to have a healthy fear of Elaine. But how could I convey this knowledge to someone who had not been privy to the same things I had? How could I do it in such a way that they would believe me and not endanger me? Before fleeing, my Panther friends had tried to warn me about Huey through similar signs, and I had failed to understand. My ignorance was dangerous to them and to myself.

Finally, only the police had ever accused the Panthers of actual crimes. Everyone I knew and respected on the left — and beyond the left — regarded the police allegations against the Panthers as malicious libels by a racist power structure bent on holding down and eliminating militant black leadership. It was one of the most powerful liberal myths of the times.*

One Friday night, a month or so after Deacon's funeral, a black man walked into the Berkeley Square, a neighborhood bar that Betty frequented, and handed her a note. Betty, who seemed to know the messenger, read the note and left shortly afterwards. She was never seen alive again.

On the following Monday, I received an anonymous phone call from Tammie Van Patter, Betty's 18 year old daughter, who had also worked for me at Ramparts. She told me her mother was missing and asked for my help. I phoned Elaine, but got Joan Kelley instead. Joan told me that Elaine had had a fight with Betty on Thursday and fired her. (Later, Elaine lied to investigating police, telling them she had fired Betty the previous Friday and hadn't seen her for a week before she disappeared.)

When Elaine returned my call, she immediately launched into a tirade against Betty, calling her an "idiot" who believed in astrology, and who "wanted to know too much." She said that Betty was employed by a bookkeeping firm with offices in the Philippines, and was probably working for the C.I.A. Then Elaine turned on me for recommending that Betty be hired in the first place. She noted that I was "bowling" at Deacon's funeral and had not "come around for a long time." Perhaps I was scared by the dangers the Party faced. Why was I so concerned about this white woman who was crazy, when all those brothers had been gunned down by the police? While people didn't seem to care that much when it was white people dying.

A week later, when Betty still had not turned up, I called Elaine one more time, and was subjected to another torrent of abuse culminating in a threat only thinly veiled: "If you were run over by a car or something, David, I would be very upset, because people would say I did it." I was visited in my home by the Berkeley police. They told me they were convinced the Panthers had taken Betty hostage and had probably already killed her. From her daughter Tammy I learned that the very small circle of Betty's friends and acquaintances had all been questioned since her disappearance, and none had seen her for some time. She had left her credit cards and birth control pills at home, and thus could not have been going on an unexpected trip when she left the Berkeley Square with the mysterious messenger. Just to the rendezvous to which she had been summoned.

Betty was found on January 13, 1975, five weeks after she had disappeared, when her waterlogged body washed up on the western shore of San Francisco Bay. Her head had been bashed in by a blunt instrument and police estimated that she had been in the water for seventeen days. She was 42 years old.

By this time, everything I knew about Betty's disappearance had led me to the conclusion that the Panthers had killed her. Everything I knew had killed the Party, and the way it worked, led me to believe that Elaine Brown had given the order to have her killed.

Betty's murder shattered my life and changed it forever. Even as I sank into a long period of depression and remorse, however, Elaine's star began to rise in Oakland's political firmament. A white woman who worked for the Black Panther Party had been murdered, but — despite our rhetoric about police con-

*In a lengthy investigative article for The New Yorker, which appeared in 1970, Edward Jay Epstein systemati-

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..."
The press made nothing of it. When Peter Collier approached Marilyn Baker, a Pulitzer Prize winning reporter for Chaum 5 with the story, she said she "wouldn't touch it unless a black reporter did it first." Betty's friends in the Bay Area progressive community, who generally were alert to every injustice, even in places so remote they could not locate them on a map, kept their silence about this one in their own backyards. Peter also went to the police, who told him: "You guys have been cutting our balls off for the last ten years. You destroy the police and then you expect them to solve the murders of your friends."

While the investigation of Betty's death continued, Elaine ran for the Oakland City Council and garnered 44% of the vote. The following year, under her leadership, the Party provided the political machine that elected Oakland's first black mayor, Lionel Wilson. Elaine herself secured the endorsement of Governor Jerry Brown and was a Jerry Brown delegate to the Democratic Convention in 1976. (Before making his run, Brown phoned Elaine to find out what kind of support the Party could provide him.) Tony Clark, a Panther lawyer and confidant of Elaine, was also a college roommate of the Governor and became a member of his cabinet. Using her leverage in Sacramento, Elaine was able to get approval for an extension of the Grove-Shafter Freeway, which had been blocked by environmentalists. On the basis of this achievement, she began negotiations with the head of Oakland's Council for Economic Development to control 10,000 new city jobs that the freeway would create.

In all these successes, the Learning Center was her showpiece. Capitalizing on liberal concerns for Oakland's inner city poor, she obtained contributions and grants for the school, and bought herself a red Mercedes. The Party's political influence climbed to its zenith. It was an all-American nightmare.

While Elaine's power grew to alarming proportions, I intensified my private investigations into the Panther reality that had previously eluded me. I had to confront my blindness and understand the events that had led to such an irreversible crossroads in my life. I interrogated everyone I could trust who had been around the Panthers about the dark side of their operations, seeking answers to the questions of Betty's death.

I discovered the existence of the Panther "Squad"—an enforcer group that Huey had organized inside the Party to maintain discipline and carry out criminal activities in the East Oakland community. I learned of beatings, arrest, extortion and murders. The Learning Center itself had been used as the pretext for a shakedown operation of "after hours" clubs which were required to "donate" weekly sums and whose owners were gunned down when they refused.

I learned about the personalities in the Squad, and about their involvement in the killing. One of them, Robert Heald, was known as "Big Bob" in the Party because he was 6'8" and weighed 400 pounds. Big Bob told friends, whom I talked to, that the Squad had killed Betty and more than a dozen other people, in the brief period between 1972 and 1976. The other victims were all black, and included the Vice President of the Black Student Union at Grove Street College, whose misfortune was to have inadvert-ently insulted a member of the Squad.

Forbes fired at the intruders. A gun battle ensued in which one Panther was killed and another, named Flores Forbes, was wounded.

Jackson himself, whom the Left had made into a romantic legend, was gone. The Squad had never really accommodated Fay Stender story was not a direct hit on Huey or Bert and his reactions might tell something I needed to know. Perhaps the past was not as alive for them as I imagined. Perhaps I did not have so much to fear.

Bert had an estate on a hill above Benedict Canyon. I called my name through the security gate and was admitted into the main house. Bert appeared, wearing a bathrobe, and in a quiet rage. He was angrier than I had ever seen him. "You endangered my life the last time you came here."

I didn't have the slightest idea what he was talking about. He directed me to a passage in our text about Jackson's attempted escape from San Quentin prison (an episode in which the Panther and his companions slit the throats of three prison guards they had tied up, before Jackson himself was killed): "The abortive escape left a thicket of unanswered questions. Perhaps Jackson had been set up? If so, was it by the Cleaver faction of the Black Panther Party? Or by Newton, fearful of Jackson's charismatic competition?"

A book about Jackson had described Bert as being in close contact with Huey during the escape attempt. But denouned as a racist or government agent by my friends on the Left if I accused the Panthers of murdering Betty. (Such a possibility would seem far more plausible after the recent events.) Nor would I have any idea how new attacks from the Left. During the five years since Betty's death, my own politics had begun to change. But there remained a residue of political passion that I had not been able to suppress.

But I was still unable to write or make public what I had come to know about the Party and its role in Betty's murder. I had given some of the information to journalist Kate Coleman, who investigated further and then wrote a courageous story for the magazine New Times. It was called "The Party's Over" and helped speed the Panther decline. But I could not be a witness myself. I was no longer worried about being still unable to write or make public what I had come to know about the Party and its role in Betty's murder. I had given some of the information to journalist Kate Coleman, who investigated further and then wrote a courageous story for the magazine New Times. It was called "The Party's Over" and helped speed the Panther decline. But I could not be a witness myself. I was no longer worried about being
even with that in mind, I still could not understand why Bert was so agitated. I was already focusing, however, on something else Bert had said, that had far greater significance for me. In his article he had admitted "Huey isn't as angry as I am." It was the opening I was looking for. I told him I would like to see Huey, and a lunch was arranged.

When I arrived at Norman's, the North Berkeley restaurant that Huey had chosen, he was sitting there, sunk into one of the vinyl divans, his eyes livid and his skin pallid, drunker than I had ever seen him. He was so drunk, in fact, that when the lunch was over he asked me to drive him back to the two-story house that Bert had bought for him in the Oakland Hills. When he invited me in, I was a little nervous but decided to go anyway. The decor—piled carpets, leather couches and glass-topped end tables — was familiar. Only the African decorative masks that had been mounted on the beige walls seemed a new touch.

As we sat down in Huey's living room, our lunch conversation continued. Huey told me about a project he had dreamed up to produce Porgy and Bess as a musical set in contemporary Harlem, starring Stevie Wonder, while complain-
ing that the people around the singer had badmouthed him and killed the deal. When he said this his face contorted in a grimace that was truly demonic.

Then, just as suddenly, he relaxed and fell into a distant silence. After a minute, he looked directly at me and said: "Elaine killed Betty." And then, just as abruptly, he added a caveat whose cynical bravado was also typical, as though he were teaching me, once again, how the world really worked. "But if you write that, I'll deny it."

Until that moment I had thought Elaine was solely responsible for the order to kill Betty. But now I realized that Huey had collaborat-ed with her and probably given the order himself. He might have said, "David, I'm sorry about Betty. It should never have happened, but I was in Cuba and couldn't stop it." But he didn't. He chose instead to point a finger at Elaine, as the one alone responsible. It had a false ring. It was uncharacteristically defensive. Why point the finger at anyone in particular, unless he could indeed have prevented it and didn't?

I went home and began contacting several ex-
Panthers, who were living on the East Coast. I asked them how Elaine, as a woman, had been able to run the Party and control the Squad. The answer was the same in each case: Elaine had beaten her years before.

Huey's death allowed Peter and me to write his story, and to describe the Panther reality I had uncovered. (We book is planning a major m otion picture of Elaine's life.)

I felt justified in trying to slap the life out of her, "— this is the way Elaine introduces an incident in which she attempted to retrieve some poems from a radical lawyer named Elaine Wenders. The poems had been written by Johnny Span, a Panther who participated in George Jackson's bloody apartment to escape from San Quentin. Elaine describes how she entered- Wenders' office, flanked by Joan Kelley and another female lieutenant, slapped Wenders' face and proceeded to tear the room apart, emptying desk drawers and files onto the floor, slamming the terrified and now weeping lawyer again, and finally issuing an ultimatum: "I gave her twenty-four hours to deliver the poems to me, lest her office be blown off the map."

As Wenders worked in the office of Charles Garry, Huey's personal attorney, Elaine's thuggery produced some mild repercussions. She was called to the penthouse for a "reprimand" by Huey, who laughingly told her she was a "terrorist." The reprimand apparently still stings and Elaine even now feels compelled to justify the violence that others considered impolitic: "It is impossible to summarize the biological response to an act of will in a life of submission. It would be to capture the deliciousness of chocolate, the arousing aroma of a man or a perfume, the feel of water to the dry throat. What I had begun to experience was the sensation of personal freedom, like the tremor before orgasm. The Black Panther Party had awakened that thirst in me. And it had given me the power to satisfy it."

The thirst for violence is a prominent feature of this self-portrait: "It is a sensuous thing to know that at one's own command and to describe the Panther reality I had uncovered. (We called it "Baddest" and published it as a new chapter in the

ELDRIDGE CLEAVER

Then, in an irony of fate, Elaine Brown emerged from obscurity early this year to reopen the vexed questions of the Panther legacy. She had been living in a kind of semi-retirement with a

feminist heroine and prompt View and Style sections of newspapers in major cities across the nation to follow suit. Elaine, who reportedly received a $400,000 advance from Pantheon Books, toured the book circuit, doing radio and television shows from coast to coast, including a segment on the MacNeil/Lehrer News Hour, where she appeared on a panel chaired by Charlaine Hunter Gault as an authority on black America. ("I hate this country," she later told the Los Angeles Times. "There's a point at which you're black in this country, poor, a woman, and you realize how powerless you are."

In contrast, Elaine once told me privately: "The poorest black in Oakland is richer than 90% of the world's population."

At Cody's Books in Berkeley, two hundred radical nostalgists came to hear her, flanked by her "bodyguard," Huey's old gunman, Flores Forbes. In Boston, she appeared with another old Squad member, "Big Bob," who had been convicted of a non-Panther murder, and apparently had served his time.

I read the book and, jaded though I was, was still amazed by this reception. The only accurate review seemed to come from the Bloods and Crips who flocked as fans to her Los Angeles appearance. A Taste of Power is, in its bloody prose, and despite the falsehoods designed to protect the guilty, the self-revelation of a socio-path, of the Elaine I knew.

I don't need to mention the book's relentless demands for me. In defending his reaction to the article he had
The taste for violence is as pervasive in Elaine's account, as is the appetite to justify it in the name of the revolutionary cause. She describes the scene in Huey's apartment just after he had pistol-whipped the middle-aged black tailor Preston Callins with a .357 Magnum (Callins had unilaterally revoked his right to required brain surgery to repair the damage): "Callins's blood now stained the penthouse ceilings and carpets and walls and plants, and [Huey's wife's] clothes, even the fluffly blue-and-white towels in the bathroom." Then, Elaine's reaction to the scene: "While I noted Huey's irreverent attitude about the whole affair, it occurred to me how little I, too, actually cared about Callins. He was neither a man nor a victim to me. I had come to believe everything would balance out in the revolutionary end. I also knew that being concerned about Callins was too costly, particularly in terms of my position in the Party. Yes, I thought, fuck Callins."

Elaine deals with Betty's murder in these pages, too. "I had fired Betty Van Patter shortly after hiring her. She had come to work for the Party at the behest of David Horowitz, who had been editor of Ramparts magazine and a onetime close friend of Eldridge Cleaver. He was also nominally on the board of our school... She was having trouble finding work because of her arrest record...." This is false on every significant count. Betty had no arrest record that Elaine or I knew about. I was one of three legal incorporators of the Learning Center and, as I have already described, the head of its Planning Committee. Finally, I was not a "close friend of Eldridge Cleaver," but had met him only once, as a fledgling editor at Ramparts. (Elaine's purpose in establishing this particular falsehood is clearly to link Betty to a possible plot. "I began wondering where Betty had met him only once, as a fledgling editor at Ramparts."

Elaine continues: "Immediately Betty began asking Norma, and every other Panther with whom she had contact, about the sources of our cash, or the exact nature of this or that expenditure. Her job was to order and balance our books and records, not to investigate them. I ordered her to cease her interrogations. She continued. I knew that I had made a mistake in hiring her... Moreover, I had learned after hiring her that Betty's arrest record was a prison record — on charges related to drug trafficking. Her prison record would weaken our position in any appearance we might have to make before a government body inquiring into our finances. Given her actions and her record, she was not, to say the least, an employee hired by mistake without notice."

"Betty had no prison record for drug trafficking or anything else."

Elaine concludes: "While it was true that I had come to dislike Betty Van Patter, I had fired her, not killed her."

Yet, the very structure of Elaine's defense is self-incriminating. The accurate recollection that Betty, who was indeed scrupulous, had made normal bookkeeping inquiries that Elaine found suspicious and dangerous, provides a plausible motive to silence her. The assertions that Betty was a criminal and possibly involved in a Cleaver plot, are false and can only be intended to indict the victim. Why deflect guilt to the victim or anyone else, unless one is guilty oneself?

Violence was not restricted to the Panthers' dealings with their enemies, but was an integral part of the Party's internal life as well. In what must be one of the sickest aspects of the entire Panther story, this Party of liberators enforced discipline on the black "brothers and sisters" inside the organization with bull whips, the very symbol of the slave past. In a scene that combines both the absurdity and pathology of the Party's daily routine, Elaine describes how Betty was required to wear the Panther lash. She is ordered to strip to the waist by Chairman Bobby Seale and then subjected to ten strokes because she had missed an editorial deadline on the Black Panther newspaper.

The existence of a Murder Incorporated in the heart of the American Left is something the Left really doesn't want to know or think about. Such knowledge would refute its most cherished self-understandings and beliefs. It would undermine the sense of righteous indignation that is the crucial starting point of a progressive attitude. It would explode the myths on which the attitude depends.

In the last two decades, for example, a vast literature has been produced on the "repression of the Panthers" by the FBI. The "Cointelpro" program to destabilize militant organizations and J. Edgar Hoover's infamous memo about the dangers of a "black messiah" are more familiar to today's college students probably than the operations of the K.G.B. or the text of Magna Carta. In A Taste of Power, Elaine Brown constantly invokes the F.B.I. (specter as she did while leader of the Party) to justify Panther outrages and make them "understandable" as the hyper-reflexes of a necessary paranoia, produced by the pervasive government threat. A variation of this myth is the basic underpinning of the radical mind-set like Oliver Stone's fantasies of military-industrial conspiracy, it justifies the radical's limitless rage against America itself.

On the other hand, even in authoritative accounts, like William O'Reilly's Racial Alibis, the actual "Cointelpro" program, never amounted to much more than a series of inept attempts to discredit and divide the Panthers by writing forged letters in their leaders' names. (According to O'Reilly's documents, FBI agents even suspended their campaign when they realized how murderous the Panthers actually were, and that their own intelligence pranks might cause real deaths.)

Familiarity with the Panthers' reality suggests a far different question from the only one that progressives have asked — Why so much surveillance of the Panthers? — namely: Why so little? Why had the FBI failed to apprehend the guilty not only in Betty's murder but in more than a dozen others? Why were the Panthers able to operate for so long as a criminal gang with a military arsenal, endangering the citizens of major American cities? How could they commit so many crimes — including extortion, arson and murder — without being brought to the bar of justice? The best review of Elaine's book and the best exegesis for her Party are provided ironically by Elaine herself. In the wake of the brutal and senseless whipping of Bobby Seale by a leader insane with drugs and political adduction, and a coterie too drugged with power themselves to resist, she reflects: "Faith was all there was. I did not believe in the ultimate lightness of our goals and our party, then what we did, what Huey was doing, what he was, what I was, was horrible."
pyramid is on the dollar bill. I was wrong.

We, the first-years, were divided into small groups led by a facilitator. Everyone went around the room shouting proudly their items of cultural significance. I saw African jewelry, Native American art, East Asian tea ware, and Greek food. When it came my turn I identified myself as an American. I proudly took out my dollar bill and declared that the image of the buffalo impressed my cultural identity. As I gave what I thought to be an insightful talk about reason, liberty, equality, and the birth of American democracy, the “woman” in the room (I put the term in quotes because I could not understand the room’s assumption identity) was giving me icy stares and stony silence. At this point, I realized I had committed a faux-pas. I silently wished that I had worn the Nigerian sweater.

The next exercise was directed at rooting out one’s unconscious racism in order to make one more “sensitive to the pain of others.” The event degenerated into a tearful encounter group with woman crying as they described the various ways they had been oppressed by sexism, racism, homophobia, etc. One woman even shed tears recalling the fact that no one had asked her to her senior prom the previous spring. I, on the other hand, did not begin to cry until I got back to my dorm room and had begun to relate the incident to my mother over the telephone.

It is difficult to express how that afternoon distressed me. The ICAN workshop may have seemed relatively innocuous, but I saw that the group had a fundamentally sinister aspect to it. The psychological conditioning, clumsy and as if it was, reminded me of something out of Orwell. I felt that I should have spent my first eight hours on campus getting to know my roommate, exploring the town, maybe even throwing a Frisbee around. Instead, I had been trapped for four hours in a room feeling stigmatized and alienated because I was an American with blonde hair. I had learned only one thing from the session: you have to be a victim to fit in at Wellesley.

It began to feel a little better a few days later when classes began. I was enrolled in four classes I was really excited about. But as the term progressed my enthusiasm evaporated as I saw that everything we learned had to be forced into a template of feminism. At first it was an interesting change of pace, but after a while it became tedious, especially because I felt there were so many other interesting things to talk about. Also, I started to notice that the academic atmosphere was constantly undermined by the injection of student emotions, sometimes the instructors encouraged. I kept quiet in my classrooms since I began with “I feel… “. “When I was young… “. I had a friend once… “. Most students felt compelled to evaluate texts written thousands of years ago by their own values. Dead White European Males like Plato and Aristotle were simply targets. Wellesley students were encouraged to dismiss them out of hand and to regard the greatest works of Western culture as little more than receptacles of sexism, elitism, racism, class struggle, or whatever.

A class in which this revisionism was particularly marked was called “Classic Texts in Contemporary Perspectives.” I did not realize at the time just what “Contemporary Perspective” would entail, but I was hopeful. Unfortunately, however, the lectures were centered around the classics regarding sexism. Most interesting was the day we discussed Homer’s Odyssey. I was excited as I walked to class that day, for I felt I had found an interesting irony in the Sirens’ song which represents complete knowledge yet kills whoever hears it. Judging from Homer’s lyrics, along with the Oedipus trilogy and the Myth of Sisyphus, I thought that perhaps the Greeks felt that knowledge was ultimately destructive to mankind. (Later, in my junior year, I would read Birth of a Tragedy and feel smugly validated by Nietzsche’s discussion of this idea.) Yet when I shared my thoughts with the class, I was met by silence. Not one person responded to me — even critically. Eventually, a student inaudible for her amusing whine complained that Odysseus was “very elitist” when he ordered the men to tie him up and put wax in their ears so that they could not hear the song and be lured to their death. This woman felt that it was unfair that other students got to listen to the song. If everyone could have listened to the song, then no one should have. This occasioned a debate that lasted for the entire hour on how Odysseus should have managed the situation in a more democratic way. Some students advocated a random lottery to determine who would listen to the song, others felt that Odysseus should listen to the song. There were no right or wrong answers. Some raised objections that some men on the ship had to work while the others didn’t. Someone else pointed out how insensitively Homer portrayed all of Odysseus’ working class sailors as morons.

and on it went with the professors looking amazingly interested. I had discovered the Wellesley mantra: “It’s Not Fair.”

The next class was dominated by a hysterical student decrying the offensiveness and sexism of Aristophanes’ Clouds. The bawdy jokes and sexual innuendos were incompatible with feminist sentiments. I found it very amusing, since Lysistrata is often considered the first feminist play. The professors were obviously moved by the student’s tirade, although they attempted to justify why they had chosen the play. They defended themselves by pointing out how they deliberately selected works written by or about women — instead of Oedipus Rex, Antigone instead of The Clouds, Lysistrata; and so on.

After that I found myself very sleepy in class; shamefully, I admit that I nodded off during many of the later debates.

Another aspect of Wellesley for which I was unprepared in my first months was the active and militant feminisn. Many of the most powerful and outspoken students are lesbians and the community as a whole is very vocal. They spearheaded an intense public

Strange enough, however, only once in the past four years have I had a confrontation with a professor. Generally, I have found that most faculty members are decent people with a sincere interest in teaching; they are simply at the mercy of the academic system, which insists that professors grade students and that they must conform to the academic system’s arbitrary criteria. I was astonished when Robbins announced to the class that the Cold War was merely a social construct of the American military-industrial complex that was used to justify the imperialistic nature of American military policy so industrialists could make a lot of money at the expense of the “periphery.” Furthermore, he asserted, “The Soviet Union was never a military threat to the U.S. and Europe at all.” Finally, I became enraged when he implied that the U.S.S.R. was morally superior to the United States.

I challenged him, confident that I knew enough to prove him wrong. We argued for an entire hour. At first, I was very restrained. I described how intercontinental ballistic missiles pointed at specific American targets could be con- structed as a military threat. I cited studies of the quantity, range, and sophistication of Soviet conventional forces. “The Soviets never were a threat to Europe,” he retorted with a straight face. He remained adamant even after I brought up such episodes as the suppression of Poland, Prague Spring, the Greek Civil War, and the Berlin Air Lift.

At one point, he smiled the knowing smile of a chess champion and said, “How do you know they’re better than us? How do you even know the Yalta Conference?” I felt like screaming, “Of course I have! But I simply nodded. He then asked the class if anyone could talk about the Yalta Conference in the context of this conversation?” No one responded. So he pro- ceeded to tell us about spheres of influence. I countered with examples of Soviet expansionism. Frustrated, he turned to the class and pleaded, “Will someone please read a book?” One woman finally did respond, contributing to the discussion in classic Wellesley fashion: “I don’t know that much about history and all, but, um, what were they saying, Professor, like, sounds right to me.”

Another woman suggested that because I was an American, my “patriotic prejudices” tainted my academic judgment. Another woman declared that my account of the Cold War was simply my “belief.” At this point, I lost control and raised my voice. I promised to bring in a list of books which people could read if they wanted the historical facts. Class ended and I left. Not surprisingly, my grade dropped from a solid B to a C minus.

In truth, I often responded irresponsibly when confronted with a class like this one which I believed to be a waste of my time. Invariably I would fall asleep in lecture, or skip class altogether. My grades, unfortunately, reflect this behavior. I have never quite qualified as an average student at Wellesley, considering that the average grade awarded in the humanities and social sciences is a minus.

One of the cornerstones of my classical liberal phi-
against self-responsibility. I believe that where there is a will, there is a way. Therefore, if my educational experience has been less than stellar, I have only myself to blame. I think that there is a decadent trend in college campuses towards political correctness. I decided to do it, although I did not enter college as an activist—far from it. I became politically active my junior year, joining the staff of a non-partisan, non-conservative newspaper. The Dean wrote a few articles deconstructing multiculturalism and multiculturism. I started attending the Student Senate and attending various meetings on campus issues.

In retrospect, I was very much like a bull in a china shop. One time I attended the debate on multiculturalism and I called someone a counterfeiter of the Republic. The atmosphere is now so tense on campus in general, how could anyone expect me to find a friendly audience?

I was regarded as a liberal feminist renegade in high school. At Wellesley I am infamous for my activism. I did not enter college as an activist—far from it. I became politically active my junior year, joining the Student Senate and attending various meetings on campus issues.

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THE MAGAZINE
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INHALE
SEAL OF THE PRESIDENT OF THE
UNITED STATES OF AMERICA
TO THE CHIEF

SENSITIVITY ÜBER ALLES
Conversations: Straight Talk with America's Sister President by Johnetta Cole Reviewed by John Ellis

By now everyone knows that Johnnetta Cole was appointed to head the Clinton transition team's cluster of appointments in education, the arts, labor and the humanities (See "The Culture, Stupid" January 1993), and that she seemed a likely choice for Secretary of Education until the Jewish newspaper Forward broke the story of her unsavory past, reaching well into the Eighties, of strident activism on behalf of Marxist-Leninist regimes. During this time, Cole had consistently taken a harsh view of the evils of American society, and had been an uncritical apologist for the ugliest behavior of the police states which she favored, and had been folsom in her praise even of such old-line Stalinist Communist party members as Herbert Aptheker and Alexandra Pollack. She had been, according to Forward's story, a member of the national committee of the Venceremos Brigade and a founding board member of the U.S. Peace Council, an affiliate of the Soviet-inspired World Peace Council. And she had never publicly broken with these groups.

Ms. Cole did her best to avoid interviews and requests for comment when the news hit, but she finally talked to the Atlanta Constitution, angrily denying these reports as "vile" charges by right wing extremists, though not contesting the facts. Clinton administration officials read her obituary of the matter by calling it "silly" (Vernon Jordan and Dee Dee Myers, probably not coincidentally, both used the same word) but they seemed not to believe their own story, for they quickly tossed Cole overboard. The New York Times (December 17) reported that "privately, transition officials are assured questions about Cole will go no further in setting Administration policy and will not be nominated to any top Administration position."

Johnnetta Cole disappeared from the limelight as suddenly as she had appeared there. But what did it all mean?

Forward story writer David Twersky reported (December 11) that "a number of Clinton campaign officials appeared stunned when they received insinuations that Ms. Cole's radical past and could not explain how she had been appointed to head the cluster group without a background check." Later (December 18), Twersky called it a "major league blunder." But it would soon be clear that it had in fact been something more malicious; a calculated risk.

This was brought home to me a few weeks after the furor died down, when I noticed a new book in local bookstore—Conversations: Straight Talk with America's Sister President by Johnetta Cole herself. My suspicions aroused, I phoned the publisher (Doubleday) and asked what the exact date of the book's publication had been. It was January 13. The next question was obvious: what day had the Senate hearings for Clinton's cabinet nominees begun? It was January 19. Clearly, this book had been timed to be weekend reading for Senate Committee members just before the hearings. Everything about it announces that this had been its purpose: the book is not about anything in particular, and its omissions should have been obvious, but even if Senators only judged it by what it says—not what it suppresses—they should still have been dismayed at the nomination. The book is composed of approximately equal parts of self-promotion, rant about racism and sexism, and pious banalities, the latter clearly intended to be quoted as the wisdom of Johnnetta Cole. Here is an example of the general level: "An affluent woman and a crack-addicted woman may not at first glance seem to share much in common, but racism connects them. And so does sexism." Or how about this informative and original gem: "Racism, sexism, or any form of oppression is abuse, plain and simple." Cole has no fresh analysis or insight to offer, just a tedious recitation of standard PC orthodoxy with all the tired old words: empowerment, self-analysis or insight to offer, just a tedious recitation of standard PC orthodoxy with all the tired old words: empowerment, self-esteem, role-models, institutional racism, and so on.

If one of the best single diagnostic indicators of PC mental illness is one's ability to come up with the same breeze, one might expect from one of the first chairpersons of a Black Studies program. There is much silliness about pre-colonial African women having been well-educated, highly civilized, and with more experience in civic decisions than white women. Cole even gripes, in an interlude of Leonard Jeffries—style nonsense, about white teachers teaching black children. It is chilling to think that this is the Secretary of Education that Hillary had in store for us.

Cole's first priority upon arriving at Spelman was evidently to start up Afro-American Studies and Women's Studies—just what bright black women need—and when she muses about being President of the United States, it is only to imagine what she would do then about racism and sexism. What splendid new sensitivity training and reeducation projects would she have thought up for all of us? Or maybe a Cuban-style Family Code? ("Unless the state is going to extend its arm into that household, it's just a lot harder to deal with all that stuff," she said in 1989.)

When the Clintons saw earlier in the campaign that neither Hillary's doctrinaire political correctness nor her aspiration to be co-President was acceptable to the public, they pocketed the strategy and instead said that they would do whatever was necessary to win. And so it was that, during the campaign, the New York Times reported that "foreground of 400,000 kerchiefed university students". It is possible that Cole co-signed an ad placed in the New York Times bitterly denouncing her, and explicitly endorsing the rounding up and shipping off of 400,000 Algerian students for "education camps."

Is it possible that the Clintons knew nothing of her past? Of course not. Cole is, after all, a protégé of Donna Shalala, having served under her as student-body president at Hunter College. Shalala is close to Marian Wright Edelman. Both Shalala and Wright have been on the Spelman Board of Trustees, and both are considered for Cabinet-level positions. And everyone knows by now, Edelman and Shalala are among Hillary Clinton's oldest and closest friends.

Transition team officials claim to be ingenuously not to know why no background check had been done before Cole's appointment, but the reason was perfectly obvious. Hillary knew very well who she was and what she had done and wanted her anywhere. With her buddy Shalala at Health and Human Services and her buddy Cole at Education, Hillary would have complete control over the civil and federal governement. The speed with which Cole was dropped from consideration tells the same story. Once the news was out, transition officials immediately said that Cole was out. No apologizing, no wringing of hands, no hesitation over dumping this insider and friend? It takes no imagination to understand why. Everyone had always known what the problem was, and they had not had to know what might be done if it became public. The original Forward article had reported "alarm among those concerned that the Arkansas's presidency not fall prey to her "vile" character; later (December 18), Twersky called it "silly" to imagine that Cole's "penetration of the Clinton transition." But that was like being afraid about Nixon's White House falling prey to the plumbers: it was not what was getting into the White House, but what was being created there that was the problem.

In this book, Cole tries to create what John Le Carre might call a legend—an account of her life and activities to cover her tracks. To appropriate the title Straight Talk is perhaps supererogatory chutzpa. Cole's account of her life and thought/boasts as "a middle class" (with Shalala on the ground and her privileged life as President of Spelman College. It dwells on the importance of the black church and tells us of her board memberships in various civic organizations and corporations (like Georgia's own Coca-Cola). It mentions her fine large house at Spelman and the lovely and expensive apartment she lived in while at Hunter College, clapsovades about her three splendid children, and so on ad nauseam.

There is one only thing Straight Talk never mentions, and this is what had clearly been the most important part of Cole's life: the cause for which she was associated, and the people she became President of Spelman she sensed (as she tells us in 1989.)"That you are seeing yourself and your own country years from now." A hint of the iceberg whose tiny tip is exposed in this book emerges only in an odd aside when she is talking about feminism. She says that 'all women...I'm a feminist.' More revealing is her Stravagant vision of the world she saw when she was, in fact, the case, threadly, rather dismayed to find more sexism than there is in the U.S. And for Castro, it's too bad that he has isolated himself from his enemies by refusing to go along with "Western economic and political models." Cole does not see fit to mention her long record of cheering for El Jefe's rejection of those models, nor does she mention her earlier enthusiasm in a piece she republished as late as 1988 for Castro's efforts on behalf of women through The Family Code, a hilarious piece of socialist engineering which wrote into law that "men are required to remain 100% of the household and child care when women work." (In this article, Cole at least conceded that it would take confidence for women to bring charges against their husbands.)

Cole proudly admits to being associated with "progressive" ideas in Straight Talk, but she is careful not to say how progressive. (The Family Code might not have gone down too well with the Senate.) A hint of the ivory-tower whose tiny tip is exposed in this book emerges only in an odd aside when she is talking about feminism. She says that 'all women...I'm a feminist.' More revealing is her Stravagant vision of the world she saw when she was, in fact, threadly, rather dismayed to find more sexism than there is in the U.S. And for Castro, it's too bad that he has isolated himself from his enemies by refusing to go along with "Western economic and political models." Cole does not see fit to mention her long record of cheering for El Jefe's rejection of those models, nor does she mention her earlier enthusiasm in a piece she republished as late as 1988 for Castro's efforts on behalf of women through The Family Code, a hilarious piece of socialist engineering which wrote into law that "men are required to remain 100% of the household and child care when women work." (In this article, Cole at least conceded that it would take confidence for women to bring charges against their husbands).

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Polemical on Grenada accused the United States of "socialism is the way to organize the world.... in being in Cuba, you are seeing yourself and your own country years from now." A hint of the iceberg whose tiny tip is exposed in this book emerges only in an odd aside when she is talking about feminism. She says that 'all women...I'm a feminist.' More revealing is her Stravagant vision of the world she saw when she was, in fact, threadly, rather dismayed to find more sexism than there is in the U.S. And for Castro, it's too bad that he has isolated himself from his enemies by refusing to go along with "Western economic and political models." Cole does not see fit to mention her long record of cheering for El Jefe's rejection of those models, nor does she mention her earlier enthusiasm in a piece she republished as late as 1988 for Castro's efforts on behalf of women through The Family Code, a hilarious piece of socialist engineering which wrote into law that "men are required to remain 100% of the household and child care when women work." (In this article, Cole at least conceded that it would take confidence for women to bring charges against their husbands).

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HOMELESS MAN TO GET LAW DOCTORATE

JUDITH SCHUMAN WEIZNER

Dr. Maximilian Shellout, dean of the National Law School, announced yesterday that the school would grant an honorary Doctor of Laws degree to Lucien Sacrevache, a 43-year-old homeless undocumented alien of New York City, because of the remarkably broad knowledge of the law he has exhibited.

Dr. Shellout said that since arriving in the United States in 1983 Mr. Sacrevache, appearing pro se in at least ten cases, some of which he has argued before the Supreme Court, has compiled a winning record that would be the envy of any member of any blue ribbon law firm.

In his latest stunning victory, Sacrevache vs. Pan-Global International Insurance Company, Inc., Mr. Sacrevache won an appeal that will effectively extend to the homeless the same right to buy homeowner's insurance that homeowners and renters have long enjoyed.

Last March the Court of Appeals held that Pan-Global must pay the claim of Mr. Sacrevache, whose lean-to was destroyed when fire swept the rubbish-strewn area under the West Side Highway where he and twelve other homeless persons lived.

Following the fire a year and a half ago Mr. Sacrevache submitted a claim to Pan-Global for twenty-thousand dollars which the company refused on the grounds that Mr. Sacrevache had not only never purchased one of its policies, but had never even applied for coverage either on his abode or on its contents.

Citing the precedent set in Sacrevache vs. Burger Queen, Mr. Sacrevache stated that although he had not actually purchased insurance, he had intended to do so, therefore entitling himself to coverage. (In Sacrevache vs. Burger Queen, the restaurant was compelled to retain Mr. Sacrevache, then a beggar, as its doorman because Sacrevache had sought conventional employment by the Burger Queen on many occasions, thereby demonstrating a willingness to work.

The court ruled that Sacrevache's impressive lack of hygiene could not be held against him in the presence of such an obvious and ardent desire for employment.)

In his original action against Pan-Global in State Supreme Court, Mr. Sacrevache was unable to produce any concrete proof of his desire to be insured and case was dismissed for lack of evidence. However, subsequent questioning of fire department officials elicited possible recollections of a pile of soggy insurance company brochures seen amid the rubble of melted VCR's and twisted TV's and computers after the fire. The case was thus brought forward again on grounds of newly-discovered evidence.

Pan-Global insisted that if indeed there were brochures, said brochures must be produced in court so that their authenticity could be determined. Mr. Sacrevache was unable to produce them, but instead introduced testimony from the captain on duty at the fire who swore that one of his men had told him he had seen "a lot of papers in the corner."

Mr. Sacrevache swore that these papers included brochures from several insurance companies regarding their homeowner policies. He said he had been comparing coverage on electronic equipment on the evening of the fire, that he had decided on the Pan-Global policy as most comprehensive, and had been on the point of going to a nearby pay phone to call Pan-Global's 800 number when his washing machine overflowed, pouring water onto the cord connecting his microwave to the traffic light at the corner of Fifty-eighth Street and Twelfth Avenue, starting the fire.

The fire captain's testimony as to the existence of the brochures was dismissed as hearsay and the verdict went against City Signal Co., which provides New York's traffic lights.

On appeal, therefore, the recollection of the fire captain concerning the existence of the brochures was held to be such corroborative testimony and the decision was reversed. The Court directed Pan-Global to pay the twenty-thousand dollar claim.

During the time he was proceeding with his appeal, Mr. Sacrevache also handed down a product liability suit against the Swirlpool Washing Machine Company and a settlement of undisclosed magnitude from Bronze Star Microwave. (He argued successfully that the homeless, having no address, cannot subscribe to consumer magazines and are not in a position to know about possible defects in products. Furthermore, since the homeless nearly always acquire their electronic equipment unboxed, without instructions and with deathbed statements, testimony given either by the homeless or corroborating that of a homeless person must receive special weight due to the desperate nature of their circumstances.)

A suit against City Signal Co., which provides New York's traffic lights, is still pending.

This afternoon, following Dr. Shellout's announcement, Mr. Sacrevache, embracing once again his identity as an undocumented alien, expressed his thanks to the National Law School and to the United States. "I am especially grateful to this country for the many opportunities it has given me. Long before I came here I heard a saying — "Only in America"—whose true meaning escaped me until today. Now I too can say, Only in America."

Judith Schuman Weizner's last piece appeared in our December issue.