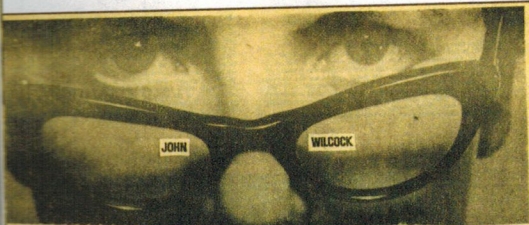


## JOHN WILCOCK

*Village Voice, East Village Other,  
Los Angeles Free Press,  
Other Scenes*

I was one of the five people who started the *Village Voice*. After five years, a guy called Walter Bowart, in the East Village, figured the *Voice* was kind of passé, so he started the *East Village Other*. I went and became the first editor of that, and while we were sitting around in the office of the *East Village Other*, we realized that there were five papers by then which were basically alternative papers—which were really the first alternative papers. Up to that time, any paper that wasn't a regular weekly paper just covered the Mother's Institute or, you know, boring things. The five



original papers were: the *Los Angeles Free Press*, with Art Kunkin; Max Scherr's *Berkeley Barb*; the *Fifth Estate*; *The Paper*, in [East] Lansing, Michigan; and our own paper, the *East Village Other*. And as a result of that, we put together the Underground Press Syndicate [UPS]. Any underground paper anywhere in the world was allowed to join on one condition: they had to send a copy of the paper to every other paper in the UPS. And the way we initially made money was to sell subscriptions to *Time* magazine, but that didn't bring in much. Then this guy Tom Forcade turned up (he later started *High Times*

after a dope run). He took over UPS and sold the rights to Bell & Howell to microfilm all the underground papers. So that's what initially financed the underground papers. And there were six hundred papers at one time, all over the world. Everywhere I went in the world I was interviewed because people were interested in this phenomenon, these American underground papers. And every underground paper I ever went to believed in two things: they wanted to end the Viet Nam War and to legalize marijuana.

## PAUL KRASSNER

*The Realist*

I was working for Lyle Stuart (I started in 1953, and it was in 1958 when I started *The Realist*), who edited a paper called *The Independent*. It was the precursor to the underground press and was essentially against censorship, but it was in the tradition of *I.F. Stone's Weekly* and George Seldes's *In Fact* and, you know, there was a whole tradition, in that time, of publications going back to Tom Paine. I started out just filling envelopes with issues of *The Independent*, mailing them out—and I ended up as their managing editor. That's where I got my journalistic apprenticeship. At that point our office was a tiny, tiny office on Forty-Second Street in New York right off, I think it was, Sixth Avenue. Lyle was a big fan of *MAD Comics* and

*Rat Subterranean News*, vol. 2, no. 14 (1969).  
Wilcock surveys the scene.

Opposing page: *East Village Other*, vol. 2, no. 5 (1967). "Roll up, roll up . . . Ladies and gentlemen take your seats for the greatest show in America since Joe McCarthy did his famous TV pratfall. It's the Angry Arts Festival and it's all over New York City—now!" —Lead paragraph in Dick Preston's cover story on Angry Arts Week.



## HOWARD SWERDLOFF

*New York High School Free Press,*

*John Bowne Was a Pacifist*

We were a group that had representatives in a variety of schools, in dozens and dozens and dozens, probably hundreds, of schools. We distributed this newspaper all over the city. At the height of its publication we printed forty thousand copies a month.

I was a student in Queens, New York, at John Bowne High School. We all had our little papers going in our various schools. I was printing a paper in my school called *John Bowne Was a Pacifist*. We all had our little copies of different newspapers that we published. Some were more or less elaborate than others. We knew each other because we were working together in the antiwar movement originally, and out of the experiences we had in the summer of 1968 at the Democratic Convention in Chicago, among other places, we became progressively more interested in other issues besides the war.

If you were white, chances are you came to this through the antiwar movement, opposition to the Viet Nam war. We had been doing this for a couple of years already, most of us. New York City had a very active opposition to the war in Viet Nam. There was an organization in New York called the Fifth Avenue Vietnam Peace Parade Committee on Seventeenth Street, and a lot of us would go there after school. They provided us with facilities to publish our little antiwar newspapers. You would meet students from all over the city there—from Bronx Science, from Seward Park, Brooklyn Tech, you name it. And there was an antiwar organization focused

on high school students called the High School Student Mobilization Committee, and a number of us were active in that.

In 1968, where the genesis of this paper occurs, we were a mixed group of kids, white and black, male and female, and from all over the city in New York. Since we were breaking new ground, doing something that hadn't necessarily been done before, we had all kinds of access to equipment and money and resources that we probably would not have if this happened again today. For example, there was a newspaper in New York called the *New York Free Press*, and it was published out of an office on West Seventy-Second Street off Broadway. They gave us access to their facilities at night, after they went home. Professional typesetting equipment, a fully equipped office, and they actually had a woman who was selling advertising for the *New York Free Press* and she sold advertising for us. We had full-page advertisements from Columbia Records. I don't think that would happen today. On the front page we had "Anarchist Calls to Insurrection," and inside you had full-page advertising from record companies, movies and clothing stores in the city, etc. This office was also producing a pornographic newspaper, the *New York Review of Sex*, a high-class version of *Screw*. We also were exposed to a lot of stuff that was going on there that people would be sensitive about today.

A lot of the members of our staff and activists in our organizations were

*East Village Other*, vol. 3, no. 39 (1968).

Following page spread, left: *Gothic Blimp Works*, no. 3 (1969). "I wanted to do something sexy, basically, and I love cats and I love lions. The sexiest thing I could think of was actually, if it were actually possible, to have sex with a lion and have a baby that was part lion; it was just a great concept. Of course, I've always been a real fan of the jungle comics and jungle girls, so she [Panthea] was kind of a jungle girl character." —Trina Robbins. Following page spread, right: *New York High School Free Press*, no. 8 (1969).



new york

# HIGH SCHOOL FREE PRESS

ISSUE 8  
SPECIAL  
CONSPIRACY  
EDITION  
APRIL-MAY '69

5 cents in schools  
15 cents on newsstands

"four letter words,  
filthy references,  
abusive and disgust-  
ing language, and  
nihilistic propaganda."

-Judge Bartel

"Of, by, and for liberated High School Students"



A mother pleads for her son's freedom at Erasmus High School. his freephoto by Miriam Bokser

## HAPPY MOTHER'S DAY



what we called red diaper babies. I wasn't one of those. I was an All-American boy—I was a Boy Scout and an honor student. I lived in Queens and had no connection with the cosmopolitan world in Manhattan. I played in the local band and went to a little provincial high school in Queens, so all of this was new to me. I didn't understand the nuances of the left—the Trotskyists and the Communists, or any of that. I wasn't interested either. I was doing this because I felt that the principles that this country was founded on were being violated by the Viet Nam War, and I had a certain kind of antiauthoritarian streak in me that is very American, you see it today among the Libertarians on the right more than you might see it on the left. That was my thing. We had a variety of perspectives, but what we all shared was this kind of exuberance and antiauthority.

Then of course the African-American students were already in conflict with the authorities over civil-rights issues and over cultural issues that were specific to them. That was already going on before we became active and aware, and we made alliances with them. We started getting very sophisticated about our roles and our power struggles, and we

made alliances with African-American students, with Latin students, and we developed a fairly sophisticated degree of coordination by the spring of 1969.

One of the things I left out was that there was a teacher strike in New York in September of 1968.\* This gave us all kinds of free time to develop our talents, to build organizations, which we did. That fall was really important because we devoted all of our efforts to building this student organization and this student newspaper.

We went around the city opening up schools in alliance with the black student organizations, and we had the newspaper to give out to students who were milling around or in the buildings conducting freedom classes. We now had this very impressive newspaper and, of course, the strike and our reaction to the strike was on the front page of our newspaper and we started to make connections between all of the stuff that was going on. It was very natural that all this stuff started to fall into place.

*Sansculottes*, no. 24 (1967). Based out of the Bronx High School of Science, *Sansculottes* was one of the earliest high school underground newspapers in New York City. Here they issue a call to mobilize fellow high school students interested in attending the October 1967 antiwar demonstration in Washington.

\*The strike stemmed from a May 1968 dispute between the United Federation of Teachers (UFT), led by Albert Shanker, and the administration in the Ocean Hill–Brownsville school district over the dismissal of thirteen teachers there. The Ocean Hill–Brownsville area of Brooklyn was one of three newly decentralized school districts in the city, part of a pilot program initiated by mayor John Lindsay to test the efficacy of community-led school boards. Though once a predominately Jewish neighborhood, the area was, in 1968, a mostly black community, and the newly formed, community-elected school board voted to dismiss thirteen teachers who were all white and almost all Jewish. Albert Shanker and the UFT protested this action as a violation of the teachers' rights and a long, protracted battle ensued. In a series of strikes that took place between September and November 1968 there was a citywide shutdown of the public school system for a total of thirty-six days. During this period, parents and sympathetic teachers and administrators would routinely go around opening schools, but it was only the students who were able to actually keep the schools open and functioning for any length of time. Though the union ultimately prevailed, the strike was widely seen to be a racist denial of the wishes of the Brownsville community and served as a unifying issue for student-activists all over the city.



section of the movement, including people like Tom Hayden and other key SDS people. So we went to this thing and met with representatives of the Viet Cong, the NLF [National Liberation Front]. It was funny. We had a chartered plane and it had barely taken off when Malcolm Boyd—he was the first one that I saw—broke out a joint. It ended up there were people smoking dope on that entire airplane—the air was just green. At that time, that was a revolutionary thing.

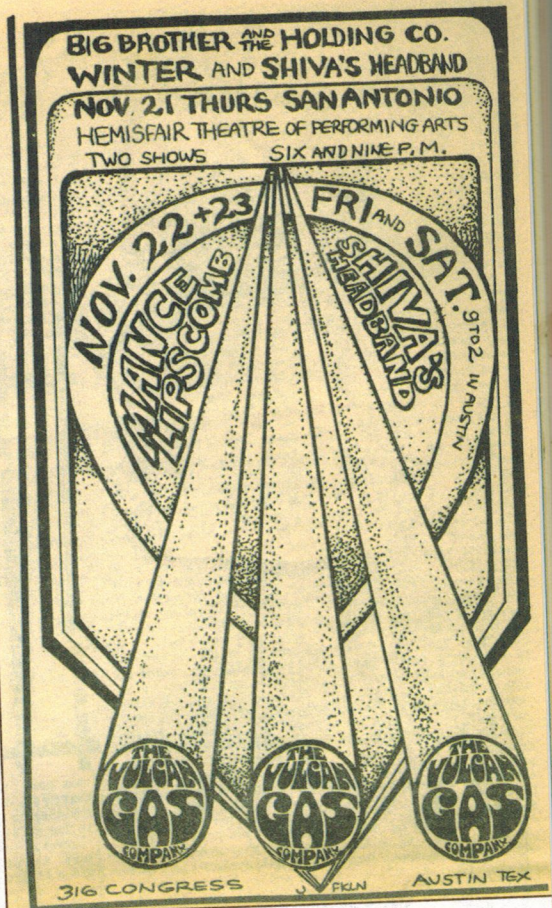
I don't think that there is such a thing as objectivity. We just thought we were advocacy journalists, but we made our biases clear. One of the important things about the underground press was that it was a collective, communal experience, and everybody came in and got involved and became a part of it, and got politicized through the process.

### BEN MOREA

*Black Mask, The Family*  
(Up Against the Wall/Motherfucker)

I went to see the Diggers and stayed with them a couple weeks in about 1963, before *Black Mask*. Peter Berg, Peter Coyote, and Emmet Grogan were the main three. I went out there and stayed with them and tried to understand where we were similar and where we were different. I was friends with them, I liked them, but we were very different. They came out of theater, the Mime Troupe, and we came out of art and evolved to be more political than they did. We were much more action freaks than they were; we became stone street fighters. Everything else fell to the wayside, at some point that's all we were doing. We had evolved from artists to warriors. We

were part of that "hip community." We did a lot of LSD and were completely comfortable with hip culture, but we, at the same time, were political and saw ourselves as warriors. So there was always this gap—we were not hippies but we were definitely not political. We were some other entity, an amalgam.



*Rag*, vol. 3, no. 6 (1968).

Opposing page: *San Francisco Express Times*, vol. 1, no. 33 (1968). Photos by Jeffrey Blankfort. "He didn't hit me in the head because I was wearing a helmet. I had a kind of bicycle helmet. Cops don't like hitting people on the head if they're wearing helmets."

Following page spread, left: *Helix*, vol. 6, no. 5 (1969). The San Francisco Mime Troupe comes to Seattle.

Following page spread, right: *Berkeley Barb*, vol. 7, no. 16 (1968).





WE ARE OUTLAWS!

THE CITIES ARE

THE NEW FRONTIER

THERE IS NO LONGER ANY DISTINCTION BETWEEN THEORY AND ACTION



A NEW MANIFESTO:

THERE ARE NO LIMITS TO OUR LAWLESSNESS

We defy law and order with our  
bricks bottles garbage long hair  
filth obscenity drugs games guns  
bikes fire fun a fuckin' — THE  
FUTURE OF OUR STRUGGLE IS THE  
FUTURE OF CRIME IN THE STREETS.

WE ARE ALL CRIMINALS IN THE  
BLIND EYES OF PIG AMERICA — In order  
to survive we steal cheat lie forge  
deal hide a kill — THE FUTURE BELONGS  
TO THE FREE SPIRIT OF THE OUTLAW  
And we take the outlaw's oath &

ALL  
PROPERTY IS TARGET  
ALL LAWMEN ARE  
ENEMY!

From  
now on  
Total  
Disregard

for the man's  
home jobs polit streets  
stores churches daughters  
sons pets media culture games  
goals laws & orders

WE ARE THE FORCES OF CHAOS AND ANARCHY  
WE ARE EVERYTHING THEY SAY WE ARE AND WE ARE PROUD OF  
IT — WE ARE OBSCENE & LAWLESS  
DIRTY VIOLENT & YOUNG. HIDEOUS DANGEROUS

WANTED

up against the wall / MOTHERFUCKERS

IS HOW WE LIVE

POLITICS

BAMN

by any means necessary



The Free Store was on Tenth Street on the uptown side of Tompkins Square Park. Well, let me correct that, we had two of them. We had one also on Tenth Street, I believe, around Third Avenue. I'm not sure which came first. It was a community center, it had clothing, and we had access to other tools. For instance, if a person who was AWOL came in we would have clothing to give them, would get them ID printed (the printing press wasn't there, we had a mimeograph machine, but we would take them to the printer). We had a doctor and two lawyers under retainer. So if you came in the Free Store needing medical or legal help, we would send you. We had six crash pads that we rented so that we would have a place to put runaways who came in to the Free Store. The Lower East Side was very dangerous for young people. There were a lot of hippie kids, or runaways, or whatever you want to call them, who would come to the Lower East Side thinking it was a nirvana, and it was a dangerous ghetto. A lot of kids were getting beat up, getting raped, so we would protect them, take care of them. It was just a logical outgrowth. We were a community organization, we felt.

We would also disseminate free food out of the Free Store. We had working relationships with Judson Memorial Church, which was a liberal, left-leaning church. They would give us papers saying we were nonprofit so we could go to Dannon Yogurt and get all the yogurt for a week that was mismarked. We would get thousands of yogurts every week, and we had, like, fifty-five-gallon drums or garbage cans that we would fill with yogurt, and we would distribute it in the streets. We had a free dinner night once or twice a week and we would use those

same papers to go to the Hunt's Point Market so we could get food that was a little old but yet still edible; we could get it free. We could go to the Fulton Fish Market and get free fish that was marginal whether they could sell it, but it was still good. Once or twice a week we would have a feast that would feed around four hundred. See, one of our things was there was a certain cultural antagonism between the ghetto-dweller and the youth, the hippie. They didn't quite have the same background, so our role was always to try and ease that tension. So our meals had ghetto and hippie youth. Then we would have free concerts. We'd have black bands or steel drum bands, rock bands, and Latin bands all playing together so the audience would be all three. I mean, that was our goal, it was conscious. We would try to bring together art and politics or ghetto and hippie—we were always trying to bridge gaps.

We mostly printed our own stuff, but the machine was open to the public. I mean, we're anarchists, we're not going to say, "You can't use the machine." But generally we printed our own daily stuff, twice a day, three times a day, once every other day. It was not by schedule. A lot of the flyers we put out, like say somebody got busted, we'd put out a flyer, "Hey, such and such happened." Or say there was some bad LSD on the street, we'd put out a flyer saying, "Be careful of this purple acid." It wasn't just political, we were never just political and that's why the politicians didn't like us. They couldn't figure it out. Either we were wasting our time or we were being frivolous. We didn't see it that way; we were neither wasting our time nor being frivolous. We were being total. Warning people about bad acid was just as important as fighting



the tactical police force, to us. That was the difference between us and everybody else, and there was no one else like that. The conclusion we came to then [was that] it was a full time occupation. We were almost suicide warriors. We'd wake up in the morning and say, "Well, maybe this is our day." It was just that's how it was; there was no, "Maybe we'll wait for politics, or we'll wait for this election." Each day it was like, "Maybe this'll be our day, maybe we won't make it."

That sense of absolute struggle was in everything. It wasn't just the demonstration, "OK, next Saturday we're gonna go out and demonstrate." Our life was a demonstration, morning till night every day, in whatever form. For instance, we cut the fences at Woodstock. To me, that was no less important than storming the Pentagon. See, that's the difference between us and all them Leninists and Maoists and horseshit ideologues: we didn't think one was more important than the other. Life was important. What was happening at Woodstock was an affront to us, to the culture. That was as important as going into the Pentagon, but no politico would ever think that. They had this hierarchy of beliefs. If we were walking down the street and we saw an assault and we interfered and we were killed, that would be as important as dying in the struggle. That was the struggle. That's what the politicians never understood about us.

## HOWARD SWERDLOFF

*New York High School Free Press,  
John Bowne Was a Pacifist*

Franklin K. Lane High School, which was on the border of Brooklyn and Queens, was a place where there was a lot

of tension between the white and black students. Of course we had a guy there, a *High School Free Press* guy, who wrote a big article about it. There was a full-blown riot over a Confederate flag being put up and black students trying to take it down. These things all kind of merged into one another. We didn't see ourselves as journalists; we saw this as part of our total existence. We weren't just putting out a newspaper we were encouraging rebellion with this newspaper.

The SDS chapter up at Columbia University, which was near our headquarters on West Eighty-Fifth Street, tried to give us advice. Mark Rudd, Nick Freudenberg, all these characters from Columbia University used to come down and try to give us advice. We thought they were a joke. They would come down and try to get us to read Che Guevara's diaries or Mao Tse-tung. We listened to them politely but we thought they were idiots. We were so full of ourselves that there was no telling us anything. If you were over twenty years old, you couldn't give us any advice. We were very arrogant. We were charming because we were young, but if we had been a little bit older I don't think we would have been so charming.

Because of our young exuberance and our attractiveness to the media people, we had a guy who was making a movie about us following us. He had a Land Rover and so we took advantage of that. No subways for us. We had a film crew that drove us from school to school and provided us with lunches and, of course, some of us would go out with the filmmaker to Times Square at three o'clock in the morning and see Clint Eastwood movies and smoke cigars. We were big shots, we

Following page spread: *Rat Subterranean News*, vol. 2, no. 19 (1969).





format for pages, or whatever. We typed on an IBM Selectric and would type the stories twice so we would justify them. I don't know why we decided to do that, it was a lot of work. Then we would cut and paste—this was back when cut and paste meant cut and paste. It was a big event. Sometimes we worked for two days and two nights, straight through, with a little bit of chemical assistance, but primarily just on our adrenaline and energy because we were really so excited, and it was so much fun.

We had a lot of gall and a lot of chutzpah. We were fearless, and we just went out and did it. We learned as went along; we taught ourselves how to do it. It was never really slick, but it's remarkable that it came out as good as it was. *Rag* always had excellent writing, political analysis and cultural coverage. It was always very, very well written, and that was one of the things that pulled people. Also, when we started it we decided that we weren't going to be boring, we weren't going to be heavy, we were always going to have a lot of humor and a lot of cultural stuff, and in that sense, we sort of reflected the Austin community. We always had a lot of arts, art coverage and *actual* art in the paper, but we weren't like some of the papers that got so McLuhanesque that you couldn't even read it. *The San Francisco Oracle* . . . frequently you couldn't read the copy!

## MICHAEL KLEINMAN

*New York Herald Tribune*

It was a high school paper, distributed all over New York . . . fifty to sixty thousand copies.

My job was selling ads. I was really good at getting full-page ads from the record companies. We were actually their target audience, if they thought about it for ten seconds, which of course I asked them to think about for ten seconds. We were their test market—they loved us. We were getting all these freebies because we were from the press. They had parties, [we'd] go see shows, they'd get you into all the movies you could see. It was quite a racket, actually.

What money we had went right back into what we were doing. We had our own storefront on St. Mark's Place, eventually. We grew into the White Panther Party—we didn't want to be Yippies. We were Communists and we weren't afraid to say it or admit it in our approach back then. We had a three-point program: dope, rock 'n' roll, and fucking in the streets.

We shut down the whole New York City fucking school system one year. We all went to Stuyvesant High School. Back then only boys went. We were the class that integrated it with girls. We shut down that school three or four times, but we shut down the whole city in 1970. We led a march from Manhattan over the Brooklyn Bridge and met Boys High and all those dudes coming from Brooklyn, and then came back, took over the New School on Fifth Avenue and made that the headquarters. You don't even understand: there was barricades in the street, people were ready for war.