

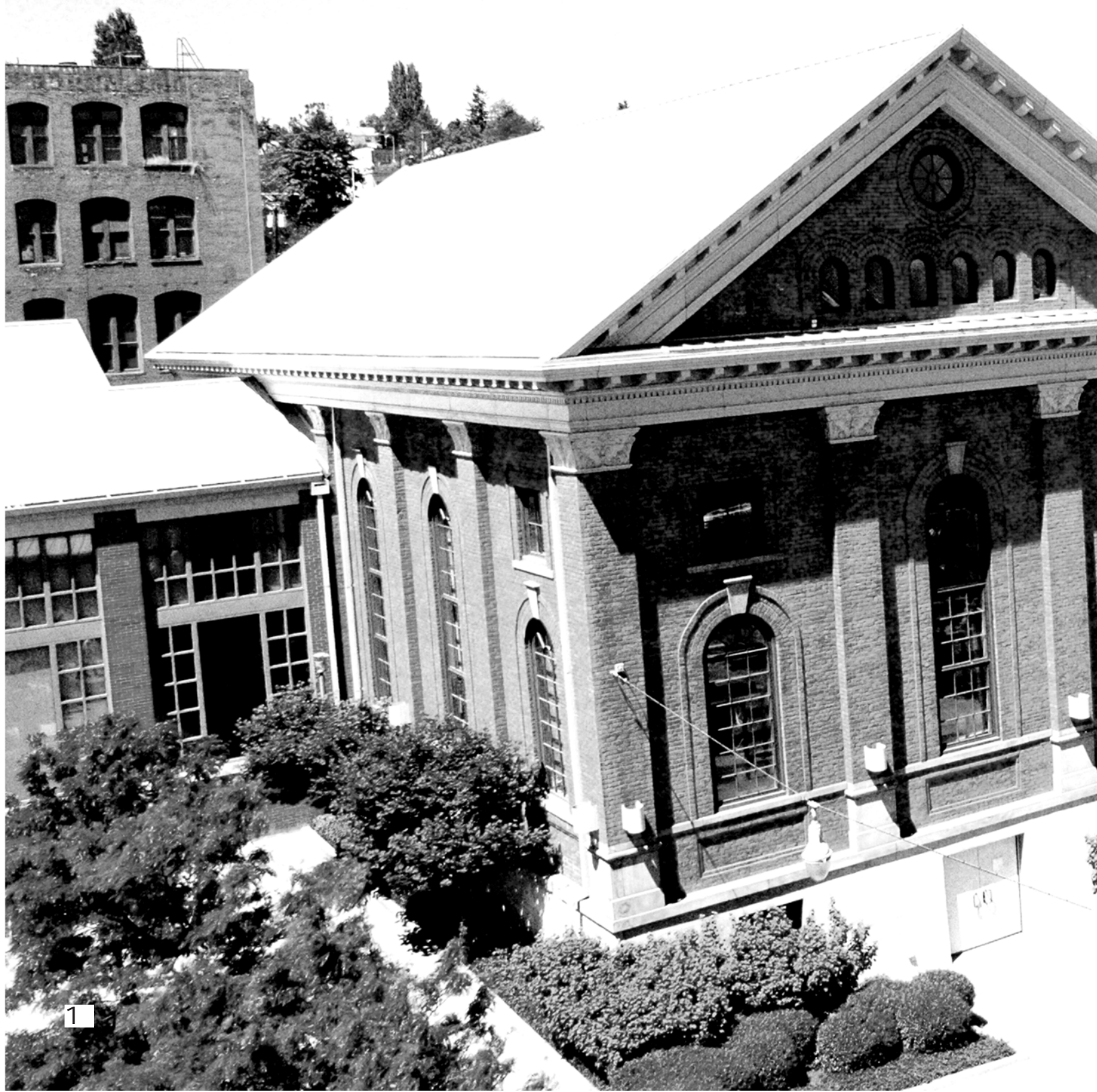
autonomy

issue no. 1 FALL 2009

//253



The Curious Case of Stolen Space	P. 2	Someone Tell Me What the Fuck is Happening	P. 11
What is the Role of an Artist in the City?	P. 5	Interview with Seth Manazel of Iraq Veteran Against the War	P. 13
A Proposition for Pursuit	P. 7	Autonomia Social Center	P. 18
No One Is Illegal	P. 9		



THE CURIOUS CASE OF STOLEN SPACE

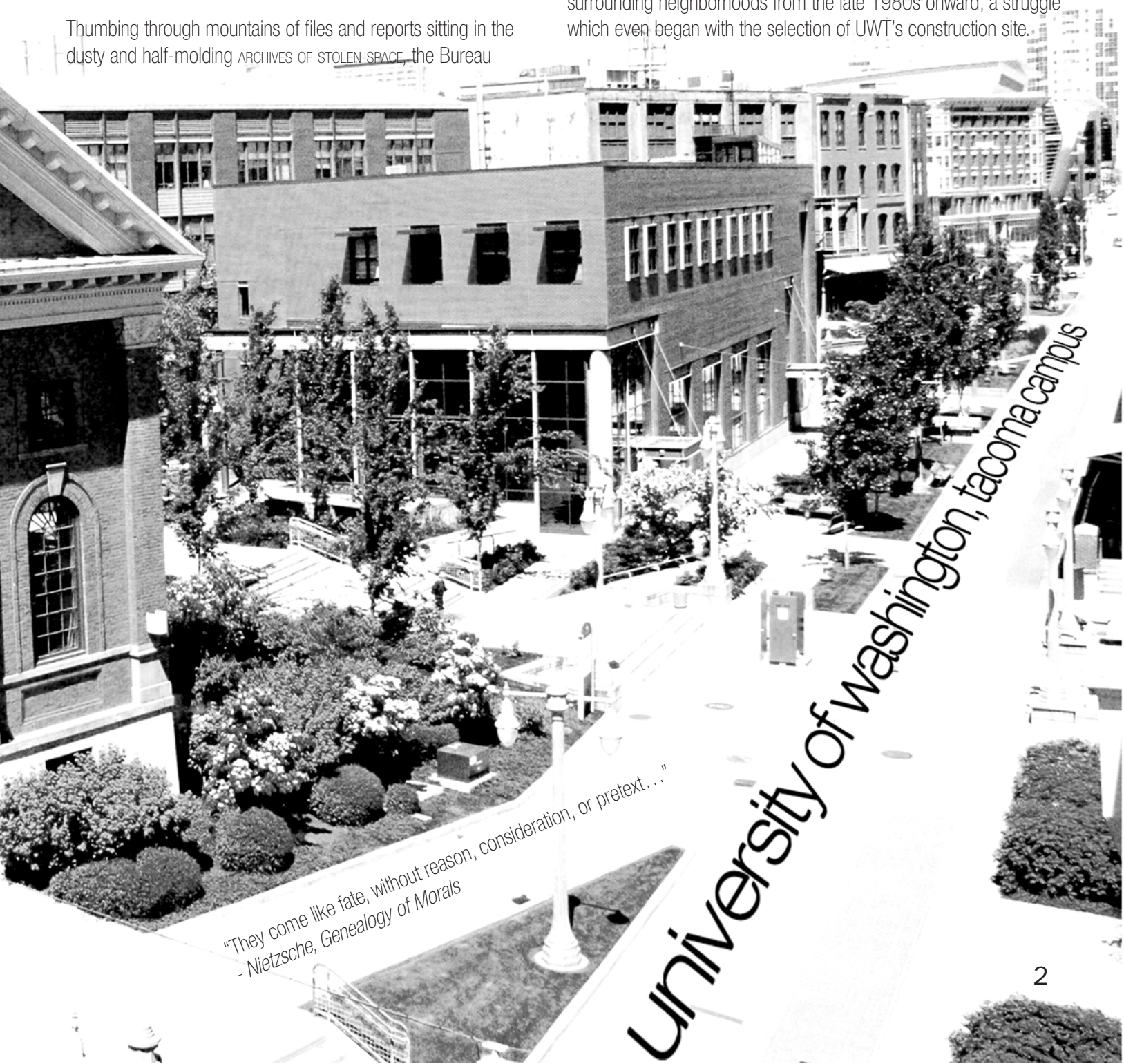
Communique No. 1
The Bureau of Taking Back Public Space

Greetings from the Bureau of Taking Back Public Space!

There is a decidedly socio-spatial dimension to Tacoma that we would like to address. Social and spatial ambiances speak louder than words, and we implore our readers to study the city in which they live this way. What's been changing Tacoma socially is sometimes called a "renaissance," or an "urban renewal..." We would like to outline several factors involved.

Thumbing through mountains of files and reports sitting in the dusty and half-molding ARCHIVES OF STOLEN SPACE, the Bureau

has traced much of this to the construction of the University of Washington in Tacoma, which broke ground in 1995. No... the Bureau is not opposed to educational institutions. Universities, however, are more than just educational institutions. They are also real estate developers. As such, UWT and its retail entourage were never interested in Tacoma's low-income neighborhoods, and knew nothing about neighborhood issues and dynamics. UWT was the forward operating base in a long and bloody war waged against its surrounding neighborhoods from the late 1980s onward, a struggle which even began with the selection of UWT's construction site.



"They come like fate, without reason, consideration, or pretext..."
- Nietzsche, Genealogy of Morals

University of Washington, Tacoma campus

In this case, the city 'benignly neglected' the old Brothel Row area in downtown Tacoma so that the grimed up and dilapidated property would be less expensive to buy out in the mid-90s for the purpose of developing UWT. This was done at the expense of the surrounding neighborhoods: especially the Hilltop neighborhood to the West.

Like many inner-city black communities, Hilltop fell victim to the CIA-condoned cocaine shipments into the US from Nicaragua and Colombia during the 1980s. Though beyond the scope of the present task, the Bureau refers our readers to the little-known and little-studied LIBRARY OF RACIST URBAN PLANNING for further information on the War on

Drugs. (Some early stories of "renewal" in the Hilltop are told in the 1991 documentary *War on the Hill*.)

If crack cocaine was Hilltop's first Trojan Horse, the urban university was, indeed, the second. As a gift to the community, UWT would speed things up a lot faster than crack did. The university was a newer, more constructive vehicle for inner-city gentrification. Land acquisitions of the former Northern Pacific Railroad warehouse complex began in 1990, and by 2002 65% of the site had been acquired. It is still being developed today. Soon after the campus opened in 1997 Tacoma found itself in an "enviable position" (according to two academics, *Perry and Wiewel*) whereby investment and development "generated more investment and development," creating a cycle of growth that most cities seek but never achieve.

The City has erased this story. Yet, today there is a similar fable. The City of Tacoma continues to subsidize *unaffordable* condominium communities in other cities like the gigantic Point Ruston development... (located not in Tacoma but in the City of Ruston.) Why does "The City of Tacoma" do this? The Bureau knows from history that this municipality does not exist for the enrichment of everyone, but only for the enrichment of the rich! ... for the enrichment of their social and financial capital.

After UW Tacoma, the next step for this municipality was to criminalize the urban youth and black culture, and reward activities of the white population through festivals, funding, and other forms of favoritism. Some of our readers may know Tacoma has effectively banned hip hop concerts. But already before this "spitting while

black" was illegal in Tacoma. If you are poor and you live in Tacoma, you are fucked. That means most of us here are fucked.

Black-owned businesses are disappearing on the Hilltop. There has been an increase in city codes, fire codes, and the informal yuppie codes. Your concerned neighbors might be encouraged by Tacoma CARES (a "community organizing" group) to report your ugly paint job, or your house with bushes instead of a backyard, or your junk vehicle. Too many police visits at your apartment and you could be evicted, so the police might just visit you to fuck with you even more. To be sure, Washington Community Renewal Law explicitly forbids "discrimination." But these words are quite useless in reality, and there are clearly many ways around them.



Photo by Steven Cysewski, Tacoma in the 1980s

Tacoma started a "Safe Streets" program to disrespect all of Tacoma's graffiti pieces (some of the best in the Northwest), and began rolling out a whole host of museums, ugly and unusable plazas, and indefensible public viewing areas. Following the urban designs of Rudy Giuliani, former mayor of New York City, city councils across the US all started sounding like echoes of one another. "Crime prevention through environmental design" was a popular slogan. An obsession with "fixing broken windows" dominated discussions in city halls and universities. The logic of the theory is the same logic behind banning hip hop concerts: *Hip hop leads to black people, black people lead to gangs, gangs lead to violence... no hip hop!*

Our alternative has always been to "community organize" when this type of shit starts happening. But we can't do that anymore. In Tacoma the community organizing model has been totally taken over by the police and the social workers. What is this "community" people speak about anyway? It's whitey's community using the police as an institution to gaffe and remove the 'undesirables' from the inner city, that's what it is!

Let us explore other avenues. And let the Bureau be clear on one thing: their "broken windows theory" foreshadowed a new kind of fascism. Their theory said this: by *cleaning up the streets* with strict ordinances and racial profiling, cities could decrease crime and increase their stock of gentrifiers.

To city managers, nothing could have sounded better than killing two birds with one stone: the high crime and the low property values.

In the end, the state proved to be the biggest criminal of them all, with the monopoly on crime, drugs, forced eviction, and city planning. Any government activity when taken to the extreme “crowds out” the private sector, right? And the government is pushing more dope than anybody else. There is a camera on every block. There are random checkpoints in our neighborhoods. We live in a police state. We do not ask whether the “broken windows theory” is true or not. That’s like asking whether fascism is true! Or, like asking whether fascism works! Do you see our point? Whether fascism is working for the police, or whether it’s working for whitey does not matter. Fascism is by definition authoritarian. Fascism is anti-autonomous. Fascism is destroying us. This is our life! We have to destroy what is destroying us.

There is no obvious solution to the problem of gentrification, because today the majority of what is called “community organizing” in Tacoma is done through a corrupt city government bureaucracy, and through the police substation. Neighborhood councils are dominated by Clark Kents and Bruce Waynes (the “concerned citizens”), and guided by the cops and the social workers. If you want to voice your Fuck-yous at the neighborhood council, those voices will be recuperated by Associated Ministries and by the yuppie bloc, and you will be stared down by all the “settlers” who want to gentrify these neighborhoods, who want to colonize these communities.

How do the police and the social workers “organize” the community? They do it by strengthening organizations who share their vision of an elite inner-urban society, by strengthening those who have the power and money to make decisions that affect other people. For example, the Hilltop Action Coalition receives money from the police department itself. This organization then sells foreclosed homes to the incoming colonizers. It is all part of the same process.

In conclusion, we would like to send a big Fuck-you to all the community organizers. This message is for you: you are not organizing our community, your community is organizing against ours.

The Bureau will have more statements to make in the future regarding this logic of urban space. For now we shall say that amidst all that has changed, we are even more convinced now that nothing has changed at all. Only the rich are living in the euphoria of high economic indicators, endless growth, and political stability – despite a recession. Pierce County has the highest foreclosure rate in Washington State. As UWT continues to acquire land along the hillside and into the neighborhoods, further widening the gap of uneven development, we will continue to interject our ideas into a public debate for which there is no public and for which there is no debate.

Autonomy is power,

The Bureau of Taking Back Public Space

“In some way that is incomprehensible they have pushed right into the capital. At any rate, here they are; it seems that every morning there are more of them.”

- Franz Kafka, *Country Doctor*

What is the role of an artist in a city?

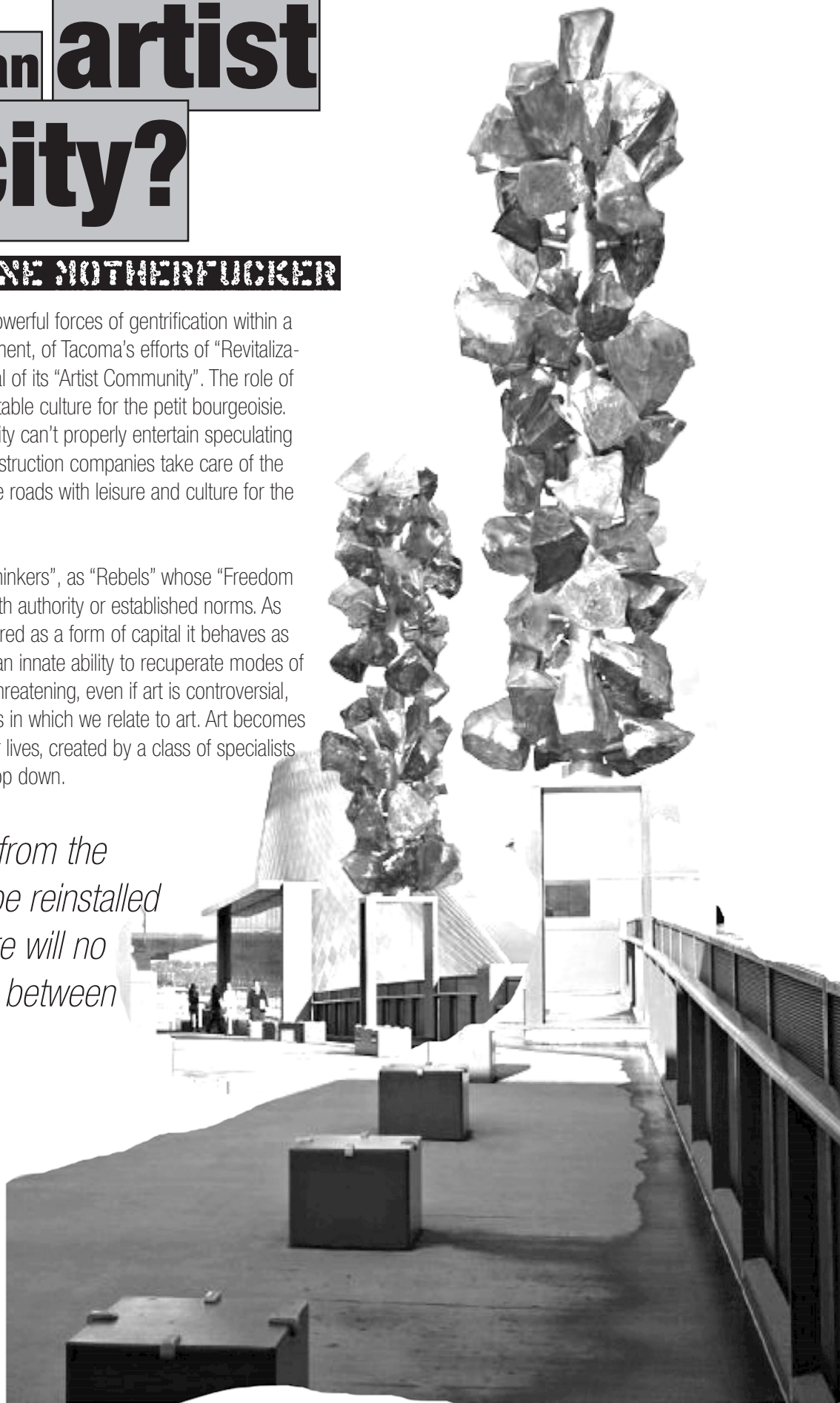
WRITTEN BY NO ONE MOTHERFUCKER

Artists are one of the first and most powerful forces of gentrification within a city. The success of a condo development, of Tacoma's efforts of "Revitalization" all hinge on the successful appeal of its "Artist Community". The role of an artist in a city is to create a comfortable culture for the petit bourgeoisie. If there's nothing "Happening", if the city can't properly entertain speculating residents, there won't be any. The construction companies take care of the condos, the uppity art scene paves the roads with leisure and culture for the upper class to consume.

Artists are often thought of as "Free Thinkers", as "Rebels" whose "Freedom of Expression" is somehow at odds with authority or established norms. As insightful as art may be, when considered as a form of capital it behaves as any other commodity. Capitalism has an innate ability to recuperate modes of resistance into itself. So even if art is threatening, even if art is controversial, Capitalism frames the set of conditions in which we relate to art. Art becomes institutionalized and removed from our lives, created by a class of specialists who spoon feed us culture from the top down.

"When art is removed from the institutional sphere to be reinstalled in the praxis of life there will no longer be a separation between art and life"

Art is supposedly meaningful. The petit bourgeois consume art in an attempt to consume meaning. Life in modern society is precarious, seemingly meaningless. We are given few options. We may work, go to school, or have children. No other options are readily available, no other options are



seen as favorable. Our relationships are empty. Our livelihoods are unsatisfying. We are trapped in a framework of precarious consumption and conditions. The middle class professionals consumption of art is an attempt to fill the vacancy of meaning in their lives. The consumption of local art, from a burgeoning scene helps establish the authenticity of the work, thus the amount of meaning its yuppie owner may derive from it.

Through the guise of culture and economic development, The City of Tacoma organizes and funds events to entertain its leisure class with art. Trying to remold its communities into desirable residents, residents with money. What is an artist to do in this situation? Understanding the mechanisms of capital and the processes of commodification is vital if we are to make art a threat against the forces of capital that maintain our miseries. How can we create cultures of resistance within cities when the creativity of the artists within them is constantly being recuperated back into the same spectacle of capital that we're opposing?

"Art is a representation that replaces reality. The separation of art from reality has created a situation in which both planes are lived as isolated spheres, without spirit or emotion. Art becomes petrified in museums, in galleries, in salons and libraries, while existence continues to the rhythm of the minute hand that subjugates salaried work. There, beauty is suppressed, joy is domesticated, pleasure enslaved, and peculiarity made uniform."

quotes taken from *The Garden of Peculiarities*
by Jesus Sepulveda

WE DEMAND AESTHETIC JUSTIFICATION

INVERT THEIR GALLERIES



INVERT THEIR MUSEUMS

A Proposition for Pursuit

"The cop is a social relationship that embodies the idea of oppression and control as well as a real person who fucks our lives over and deserves nothing from us. They are symbolic and are real. We must attack both symbolically and materially."

-The Old Fairytale, Words and Letters II

Day or night, on the streets of Hilltop in Tacoma it is not uncommon to see the uniformed lackeys policing the vicinity. From the grass of the local parks one has begun to expect an encounter with the authorities, especially come nightfall. Police harassment of a neighbor or friend is a regular and familiar occurrence. It would be an astounding incident to glimpse out the window for longer than ten minutes and not see the ominous police car lurking. The realities of living in a police state are continuous and versed in oppression.

Most of us endure a feeling of hostility toward the police. This hostility should not stop with language. The recognizable and reoccurring expression of "fuck police" embodies the aggression we feel but it does not materialize them. We would all rather disregard our empty rhetoric if the uniformed fools would fall dead in their tracks. Yet, the com-

plexity of our social reality continues to hinder the immediate manifestation of our thoughts. The resentment of the police is widespread, that is indisputable. There is a low-intensity occupation at present. The police state is continuously attacking us. Our strikes are less evident. The opposition is less visible. It is confined to the clenching of our fists and the grinding of our teeth.

An intensified violence against those who carry the badge of power is essential. Yet, it can not spring from sheer air or from the so-called movement; we do not have the basis for such a social force, we do not have the agency. Nor may we ever. Nonetheless, there are less instantaneous methods that may be conducted to begin ridding our lives of terrorization. It is the illustrious "Copwatch" that comes to mind. Copwatch is a project that focuses on patrolling those who patrol us.

In Tacoma we seek not to only patrol the police but to abolish their so-named "necessity". A lengthy and weighted proposition but we seek it regardless. By attacking together to present a force actively opposed to their presence. Tacoma Copwatch plans to consist of any one person to an indefinite number of people. The group will actively pursue the police in their pursuit of domination. To be more specific, it will consist of individuals that oppose any and all police activity. In response to that opposition we will aggressively trail the police on the streets whether by the form of individuals armed with video/photo cameras, numbers, pens and paper, words, and/or direct confrontations between the uniformed mafia and the accused.

If this sounds like something you or someone you know would be interested in then contact us at...

tacomacopwatch@gmail.com

From Petaluma Copwatch:

Important phrases:

WHEN STOPPED BY THE COPS, IF YOU ONLY REMEMBER A FEW KEY PHRASES, REMEMBER THE FOLLOWING! SAY THEM LOUDLY ENOUGH FOR OTHERS TO HEAR YOU! AND IF YOU CAN, RECORD THEM...

“I do not consent.”

“I’m going to remain silent.”

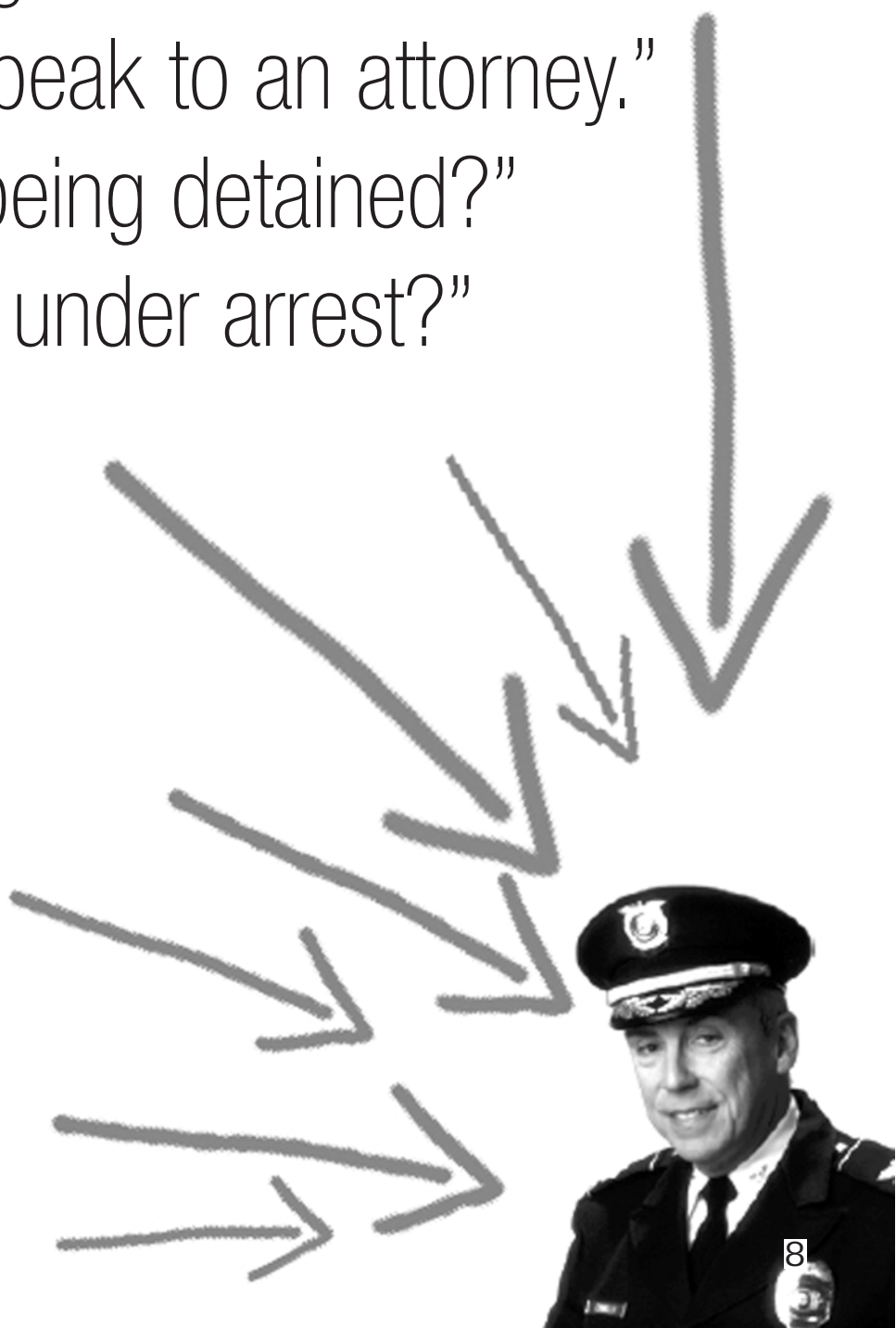
“I wish to speak to an attorney.”

“Am I being detained?”

“Am I under arrest?”

If you don't have papers or fear you may be deported, don't say anything except "I am going to remain silent and wish to speak to an immigration attorney."

Don't sign anything without an immigration attorney present. Asking for an immigration attorney does not mean you do not have legal status in the U.S. If you are on parole, your rights to search and seizure have probably been altered, so simply saying, "I am going to remain silent and I wish to speak to an attorney" is a safer bet. And always, if you see someone being engaged by the police, stop and watch. You have the legal right to observe or film police activity.





NO ONE

In the creation, life upon Mother Earth was never told that they could not journey to where the pursuit of needs or desire would take them. Many life forms depended upon the journey for their survival: the caribou, the buffalo, the whale, the salmon, flocks of many types of birds, even the human animal journeyed. In the Natural World there are no borders, no one is illegal.

Along came groups of human animals that conquered other groups of once free human animals. The conquerers set marks upon paper that defined the limits of their conquest and these marks became the borders that told all the boundaries of their authority. The land and all life that lived within the boundaries of their authority were subject to the dictates of the authority of the conquerers who became a ruling class over all within their rule. The rules of the rulers were set down on paper as laws, which defined what was legal and what was illegal based upon what benefited the rulers. Those outside of the boundaries could only cross the borders legally if the rulers felt they would benefit from this act, those that crossed with little or no benefit to the rulers were declared illegal. In the Natural World there are no borders, no one is illegal.

The rulers of the unnatural nations saw all lands of indigenous people as unconquered lands. Since, within their system of unnatural nations the rulers had, in their view, the divine right of authority, those outside of their system had only the right to be conquered and ruled. Thus the progression of the system of unnatural nations has been that of worldwide conquest of unconquered lands. In the Natural World there are no borders, no one is illegal.

Though the ruling classes of the unnatural nations with their borders sought to control those that crossed the borders, they did not place the same limitations upon themselves. Throughout the history of the unnatural nations, acts of invasion of other unnatural nations have continuously occurred, which has advanced to a state of war, mass death and destruction. Given the ruler's laws of borders, that they base the boundaries of their authority upon, all offensive wars should be illegal. But the laws of the rulers are only for the governed and are not meant for the governors. In the Natural World there are no borders, no one is illegal.

Unnatural nations formed alliances with other unnatural nations, signed military pacts and rights of exploitation, which they called trade agreements. The rulers and their exploitation were given free passage across the borders of unnatural nations. Thus the repression and exploitation of the people and the pillaging of Mother Earth became multinational pursuits. In the Natural World there are no borders, no one is illegal.

The people who are ruled by the rulers are documented and placed under the ownership of the unnatural nations and called citizens. To be owned by an unnatural state brings the slave's duty to follow the ruler's laws, fight if needed in the ruler's army and to pay part of all that which they make in the form of taxes to the rulers. To the ruled they may only cross their masters borders without their master's permission or they are declared illegal. In the Natural World there are no borders, no one is illegal.

Most of the governed classes must seek out employment from the owning class, for the owning class has proclaimed

IS ILLEGAL

ESSAY WRITTEN BY Arthur J. Miller, Tacoma IWW

resources and the production of needs as their private property. Thus the govern class also became the working class that produces the needs of society in which the owning class profits by selling back to the producers their needs in the form of consumer products. To attempt to change this arrangement is illegal by the ruler's laws, as is crossing their borders without permission to sell one's labor for greater return. In the Natural World there are no borders, no one is illegal.

Throughout the world the owning class seeks to accumulate all that they can by keeping as little of produced wealth as possible out of the hands of the people. To back up this arrangement the owning class uses its hired guns, the police and military, its laws, courts and prisons to keep those that they govern from gaining a better share. The very existence of the unnatural states and their borders is an act to keep the owners rich, the governors governing and the people poor and oppressed. In the Natural World there are no borders, no one is illegal.

The people struggle to survive under this system, for survival is this first natural law of all. Sometimes because economic needs become so great, or get in the way of the ruler's wars, people find that they must move to new locations to seek work or safety. If that move takes them across the master's borders without permission, they become illegals, even if they are doing nothing more than following the first natural law. In the Natural World there are no borders, on one is illegal.

Sometimes with family intact, other times forced to separate from families, the ones called illegals move as they can down perilous paths. Hunted by agents of the unnatural states and

sometimes preyed upon by those seeking vulnerable victims. Cold or hot; hungry; hiding out in the elements; longing for the home they were forced to leave behind; moved by the hope that at the end of the journey they will find something better. In the Natural World there are no borders, no one is illegal.

Declared illegal by those who seek to control the world; hated by those that cannot see beyond their master's deceitful social conditioning. Those declared illegal become the master's blamed ones for everything from driving wages down, to taking jobs away, crime rates and even environmental destruction. All the things that in fact the owner's greed produces. In the Natural World there are no borders, no one is illegal.

The Natural World thrown out of balance. Natural law becomes outlaws. Nothing makes common sense anymore. Where in the laws that govern the existence of all upon our Mother Earth is there found that a few have the legal right to govern and exploit the many? Where does it state that the majority must do without so that a tiny minority can have far more than they will ever need? Where in the Natural laws does it declare those that cross unnatural borders are illegal persons? In the Natural World there are no borders, no one is illegal.

The unnatural system of the greedy few cannot go on forever, for our Mother Earth cannot withstand that continuous abuse, the people can give to the greedy ones only so much. Mother Earth is already showing signs of breaking down, things must change. We must restore the natural balance of things, the borders must come down and those who have been declared illegal must become legal once again. For there are no borders in the Natural World, and no one is illegal.

someone please tell me... WHAT THE FUCK IS HAPPENING??

COMMUNIQUE NO. 2

BUREAU OF TAKING BACK PUBLIC SPACE

Tacoma implemented a new program in 2006 called "Complete Streets" to redesign all streets in Tacoma wherever an area is undergoing redevelopment. All over the downtown Broadway area, streets are being repaved and redesigned. But what exactly makes the completed streets any different from the uncompleted streets in terms of livability, neighborhood identity, and other potential?

Not much! Most of the real work the planning establishment did was bring the power lines, cable lines, and piping underneath the sidewalks into a single conduit area, although the name "Complete Streets" suggested it was an initiative that would encourage "mode shift" from cars to bicycles, promote democracy and public use, and make the city more "green." According to their handout, these are the goals of Complete Streets:

- **Provide transportation choices & make mode shift possible**
- **Accommodate larger vehicles without compromising pedestrian and bike safety**
- **Improve public health**
- **Reduce environmental impacts**
- **Support livability and neighborhood identity**
- **Support community vitality and growth**

...we see none of this actually happening. Complete Streets has been offering tours of their projects open for public comment. So the Bureau of Taking Back Public Space went along with in order to study and review their methods.

Most of the lobbyists on these tours were representing various departments from within the city (public utilities, water, internet, cement, etc.) The Bureau did not see any of our constituents from the skateboard lobby, the homeless lobby, the pro-fun league, the graffiti lobby, chalk lobby, hopscotch lobby, re-wilding lobby, the anti-condo consortium, anti-capitalist bloc, the black-owned businesses, the public-drinking lobby, the couch-surfing lobby, etc. and so (as always) none of our voices were heard.

Social relations have become impossible in most cities. The redeveloped neighborhoods in Tacoma have only two all-pervasive themes: automobile traffic and condominium comfort. These are merely expressions of bourgeois contentment, lacking any sense of play, "livability" or "neighborhood identity."



Why build fences instead of benches? And mini parks, and pedestrian-only zones, and overgrown plants, and jungle gyms, and something to explore. Condemned to die of boredom on these street corners, The Bureau of Taking Back Public Space must find adventure elsewhere.



Option A



Option B

Does your neighborhood identify with tree panels or shrubs? ...These are questions the Bureau is not asking!

We might imagine “government regulation” as our enemy for imposing costly rules for every conceivable human activity (ADA compliance, etc.) Yet - The Complete Streets program prefers to pay for the regulations related to automobile activity instead of pedestrian activity, making their “mode shift” impossible. The city is not willing, pure and simple, to make it a livable city.

The automobile is at the heart of all this propaganda, both as the supreme good of the alienated life and as an essential product of the capitalist market. Parking on Broadway, they say, will be increased by 7%. Whereas the only bike lane they were able to add stretches for just one block in the Broadway area.

Across the street from the Municipal Building on St. Helens Ave., there is one of the Happenings boxes, as pictured on the right. The Bureau asked Complete Streets if they plan on introducing Happenings boxes, or something similar, in newer areas, perhaps even in neighborhoods. The answer was no. Instead, Complete Streets dismantled the Happenings on St. Helens Ave. Why, the Bureau asked, would you take down something vital to neighborhood identities when your stated goal is to support neighborhood identities? They agreed that the box is “definitely important,” but mumbled shadily that the boxes are not “requirements” of the Complete Streets model.

In conclusion, there are some cities exploring an urbanism designed for human pleasure, but Tacoma is not one of them. Complete Streets does not have a social conception of urbanism, and hence is only “complete” in the sense that it is *completely ridiculous* to claim any of the benefits it has announced. Where is the “green infrastructure” is, or the democracy, and does it contribute strongly to a unified urban social milieu? It doesn't. Down with these stupid “beautification” projects! Art remains the prerogative of the city bureaucracies. So enough already!

Their art, our alienation!

- *The Bureau of Taking Back Public Space*



interview with seth manzel

from

GI VOICE

COFFEE STRONG



Q: How long were you active in the military?

I was active in the military for 4 years, from 2002 to 2006, and I was deployed from 2004 to 2005.

Q: Would you like to talk about your political positions prior to joining the military? For example, when you were younger and thinking about joining the military?

I was a rightwing fundamentalist Christian, until I actually read the Bible and realized that that I didn't agree with one bit of it. I had always been rightwing, working at a gun store growing up, but I was pretty

critical of the Republican Party. I was a pariah [outcast] in the store because I wouldn't join the NRA, so they thought that I was some kind of subversive. I was also against the conflicts that we had going on in Kosovo and Yugoslavia and Sudan; I was very pissed off about it, and at that time it was 'the right' that tended to be against those things. They saw Clinton as being a draft-dodger who was literally sending people off to die in other places. It was a pretty fair critique of him and I still agree with that: Clinton was a horrible war-monger. When I joined the military, we had already invaded Afghanistan by 2002, and it was pretty clear that we were going to invade Iraq. I had lost my job at the gun store and needed money. I just had a baby, my second daughter, and I had to support my family, so I joined the army infantry and signed up for 4 years. I considered myself a libertarian at the time when I went into the army, but being over there I saw how profiteering worked and how so many people were getting rich off the war, like contractors. Contracting companies were making astounding amounts of money off the suffering of the Iraqi people and off the soldiers and soldiers' families. It was pretty clear to me that the brand of libertarianism that I had subscribed to was pretty bankrupt because it wasn't critical of corporations and their ability to amass so much wealth at the expense of others without any consequence to their shareholders.

Q: Were there any specific events that triggered going down a different political path for you, or was it more of a slow process?

It was a slow processing. Seeing some of the more egregious war crimes and things that were going on, general mistreatment of the people and unprovoked killing. That sort of thing definitely hardened my ideas, but I think by the time that sort of thing started happening I was already established in being outraged by what was going on. And at the same time, I was complicit. I was working very hard to achieve what I thought were the goals of the United States because I figured while we were there we might as well make the best of the situation. But I realize now that any good that I did was far-outweighed by a lot of horrible things that I ended up doing.

Q: So I guess that whole idea of patriotism was pushed really far away, but how did it play a role, if any, to your involvement in the army?

During the Clinton Administration I felt just about the same as I did with the Bush Administration. I don't think I've ever had really strong feelings about: "Yay, America, were doing the right thing". It was even more blatant under the Clinton Administration. I mean, the day that Monica Lewinsky hearings were supposed to begin he bombed aspirin factories in Sudan. That sort of blatant killing people for the sake of purely political purposes, the people who were being bombed had absolutely nothing to do with it. I don't think I have ever been seduced by the idea of American military and power, it's just that I didn't have much in the way of skill set to work in the civilian world so I joined the army instead.

Q: What, if any, events in the military moved you in a different direction?

I witnessed the Iraqi police torturing someone one time, he was an Iraqi prisoner. It was clear that we were sending prisoners to the police to be tortured, I actually transported someone to the Iraqi police to be tortured one time. Seeing the things that they were doing to those people with American money, being no mistake about it, they were funded entirely by the US military and the department of defense, it's not like they were living off the tax system there, so the things that they do they're doing with our tax dollars, not with money from the local economy, so when they're doing those things they're doing them in the name of America, and the people that they're doing them to are well aware of that, they know very well that the Iraqi police are working hand in glove with the US military. That's something they are going to take back to their local population, their neighborhoods and their friends. How can you be tortured and not harbor really severe feelings against the country that is responsible for it? If we don't do something in Iraq to completely repay them to what we've done to them we'll face all kinds of terrorists acts in the future, this is the kind of thing that makes terrorists, not the kinda of things that fights terrorism. That's pretty clear from being there that fighting Terrorism is obviously not the main objective. The main objective is to enforce fuel monopolies, to make spaces that are safe for contractors to work in.

Q: Can you talk about the state run gas stations?

At the time that I was there, there was a fuel monopoly and the state approved who could sale fuel and it could only be sold from certain fueling stations. So people would purchase more fuel that they needed, then they would sell it on the side of the road for profit. That cut into the fuel monopoly so we were instructed to shut down those stations. We would go up and sometimes arrest people, sometimes pour gasoline on them, sometimes shoot their gas cans and set them on fire. There were times when people were killed in the course of doing that. It was so blatant that this is what we were there for; we were there because of money. We were there to kill people over the



few dollars that someone would get from selling gasoline on the side of the road. It's the one natural resource that the Iraqis have and we are not allowing them to sell it for a profit, which is pretty horrible.

Q: You were talking about the changes in your political ideas, even before you went to war, but when you came back, was there something that changed radically?

Yes, I went to Evergreen College and started taking classes with Larry Mosqueda. A lot of things that I read in his class affected me. The way that he explained things made them make a lot more sense and it certainly sharpened the political views I already had. It got me into activism, which I had been pretty skeptical of, and still am in a lot of ways. I have been really skeptical of the sign-holding peaceniks who were happily paying their taxes and in doing so murdering people all over the world but demonizing soldiers who were only doing their jobs. I think the peace community is as equally responsible for the war as soldiers are. After coming back I was angry. I wanted to throw bricks. I didn't want to hold a sign and I was really resentful of people who did, but being at Evergreen kind of got me into this state of mind where I could live in that world and deal with the peace community in a non-confrontational way. I almost kicked over a table for Ehren Watada supporters, though I do not have anything against Ehren Watada. The supporters tend to demonize soldiers who deploy and refer to them as war criminals and things like that, and I was really angry at that moment. That was around the time that I got back.

Q: Do you want to talk more about that teacher that influenced you, Larry Mosqueda?

He's one of the people who helped us found GI Voice which is the corporation under which Coffee Strong operates, and he encouraged me to get involved with IVAW (Iraq Veterans Against the War), and encouraged me to speak out about issues instead of just writing angry papers all the time.

Q: You had said that you were, and still are, skeptical about activism, could you elaborate?

I think activism can be a real opiate to change because when there is a demonstration or something like that, it's a bunch of

people out on the streets saying they're angry about something. But it's not like George Bush or Barack Obama is gonna see their signs and suddenly have a change-of-heart. Unless it reaches a critical mass where there's general strikes or things like that, it really is an opiate because it's taking peoples' energy and peoples' anger who would otherwise be put into productive stuff like throwing rocks or building food co-ops, something that actually does have a positive influence. It just saps that. Demonstrations can be good in some ways. I mean, that's how people can get into activism, but if it's just a peaceful march, in a lot of ways it doesn't accomplish anything. Although, with PMR (Port Militarization Resistance), it's somewhat different because they're actually costing the city money every time they do something, and they're really focused about that. But often times peaceful marches consume an enormous amount of energy in the activist community, which a lot of time is not a big deal because they're not doing anything anyway. In other ways peaceful marches certainly have their place but I'm skeptical of how significant their whole thing is.

Q: Some activists and more left-leaning groups tend to say that any kind of confrontation - not just throwing rocks or property destruction - against any type of authorities, like the police, companies, financial institutions, are not constructive things. They say that those confrontational actions hurt "the movement". Do you have any thoughts on that?

The solution they have is working through the system, which allows companies to profit off the exploration of others. It's pollyannaish [blindly optimistic] to think that holding signs is going to change anything. Those same people would go out of their way to stop someone from throwing a rock through a Starbucks window, but they certainly wouldn't go out of their way to stop a police officer from beating one of their fellow activist and they wouldn't do anything to stop the state from engaging in violence. But god forbid that some insurance company is gonna have to cover the cost of the window... it makes absolutely no sense. When you see the naked brutality that is being used in other parts of the world to enforce our hold on their natural resources... we are actively killing people, but some activists care about a Starbucks window. They're so sheltered, it's almost offensive to think that they're fighting against one of the most horrible systems that's out there at the moment, and that they



worried about property destruction, it's horrible.

Q: Do you think that being a soldier is very different from other jobs as far as the having human lives in your hands? Although very serious things are done sometimes against the soldiers will, how much responsibility does the soldier have in the matter? How does this fit into the demonization of soldiers, which you mentioned earlier?

A: If you could wave a magic wand and all the soldiers would be gone and there would instead be only people who push buttons to launch missiles, the effect would still be the same. Soldiers could actually discriminate more between a civilian and an actual combatant. So in that respect if you're going off some sort of morality or what is better, an individual infantry soldier is probably the least-damaging unit of the army whereas someone could indiscriminately push a button, launching a missile into a house somewhere quite easily. Contractors can easily do that. You don't have to have soldiers to launch missiles. Now if you're talking about the responsibility of the soldier for acts of brutality: soldiers will do what they have to do to get the job done. That's what they are indoctrinated to do. When they actually refuse to do something — that's a failure of the indoctrination process. They are usually just doing what they are programmed to do, and sometimes that is some pretty horrible and egregious things. They are doing all of this on behalf of the American taxpayer who is more responsible because if that soldier was not there, the American taxpayer would still be contributing to the launching of missiles into some place and killing a bunch of people. If the army was not there, the US government would still find ways to use violence to achieve their ends. The role of the soldier is pretty inconsequential, unless they do something like resist. One of the people in my unit cut out a prisoner's eyes. In his defense, he had seen a video of this very same person cutting off a marine's head on youtube. That was one of the things they showed soldiers when they went out on this particular mission to capture this person. The soldier in my unit took him back and he used his little Gerber tool and cut out that guy's eyes. That's something that happens when you put people in those situations. I'm not saying it is good, I'm not saying it's right, I'm not trying to justify it. I am just saying that that is a natural consequences of putting people in that situation. And yes, soldiers bare some responsibility. They decided to sign up and they decided to follow orders. At the same time, they are doing just about what anyone else would do in that situation. The American people are not morally superior to the German

people of the 1930s. The American people would go along with any kind of horrible program here at home. And we are going along with it. We are moving Guantanamo detainees out of a concentration camp in Guantanamo Bay into the United States and no one is disturbed. People are just saying "I don't want them in my community because I don't want scary Muslims living near me." But they're not outraged at the fact that we are keeping people in those conditions and that they will probably be tortured here in the United States. That sort of thing doesn't seem to be bothering people at all. It's easy to demonize soldiers but I think it is the American people's lack of their own fortitude to stand up for what is right. And stand up in a sensitive way. That's the real problem. Soldiers are just a tool, a part of the machine. It's silly to try and get angry with them and demonize them, which is something the movement has done quite a bit, though maybe not on a conscious level. Soldiers are often the object of ridicule in the movement. And it would make a lot more sense to demonize the people who are actually profiting from the war than it would to demonize the soldiers.

Q: Do you see much of a difference at all between the left-wing and the right-wing of the US government?

No, not at all. If you look at what the people from the defense industry supported in the last elections, they gave overall \$694, \$148 to John McCain's campaign and they gave over a million dollars to Barack Obama. So he's obviously in their pocket. They bet heavily on him, and they won, and so now they have a fair amount of sway over him. So companies like Boeing and Lockheed Martin are all giving tons of money to Obama and they would lose all kinds of money if the wars would end tomorrow. I'm sure they didn't give this money out of the goodness of their hearts. I'm sure that they want something in return, so yeah, there is absolutely no difference between the left and the right-wing aside from some aesthetics that they say about abortion rights, gun control and gay marriage. There is not any big difference between both parties.

Q: Do you feel as if there is some sort of common political identity, or political and economic identity between the right-wing and the left-wing of the government?

Yes, they are both National Socialists. The Republicans talk about socialism as if it is the worst thing out there, though they engage in many socialist practices. The way the government (either the Democrats or the Republicans) is not at all dissimilar to how Hitler's government related to big industry. I



think that National Socialism is the common thread between both parties even if they don't use that terminology.

Q: A couple months ago I was listening to Michael Savage on the radio, and he quoted Mussolini in an attempt to say like, "See, what Obama is doing is fascism." But I thought it was interesting coming from Michael Savage, because a lot of things he seems to wish to see, though kind of different, practically are politically fascist.

Yeah. The right does often identify the left with Nazism or Fascism. And the left does do a lot of things that can be associated with fascism, as does the right. Both the left and the right are very close to each other.

Q: How do you feel about any potential resistance, or maybe revolution, combating this kind of social situation? And I think I'm looking in more of a broader sense, not just war, not just activism, or human rights, but the broader sense?

Yeah we've killed millions and millions of people in the past decades: from Vietnam, Cambodia, South and Central America, and now in the Middle East. We are going in the course of the next decade to kill millions and millions of people, unless this is stopped. I guess the question is if you know that something like that is going to happen, and as sure as we are sitting here, it will, what would you do? It seems like one may wish to take some pretty drastic measures to prevent that from happening. If things don't change, a lot more of people are going to die, and the environment is going to be irreparably damaged, which it may already be. I don't think that there is anything too drastic that's not worth doing when it comes to saving so many lives, people will inevitably die because of the things that will be happening in the next few years

Q: Which kind of resistance do you see as really inspiring right now? Whether it is to spread the word more, or something else?

I think the GI resistance is really important, but as far as the American people are concerned, I really don't know if you convince them that what we are doing is wrong, what would they do about it anyway? They'll go back to watching TV, the Superbowl, American Idol, and there would be no net change in the situation. So as far as changing peoples' minds, I don't think it really matters. What matters is the real work that needs to be done to bring about change. As far as getting the word out, it seems like a whole lot of effort for not a whole lot of results, and as a movement where we don't have a lot of energy to put in thing that are not fruitful. And even with this place [Coffee Strong], we kind of suffer from that same thing, we are fighting an uphill battle. We are trying to

position ourselves to be really effective, but I mean as far as GI rights counseling, when we do that, we are helping individuals. But we are allowing the system to continue running, so there is just going to be more individuals coming to us. It's not going as a positive effect on the world.

Q: Sometimes I feel that part of the reason why we don't see these ideas spread to the entire population, or even a larger part of it, is that within the activist movement, as well as in the left, there are not many strong ideas being talked about - or really any ideas at all. Usually everything is really vague, it goes: "We are against this, this is bad," "We are against this, this is unjust," or even "We are for this, we are for social justice". In all of this people are dealing with very general terms, terms that seem empty to many people. I don't talk about more complicated ideas, like what does it means to be free, to be an individual, or to have control over your own life. I feel like those things don't get talked about at all. Do you think that it would be useful to bring those things up?

Yes, it's good to have some kind of picture that you are working towards instead of that vague, nebulous future that you are trying to bring about. I think that having a pretty well laid out idea of what things should look like afterwards is pretty important.

Q: Do you think that this is something lacking in the anti-war movement, or in any kind of semi-pseudo resistance that is going on right now?

Yeah, that and a real strong analysis of how the system works and what the weak points of the system are, that something that is also really lacking. We are not very strategic when we do things. PMR is pretty strategic; they have a pretty good strategic plan. But as a whole, we as a movement do not have a very strategic plan.

Autonomia Social Center

The concept of Social Centers is rooted in Italy, back in the early 1970's. They currently exist in cities throughout the world, but more commonly in Europe in either squatted or rented buildings. Every individual center may vary, but these centers are intended to run on the basis of non-hierarchical, collective decision-making. They are non-profit spaces that provide resources that are determined by both the needs of the community in which the social center is based, and the skills which the participants have to offer. The projects are run on an entirely voluntary basis. Those involved are neither charity workers nor social workers. Often, motivations behind charity and social work lie within personal gratification and financial interest which leads to questioning the sincerity of those providing the charity. These spaces stem from the idea that we can exchange resources to mutually benefit and protect ourselves as well as the people we interact with on a daily basis, without the interference of ulterior motives.

The incentive behind Autonomia Social Center began with a non-exclusive emphasis on creating a support network for women based and organized by those in Tacoma's Hilltop neighborhood. We encourage the involvement of everyone regardless of sex, gender, race, age, and sexual preference. It is a free space where people can share knowledge, skills, ideas, experiences, get to know each other and encourage ourselves to gain control, not over others, but our individual lives in their entirety while taking care of each other as a community. We cannot rely on those in positions of wealth and power to give us autonomy; we have to create it for ourselves.

What Autonomia Social Center will consist of but is not limited to:

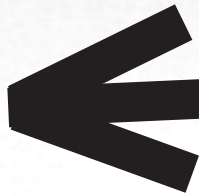
- Literature and pamphlets ranging in genres pertaining to women's health guides, herbal and home remedies, fiction and non-fiction relating to women's struggles and resistance movements.
- General Anarchist library.
- Discussion and support groups varying in topics.
- Consistently scheduled classes, workshops, and skill shares. (For example: women's self defense classes, etc).
- Women's health products available for free or donation.
- Special events such as benefits and movie showings.
- A free food pantry.
- Kitchen and internet access.
- Hang out space to relax, drink tea or coffee, and chat.

These are all suggestions of what projects can exist within this center. Participation and input from those interested is vital for these free spaces to remain ongoing for multiple generations.

A woman with a dagger is a powerful emblem. She is no one's property. Offense against her will be answered by her own hand.



Future location and hours of operation to be announced.
For further information, contact:
autonomiasocialcenter@riseup.net



CONTACT autonomy253@gmail.com

