

## NEGLECTED TO DEATH

*Thou preparest a table before me in the presence of mine enemies.* (Psalm 23-5)

He wore a blanket over his shoulders, and people in Little Five Points called him "Iceberg." One summer afternoon in 1995 when Food Not Bombs was serving soup in the Square, the man wearing that blanket walked up to our table and whispered in my ear, "Don't call me what those others do. My real name's *James!*" When I tried to get him to talk some more, he only babbled. Then after staring at the ground for awhile, he slouched away and leaned against a wall. Sliding slowly down to the sidewalk, he hugged his arms around his legs and hid his face in his brown wool blanket.

The next Saturday James was lined up for soup again. I tried to get him to talk, but just as before he didn't make sense. Flustered, I asked *James, are you on some kind of medication?* He stared me hard in the face and rapidly clenched and unclenched his fists. Speaking in a clear, strong voice, he declared "They say I can't get by without 'em, but those pills make me stupid, *stupid!* I don't need 'em and I won't take 'em!" He was pulled to let that sink in before saying he *hated* that hospital, *hated* their pills and their doctors...*hated 'em even more than jail!* And then he walked off without eating a bowl of soup or a single slice of bread.

Over the years, I sometimes managed to catch James when he was better able to converse. *Yes*, he said, *Yes!* He'd often been in Georgia Regional Hospital, and every time he left, he was not but he was not, he was not, and every time all he got was a list of shelters, and a MARTA pass. So James ate out of garbage cans and slept in abandoned buildings and in the woods. Shelters wouldn't take him in because he was incoherent and didn't have ID, and he was often too disoriented by his illness to even find the soup kitchens. James was stuck in a rapidly revolving door of hospitals, jail, and the streets. Somehow he took marginal care of his personal hygiene and appearance, but underneath all his layered clothing, he was skin and bones. Most people in the Square avoided him because of his unpredictable and sharp tongue. He could be persistently obnoxious in a baffling kind of way, but I never heard anyone say that he had ever hurt anyone. On his best days, James could be well-spoken and considerate. He knew far more about the world than the world ever gave him credit for knowing.

But now it's too late to mount a rescue, because James is dead. His decomposed body was found in the summer of 2003 in an abandoned building, in what the homeless call a "cat-hole." The cause of death was undetermined. He may have died of malnutrition, pneumonia, suicide, or even murder; but whatever the medical cause, I charge that James was neglected to death, and that his senseless, premature passing should shame us all. If James had received proper treatment at Georgia Regional Hospital, if he had been placed in a loving group home, if he had been assigned a competent social worker with the right knowledge and ample resources, then maybe his life might not have ended in some grimy cat-hole, alone and in some desolate part of town.

Saving mentally ill people like James is not a high priority for the Georgia Legislature. They shut down the Georgia Mental Health Institute (GMHI) in 1998 while cutting thirty million dollars out of the annual mental health budget, while falsely promising at the same time to "deinstitutionalize" the mentally ill to community group homes. In service to Atlanta's business interests and real estate developers, our lawmakers also authorized the demolition of Techwood and Capitol Homes, depriving thousands of the poor of affordable housing and making at least hundreds of these same people homeless. Just as they closed GMHI, our lawmakers continue to "balance the budget" at the expense of the sick and poor. Yet, even as they throw our most defenseless out on the street, they and their accomplices in the Department of Human Resources still manage to congratulate themselves for being "compassionate."

Simply put, those who are too disabled to ever work or pay taxes are regarded by the Bureaucrats in Charge as bad investments. People with mental illness, AIDS, hepatitis, diabetes, addictive diseases, and any number of other chronic or incurable conditions, are tossed out on the street to die or rot in jail. Permanently traumatized veterans who fought in Vietnam or the Persian Gulf languish year after year on the streets, and those with addictive diseases are put on waiting lists for months or years for detoxification in the ever-dwindling numbers of public facilities still funded for that purpose.

On July 20, 2003, the *Atlanta Journal-Constitution* reported in an editorial that "there may be as many as 85,000 (adult) homeless people in Georgia with a mental illness, an addiction or both." Since Georgia has only nine million adults and children, that figure of 85,000 represents *almost two percent* of our entire adult population. Most of those tens of thousands so cited who aren't living on the street are likely to be incarcerated. According to the same editorial, the Fulton County Jail alone housed 700 mentally ill inmates, while Atlanta's Regional Hospital holds less than half that number. In Atlanta, as in the rest of the country, there are more mentally ill and addicted people in jail than in hospitals. And why is that? Because jail is cheaper than hospitals or group homes. *Real* compassion is never cheap.

The practice of throwing sick people out on the streets started in earnest over twenty years ago when President Ronald Reagan, the "Great Communicator," discontinued the mental health programs of his predecessor, Jimmy Carter. Instead of spending money on the sick and poor, Reagan increased military spending and cut taxes for the rich. Simultaneously, the states followed suit by cutting their own funding for mental health and opening up new jails and prisons. Now, under President Bush, neglecting people to death is an unrecognized epidemic. Bush's stated goal is to privatize public health altogether and to turn Social Security over to Wall Street. For those of us who "work in the trenches" with the homeless, it is obvious already that anyone who is poor, sick, or disabled is in very real danger of being abandoned and left to die on the streets. The "safety net" is being ripped apart, and the result is an accelerating war against the poor and homeless.

In 2003 Mayor Shirley Franklin convened an elite "Homeless Commission" to study "the problem" and propose solutions. Bankers and lawyers, Central Atlanta Progress, real estate developers, and downtown business and neighborhood associations were the main constituents represented in the Commission.

By no coincidence, these "experts" on homelessness just happen to represent the same financial interests that are largely responsible for "the problem" in the first place. It is for their benefit that Capitol, Grady, Perry, and Techwood Homes were demolished to make way for a forest of condos and lofts, and it is they who benefit the most from the minimum-wage workforce, which is composed entirely of the poor and homeless. These business interests want to drive the poor and homeless out of downtown Atlanta. They want to make downtown lucrative for investments, which unsurprisingly, means lucrative for *their* own investments.

Last year Shirley Franklin's Homeless Commission opened its long-awaited "Gateway Center" in the old Atlanta Jail facility, just next door to the new lock-up. According to the April 24, 2005, edition of the Atlanta Journal-Constitution, this is the first installment in the Mayor's plan to "eliminate homelessness in Atlanta by 2013." What it actually does is provide 30 "emergency" beds for women and children and 270 beds for men. Only fifty beds are designated for people with mental illness and addictive disease, despite the fact that the mentally ill and addicted make up at least fifty percent of the homeless population. Like the Salvation Army, which charges \$12 per night for the homeless to stay in their shelter, those who need help the most are least likely to get it. The Gateway Center provides assistance to less than five percent of the city's homeless on any given night. It's better than nothing, but not much. As homeless activist and civil rights leader Timothy McDonald says, the Gateway Center is no more than "a Band-Aid on a lethal wound."

Those most in need should be helped first. *The last will be first and the first will be last!* Downtown business interests and their Mayor should not be allowed to drive the homeless out of downtown. Shirley Franklin's Homeless Commission should be exposed for what it is, an advocate for the rich and an enemy of the poor. - *Bob Darby*

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## Know Nukes

In 1952 the Paley Commission, appointed by the Truman Administration to study U.S. energy needs, recommended that the U.S. build itself a solar future. The Commission specifically warned against going nuclear, asserting the promise of renewable energy sources to be greater than that of nuclear power for meeting energy needs and preventing economic dislocations due to disruptions in foreign oil supply. Dwight Eisenhower's "Atoms for Peace" program intervened the next year with its propaganda promises of energy "too cheap to meter". The program aimed to distract a population uneasy with nuclear weapons, providing a shield of commercial nuclear power behind which Dr. Strangelove could amass unhindered megatonnage. More than a trillion dollars has since been squandered, for which we now receive a paltry 20% of our electricity and the dubious "security" of thousands of nuclear devices. Each nuclear power plant, and its cooling pond (spent fuel exposed to air bursts into flames), is a pre-placed nuclear bomb to any determined terrorist wishing us harm.

If this were the whole story we could move on, an expensive lesson learned, a dangerous historical moment passed, its irrationality attributable to reckless youth. Unfortunately there is a legacy, in the form of radioactive waste already released into the environment, more waste in questionable containment with no where to go, warheads out the gazo and the ever-youthful Dr. Strangelove and friends in the wings, forget wings - on stage!, panting for another trillion dollar go-round. This mini-tour of a grimy and terrifying terrain, might lead a citizen to conclude that nuclear facilities, weapons and their deadly by-products are not good for young children, parents, old or young pets, pet owners (all ages), nor old mother earth. The credibility of those who have conducted this little charade is, to be kind, poor in the extreme. They have plans. They would like to build more nuclear power plants, "safe" of course. They expect the public to be responsible for the liability in case of an accident via the Price-Anderson Act. They would like to burn plutonium as fuel in some of these plants and they are just itching to reprocess nuclear waste, one of the dirtiest aspects of the whole business. They want to build more bombs and allocate lots of money for the National Ignition Facility (NIF) so as to maintain an old & cultivate a new generation of weapons designers. They want to build weapons in space under the guise of missile defense and, to demonstrate their profound regard for future generations, they are willing to divert funds earmarked for cleaning up the mess they've made over to their exciting new projects. What this situation calls for is a little, actually a lot, of citizen intervention. - *if*

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<p>We salute Damu Smith who passed away at the end of April. He was a true warrior in many struggles for justice and liberation.</p>	<p><b>Justice is Alive</b></p> <p>Damu Smith lives. Ann Braden lives.</p> <p>They are reborn in us. Their warrior spirit, Their sharp intellect, Their purpose driven lives, Stain us all.</p> <p>Martin lives in us. Rosa lives in us. All the warriors Are reborn today in us.</p> <p>They pour their strength into us. Their fragrance washes over us. We are their life now.</p> <p>- bw, Spring, 2006</p>
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This issue is dedicated to Bud (Irving Flint) Foote. He wrote more than 100 "Foibles" for the first Great Speckled Bird in the late '60's and early '70's. Published under the pen name "Og, King of Bashan," Bud spoke to the very problems of irrational war and loopy politics which visit us today. He passed away on March 12, 2005 after a full life as author and poet and folk musician. As a professor of English at Georgia Tech from 1957 to 1999, he founded a very popular science fiction studies program. As co-founder of the Atlanta Folk Music Society, he hung out with Joan Baez and Pete Seger.

<p><b>The Mighty Great Speckled Bird</b> is brought to you by an all-volunteer staff:</p> <p>Barry Weinstock Tom Ferguson (www.thinkspeak.net) Darlene Carra</p> <p><i>We thank all our contributors and we would like to hear from you!</i> Contact us: <b>mightygreatspeckledbird@yahoo.com</b> See us on the web: <b>bird.thinkspeak.net</b></p> <p>Photos of April 1 march by Kallio Hunnicutt-Ferguson Photos of April 10 march by Carlos Manrique, Mundo Hispanico</p>
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### Sea of Fear

There is a little island of sanity in a sea of fear, represented by the May 1 Atlanta City Council resolution calling for the creation of a Department of Peace whose mandate would be to work as hard to resolve conflict without violence as the State and Defense Departments work to enrich the Military/Security/Industrial Complex. It's actually in the form of bills in congress, House bill HR 3760 and the Senate's, S. 1756. You can imagine the chances of passage but ain't we all islands of sanity with telephones, email & fax machines? Thanks to Cheryl Tarr for instigating (agitating?) this May Day gift . More info at bird.thinkspeak.net or The Peace Alliance, www.thepeacealliance.org

## National Poll Finds Strong Anti-War Voting Block

A new national poll shows that there is a previously unrecognized anti-war voting block that will not support pro-war candidates and is large enough that candidates and incumbent politicians from the two major parties cannot afford to ignore it. The Peace Vote is larger than the pro-gun, anti-abortion, or the anti-gay marriage voting blocks. A near-majority of voters either strongly or somewhat agree with a pledge not to vote for pro-war candidates. The pledge states:

"I will not vote for or support any candidate for Congress or President who does not make a speedy end to the war in Iraq, and preventing any future war of aggression, a public position in his or her campaign."

The national poll found that overall, 45.9% of registered American voters agree with the pledge, while 20.1% strongly agree, and 25.8 % somewhat agree. Among Democrats, 67.1 percent agree - 33.3% strongly, 59.2 percent of Independents - 25.3 % strongly and even 25.7 % of Republicans agree - 5.5% strongly.

The poll was conducted by telephone March 9 to 13, 2006, by ICR Survey Research of Media, Pa., which also polls for ABC News, The Washington Post, and numerous corporations and research organizations. The margin of error is +/- 3.35 percent. The poll reflected the results of numerous other polls regarding troop withdrawal, with a slight majority favoring withdrawal within a year (50.7% vs 41.4%) compared to waiting for the Iraqis to take over. As in other polls a plurality (46%), predominantly but not exclusively Democrat voters, asserts the invasion and occupation was not worth it.

"This poll demonstrates that anti-war voters are significant enough in size to affect the outcome of elections if they become organized," said Linda Schade, a spokesperson for VotersForPeace, which commissioned the poll.

## Unasked Questions

Politicians and corporate shills have honed their skills in evading questions— by failing to answer them. The art of offering the same party or corporate line in response to every question is a highly developed and richly rewarded trade. But even more disquieting is the fact the too often a probing question is never asked. Watching the PBS NewsHour I sometimes want to shout out, "Why don't you ask them...." But they don't.

I remember the Hans Christian Anderson story, "The Emperor's New Clothes?" The impertinent little boy who called out that the emperor was naked and that the description of his new clothes was a fabrication provides a telling parable for our time. I'm not thinking of the failure of President Bush's mendacity to cover the bleak reality he has created in Iraq, although it could well serve that purpose. Rather, let's focus on how it was that the crowds stood in admiration of word-attire and no one was able to ask some simple questions. "If the new royal garb is so beautiful, how is it that we see only his aging, sagging frame?" "How come such a drain on the royal treasury has yielded such meager results?" Instead they asked about the tailor's education, training and background. "Where was he born?" "How old is he?" "Is he married?"

### Torture and Whistle blowing

At the moment, there are several examples of government officials threatened with dismissal or legal prosecution for disclosing "secret" information and documents. The discussion seems to center on important but still superficial questions. What did they know? With whom did they talk? What did they disclose? Was the disclosure authorized?

Take the case of Agent Mary McCarthys who was recently fired by the CIA. She is accused of disclosing classified information to reporters about secret prisons in Europe and elsewhere. Reporter Dana Priest of the

## United States Social Forum

The World Social Forum (WSF) is an annual meeting held by members of the alternative globalization movement to coordinate world campaigns, share and refine organizing strategies, and inform each other about movements from around the world and their issues. It tends to meet in January when its "great capitalist rival", the World Economic Forum is meeting in Davos, Switzerland. All social forums adhere to the WSF Charter of Principles drawn up by the World Social Forum.

The first WSF was held from 25 January to 30 January 2001 in Porto Alegre, organized by many groups involved in the alternative globalization movement. The WSF was sponsored, in part, by the Porto Alegre government, led by Brazilian Worker's Party (PT). The town was experimenting with an innovative model for the local government which combined the traditional representative institutions with the participation of open assemblies of the people. 12,000 people attended from around the world.

The second WSF also held in Porto Alegre from 31 January to 5 February 2002, had over 12,000 official delegates representing people from 123 countries, 60,000 attendees, 652 workshops, and 27 talks. One famous speaker was famed American linguistic author Noam Chomsky.

The third WSF was again held in Porto Alegre, in January 2003. There were many parallel workshops, including, for example the Life After Capitalism workshop, which proposed focussed discussion on non-communist, non-capitalist, participative possibilities for different aspects of social, political, economic, communication structures.

## Atlanta Indymedia

The Independent Media Center is a network of collectively run media outlets for the creation of radical, accurate, and passionate tellings of the truth. We work out of a love and inspiration for people who continue to work for a better world, despite corporate media's distortions and unwillingness to cover the efforts to free humanity.

The Independent Media Center (www.indymedia.org), was established by various independent and alternative media organizations and activists in 1999 for the purpose of providing grassroots coverage of the World Trade Organization (WTO) protests in Seattle. The center acts as a clearinghouse of information for

journalists, and provided up-to-the-minute reports, photos, audio and video footage through its website. Using the collected footage, the Seattle Independent Media Center (seattle.indymedia.org) produced a series of five documentaries, unplinked every day to satellite and distributed throughout the United States to public access stations.

The center also produced its own newspaper, distributed throughout Seattle and to other cities via the internet, as well as hundreds of audio segments, transmitted through the web and Studio X, a 24-hour micro and internet radio station based in Seattle. The site, which uses a democratic open-publishingsystem, logged more than 2 million hits, and was featured on America Online, Yahoo, CNN, BBC Online, and numerous other sites.

## Atlanta Progressive News

Another good alternative source of news and opinion in Atlanta is the new "atlantaprogressivenews.com" According to Matthew Cardinale, Editor, "Atlanta Progressive News is Atlanta's new alternative news source. Progressive news is news that brings us closer to universal health care, living wages, affordable housing, peace, a healthy environment, and voting systems we can trust. We provide news of concern to working families. We believe there is no such thing as objective news. Typically, mainstream media presents itself as objective but is actually skewed towards promoting the corporate agenda of the ultra-wealthy. APN, on the other hand, does not pretend to be objective. We believe that our news coverage is fair and that our

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"Just as anti-gun, pro-choice and pro-life groups have organized - now peace groups have identified their constituency, and can organize into a force that no longer can be ignored by candidates for Congress and President"

Schade said organized anti-war voters may help Democrats in particular to develop a stronger position against the war, as it is their voters who are most unwilling to vote for candidates who do not oppose the Iraq occupation. The Democrats may now finally realize that if they fail to represent the anti-war community, they will lose voters who may choose to stay home or to vote for alternative party and independent candidates. Republicans also must respond to their anti-war constituency. Not only do more than 25% of Republican voters oppose candidates who support the war, but the fastest growing group of voters - independents - overwhelmingly support the pledge. More than 59% of independents say they agree with the pledge not to support pro-war candidates, and 25% strongly agree. That all-important swing voter can cause Republicans problems and could become a new source of support for Democrats - or even, for candidates running independent of the two parties.

VotersForPeace is a national effort to organize and make visible the emerging Peace Vote as a powerful voting block with electoral significance. For more information, go to [www.VotersForPeace.US](http://www.VotersForPeace.US)

" Justice anywhere is threat to justice everywhere."

- Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.

"If one minority is attacked, it is an attack on all of us"

- Bernard Birnbaum, , Holocaust survivor

"You cannot stand by and be silent when you see something is wrong. You cannot be a bystander."

- Thomas Lefkowitz, son of a Holocaust survivor

Washington Post described how these centers were created to circumvent US law, which prohibits such practices as lifetime detention without charge or trial, and inhumane interrogation measures, including torture. While there have been exceptions, in the main reactions have not plumbed beneath the surface. Did she disclose information? Was it a crime? Is the reporter also liable to prosecution? Did it embarrass the administration?

I would rather pose this question: *Why shouldn't the American people know that our government has changed its historic public policy and is now using torture, inhuman and inhumane treatment in overseas bases run by the CIA?* Consider these points:

- The Washington Post article only expanded our knowledge of these practices; this wasn't the first word.
- One would think that although torture is generally an ineffective tool for securing reliable information, potential terrorists might be deterred by the dread of capture and the new American methods of interrogation.
- Certainly the enemy networks are aware of these centers, as is so often the case, they knew before our citizens did.
- Finally, the European governments that permitted these bases to operate on their territory learned little new from the newspaper. They have been forced to confront their hypocrisy and the ire of their people.
- I can only conclude that the real purpose of this - and much other classified material -is to keep news that is damaging or unfavorable to the administration from its constituents. For if enough facts about the "decider" leak out, maybe we will all come to realize that he is bereft not of clothes but of humane ideas, a more dangerous plight for the nation.
- Ray Miklethun miklethun@usa.net



Giving the Bird to a new millennium VOL. 1 NO. 2 • May, 2006 Atlanta, Georgia, USA, Earth

## Oh, America

Where do you go now that the world is so torn by folly? At a crossroad with no signs, you seem lost. You are shoved or even shoved around by the hot and empty words of your media masters. Do you even know what is real in a world so extremely distorted by their words?

Join us as we stab into the midst of the deception. Read our fresh perspective and clear language as we discern what is behind all the tangled misinformation fed us. Do be aware that the Bird carries its own traditions forward into this new revival. We are firmly against war. We firmly seek to reveal oppression and racism and many subtle forms of slavery. We are in struggle to eliminate the devastating consequences of power and wealth in the hands of the few. We believe that universally available health care and safe affordable housing and a rational education system open to all are the rightful fruits of a sane society.

The new Bird goes beyond road causes to reveal the soil where the roots live. Our new and sharp focus is the underlying and often unseen culture, the unanalyzed assumptions, behind all we do and believe. We do hope to stay free of the usual rhetoric of left or right wing politics. We want to give you as clear and undistorted picture as we can of the real world. We want to reveal in as sharp a way as we can the raw soil in which our beliefs and ideas and actions live.

Beginning with this issue, we intend to visit the past to put into sharp relief the present. Our method of choice will be to bring the lessons of history into the present. A strong example of this approach is Nan Pendergrast's memories of the 1960 integration of Atlanta public schools. She speaks directly to America's current dilemma with its undocumented immigrant population. The segregationist mindset dominant in Georgia in 1960 foreshadows the current prevalent mindset about undocumented immigrants in our midst. Several of our authors speak about a newly awakened mass movement of Hispanic and other immigrants as they challenge the current anti-immigrant political climate. Underlying that posture of intolerance is fear of the unknown. We endeavor to know the unknown.

Georgia and the nation have many invisible populations. The very poor and the homeless and for sure the mentally ill homeless are unreported and indeed unknown. To the majority of us, the devastated bottom of our society must be shoved under a rug or, as is often the equivalent act, be jailed. We reveal in this Bird some of the consequences of that attitude.

This country's newly minted flirtation with nuclear energy and the atomic bomb is sharply etched by our focus on the past and present of nukes. We again visit Atlanta's and the nation's difficulty with its voracious

## WHEN GEORGIA CHOSE BETWEEN INTEGRATION AND IGNORANCE

by Nan Pendergrast

In challenging times like these, it is somewhat comforting to recall a period when citizen action was more or less successful. It was 1960, and the sign across the back window of our sagging station wagon carried a message which would have ceased to be controversial a century or so earlier, but it still packed enough of a wallop to net us several undeserved traffic tickets, and rock throwings in the southern part of the state. The words were simply enough, reading "We Want Public Schools". It had been printed and distributed by HOPE, Inc. (Help Our Public Education). Our beginnings were small, just seventeen people gathered in the living room of the parents of five public school students in Atlanta. Our group included two lawyers, three educators, a couple of businessmen, and the rest mothers. The goal ahead seemed impossible to achieve.

It had, of course, long been clear that segregated public schools were doomed. As far back as 1935, the Murray versus the University of Maryland decision had established the right of Negroes to enter institutions of higher learning, and in 1954, the Brown versus Topeka decision had extended the right to lower schools. Then the crisis had taken a giant step in our direction, with five Negro parents demanding the right to enter their children into white public schools the following fall.

Our state legislators, in defiance of the Supreme Court decision, had responded by enacting a set of laws designed to close every school in the state before admitting a single black student. Georgia seemed determined to embrace ignorance rather than submit even to token integration. The group which met that wintry evening did not debate the moral issue at all, for there were reactions among us which ranged from one who commented that "Halitosis is better than no breath at all" to those who believed, as I did, that the Supreme Court decision was the only one compatible with our democratic form of government. However, we all had one thing in common, the possession of genuine bawn-and-bred southern draws. This was a virtual necessity, since any questioning of the governors statement that not one transfer student would be admitted during his administration was invariably questioned in turn, "Where do you come from anyway? You just don't understand the situation!" Since I had a foresighted grandmother who had been born during the Battle of Atlanta, and moreover, born in the basement since the Yankees were occupying the rest of the house, I was the natural

choice to head the speakers' bureau, and she was exhumed whenever I addressed civic associations. To the west, Little Rock served as a grim warning of what could happen to us, but it also offered an inspiring example of what citizen action could accomplish. We were guided in the organization of our group by the "Women's Emergency Committee to Open Our Schools", the only group in Arkansas' embattled city to fight for public education. They opened an office, ran advertisements, organized television programs, made weekly mailings to as many as 5000 people, and interviewed group leaders and political officials. Informed sources credited the Women's Committee with the eventual reopening of the four closed high schools to their 3500 students.

We were certain that the people of Georgia did not want their schools closed. However, their elected officials had told them in positive tones that some form of private education could be devised which would provide segregated education. One by one, the foundations for such a program had been chipped away by the federal courts, which denied the use of public school buildings, and finally declared unconstitutional any law that sought to evade the Supreme Court ruling.

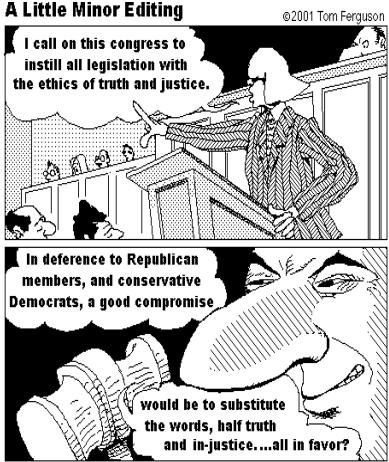
HOPE's task, then, was to acquaint the parents of the state with the stark confrontation they faced - integrated schools or no schools at all. We were sure that parents were unwilling to pay such a price for what was euphemistically called our "southern heritage". Education meant much to Georgia, which spent a larger portion of its tax dollars for schools than any other state. In spite of this, our state officials seemed determined to stake their future political careers on the chance that voters would prefer continued prejudice to continued public education.

It was of tremendous help that we were aided in our task by the clear and forceful writing of Pulitzer Prize-winning editor of The Atlanta Constitution, Ralph McGill, who courageously agreed to be the principal speaker at our first public meeting. That occasion was frightening, for only a short while before, The Temple of the Reform Jewish congregation was bombed. The attack came at about three in the morning. Fortunately, no one was in the building, which suffered grievous damage. However, it was clear that anti-Semitism was not the cause. It was the fact that the Rabbi, Jacob Rothschild, had taken a leading part in our efforts to keep the schools open. It was a tremendous relief that our meeting was well attended, and that there were no vocal objections to the words of the speakers.

In fact, increasing numbers of folks began to speak out, first the ministers, then scientists and professional groups. More than four hundred of the city's leading doctors signed a petition asking for continuation of public schools.

HOPE did not, of course, claim credit for the awakening of all these groups, but we were the first to speak out on an issue which was being doggedly ignored. From the original seventeen voices crying in the wilderness, there were now 50,000 supporters in ninety of Georgia's counties, and when the state

For more information, contact [matthew@atlantaprogressivenews.com](mailto:matthew@atlantaprogressivenews.com)



use of energy resources. As oil goes into an inevitable decline, our society must find new and way more benign power sources. We must now see ourselves as world citizens able to work together as equals to solve the enormous problems thrust at us by a rapidly changing planet. There is no one else to get us out of the awesome jam we're in. And war is for sure the dumbest solution imaginable. We are challenged to become sane for once and put our immense collective energy and creativity to work for the benefit of all. The Mighty Great Speckled Bird flies with purpose into this future vision. We hope you join us on the journey.

Write for us. We welcome new material and will publish you after review by our collective. This collective body intends to grow with new voices from everywhere. We are for sure opinionated. Some of our authors speak a truth way different from what you believe to be true. Read the diversity of our voices to extend the reach and depth of your voice.

Note this disclaimer: The Mighty Great Speckled DISCLAIMER states that each author retains full rights to her/his exposition. The Bird neither endorses nor affirms the veracity of the articles we provide in our pages of hardcopy and our Web presence. The truth presented by these various authors is theirs and theirs alone.

Realize that our new voices will expose you to the intense heat of dissent from the ordinary. This current Bird issue most certainly will anger some of you. Reply with

care and intelligence to our email address and we will publish your dissent.

- bw -

## Oh, Boss of America

The president claims to "come from the gut!" but that obviously is just a way of rationalizing/justifying policies that would provoke widespread opposition if spoken. These policies (war on environment, on enrich people, on constitution), his "gut" apparently tells him, will reduce his fear and enrich his class in one fell swoop. Coming down into reality, presence, now, is where the real "gut" is, where we experience our connection to totality, where we are already safe and can shed our "need" to dominate others, to win, to build empire, to act out this stuff that is trashing the life system. (see Echardt Tolle's *A New Earth*). -*if*-

Legislature met in January, 1960, a petition was presented to them. Although they did not repeal any of the laws which would prevent the enforcement of a pupil placement law, they did create a commission to hold public hearings in every congressional district to hear public opinions on the subject, and report their findings to the governor, who was authorized to call a special session of the lawmaking body before the schools would be finally closed.

When the commission came to Atlanta, my oldest son, John, who had recently been named the STAR Student of the district, spoke, pleading that the schools would stay open to enable his five younger siblings to enjoy the privilege which he, now a high school senior, had been granted. As I beamed with pride, a surprising blow was dealt me. I had noted with pleasure that, among the listeners, was my favorite teacher, who had made my fifth grade year a delight. As I ran to greet her, she accosted me, asking how I could possibly allow my son to express such heretical opinions. She went on to tell me that she would abandon the profession of teaching if the schools were integrated. In spite of others who shared her opinion, the commission heard from far more who wanted their children to learn, so that, before the fateful September opening day of school arrived, the Legislature had agreed to accept a plan for very gradual integration. It left much to be desired, for it admitted to formerly white schools a very small number of senior applicants. There were journalists from around the world on hand to observe the historic event, and there was no violence at all. At one school, Northside High, the transfer students were greeted by friends, for encouraged by Allison Williams, pastor of nearby Trinity Presbyterian Church, several of the Northside High seniors, members of a youth group at the Church, had arranged for the transfer students to come to social gatherings during the preceding summer. President of the Northside High Student body, Jim Martin, was especially active in making the transfer students feel welcome.



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