THE CRUCIFIX

By Moshe Rozdzial

"A Black Catholic? I didn't know there was such a creation. My image was that most African-Americans were Baptists" I blurted.

"Black Catholics are not rare, especially from Louisiana" he answered. "There is a long history of Black Catholic spirituality in those parishes and in the Creole country," he said as he took out his gold crucifix from inside his white shirt, to show me.

"I have to tell you, in all candor, that I'm not very fond of crucifixes," I said. "Somehow, the symbol of a dying, tortured Jew, was never my idea of G-d's love. In fact, if I could be really honest, growing up around holocaust survivors, especially grandparents who had been part of village life in Poland, my clearest memory of anything that related to churches was the way my grandmother would spit three times, you know, tu! tu! tu!, like in Fiddler on the Roof, to ward off the evil spirits, every time she would walk past a church steeple. The cross has really been more a burden to Jews, almost instinctively that if I look up I'd see a cross atop a roof, as she reflexively crossed the street to avoid walking directly in front of the church. Muttering, Nevelah! Nevelah!

Do you know what that means? The impurity of the dead. Any dead thing, that by Jewish law, could not be touched in any way, so as not to be defiled from spiritual purity. That's what Bubbe thought of the crucifix and ultimately, the church. Could you blame her? She saw her family, friends, a whole generation, a way of life, rise up as smoke, in a Polish winter. She would behave the same way had she seen a dead cat in the road. She'd spit three times, more if she was in a dark mood, and walk out of her way to avoid the site. The dead Jew on the cross was a Nevelah to her, a presence that has always defiled her life, Jewish life. A symbol of death and human corruptness, to my people. I know it's not politically correct for me to say these things to you. We Jews are always watching our tongues. when it comes to Christianity.
than for Christians to bear. For my Bubbe, my grandmother, it represented the wrath of Satan, swooping down on a helpless people when they were not vigilant to warding off the evil eye. She saw Nazism as just another version of Christianity, hoards of Aryan barbarians, swooping down with their broken cross, to do the work that the church had laid the foundation for, for a thousand years. I remember walking down the street with my hand in hers, feeling that tug and knowing, We fear that anything we say or do that's in any way confrontational with the Church will come back as an excuse to kill us, so we attack each other instead. You know, the joke about two Jews meeting arguing over three different opinions, or something like that. I've never been good with jokes; my mind can't retain them. It's as if I have some kind of humor dyslexia. There's a hole in my brain through which all jokes disappear."

Moshe Rozdzial is a research scientist with the National Jewish Center in Denver, CO and is a board member of the Speakers Project to End Discrimination (SPED).

SEXUAL ASSAULT IN THE BLACK COMMUNITY

By Vernon McLean

October was Domestic Violence Month. I recently recalled an article from the New York Times (Belluck, 1997) which discussed male-on-female violence in New York City. This article pointed out that more black women are killed by their husbands or boyfriends than are slain in robberies, disputes, sexual assaults, drug violence, or in random attacks.

In one-quarter of the cases where black women were killed by husbands or friends, children were also killed or injured, watched the murder of their mothers, or else found their mothers' bodies. In most cases, the mother had been trying to end a relationship with the killer.

Over a five-year period cited in the Times article, more than half of the victims were black, even though only one-quarter of New York's female population is black. Sixteen percent of the victims were white, although they make up nearly half the city's female population. And 29 percent of the victims were Hispanic, about the same as their proportion of women in New York City. Moreover, black women who were slain by their mates were likely to be in their 20's or 30's and to live in poorer neighborhoods, while white
women were more likely to be older (nearly half were over 50).

As early as 1980, scholars were finding that more black men abused their wives than men from any other racial group. For example, in a study of 2,143 black and white families, it was found that "wife abuse was nearly 400% more common in black than white families."

When black men are killed by other black males, firearms are frequently used. Black women, however, "are very likely to be punched and hit and burned and thrown out of windows." According to professor Evelyn Barbee, "African-American women also reported that their abuse was at the very severe level (i.e., involving oral, anal, or vaginal intercourse; that the abuse was more likely to be accompanied by force; that their perpetrators were more likely to be middle-aged; and that they were more likely to be abused by their uncles" (Barbee, 1994). Many were stabbed and also strangled. (Worcester and Whatley, 1994).

Silence = Death

Although it can be argued that male-on-female violence is endemic in the black community, many black male scholars have been silent on this topic. And, for black women, silence often equals death. This might lead one to draw the conclusion that black males do not care for black females. We may sleep with them. (The white slavemaster also slept with them.) But we do not like them.

Causes of Sexual Abuse and Assault

It is true that some black men are exploiters in the sense that they rape women on the spur of the moment; such males mainly want immediate sexual gratification. About a fourth of them attempt to compensate for feelings of sexual inadequacy and their inability to obtain satisfaction through more acceptable outlets. A fifth of black rapists are hostile and sadistic and are not primarily interested in sex but rather in hurting and humiliating a particular woman or women in general. And some black men frequently rape their wives. "Strong evidence suggests that one of every seven American women who have ever married has been raped by her husband or ex-husband," according to Professors Paul M. Insel and Walton T. Roth. They found that 60 percent of battered women had also been raped by their husbands, concluding that "there is little evidence that mates rape because wives have refused reasonable sexual requests. Rather, it appears that the husbands liked violent sex and used physical force to intimidate and control their wives" (1991).

Other studies indicate that domestic violence is a matter of class and not race. That is, most black men are from the lower class, and lower class members are more likely to abuse their spouse than upper class members.

I have serious reservations about this because black men who commit sexual assault and rape come from all social cases. A good case in point concerns the former Illinois Congressman Gus Savage, who in some respects I admire. Savage took his black female legislative aide with him on a fact-finding trip to Ethiopia. While there, he fondled and harassed her. Upon their return to the United States, the aide complained; Savage was criticized by his fellow congresspeople. Savage's lamentable retort argued that "only a fag"
like Barney Frank would not fondle a beautiful woman, albeit it against her wishes, if the opportunity presented itself. This is sexual assault against a woman—and verbal assault against Barney Frank.

According to Dr. Jeff Fagan, the Director of the Center for Violence, Research and Prevention at Columbia University's School of Public Health, "The truth is, it [sexual assault] is a problem of poverty, associated with other characteristics like low marriage rates, high unemployment and social problems." Fagan states that "Whatever we've done to prevent domestic violence has been more effective for white women and we have to figure out how to make it apply to poor [black] women in poor areas."

Prevention and Intervention

Fagan's findings suggest that if we are to protect black women from black men who rape and kill, we have to develop different strategies from that of the majority culture. Along these lines, Colman McCarthy (1998) has suggested several methods for decreasing or ending violence:

1. Defining the conflict. If defined objectively rather than subjectively (which is how most of us do it), conflict means only this: We need a new way of doing things because the old way has failed. Therapists have reported that in as many as 75 percent of husband-wife fights, the combatants are battling over different issues. If the two parties can define what their disagreement is, then chances are better that violence will be avoided.

2. Working on active listening, not passive hearing. Conflicts escalate when couples try to talk more than they listen. Listening well is an act of loving. If you are a good listener, you have a lover and a friend. If you are a poor listener, you have neither.

3. Developing forgiveness skills. Many macho black men are willing to say after a marital dispute, "I'm going to bury the hatchet," which is a violent statement in itself. To themselves, they add: "But I'm going to mark exactly where I bury it, just in case I need to dig it up for the next fight."

And by way of prevention and intervention, I add the following solutions to McCarthy's suggestions: People need to find other outlets for the violence and frustrations of daily life in America...rather than inflicting it on those we claim to love: black women and black children.

Depending on childhood experiences and societal influences, black men handle emotions such as anger in different ways. Instead of directing the anger inward, they may express it inappropriately and destructively. The black man who chronically criticizes, nags, or uses sarcasm is ventilating well enough to release personal tension, but is just hurting his mate, not curing the problem.

Those having problems should be willing to seek professional help. I do not deny that, as black men, we are under a lot of pressure. Too often in the black community, we view therapeutic assistance as "crazy" or as being "a white man's thing." In my view, we are "crazy" if we do not utilize the vast amount of available professional help, whether it is from
a trained therapist or a local pastor.

In conclusion, as black men, let us set good role models for our black sons (and daughters). Let us not bequeath violence to our sons. The black woman being victimized by her mate can be your mother or your daughter.

many black male scholars have been silent on this topic

Dr. Vernon McClean is Professor of African-American and Caribbean Studies at The William Paterson University in Wayne, New Jersey, and is chair of CER, the Committee on Eliminating Racism for NOMAS.

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SUBMITTING TO THE BOYS

by River Smith

Do you promise to love honor and obey? How many of us have ever had to promise to obey our wives? That question, of course, is part of the wife's commitment in the marriage ceremony that was used by most Christian denominations until a few years ago. The man cherished. The woman obeyed.

It seemed that America had finally gotten beyond that stuff, until I read recently that The Southern Baptist Convention has resurrected the biblical edict that women must submit to their husbands.

The idea was so outrageous to me, it was funny at first, until I started reading and hearing commentators who were not outraged, who did not recognize this reprehensible declaration as a wielding of the mighty religious club in the war against women. Some people say that in this same passage, husbands are admonished to love their wives, and therefore everything is equal. But being ordered to love is not the same as being ordered to submit to someone else's rule. That's oppression. The Southern Baptists say they're just following the Bible, but then why aren't they still supporting slavery, since a little further on in the same biblical passage, it is stated that slaves should submit to their masters.

Why aren't they encouraging the slaughter of people who don't believe in the Christian god, since there are plenty of passages in the Bible that seem to support that?

Actually, when I was a minister, I had occasion to run into all kinds of passages in the Bible that could be interpreted to support very hurtful behaviors, behaviors that we would not accept in our culture today.
But they're in the Bible; therefore, shouldn't we follow them? Unfortunately, they're not just in the Bible. Having read the Hindu Upanishads, Judaism's Torah, Islam's Koran, I've found two things in common among all of them: they're full of contradictions and they promote the domination of women. Every major religion was founded and developed in patriarchal, woman-hating cultures.

A historical look at the laws and mores of these groups shows that women have been measured as property and/or as beings weaker or less than men throughout the history of these societies.

Because these religions were founded and developed within these historically sexist oppressive cultures, and both the original holy books and religious traditions were developed almost exclusively by men who grew up and lived in those sexist cultures, their interpretation of God's word, divinely inspired or not, has been polluted by their sexism, racism, or ethnic prejudice.

We know enough now not to accept St. Paul's declaration supporting slavery because we argue that he was culture-bound, living in a time when slavery was commonplace in his world; yet we don't argue the same when it comes to women's roles. Why?

Theologian Rosemary Reuther, who considers herself a Christian feminist, has written that she cannot believe that God would promote oppression; therefore, anything in the Bible or Christian tradition that's sexist or racist or classist, or seemingly supportive of ethnic prejudice cannot be divinely inspired. It must be the word of men, and not truly part of the christian doctrine.

There are many of us out here who feel that all the major religions are too polluted, from their beginnings, with sexist oppression, and therefore seek out either the more ancient ways of relating to god that the organized religions have historically attempted to wipe out, or new personal ways to feel spiritually connected.

Now, personally, I'm biased. I agree with the bumpersticker I saw the other day. "God is coming, and boy is she pissed!"

River Smith is a Clinical Psychologist in private practice, television producer, radio commentator for public radio and a nationally published poet.
Man

By Martin A. David

I am a man.
Yes.
Lover
Of women and men.
Strong, gentle, quick, scared, curious
and crazed.
Beautiful
(Touch me even as I touch myself.)
Hung
(And never calling it "spare parts.")
Man.
Hurt by hurts of me
(Given and taken.)
I am brother
To men, to women, to myself.
Friend
To you, sisters, as you to me.
Listening
To you, as you to me.
Crying...and laughing.
I celebrate my manhood
Dancing---heavy, wide feet slapping
earth--
My own voice for music.
Proud
To be a man;
Learning
To be a man.

Martin A. David is a published author and translator. His stories, articles and poetry have appeared in a number of publications nationally and internationally.
THE PRISON CRISIS HAS ALREADY ARRIVED

by Terry A. Kupers

The population of American prisons has more than tripled since 1980. Fifty percent of admissions to prisons today are African-Americans; another ten to fifteen percent are Hispanic, and Native Americans are very overrepresented. Women make up only 7 or 8%, but their rate of incarceration is growing faster than the men's. The majority of felons are in for nonviolent crimes, mostly drug-related, and prison does not help them clean up. There is massive overcrowding—and research shows it leads to more fights, suicides, and mental breakdowns. The system's solution? Lock Up! Control units are proliferating fast, where prisoners remain in their cells just about twenty-four hours each day. Prisoners who fight are locked in them; also prisoner leaders and jailhouse lawyer are locked away. The programs that are known to reduce violence inside, and to help prisoners succeed upon release, are stripped away. Shockingly, in view of the fact that prisoners who take part in education programs inside have a much better post-release success rate, the federal Pell grants that funded college courses in prison were ended a few years ago. Rehab programs are dead, they even want to take away the weights—no more "coddling." The system is designed to keep the prisoners down, not to help them "go straight."

The gender order that prevails "inside" is so out of control it spoofs itself. Rape in men's prisons reflects the dominance hierarchy, the top dog gets to pick the weaker guy he will beat up, rape and then claim as his "galboy." In women's prisons, it's the male guards who commit the rapes, but the women seem more united in their stands against misogyny.) As an outsider touring prisons in preparation for expert testimony in class action litigation, regarding conditions and the quality of mental health services inside. I am always struck by the prisoners' almost desperate need for human contact. The men inside are even more alienated from each other than us guys outside—mostly distrust around the "snitch" issue, which guards play to the hilt to divide and conquer. So
prisons provide a dark mirror of the way men battle for dominance, constrict our possibilities and distance ourselves from each other out here in the "free" world. Given that more than 30% of young African-American males are either incarcerated or on probation or parole, and in less than ten years 33% will actually be behind bars, it is time we end the silence about what is going on behind prison walls, and build a movement to unite with our brothers and sisters.

Terry Kupers is our resource person for Prison Issues. He can be reached at kupers@igc.apc.org

CLASSISM:

Why Should We Care?

By Rose Garrity

What is your earliest memory of realizing that other people were different from yourself in their economic or class status? It might have to do with how you saw another person, a television show you were aware of, an interaction you witnessed, or a family discussion you heard. It may be that you were keenly aware of how you felt about your clothes, home, car or lack of a family vehicle, neighborhood, family status and other material indicators in comparison to others you knew or observed, but that you were never given language or an analysis with which to understand those feelings.

Economics is the backbone of power and privilege.

Chances are you have never thought about this enough to analyze your earliest recognition of class differences, especially if you were not living in poverty. You may have believed the myth we are all taught in The United States, that there is no class stratification or that we are all "equal", and that caste or class systems exist only in other places, "third world" societies, places such as India or Pakistan, for instance.

Why are we so willing to swallow the rhetoric and myths we are carefully taught? Some of the most liberal and even progressive folks pay no attention to class differences or ever bother to analyze class as part of unfair and oppressive treatment.
institutions, beliefs, and privilege. What would it take to make you care? Are you among those who might feel threatened at the idea of equalization of wealth by some form of redistribution? Is it easier for you to be content with your status if you believe that others deserve exactly what they have?

When we get breaks because we already have enough money to buy in bulk, pay early, buy sturdy merchandise, pay cash, not have to pay late fees or higher prices because we can't buy anything very far from our home, or stock up, or shop around, or pay huge sums for returned checks or fees for cashing checks, or have to pay huge car repair bills or taxi fares, and myriad other expenses, do we feel smug, like we are probably superior to those who "let themselves" get caught in those dilemmas?

Economics is the backbone of power and privilege. We are told over and over in many overt and subtle ways that we live in a society without class divisions, yes the truth is that people are almost totally classified by their economic status in this culture. Most of us strive to be seen as middle class or upper class. We are an incredibly class conscious society, stratified as clearly as any caste system. Class status confers privilege or scorn, invisibility or acceptance, assumed intelligence or assumed ignorance, and many other rewards OR COSTS to one's life quality. The owning classes have us successfully brainwashed to accept and maintain the systematic oppression that ensures their continued privilege.

Those without class privilege are painfully aware of what they are not privileged to, and the privileged classes seem to be blissfully unaware of what the oppressed classes have no access to. The privileged classes feel no pressure to change the status quo because it so clearly benefits them, and they know that poor people have almost no way to impact their privilege. Few poor people ever question that "class" is what privileged have, and that they themselves should be able to obtain it if they could just make themselves "worthy" enough. We are kept from taking a broader view of the privilege and material holdings of the wealthy and comfortable classes, or from recognizing all that the poor and working classes are asked to do to maintain the wealth of the privileged. We don't have time or the information to analyze how so many CEO's multi-million dollar salaries and billions in bonuses, benefits, stock options, retirement accounts, expense accounts and homes and cars and yachts and country clubs and expensive travel are paid for.

We eagerly accept a few crumbs and revel in the glow if one of them lets us get a little close to them once in awhile. We accept the trinkets they offer to silence those who could threaten their privilege, and we force ourselves to believe that when we get some trinkets we deserve them and we have raised our status because we are more worthy than those who never get any. We don't notice that the elite few couldn't have all that they enjoy if they weren't able to keep so very many workers begging for poor paying jobs and slaving at sub-poverty wages to produce the materials that they sell for such bloated profits.

If we can assure ourselves that our station in life is exactly what we deserve are capable of we will sleep better at night, and certainly the owning classes will sleep better. knowing we won't revolt and threaten their wealth and privilege. After all. didn't
we struggle and put ourselves through school to get the degree that allows us some of that privilege? If others were smart enough wouldn't they be able to do it too? If we have enough to feed, clothe, and educate ourselves and our families why should we care about classism? Don't we "pass" for middle or middle class now? If we could do it, couldn't any of the others, IF THEY ARE 'WORTHY'? 

Many paths are open to those with privilege, through no special virtue other than their class status. They are assumed to be better than others in many ways; however, the appearance of being a good citizen has a great deal more to do with who and what one is PERCEIVED to be rather than what one's ethics, values, skills and intellect are. The "American Dream" is a myth, and except for a token few only those who are almost at the finish line are ever allowed to "win". The rest of us are stigmatized and demonized, made to believe that we are inferior and cannot achieve what others have "by hard work and sweat".

We all know if we take a very clear look that the vast majority of what the rich and owning classes have is due to the slave work of masses of people whose labor created the wealth. It is due to inheritance, privilege and access. It is due to corporate welfare. It is due to hoarding, greed, and brazen, cold use of others. It is due to grabbing and keeping power and rewards to the owning classes. It is ALWAYS at the expense of less privileged groups of people.

Telling the truth about wealth is risky and unpopular. We are silenced, denigrated, labeled, and even criminalized if we say these things too loudly or often.

If enough of us were to join together and keep telling the truth we could win concessions; we could help many others to know the truth. We could help many others to realize that it is not the lack of character, ingenuity, or worthiness that keeps them poor. They could know that it is the deliberate acts and policies of the wealthy classes that keeps privilege and adequate resources from them and stigmatizes them for needing anything, while welfare to the rich is cloaked in respectability and disguised as for the public welfare and the public's sake.

If we were to stay united in our vision and understanding of truth rather than divided and coopted by the trinkets and crumbs they throw us, we could reveal their lies and myths. We could have immense power. We could unmask the real intent of the names they call us, and the discrediting and labeling they use against us when they feel threatened by our truth telling.
We could show each other and the rest of the world why they use such emotionally laden charges when they tell others what they want them to believe about us. We wouldn't be silenced by names like "Bleeding Heart Liberal," "Communist," "Socialist," "Left Wing," and "Radical. we SHOULD be radical; we should get to the root of the truth, and talk about the root cause of poverty and racism and greedy wealth.

We live in a carefully created culture of distrust and fear that silences too many of us and makes too many caring people afraid to listen to truth and to pain. We seem afraid to work for justice. If we are people of conscience, we will care about classism, and we will struggle to identify it and to address it. We will attend and offer workshops and conferences that invite the voices of oppressed classes to speak, to tell us their truths. We will refuse to participate in retelling the myths and lies about class. We will work to recognize our own class privilege and to change our own attitudes. We will become full partners in the struggle for equal pay and equal value for all work. We will unmask greed and welfare to the rich. We will unmask oppression and exploitation.

We care because it is the only way we can affirm our shared humanity and our connections to each other and to all of the universe. We care because we know that there is plenty to meet everyone's needs if no one is allowed to hoard and exploit wealth for themselves. We care because we all deserve to live with adequate food, shelter, and comfort. We care because if we all had what we deserve, the world would be infinitely safer and warmer. We care because we ALL benefit if the truth prevails.

Rose Garrity is Executive Director of A New Hope Center, a victim services agency for victims of domestic violence and other crimes, including domestic violence in Gay households.
I. Why do adults oppress young people?

**Adult supremacism shapes society.**

Adult supremacism: the all-pervasive ideology that "adults should control young people", which shapes child-rearing, schooling, and citizenship in our society. The ideology grows out of the very real fact that young children are physically and developmentally dependent on adults for survival, but has evolved into a practice of disallowing youth self-determination or participation in decisions that involve them, which often lasts at least as long as the (young) person remains in their parent(s) / guardian(s)' house.

The prescription for adult power is frequently rationalized by notions of adults' inherent superiority over youth, or youths' inferior / subhuman nature.

**“Good kids” are ones who are obedient and loving.** **“Bad kids” are ones who are disobedient and angry.**

The "rules" for minors are:

1. Be obedient.
2. Don't be a "bad" kid (disobedient, outside adults' control).
3. Don't be rude or talk back (insubordinate).
4. Do not get angry. Only show politeness.
5. Accept that rule-making and discipline are for your own good.
6. Don't think you're smart – the adult knows better than you. Adult wisdom is absolute.
7. Be grateful for your parents and what they do for/to you.
8. Love your parents.

**Violence against minors is a result of adult supremacism.**

Violence against minors: (instead of "child abuse") the continuum of hitting, slapping, pushing, etc. which encompasses both legal "corporal punishment" and illegal "child abuse". All violence against minors is a means to an ends: its purpose is to maintain control and obedience.
II Age is a continuum. Where do we draw the line between "adults" and "youth"?

The group "youth" isn't defined by any single age-line.

Young people are defined by a common living situation.

Young people: generally, persons who (1) live in the homes of their parents / parent / legal guardians and (2) are economically dependent on them. There are two major exceptions to this definition: college kids, and street youth.

College kids are often, though not always, perceived as youth because they tend to still be economically dependent on their parents, even though they aren't living in their home anymore. Street youth fit in "youth", because they are seen as the same age as their non-homeless peers, and it's assumed that under an adult's roof is where they're really supposed to be, even if they aren't now.

"Adulthood" isn't biology. It's artificial, a political organization.

Adulthood: an artificial and purposeful organization of persons in our society that exists to manifest adult supremacism by establishing two distinct classes: the superior "adults" and subordinate "minors". As an organization, membership has privileges, members define who is excluded from membership, and force is used to exclude non-members. The class nature of adulthood and childhood is not diminished by the fact that multiple demarcations rather than a single age-line separate the two groups.

Young people's oppression is about age-classes – not prejudice against just anyone who is relatively younger than someone else.

Adultism: (instead of "ageism") a general term for the oppression of young persons. "Ageism" is used almost exclusively to describe the oppression of elderly persons, and obscures the fact that age-based oppression is not based on relative youngness or oldness, but on the existence of three age-classes roughly echoing intra familial generations: kids, parents/grownups, and grandparents. The word "ageism" also doesn't fit because totally different institutions govern young people's and old people's different oppressions.

III. Adults were young persons themselves. Why do they go on and continue the oppression of young people?

Minors (& adults) work to dissociate themselves from childhood because they accept adult supremacism.

Adultism is unique as the only oppression where members of the oppressed group consistently become members of the oppressor group. How does this
happen? The class "adults" is organized to hold power in society. The mandate for adult power is often rationalized by the notion that adults are superior human beings and youth are inferior human beings (or subhumans).

Young persons are aware of this system almost as early as they can speak, and they attempt to dissociate themselves from childhood (e.g. by not playing with younger children, by insisting that they aren't children, by putting other youth down as "immature", by smoking to seem older, etc.). Hence, there is never a political conversion where youth denounce their former membership — young persons didn't identify with / feel loyalty to the group "minors" in the first place.

IV. If adult supremacism is the problem, what is the solution?

Youth Liberation is a movement led by and for young people independently speaking out for their rights.

Youth Liberation: (instead of "children's rights") a movement led by and for young people independently speaking out for their own power and rights. If exclusive adult power is at the core of young people's oppression, then the traditional model of adult advocacy on behalf of youth is in itself adultist — youth must have power over the process by which society is changed for their benefit. Adults may act as allies at the discretion of youth activists, and if they are in support rather than leadership roles.

LIFELINE: National Gay-Straight Student Alliance Grant Program has established a memorial fund for Jacob Orosco, the Salt Lake City student leader who committed suicide in September while fighting for the right to form an officially recognized Gay-Straight Alliance at East High School. A national awards committee, made up of youth from across the country will grant money to students fighting homophobia in schools. To find out more or to donate, call 800-856-1667.

Sven Bonnichsen is president of the Portland Bisexual Alliance. His undergraduate thesis was titled Adult Supremacism: Child Abuse Viewed Through an Oppression Framework. He is currently working on a book, The Youth Liberation Handbook.
According to Pulitzer prize winning authors Donald L. Bartlett and James B. Steele, United States taxpayers pay over $125 billion a year in corporate welfare to some of the largest companies in the world.

The Associated Press reports that insurance companies and their allies spent $112,000 per lawmaker ($60 million-total) in the first half of 1998 to lobby Congress in the fight against new regulations for managed health care.

During the same time period tobacco interests spent about $75,000 per lawmaker ($40 million-total) to keep us coughing.

Some facts about U.S. prisons from Eric Schlosser's recent Atlantic Monthly article:

“Until about 1975 the incarceration rate remained stable at about 110 prison inmates for every 100,000 people.

“The rate is now 445 per 100,000. Among men it is 1,100 per 100,000.

“Over 1,000 new prisons have been built in the last two decades.

“In 1980 about half the people entering state prison were violent offenders.

“In 1995 less than a third had been convicted of violent crime.

Since 1991, the rate of violent crime in The U.S. has fallen by about 20 percent, while the number of people in prison or jail has risen by 50 percent.

“The proportion of African-Americans among violent offenders incarcerated has changed little over the last two decades, but the proportion of those
arrested for drug crimes has tripled.

"Well over sixty percent of prisoners have a long history of substance abuse.

"Drug treatment is now available to one in ten inmates who need it.

"About seventy percent of inmates are illiterate.

"Ten percent are seriously mentally ill.

All of this while the prison-industrial complex collects more than 35 billion dollars each year.

African-American journalist, Mumia Abu Jamal's appeal was turned down in October. As of December, he is awaiting a new date for his execution.

Fifty thousand people have now taken the Declaration of Life pledge, which essentially says that if a person is ever murdered, they want their killer punished but not executed. Sister Camille D'Arienzo, a Roman Catholic nun from Brooklyn has created the declaration, since signed by actors Martin Sheen, Susan Sarandon, former NY Governor, Mario Cuomo and Rep. Carolyn McCarthy, whose husband was murdered. Unfortunately, polls still indicate that 70% of Americans are in favor of the death penalty.

The United States is the only modern industrialized democracy that still murders its own citizens in the name of justice.

WAHOO IS WAY WRONG and so are the Cleveland area prosecutors who put three Native American Activists, Vernon Bellacourt, Juan Reyna, and Juanita Helphrey on trial for trespassing while protesting against the Cleveland baseball team's name and logo. The judge threw the case out of court. Call 216-631-4767 for info on how to help to rid our nation of racist team names and logos.

FASCINATING FACT: Within fifteen years, 90% of all banking assets in The U.S. will be controlled by 25 banks.
Another one: 160 years ago 50 Irish immigrants were executed by the American army for deserting to the Mexican army to fight against American aggression as part of the St. Patrick's Brigade.