



## LIKE MUSHROOMS

### Points of Entry and the Birth of the Underground Press

**T**he birth of the underground press took place at the intersection of a period of rapid evolution in printing technology and the beginnings of what would become the greatest youth movement in U.S. history. By the late fifties and early sixties, not only was it possible to afford the printing bill for thousands of copies of your own tabloid-sized newspaper, chances were you would find a community of sympathetic souls to actually buy the thing.

Originally reflective of the regional character of the communities and scenes from which they sprang, the newspapers that would comprise the underground press grew to cover and sponsor sit-ins, be-ins, love-ins, yip-ins, Black Panthers, third-world liberation, women's liberation, gay liberation, grease power, red power, black power, brown power, student power, people power, abortion, crash pads, communes, comix, SDS, Weatherman, peace, love, self-defense, Viet Cong, Motherfuckers, hippies, Yippies, Diggers, dope, rock 'n' roll, and fucking in the streets.

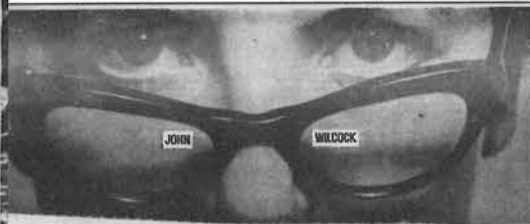
Unified on some fronts and divided on others, the one thing that prevailed above all else was an atmosphere of inclusion. Attendance was the price of admission, and the points of entry were as many as they were varied.



**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**

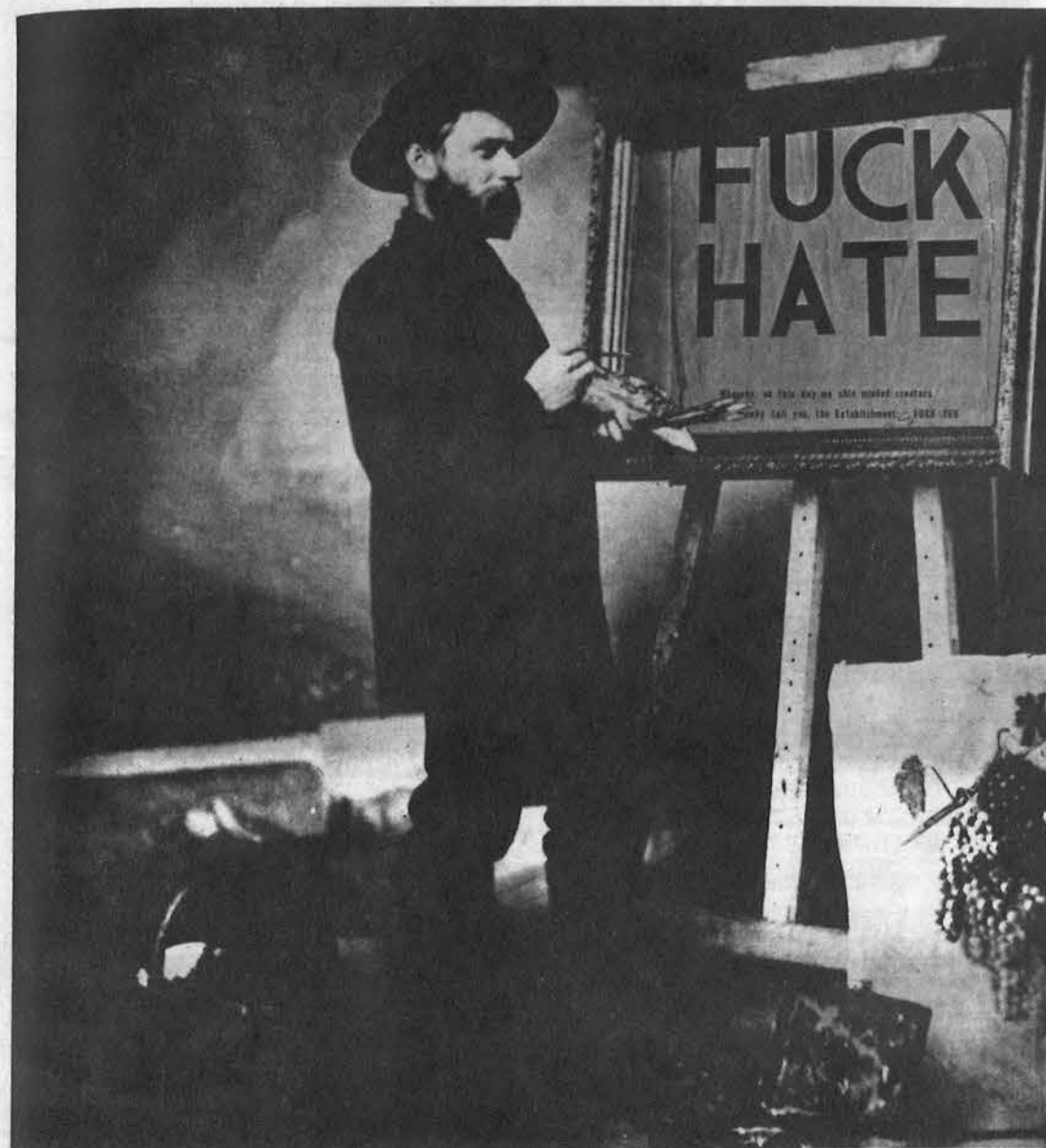
*The Realist*

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.

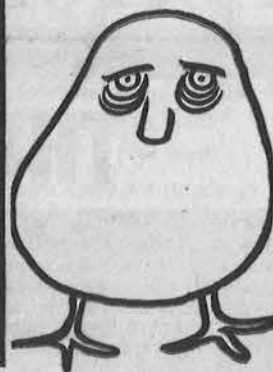
Opposing page: *East Village Other*, vol. 2, no. 5 (1967). "Roll up, roll up . . . Ladies and gentlemen take your seats for the greatest show in America since Joe McCarthy did his famous TV pratfall, It's the Angry Arts Festival and it's all over New York City—now!" —Lead paragraph in Dick Preston's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

INSIDE : FREE CUTOUT MANIFESTO

**THE ANGRY ARTS**

## social-political-religious criticism and satire

## The Realist



June-July, 1958

35c

No. 1

## An Angry Young Magazine . . .

"RUB HIS TUMMY in the morning before breakfast, and make a wish," says an ad that epitomizes all ads, "and Ho-Toi, the gleeful Chinese god of happiness, will throw his weight around for you in the land where dreams come true. Hand-carved, of teakwood. He's about 4 inches high, and men love him. We know because our husband swiped ours . . ."

And there you see a copywriter who has gone and tripped over her own editorial we. Unless, of course, the husband made a wish for an alternate wife, and the little idol actually *did* throw its weight around. We mustn't be too dogmatic about these things.

In any case, this editorial will be written in first person singular, as a sort of symbolic gesture toward a society where conformity has replaced the weather as that which everybody talks about, but which nobody does anything about.

However, I am neither for conformity *nor* for non-conformity. I am for individuality. If one's individuality is *in effect* non-conformity, then so be it. But basically, one's individuality consists of conformity—to oneself.

The purpose of the *Realist* is twofold.

First, it is devoted to the reporting and analysis of timely and significant conflicts that are ignored or treated only superficially by the general press.

Much of the material, therefore, will be critical of specific social and political activities of organized religion. As a recent editorial in the *Christian Century* states, "religion needs as much to

(Continued on Page 2)

## ARTICLES . . . FEATURES

**Marriage Mixture in the Melting Pot**

**The Role of Myth**

**The Dislocated Hipsters**

**John Foster Dulles Meets Bertrand Russell**

**A Critique of Pure Treason**

**What Makes Wyatt Urp?**

**Yes, Virginia, There Is a Loophole**

**Modest Proposals**

**Little Irish Baskets: Bundles for Britain**

**Taboo Or Not Taboo**

**The Man Who Saw God**

**Existentialist Nursery Rhymes**

**The Advertising Culture**

**What This Country Needs Is a Good Nickel Tickle**

**Liquor and Lobbies**

sent a subscription to it. Bill Gaines, the publisher of *MAD*, wrote back to Lyle and said he was a big fan of *The Independent*, and he signed the letter, "In awe." So they became friends and Lyle [eventually] became the general manager of EC Comics. When Lyle Stuart became the general manager we moved our office to 225 Lafayette Street, which was known as the *MAD* building. We got an office on the same floor, in fact, and I would sometimes do stuff for *MAD*, like take a bag of stuff to the post office (which I could then put on my resume that I was in direct mail).

It was a very exciting place to be and my friends were jealous of me. By the time *MAD Comics* was out, I was in my late teens, and so I was probably older than their usual readers, which were teenagers and preteens. But I was charmed by it—just the imagery of Superman going into a telephone booth to change his costume, but he can't because Billy Batson is changing into Captain Marvel there and he'd have to wait. It was mostly about comic books then, but, you know, it did leak out into other areas of the mainstream culture that *MAD* would parody.

Anyway it was in, I think, 1955 when I sold my first article to *MAD*. It was just a script called, "If Comic Book Characters Answered Those Little Ads in the Magazines." So it would be like Dick Tracy getting a nose job or Little Orphan Annie getting Maybelline because she had these empty oval eyes. They assigned the articles to an artist, and in this case it was to Wally Wood, and when they bought that from me, I told Lyle, "I'm floating."

Then I wrote this thing for *MAD* called "Guilt Without Sex"—it was a handbook for adolescents. They said it

was too grownup for *MAD*, but I did sell it to *Playboy*. It was the first thing that I sold to *Playboy*. There again was another floating experience. So, anyway, I said to Bill Gaines, "A million and a quarter circulation, I guess that's why you're keeping the magazine aimed at teenagers. I guess you don't want to change horses in midstream." And he said, "Not when the horse has a rocket up its ass." It had nothing to do with my article; it had to do with their circulation. It was the essence of my awareness that there was no satirical magazine for adults. This was before *National Lampoon* and *Spy* and before comic strips like *Doonesbury* and before TV shows like *Saturday Night Live*. All of the things that concerned me, all of the injustices and contradictions in the culture, there was really no satirical outlet for that. So in combining *MAD Magazine* and *The Independent*, the process [with *The Realist*] was to try to communicate without compromise, and the goal was to eventually put myself out of business—this was the fantasy—by liberating communication. The mission statement was, in effect, a combination of entertainment and the First Amendment.

*The Realist*, no. 1 (1958). "For the first four or five years, I was living at home with my parents. I was working out of Lyle Stuart's office, and he was only charging me like ten dollars a month, and I had a top-flight lawyer who was charging me fifteen dollars a month as a retainer. I was doing the editing and the delivery and whatever there was to do—it was a lone-person thing." —Paul Krassner.



## ART KUNKIN

Los Angeles Free Press

I became a tool and die maker, a master machinist, and I worked in the fifties at General Motors and Ford as part of the whole radical thing that I was involved in then. At one point the union wanted me to become a union executive and the company wanted me to go into management. I had been five years at GM and I didn't want either one, so I went back to school to become a history professor. This was in 1962-1963, and I was going to school nights and working in machine shops during the day. While I was in school there was somebody from the Socialist Party who was teaching a class there, and he had been approached by some Mexican-Americans who wanted to start a paper. He didn't have the time and [asked whether] I wouldn't be interested in doing that with them. So while I was going to school I began connecting with this Mexican-American group, and they were putting out a little eight-page paper once a month called *East L.A. Almanac*. I was the political editor, listed on the masthead as Arturo, and I'm writing about garbage collections in East Los Angeles.

A couple months go by, we're putting this paper out and it's being sponsored by a lawyer—you know five thousand copies, eight pages, once a month—and we get word that Vice President Johnson was coming to town to meet with the Mexican-American leaders. So the day before he was to come, the *L.A. Times* announced that he wasn't coming. The next day, he came anyway, and it was a terrible conference—he knew a great deal about the blacks but he knew nothing about Mexican-Americans. So

I'm writing this story up for this little paper and somebody calls me from City Hall, a Mexican-American, and he's got the story of why Johnson almost didn't come. It seemed that Johnson's trip was being backed by a group called the California Democratic Council [CDC], which was a group kind of at the fringe of the Democratic Party—very progressive, liberal people. Jesse Unruh, who was state treasurer of the California [Democratic] Party, and Roz Wyman, who was on the city council, decided they didn't want the CDC to get the credit for a visit by the vice president. So they began a campaign of phone calls and telegrams to Washington to stop Johnson from coming, saying he was going to be picketed and it was going to be very unpleasant. Johnson came anyway (after having announced that he wasn't coming), and I wrote this up. To protect my informant at city hall, I wrote the article as if I were drawing on Sacramento and Washington—the other end of these telegrams. So this story appears in this little tiny paper and the following day it gets picked up by the *Wall Street Journal* and *The New York Times*. I become a hero in the Mexican-American community for a few days, then I go back to writing about garbage collections again.

Two weeks before Kennedy was assassinated, Johnson was again in L.A. as the vice president. There was a conference of Mexican-Americans at the Ambassador Hotel, and we were distributing our paper in the lobby. One of the guys, Alex Porras, was approached by two well-dressed Anglo guys who said they were on Johnson's staff and [that] Johnson didn't like our article last August and he thought we were a bunch

Los Angeles Free Press, vol. 1, no. 9 (1964).

VOL. 1, No. 9

THURSDAY, SEPTEMBER 17, 1964

10¢  
(15¢ outside of Los Angeles)

# RACISTS IN GLENDALE

SEE PAGE 3

FROM THE BOSTON GLOBE

## THE L. A. COFFEE HOUSE SCENE

BY HARVEY SIDERS

LOS ANGELES—While the folk music boom continues to reverberate around Boston, the City of Angels comes nowhere near duplicating the action back East: an amazing fact considering the 50-odd coffeehouses that flourished hereabouts at the beginning of this decade.

But that difference is merely quantitative. Qualitatively, Los Angeles espresso emporia are unique, serving as a lively sounding board for the intellectuals or the pseudo-intellectuals, as well as an unpressured outlet for professional and amateur folk performers.

Nothing like them exists in the Hub. Bostonians are accustomed to the intimate type of atmosphere at their coffeehouses where name talent—local or national—is booked to appear on a regular basis.

Self-Entertainment

Here in Los Angeles, the coffeehouse is essentially a club, rather than a night club. Each is a market place and melting pot where the philosophy and the music are as strongly flavored as the Cafe Wein, Darjeeling tea or Dutch cocoa.

The patrons would rather entertain than BE entertained. Which means that a great many customers bring their own guitars or banjos to the coffeehouses, and literally swap notes. For those who can't afford their own instruments, there are some coffeehouses that rent guitars. Practically all clubs rent chess sets, and a few even rent Scrabble sets.

In the clubs where professional entertainment is featured, the management not only allows but encourages the do-it-yourself-between-sets activity.

One such coffeehouse is the Garret, presided over by a statuesque blonde contralto named Terra Lea. Miss Lea—who owns half interest in the coffeehouse and has been performing there since 1958—is a magnificent entertainer, interspersing a wide range of folk material and some pop tunes with warmth, wit and whimsy.

Too Many Imitators

"I'm not too concerned about the ethnic," she confessed. "I dig Belafonte, The Limeliters, Bud and Travis, Joe Raposo, even The Womenfolk who started right here at The Garret. All types of folk music appeal to me. But I am concerned about the example set for our young folk singers by Bob Dylan. The image he sets is one of being unkempt and slovenly. But he certainly knows how to write."

Another view of the current folkways came from Al Mitchell, entrepreneur of the rambling Fifth Estate on Sunset Blvd.

"There's much artificiality on the folk scene today — too many imitators," observed Mitchell. "There are urban blues singers trying to sound like refugees from a chain gang, and equally ludicrous are all those do-gooders protesting just for the sake of protesting."

And yet Mitchell's Fifth Estate—open every night from 7 p.m. to 6 a.m.—constitutes an elaborate protest in itself. "This is my answer to the blatant hustling, the pressures, above all, the lack of graciousness out there," he explained, pointing vaguely to the outside world. "People come in here, and as long as they buy one item, they can stay all night. I won't bug them. I believe a coffeehouse

should be an extension of a university."

Reinforcing this concept were his art gallery, a display of arts and crafts, his "conference room," where "some of the most stimulating discussions have been engendered," and the two main rooms where the patrons were playing rented instruments, listening to piped-in FM classical music, or meditating over their rented chess boards.

Country Revival

At another club, named simply The Coffeehouse where it seemed every table sported a chess game and a juke box was alternating from Miles Davis to Joan Baez to Van Cliburn, a young performer-customer talked excitedly about "Easterners like Dave Van Ronk, John Koerner and Eric van Schmidt."

Falling his 12-string harmonica guitar, Laurie Weiss claimed he could identify with their city blues: "I can relate directly to their style because I find it easy to slip into Negro dialect. It's natural to emulate the Negro—after all, we're carrying the white man's burden."

With considerably less ambiguity, Laurie suggested the Ash Grove for the "other end of the folk spectrum." As he put it, "They're ethnic as all hell."

Ash Grove is indeed the hotbed of traditionalism in Los Angeles. Operated by Ed Pearl—a young, wiry, energetic, loquacious intellectual who runs the well-attended UCLA Folk Music Festival each year—Ash Grove not only features name performers, but houses the School of Traditional Music.

Ed's single-minded devotion to the "public poetry aspect of folk music and the oral tradition of rural society" has resulted in a conspicuous revival of country music in the Los Angeles area.

"I've booked many Eastern folk artists, but I prefer the West Coast performers," Ed remarked. "You have a crazy world back there. Your folk singers are too commercial, too attracted by glitter. They're all recording too early, and so many of them are trying to sound black or trying to imitate the Scroggs style of picking."

"We don't push our folk musicians too fast out here. They learn slower, but more thoroughly. And here at Ash Grove, they're given a solid background in traditionalism. That's why I find the Kentucky Colonels musically superior to your Charles River Valley Boys."

And so it goes as in any art form, controversy as healthy as it is insoluble. But one thing is certain. The coffeehouses here are more stimulating because they encourage more direct participation.

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The Boston Globe  
Friday, August 28, 1964

THE D.A. vs. "OBSCENITY" - Part Three  
CUMMINGS COMMENTS on CITY CHARTER  
LIPTON BATTLES GOLDWALLACE  
THE JAZZ OF JOHN BANISTER  
CALENDAR OF EVENTS—SEE PAGE 8

A NEW HIP WEEKLY

10¢



EDITOR'S NOTE

The Free Press is planning in coming issues to carry a complete Coffee House and Folk Music Cabinet Directory. The addresses of the places mentioned in the Boston Globe article are:

The Fifth Estate, 8226 Sunset Blvd., L.A. 46. (Free Press offices are below in Suite 3).  
The Coffee House (Mother Neptune's), 4319 Melrose, L.A.  
The Garret, 925 N. Fairfax, L.A.  
The Ashgrove, 8162 Melrose, L.A.

BULK RATE  
U.S. POSTAGE  
PAID  
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Permit No. 29590

LOS ANGELES FREE PRESS  
8226 SUNSET BOULEVARD  
HOLLYWOOD 46, CALIF.

DATED MATERIAL

of Communists, and they walk away laughing. So I wrote this one up and this article appeared in December of 1963 when Johnson was already president. The first week of January 1964, everybody at the paper gets visited by the FBI (including the lawyer who is backing the paper), and everybody freaks.

The FBI came to visit me. I had always been told never to speak to the FBI without an attorney, but I'm not doing anything now, I'm writing in this little Mexican newspaper. These two FBI guys showed me their credentials and stuff, one was a tough guy and one was a nice guy. I kept them on the porch where I had some control over the conversation. They ask me if I'm a Communist, and I say, "No, I'm not a Communist. If you've looked into me, you know I have a program on KPFFK speaking for the Socialist Party." Through the Socialist Party I was working closely with Norman Thomas and Erich Fromm, the famous psychologist. I wrote some resolutions with Erich Fromm against the Democratic Party drift of the Socialist Party. So anyway, they say, "Thank you for telling us you're not a Communist." I felt like a shit for having spoken to them. Next thing they do is they give me a dozen names and they say, "Do you know these people? Would you like to talk about them?" And I said, "Well, I'll talk about myself, but I'm not going to tell you anything about these people." I knew every one of the twelve—they were all radicals. Dorothy Healey, the head of the Communist Party in Southern California was on there (I was Southern California chairman of the Socialist Party when I was doing this program for KPFFK). So I said, "No I'm not going to tell you

anything about these people." They walked away thanking me, and I felt stupid for having spoken to them. The next day I go to my machine shop job in East L.A. and they gave me my walking papers. I had been there exactly a year; they had to give me a vacation check. The owners locked themselves up in their office while the foreman told me I was fired and wouldn't give me a reason. The next day I spoke to people at the shop, and indeed the FBI had been there. So in January 1964 I'm out of work. I was really angry. I mean, I had been in the radical movement for years at this point and this was the first time that I had ever gotten singled out. As a matter of fact, when the FBI came to my door it was kind of flattering almost—somebody was paying attention for once. So I was, and still am, a skilled machinist and I could've gone out and got a job, but I went on unemployment insurance and started planning the *Free Press*.

I met a guy at FM (*Fine Arts Magazine*) Hal Marienthal, and he told me that he would help me get some money. He thought I needed \$10,000, and he would help me get the money if I could put together a staff of writers who could produce something equivalent to the *Village Voice* of New York. So I went back to KPFFK, and I was going through the Rolodex of all the people doing radio programming and picking out people that I thought might be good writers. While I'm sitting there the program director of the station comes yelling through the halls, I mean literally at the top of his voice, "Somebody hasn't showed up for a program! Does anyone want to get on the air?" I raised my hand, and, of course, he knew me. So I go into this little booth and for an

hour I do a program off the top of my head, "What I Would Like to Do with a Newspaper in Los Angeles." I spoke about the *Village Voice* and about all the different communities in Los Angeles. I didn't know who I was speaking to. I may have been speaking to hundreds of people; I may have been speaking to twelve people or two people. When you're sitting in a radio studio you have no idea who's listening.

The radio station was going to have a fundraiser, a Renaissance fair, in two weeks. I was active in the station and I knew that hundreds and hundreds of liberals would be there and, you know, it's kind of a kooky event. I knew the person who was doing it, Phyllis Patterson. So after I leave the radio booth and I've been speaking for an hour about the paper, I called her up and told her my idea. I said to her, "Could I have a table there and put out a leaflet about what I'd like to do?" And she says to me, "Well, I was going to do a paper for the fair, but I didn't have the time to get it together. Maybe you'd like to do a paper for the fair." So I went down to meet her the next day. I got dressed up in a suit and I go out there to meet with her and talk to her about the idea. She later told me she never thought I'd do anything. In the first week, talking to the KPFFK advertisers, we collected \$200 in advertising, and it was possible in that time to print an eight-page paper for \$125 (five thousand copies). Part of the story is that after I had left the machine shop I started a little print shop in Maywood, California, and I had sold it to go back to school and study. So I went back to my old print shop, to the owners, and they let me use the layout equipment.

In the second week we began putting this paper together, and by the

time of the fair, we had the *Faire Free Press* printed. It was called *F-A-I-R-E Free Press* on the front cover, and there were little tiny articles with headlines about Shakespeare getting arrested for obscenity and students having ban-the-crossbow demonstrations; an art review of the opening of the Mona Lisa painting; and a little article about Sir Walter Raleigh bringing tobacco back to England and the health problems that were created. In other words, all kinds of contemporary issues under the guise of medieval issues. This was on the cover, and we sold it for a buck a piece at the fair. You opened it up and inside was a statement about what I wanted to do to start a paper like the *Village Voice*. The main article was a feature on a bust at the Cinema Theater of a Kenneth Anger film on homosexuality. Then my ex-wife wrote a piece on nursery schools, and I had a piece about Joan Baez and a tax refusal, and I got a couple of music reviews. So inside was the *Los Angeles Free Press*. After the fair I had a couple thousand copies left, and I refolded the paper and put the [*Los Angeles*] *Free Press* pages on the outside and the *Faire Free Press* on the inside. It's kind of a remarkable little project. In the first week of doing this we raised \$200 through advertising. At the end of the fair, I had \$1,000. I gave KPFFK some money—there was an agreed-upon percentage because I had a little booth there and so forth.

Al Mitchell at the Fifth Estate [coffee house] gave me a basement office (I had gone over there with copies of the paper, the first *Faire* issue), and I spent the next month writing a business plan and trying to raise my \$10,000. I succeeded in raising \$600 from two friends: \$200 from one friend and \$400



from another. I started the paper with that, and we came out for the next ten years without a single break, sometimes with great difficulty.

8226 SUNSET BLVD.  
home of the round table  
\*CHESS  
\*GIFTS  
\*GALLERY\*  
\*8 pm 'til dawn  
CRAFTSMEN - ARTISANS!  
SPACE IS STILL AVAILABLE  
FOR YOUR BOOTH IN THE  
FIFTH ESTATE CRAFTS  
VILLAGE! CONTACT MR. AL  
MITCHEL AT OL 6-7673 after 8 pm.

**the Fifth Estate coffee house**

### BEN MOREA

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

I had been involved with jazz during my drug addiction days. I was a musician and every time I got out of jail I went back around the jazz world and got readdicted. I was in prison several times, but when I finally kicked for the last time, I was in jail and I got very sick, so they put me in the prison hospital, which was one ward in Roosevelt Hospital in Manhattan. In that prison hospital (which was some transition between prison and hospital; it was not a prison atmosphere, but yet it was segregated from the rest of the hospital) there was an occupational therapist that befriended me, a woman. She, for some reason, sensed that I had more potential than I had been utilizing, so she took it upon herself to really try to set me in a different direction, really help me to educate myself, give me the tools. She was an art therapist so I started painting. Besides studying different art movements

and philosophies, I became aware of a lot of the European art movements. After leaving the prison hospital (and I had vowed that I wasn't going to go back to drugs), I stayed away from the jazz world and, being a creative person, sought art as my artistic outlet.

Then I got involved with an art group. The person that originated this group, his name was Aldo Tambellini. One of his motivations was to bring art into the vernacular. We used to talk about primitive art. Primitive art was a total part of the life. So, in other words, they made masks as part of their spiritual world and carved their spoons, which were utilitarian items, but they were really artfully done. Their houses were really artfully done. Art was a total part of your life and culture, but in the west art became removed from life, and so one of his ideas was that we should break from that. Aldo developed these multimedia shows; they were the first multimedia shows done in America. He was a painter and sculptor, so he started painting on slides and he would project those slides so the paintings were projected on the wall. While it was projected, we had a black poet that participated with us, Calvin Hernton, we had a jazz musician playing, and we had a dancer on occasion (modern dance like in the Twyla Tharp tradition). I created these sound machines out of everyday items, like saws and grinders, but I made them into musical entities. I became more interested in Surrealism and Dada, and I started to see the need for the written and verbal attack on western culture, à la Surrealism and Dada. Ron Hahne, this other artist who was part of

*Los Angeles Free Press*, vol. 2, no. 34 (1965). "At the Fifth Estate I was doing the paper, and people would come down almost every night from the coffee house to visit me." —Art Kunkin

# BLACK MASK

No. 9

JAN. - FEB. 1968

5 Cents



"These smut sheets, are today's Molotov cocktails thrown at respectability and decency in our nation. . . . They encourage depravity and irresponsibility, and they nurture a breakdown in the continued capacity of the government to conduct an orderly and constitutional society."

Rep. Joe Pool (House Un-American Activities Comm.)

*Black Mask*, no. 9 (1968).

Aldo's group, agreed with me—so him and I started *Black Mask*.

Ron and I agreed: not only did we want to follow the direction of Surrealism and Dada, but we made it even more political. He and I more or less removed ourselves from Aldo's multimedia shows. It wasn't a hostile break . . . it was just, we evolved. So Ron and I did *Black Mask*. He and I worked on the layout and the visual. I was really the main editor and writer, but Ron went over everything with me, gave me his opinions. He and I worked on the covers, and we thought of the cover being very important, almost like a painting. We saw the cover as an artform.

At that time we worked in his apartment. Obviously he had a kitchen table, so we used that and would [do] layout [on it]. First we would sketch an idea, or I would suggest something and he would either agree or disagree and we would go further in our discussion. We did everything together. I would never say, "This is what we're doing." And he would never say, "This is what we're doing." We were also interested in Constructivism, and really interested in all the art movements of the modern twentieth century. We saw the layout as being an important tool, equal to the words. So we continued that for ten issues.

## JOHN SINCLAIR

*Work, Change, whe're,  
Fifth Estate, Warren Forest Sun,  
Ann Arbor Sun, Guerrilla*

Detroit was what you would call a cultural backwater of the United States at that time. Nothing was happening, and it had no connection to the outside world, everything was all hidebound. So you got your inspirations from reading an underground paper. Well, before the underground papers, the small poetry presses (that's where I came out of) had an underground system of communications and a lot of that was through mimeograph publications (but [there were] also people who could pay for printers). This was really outside the mainstream and it was just poetry and maybe a little bit of arts coverage on the edges, but it was the same paradigm as far as independent producers of literature banding together, sending each other their stuff. That's how you found out what they were doing in San Francisco, Los Angeles, Chicago, Atlanta, and Vancouver. Then when the papers sprang up, they were even more au courant because they had news of what people were doing in several areas against the war, against the draft, for the civil rights movement, all that kind of stuff.

Harvey Ovshinsky was a high school student when I met him. He had started

*The Paper*, vol. 2, no. 2 (1967). The Spike Drivers perform at a benefit for Harvey Ovshinsky's *Fifth Estate* newspaper.

Opposing page: *Berkeley Barb*, vol. 5, no. 5 (1967). The power of the Underground Press Syndicate. This photo was part of a full-page reprint in the *Berkeley Barb* of *Fifth Estate*'s coverage of Detroit's Twelfth Street riots in the summer of 1967. Caption reads: "*Fifth Estate* co-editors Ovshinsky & Werbe interview looters as they window-shop at a cleaners at the corner of Trumbull and Forest. Photo by C.T. Walker."



Detroit's first underground tabloid called the *Fifth Estate*. My wife Leni and I, my first wife, we saw this first issue of *Fifth Estate* and it was appallingly ugly. At the same time, we were thrilled because we were part of an arts community centered on a place called the Detroit Artists' Workshop, and we were proponents of the mimeograph revolution advanced by Edward Sanders here in New York City at the Fuck You Press. So we learned from him that you could publish off a mimeograph without it costing you very much money, especially if you could steal the paper and ink. We published books of our own poetry and other writings. We published a poetry magazine, an avant-garde jazz magazine—we did all this with mimeograph. It was a very grueling process, but you could do all the work yourself so you didn't have to pay a printer—that was prohibitive. We would have never published one book had we had to hire a printer. We didn't have any money at all. So we became very proficient with this, but it was a strenuous process. Then all of a sudden here's this paper . . . in Detroit. We said, "Wow, a tabloid. Why didn't we think of that?" So we sought out Harvey Ovshinsky and told him we were thrilled by what he was trying to do, and if he needed help we wanted to help. We knew how to do this. We knew how to write; we knew how to do layout. We knew all this stuff and we wanted to be a part of it. By the second issue I wrote a column for him, which was an arts column called The Coatpuller. It was about music, poetry, plays, other kinds of arts activity around Detroit from an underground perspective. Leni did the photography and helped with the layout, and then Gary Grimshaw came in and he did the layout. So I was intimately involved with them from the second issue.



## HARVEY WASSERMAN

Liberation News Service

When I grew up in Columbus, Ohio, I was in a Jewish youth organization, and our organization had conferences. Our region included Colorado, and when I was in high school I met this guy, Marshall Bloom, from Denver, who was a year older than me. We became friends, but I lost track of him over the years. In the spring of 1966 I opened *The New York Times* and there on the front page was my friend Marshall, who I hadn't seen in years, and he was leading a walk-out of the student body at Amherst College at the graduation because they had Robert McNamara as the speaker.

So when I graduated University of Michigan in 1967 I went that summer



to Europe and I found Marshall. I ran into him on the street, actually, in London, and he was leading protests against the London School of Economics. The lead editorial in the Sunday *London Times* was, "Bloom Go Home." He was really a big troublemaker. I stayed with him at his apartment, a place called Montague Mews. He had then been appointed to become the head of the Collegiate Press Service, which supplied articles to college newspapers around the country, and so he asked me (I had a Woodrow Wilson fellowship to go to the University of Chicago) to be the Chicago correspondent, and I said sure.

He went back to the U.S., and I went traveling around Europe. When I got back in September, I found that he had been thrown out of the Collegiate Press Service for being too radical. When he was thrown out of the Collegiate Press Service, he and Raymond Mungo, Veranda Porche, and a couple others had been riding around the country trying to raise money to start what Marshall called the Liberation News Service. The Liberation News Service was to supply articles, not to the collegiate press, but to the underground papers (of which there were hundreds that had started at the peak of the antiwar movement in the late sixties, in 1967 actually). So I came to see Marshall thinking I was going to be the Chicago correspondent of the Collegiate Press Service, and he said I would just be the Chicago correspondent of the Liberation News Service, and I said, "OK, that's fine." And so I went back to Chicago in September and Marshall was doing what he was doing trying to get the news service going.

On October 19, I came back to Washington because the big march on

the Pentagon was going to be on the twenty-first. Unfortunately for me, I got beat up in a rally so I wasn't in very good shape when I got to Washington. Marshall was there and we were all packed into this house on Church Street, on the northwest side right near Dupont Circle, which was kind of the hip area of D.C. On the twentieth, the next day, we had a meeting in a loft, somewhere on the northwest side, of all these editors who had come for the march, and Marshall put on his Sgt. Pepper outfit that he had gotten in London and convened this meeting. He said, "OK, this is the Liberation News Service." And it was just a really wild scene. Everybody's yelling, there's actually a fistfight or two—it was just really wild. Everyone was all decked out in their hippie costumes, all ready for the big march on the Pentagon, the war was at its peak, it was an amazing time. That was the founding of the news service.

### THORNE DREYER Rag, Space City!, Liberation News Service

I grew up in Houston. I graduated from high school in 1963. That was a period of time when things were just starting to happen, where there was this sense of possibility, this sense of history. You already felt it back then. And so I was primed, I was ready to do something when I came to Austin. I also grew up in an environment . . . my father was a writer, a fiction writer, and was a reporter and editor at the *Houston Chronicle*; my mother was a pretty famous artist, art teacher and gallery owner, Margaret Webb Dreyer, in Houston. She also became a major peace activist. She was

one of these larger-than-life figures, and I got a lot of my sensibility, a lot of my sense of the sacredness of human life (the basis for antiwar sentiments), from my parents, and especially from my mother. Their art gallery, Dreyer Galleries, was always the center of this kind of literary and progressive community in Houston. My mother always pulled people together, and that was the great ability that I've always had—to be a focal point, to pull people with lots of skills together to make things happen. So I came already with that sense, and Austin was just, you know, you'd walk around and you'd see these weird-looking people and you'd get this sense that things were happening, and obviously the drug culture was just starting to really explode.

In the early days it was mostly the coastal papers that were recognized—the *East Village Other*, the *Berkeley Barb* and the *Los Angeles Free Press*. The stuff that happened in the middle of the country the people weren't aware of, but I think that what we did was really very unique and seminal. *Rag* was incredibly influential. What happened at *Rag* was repeated, or affected what happened, in a lot of other places. Austin was unique. Austin was the perfect setting for it [*Rag*] because Austin already had that incredible tradition, that literary tradition, the cultural tradition, and had always been a center for progressive politics and for radical politics.

## U.P.S.

THE UNDERGROUND PRESS SYNDICATE is an informal association of publications in the "alternative press" and exists to facilitate communication between such papers and the public at large. Members of UPS are free to use each other's material. A current list of all UPS papers and advertising rate cards for individual papers are available by sending a stamped, self-addressed envelope to UPS, BOX 26, GREENWICH VILLAGE POST OFFICE, NEW YORK 10014. A sample packet of about a dozen UPS papers is available from the same address for \$4 and a Library Subscription to all UPS papers (about 50) costs \$50 for the remainder of 1968.

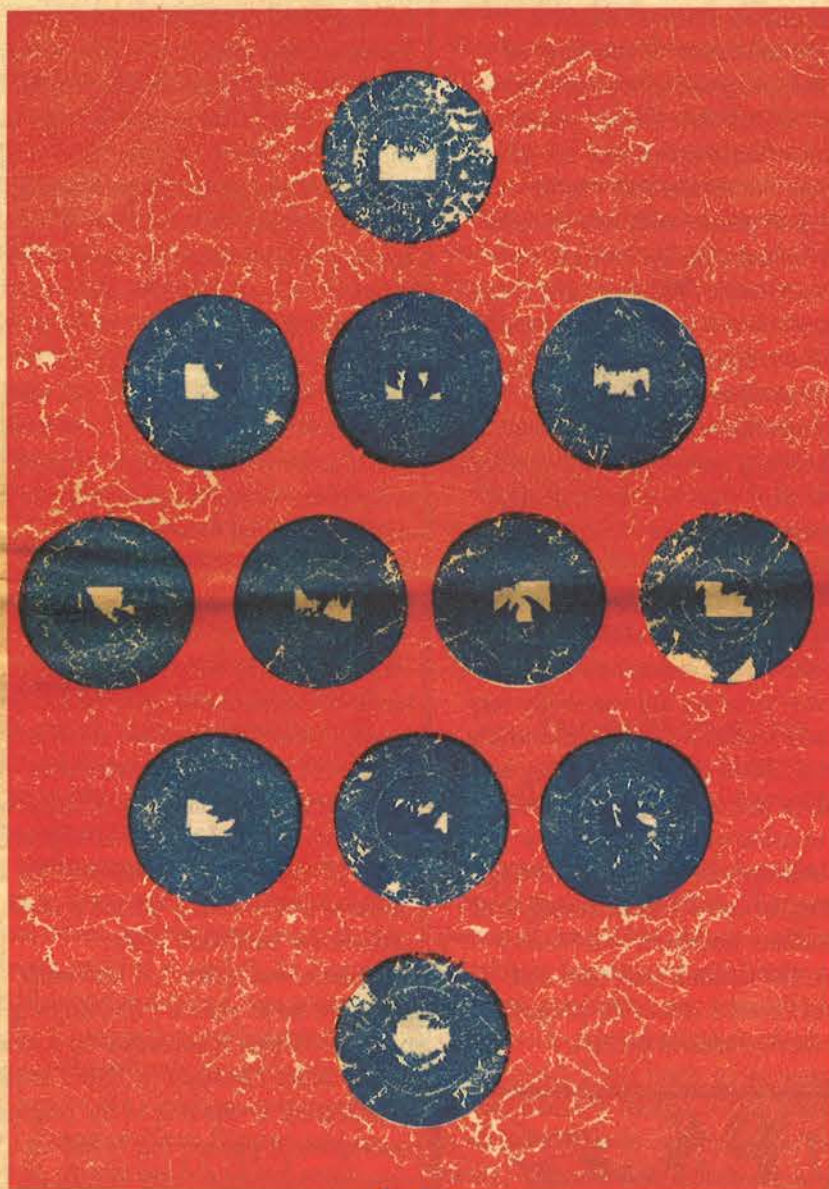
We were the sixth member of the Underground Press Syndicate. Unlike LNS, which was a real organization that fed packets of intense copy and photography and art to all the papers twice a week, the Underground Press Syndicate was primarily a commitment: One, that every paper would run the list of the underground papers in every issue; and two, that there was free reprint rights. All these underground papers suddenly had connections to each other. There wasn't an organization, it wasn't a thing—it was more a concept. We sent papers to everybody. We put everybody on our subscription list . . . we would get fifty papers a week, or something like that. We had tables and racks and everybody would come in and read the papers from everywhere. It was amazing because it started out being five or six underground newspapers and eventually there were hundreds all over the world. They just started popping up like mushrooms all over the country out of totally different kinds of communities, psychedelic drug communities (like the [*San Francisco*] *Oracle*) . . . some of them were very political, very radical, some of them were just kind of leftist student newspapers. They all had kind of different looks, a different feel, but they all had a sense of community with each other.

Austin was really tied into what was going on other places. I had met a guy named Michael Kindman who had a paper called *The Paper* in East Lansing [Michigan]. It was one of the original underground papers, and it was on a campus [Michigan State University]. I talked to Max Scheer, to a few people. There were several things that inspired *Rag*. We knew some of the people. They

*Open City*, no. 47 (1968).



# ORACLE



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# THE PAPER

Vol. II No. 17 East Lansing, Michigan, Week of February 27, 1967

can blanton  
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on: **The State of US** pages 2-3

**THE UNTENURED MIND**

UNDERSIGNED STUDENTS AND FACULTY MEMBERS OF MICHIGAN STATE UNIVERSITY, DEMAND THAT THE UNIVERSITY REVERSE ITS DECISION TO DISMISS W. GARY GROUT, J. KENNETH LAWLESS, AND ROBERT S. FOGARTY.

**LEGAL POT** p.8

The PAPER Forum p.4

georgy girl p.6

ACADEMIC FREEDOM (Part II) p.5

Lackey - Faulty Humanism p.7

brooklyn bridge p.9

columns p.14-15

LGM p.16

**COMMIT NO NUISANCE**

**HELP**

If the enthusiasm that has been exhibited in Bessey Hall can be maintained and channeled toward accomplishing these ends, an important step will have been taken in humanizing the technocracy in which we are all inextricably engulfed.



didn't know us, but we made contacts with them. The movement in Austin was really tied to the movement in other places. Austin SDS [Students for a Democratic Society] was one of the biggest and most important SDS groups in the country and was very influential in terms of the national SDS. It was kind of the Prairie Power, the anarchist wing, in many ways, of SDS nationally. A number of people from Austin ended up becoming national officers. All the key people who worked on *Rag* were also involved with SDS—there was incredible overlap, it was really the same people.

One of the things about the Austin New Left was that there was this amazing sense of community. We were all very tight. Not just tight in a closed sense, but it was always growing. Somehow *Rag* was just the next evolutionary step in that community. It was the voice of that community and it pulled the community together—it played both of those roles.

We were mostly on the west side of the campus, within ten or twenty blocks of the University of Texas all the way around. The University of Texas was very, very different then—the student union was really a center; the west mall was a big open space so people could have rallies; the Chuck Wagon, which was the coffee shop in the student union, was the center of an incredible amount of subversive activity. Back then we worked out of the student union. SDS was a student organization, even though half of us weren't students most of the time. Times were different. You could be a student and drop out, go back, drop out, go back, drop out, go back. You could find places to live for seventy-five dollars. It was much easier to live. It was much easier to function. It was much easier to

go to school, to be around campus.

There was a place called The Ghetto. The Ghetto was an old Army barracks on the west side of campus and it was the center for a latter-day beatnik, early bohemian kind of scene—[there were] the *Texas Ranger* people, like Gilbert Shelton, who started the *Fabulous Furry Freak Brothers* in *Rag*; Janis Joplin; Billy Lee Brammer, the author who wrote *The Gay Place*. There were all these different groups. There were motorcycle groups that were kind of lefty, there were the spelunkers, there would be a table of the old Socialists. In the Chuck Wagon all these people would gather around, you know, and what *Rag* did was it gave all these people a place to come. When the paper would come out it would be a big event.

### ALICE EMBREE

*Rag*, NACLA.

*Rat Subterranean News*

My dad was a professor at UT, so I grew up in Austin. They had fairly liberal ideas about integration. I had been in a couple of situations in high school that kind of changed me. Getting tossed out of a restaurant with a black girl on our marching squad . . . you know, that kind of thing. We had gone from Austin High down to Corpus Christi, and they got us all out of this bus (it was this stupid marching thing) and then had us standing around and no one would tell us what was going on. Then finally we get back in the bus, we go to another place, we all sit down. I was with another woman named Glodeen, who is the only African-American on the marching squad, and this waitress came over to our table and said, and you know this is so

Southern, "I'm sorry, sweetheart, we just can't serve you here." So polite, and she probably didn't want to be doing it; she was told to do it. I got up and said, "They won't serve Glodeen. We need to leave." And everybody else goes, "But we just ordered, Alice." It was just one of those markers in your life where you realize what other people will do and what you will do, and what it really meant to the person I was sitting with. So at least three of us stomped off to Woolworth's and we ate, because Woolworth's was integrated at the time (it was 1963).

Then when I was a freshman at UT in 1963 I got involved in civil rights stuff because dorms were segregated, and some movie theaters, and some restaurants, and the football team was segregated. I try to explain particularly to younger people that we had the civil rights movement as the example of moral courage and direct action. It was like, you can do things and change things. That was the first thing, and then I slowly got involved in [the] university freedom movement. Then Kennedy gets assassinated, and none of us were enamored of Johnson (some of us might have been enamored of Kennedy at the time), so I got involved with SDS in the spring of 1964 and then got involved in antiwar stuff.

I think it was like finding a place where you belong, you know. It was really before the draft kicked in very heavily and so, you know, anybody who was different, we were all mushed together by the other people and we all kind of hung together in certain ways, whether you were politically left or culturally left. There was, I think, a bigger overlap in Austin than in a lot of places that way. I think it's the weird atmosphere of Texas, it kind of throws you to the extremes. You can't hide; we stood out.

I dropped out and went campus traveling with Jeff [Shero] for SDS. (I think that was 1965 that we were doing that, spring of 1965.) We would show up in a town with a list from *New Left Notes*, cold, and start trying to find people. [We were] talking to people and then having meetings on what the issues were, organizing chapters and stuff. We went west in a station wagon called Butterscotch. We went all the way up to Laramie, Wyoming, and organized, I think, the last state to have an SDS chapter. We were in Utah—I mean, good Lord! Some very desolate places.

I think I do stand out, probably, as one of the women who found my voice through the women's movement. When *Rag* started I was certainly . . . I think if you ask a lot of people [they'll say], "Oh, Alice, you know, spoke up at meetings. Alice got put on disciplinary probation. Alice was a leader." But I didn't really see myself as a writer. I typed. That's what I did, I typed. I worked at this place, a Peace Corps training place, and I would take the [IBM] Selectric out at night. I didn't even think of it as marginally wrong, I was like, "Well, it's not being used." But I did not see myself as a writer and I didn't really write anything until, I guess it's not that much longer, it was

Previous page spread, left: *San Francisco Oracle*, vol. 1, no. 9 (1967). Cover artwork by Bruce Conner. Founded by Allen Cohen and initially funded by brothers Ron and Jay Thelin (coowners of the Psychedelic Shop, which was located in the heart of the Haight-Ashbury district), the *San Francisco Oracle* started publishing on September 20, 1966, and lasted for twelve issues. Highlights of this issue include: a report on LSD by Tim Leary and Ralph Metzner; an antiwar poem by Michael McClure; psychedelic art by John Thompson; an analysis of Buddhist thought by Dane Rudhyar, illustrated with a drawing by Michael X; and an article by Allen Cohen on the murders of two local drug dealers.

Previous pagespread, right: *The Paper*, vol. 2, no. 17 (1967).



the fall of 1967. I was in New York by then and I had been on a Chile exchange program that had been cancelled and [of which] Frank Irwin, who was the chair of the Board of Regents, said, "Well, we cancelled it because of the Embree girl." And that was the first thing that I wrote, a long piece about the Chile exchange program, for *Rag*. It kind of came out of total anger.



**PETER SIMON**

*Cambridge Phoenix, Real Paper*

I grew up with my father being an amateur photographer. I followed in his footsteps wherever he went. He taught me early on how to use the darkroom, and then he died when I was only twelve and I inherited all his equipment. I actually started a group and a, sort of, photo magazine, a student-run magazine, that I would distribute to students. This was when I was fourteen, fifteen, sixteen, seventeen, and I was photo editor of the student newspaper and the yearbook and would also work for a local paper in my hometown, which

was called Riverdale, right outside New York. I worked for *Riverdale Press* and earned ten dollars a photo.

Ray Mungo and I became friends while he was the editor of *BU News*, which was the campus newspaper for Boston University. He led a lot of left-wing causes. He barraged kids with left-wing propaganda, which I wasn't familiar with when I first got there because I was slightly apolitical. It wasn't long before he convinced me to go out and demonstrate against the war. He was a very charismatic figure and he got a lot of students behind him. It was about the time when it was becoming obvious that we could be drafted for this war that we didn't really care about, so there was a wave of enthusiasm that swept over the BU campus and across the country (but it first started with BU and Columbia). He turned the *BU News*—which he was the editor of and which was a student-run but university-funded newspaper—into a left-wing radical newspaper for which he was the editor and spokesman. The administration was horrified about this, but because it was student-run, they couldn't really do very much about it. The campus got very divided between the ROTC, fraternity-loving, beer-drinking right wing versus the hipster left-wing, sex, drugs, and rock-'n'-roll types that grew in numbers as the years went by. Thanks to Ray, somewhat, it became a very politicized, polarized campus. There were be-ins, sit-ins and shutdowns, civil disobediences, and marches. It was one thing after another. He started with the war, but then it was pro-pot and after pro-pot it was pro-abortion, after pro-abortion it was against Dow Chemical. It was on

*Cambridge Phoenix*, vol. 1, no. 9 (1969). Peter Simon shoots the Rolling Stones at Boston Garden.

and on and on—there was a parade of different causes that he championed. It was really fun to be a student at BU in the late sixties. Everyday there was some other major exciting event taking place.

I was the photo editor of the *BU News*, and I worked very hard for them, as a matter of fact. Every week there were two or three or four events that I attended, or people that I had to photograph in the Boston area that somehow related to BU. There were feature articles and there were demonstrations and rock concerts, or sports events. We had a darkroom down at the student union and I would be in the darkroom with my friends printing pictures and getting stoned and listening to Dylan and the Beatles and the Stones and the Dead. It became quite a hippie hangout there in the darkroom, you know we just had a blast, we really did. It was one of the most enjoyable periods of my life, really.

He [Ray Mungo] went to Washington to start Liberation News Service and we all stayed in Boston to finish graduating. At one point I actually spent a lot of time in Washington. They had rented a house in the Northwest district and I went down and lived for a while there. I'd set up a makeshift darkroom; I don't know how the hell I did that. I was there for maybe a month doing pictures for LNS and submitting them, but that was short-lived because I really didn't want to live in Washington. Of course I wasn't paid anything for this, mind you. It was all done pro bono because I just believed in the whole idea of it. I just sort of contributed my time. I did it for the experience. It was almost like continuing my education to do that sort of stuff.

I just really fashioned myself as a left-wing alternative culture type of

photographer and did all I could to get backstage to see, you know, the Stones or Bob Dylan, whoever was coming through that I really wanted to see. I would use my press credentials to get there.

## JEFFREY BLANKFORT

*San Francisco Express Times,  
San Francisco Good Times*

When I was a small child my sister and I did some experimenting with old Kodak folding cameras and we had a darkroom in the basement of our house in which we actually learned how to develop film. But then I forgot all about that until I was working at the *San Francisco Examiner*, a Hearst newspaper, after I got out of high school. I learned how to develop film in the darkroom of the *Examiner*, but still I was more of a writer than a photographer until I came across, quite a few years later in the early sixties, the book *Decisive Moment* by Henri Cartier-Bresson. Looking through that book made me decide to become a documentary photographer in the style of Bresson, and so I slowly did.

I had a job working in Marin County, where I lived, but in San Francisco, uniquely, they had a photo center and for a very inexpensive price (I think it was ten dollars a year or six dollars for six months) you had the use of a darkroom, which was complete with chemicals. All you had to do was bring your paper and they had about sixty enlargers, a drying room, a developing room, and they had a studio for doing portraits. It was very unique and a number of San Francisco photographers besides myself owe our careers to the San Francisco Photo Center (it's now named after Harvey Milk) right on Duboce Avenue off





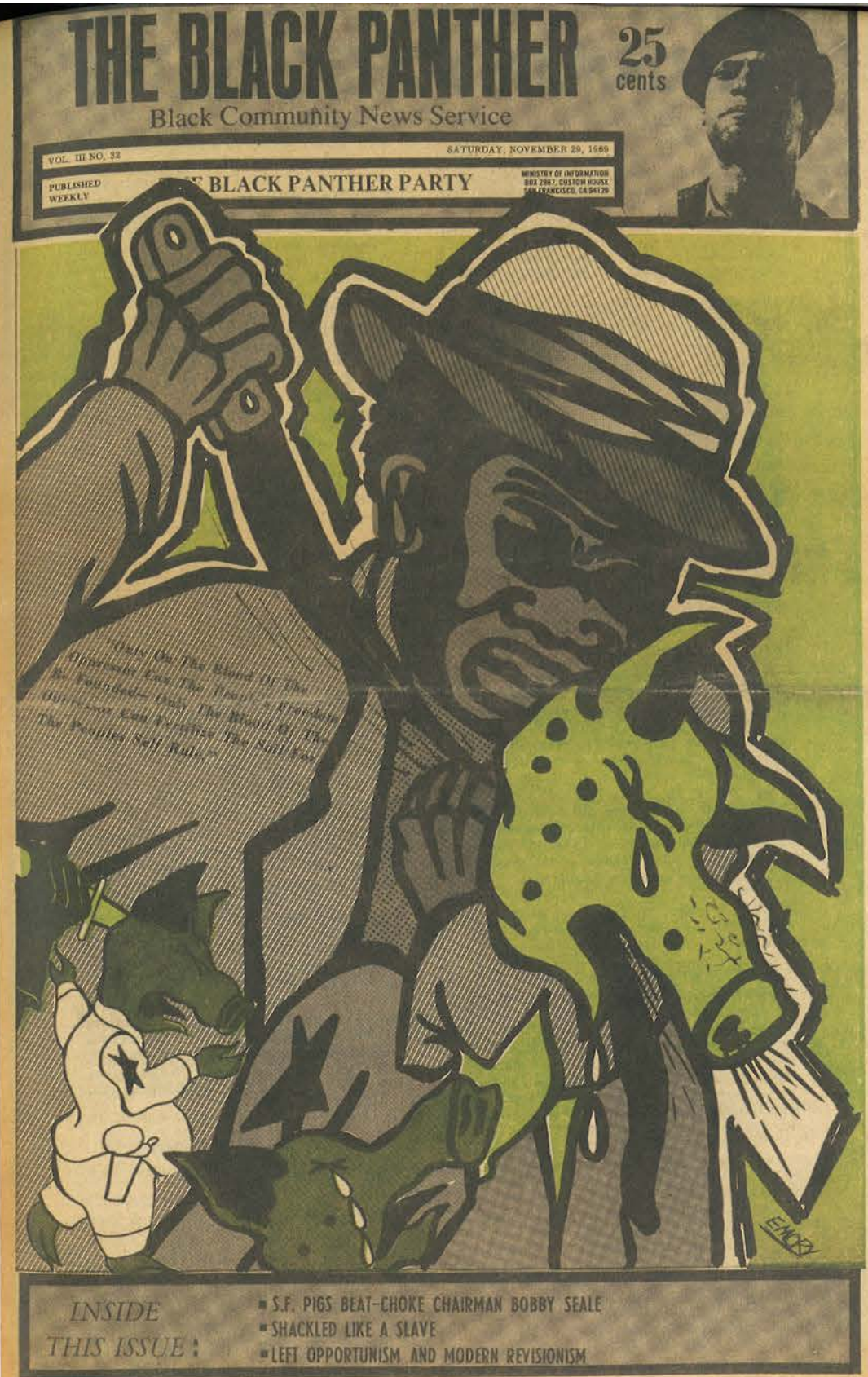
Divisadero. I used to go there after work three nights a week until it closed at ten o'clock. In those days paper was very cheap, you could buy a box of Luminos paper (a hundred sheets) for five dollars, believe it or not. So I could print and print and print the same photograph until I got a print that I liked, and I was sort of learning on the job.

Then came the Sixties. The first movement activities that I photographed were at the Sheraton Plaza sit-in in 1963 on Market Street. Until that time in 1963, unless you had a family that owned a hotel or apartment house, unless you were white, you could not get a job working in a major hotel or restaurant in San Francisco. For three or four days there was a massive sit-in and disruption of business in the Sheraton Plaza on Market Street (at Market and Montgomery). Dick Gregory came to offer his support; the labor unions did not. Despite talking about ending racism, the labor union did not support the students in this case. There were a number of arrests made, but in the end, after four days, the hotels and restaurants signed a deal saying they would no longer practice racist hiring practices. Unfortunately the pictures I took were all underexposed,

totally useless. I had another chance shortly thereafter when the same group—led by the NAACP, which was a radical organization at that time under Nathaniel Burbridge—decided to integrate the automobile agencies on Van Ness Avenue, which was called Auto Row. Three hundred and fifty-seven people were arrested after sitting-in at the Cadillac agency on Van Ness, and after that, the auto dealers agreed to end racist hiring practices. Two major victories for the civil rights movement which are generally unknown by people in San Francisco.

There were no underground papers, so to speak, at the time, and nobody was sending me on assignment. I went to Europe in 1966, left my job and went to Europe to actually become a photographer and see what it was like to live in another country. I went to live in Italy for six months because I had friends there and I sharpened my skills. When I came back [to the San Francisco Bay Area] Huey Newton had been arrested, accused of shooting an Oakland policeman, and I started photographing demonstrations outside the Alameda County Courthouse. One of them was used in the newspaper, *The People's World*, which was the organ of the Communist Party. Kathleen Cleaver saw that picture, got my number, and called me, and that began a friendship that exists to this day. I went over to see Kathleen, and they used that same picture in the Panther paper. Then she asked me if I would print some other pictures, which I agreed to do. From that point on I became kind of the semiofficial photographer for the Panthers.

*San Francisco Express Times*, vol. 1, no. 8 (1968).  
Jeffrey Blankfort photo of filmmaker Jean-Luc Godard at a rally for Huey Newton in Berkeley. Opposing page: *The Black Panther*, vol. 3, no. 32 (1969).





## EMORY DOUGLAS

### *The Black Panther*

They had a place called the Black House here in San Francisco where a lot of cultural activity used to go on. Eldridge Cleaver used to rent the upstairs and all the cultural stuff went on downstairs (Marvin X was living downstairs). It was an old Victorian house in [the] Fillmore [district] above Divisadero on Broderick Street off of Sutter. One evening, I went through there and there wasn't any activity going on, but Bobby [Seale] and Huey [Newton] were there. They usually used to come over there to go up and talk with Eldridge because he had worked at *Ramparts* and they knew of his writings and they were trying to recruit him into the [Black Panther] Party to be the editor of the newspaper. So that evening when I came there, Bobby and Huey and Eldridge were downstairs sitting at the table having a conversation. I came in and Bobby said, "I'm working on the newspaper." This was our first newspaper, and I saw him just take it out of the typewriter. He had typed it on a legal-sized sheet of paper, and he was using his markers to do the masthead of it. Because I had been going to City College and took up commercial art, I had a kind of sense of what he was doing. I had materials from City College so I told him I could help, I could go home and get some of my materials and come back and maybe he could use them. He said, "OK." So I walked home, picked up my materials—rub-off type and all that kind of stuff—and came back. It took me about an hour, and when I came back they was surprised that I came back. They said, "Well, you

seem to be committed. You've been coming around and the whole bit. I'm finished with this one but we're going to start our newspaper and we want you to work on the paper. You'll be the Revolutionary Artist for the paper."

The first paper was April 2, 1967, the one that Bobby laid out. It was two legal-sized sheets of paper, typed on front and back, and then they would staple it together. It was done on a Xerox machine. Bobby and them had access to copy machines through these community service programs that they worked in so they printed them like that. They would just hand them out, give them out to folks. The first issue was about the Denzil Dowell murder by the Richmond police.

## ABE PECK

### *Seed, Rat Subterranean News*

When I was in Chicago I was a very avid reader of *The Realist*, Paul Krassner's magazine. Krassner, to me, was kind of the godfather of the underground press [because of] his attitude about Dadaism and [his] ability to laser into psychedelic mindset issues of how to think about politics and about government (even though it [*The Realist*] was printed on white paper and Paul was older and all that stuff). Anyhow, Paul had gotten mugged and wrote something in *The Realist* that he was looking to get out of New York City, and it said he was looking for a farm. I was living with a couple people, you know, hanging out with several people, and I volunteered this guy's farm without asking him first, of course. I wrote a psychedelic letter. I had got a lot of colored pens, and I had a Rapidograph, and I wrote—and this all sounds very

*The Black Panther*, vol. 2, no. 2 (1968).

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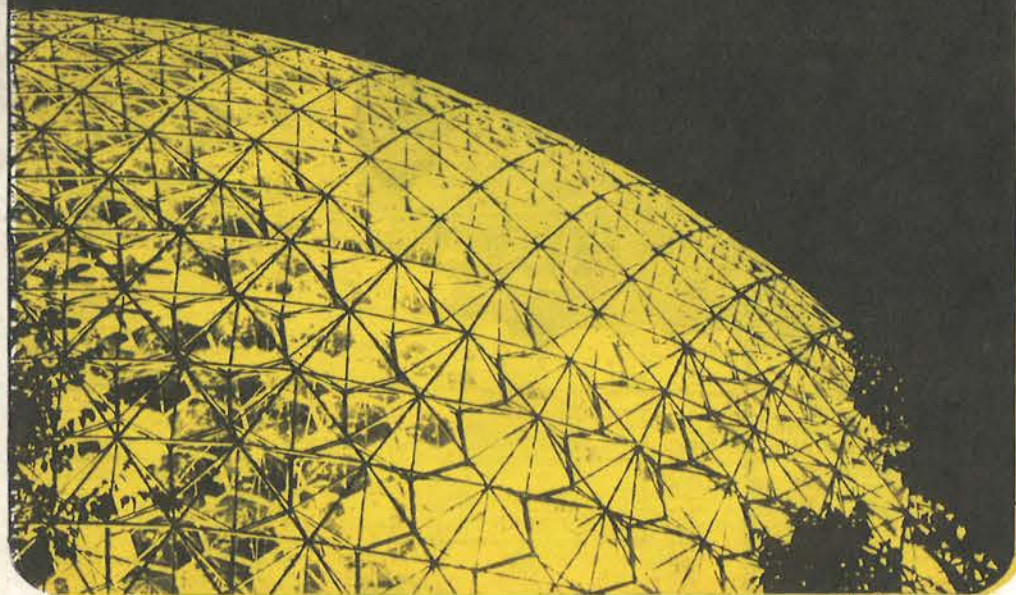
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**CHICAGO SEED**  
VOL. 3 NO. 11 35¢

hokey—but I wrote this letter that was filled with colors and this and that. Instead of Paul responding, I got Jerry Rubin coming out to tell me about this groovy Festival of Life that was going to happen in Chicago, around the time of the Democratic Convention, that was going to be kind of a counter-convention—you know, separate from the creeping meatball kind of politics, as they called it.

So I was excited by this, and I wrote a piece for the *Seed*, which was publishing before I got there (they had started publishing May of 1967, around a Mother's Day Be-In). The papers really were getting by with a little help from their friends, and I just came in with this thing, and, my memory is not specific about this, but I said, "Hey, Jerry Rubin is going to be in town." People knew who Jerry Rubin was and, you know, the *Seed* was an umbrella at that point. Which means, if something was going on in the community that was counterculture or antiwar, the *Seed* was in that mix between covering it and advocating it. So they ran it, and I started hanging out at the *Seed*. In terms of access to the paper: if you came in with something that seemed simpatico with everything that was going on, I think the odds of getting printed were pretty good. Also, I was a halfway decent writer at the time. It was a combination of the fit of the material and I guess I passed someone's sniff test. I was cool enough to come in.

### TRINA ROBBINS

*East Village Other,  
Gothic Blimp Works, Berkeley Tribe,  
It Ain't Me, Babe*

I grew up in Queens, New York, in a very suffocating kind of neighborhood.

I escaped into books; my mother was a teacher and she taught me to read. Boy, did I take to books—I read everything. I also read comics. In those days, a lot of parents were worried if their kids read comics because they thought it meant they wouldn't read books, but I read everything so there was no problem. Once a week when I got my allowance, I would go to the corner candy store where they had this spinner rack that said, "Hey Kids, Comics!" and I would buy a comic. I bought all the comics. I loved the teen comics that were basically aimed at girl readers. I bought everything, though, that had a female hero, which meant that I loved Mary Marvel, I loved Wonder Woman, and I also bought all those wonderful Fiction House comics, especially the jungle comics, I loved Sheena, I loved the Jungle Girls. Fiction House, really they were action comics, but they specialized in women heroes. At the age of seven I was very advanced; I was reading teenage books. I don't remember any specific titles, but I read all the classics as a kid: *Little House on the Prairie*, *Pollyanna*, and *Little Women*, all of those. At the age of thirteen I discovered science fiction and I went through a period, I think from thirteen to about seventeen, reading nothing but science fiction. Discovering Bradbury was like how born-again Christians must feel when they discover Jesus.

I'd always drawn, but I never knew what I was drawing . . . it was just these little drawings on paper. I didn't know what they were until there was this little comics renaissance. I had read comics like mad as a kid, and then I stopped when I was a teenager. It was like comics were kids' stuff. But then there was this comics renaissance over at Marvel with

*Seed*, vol. 3, no. 11 (1969).



the X-Men and the Fantastic Four and Spiderman and Thor and Dr. Strange. I really loved Thor and Dr. Strange, of course they were my favorites. Dr. Strange was so, like, mystic and psychedelic. And Thor, because I had always struggled with the concept of a bearded guy in the sky, this God, which I never really liked, and I loved mythology, and Thor was like Stan Lee was saying, "Yes, there really are gods. There really is a god Thor." It's like saying, "Yeah, you don't have believe in that stupid guy in the sky, there's other gods." That was great for me, I really liked that. So I got turned on to comics again. Then Batman was on TV and it was very pop art. I started realizing that these little drawings I was doing were sort of like proto-comics, and that's kind of what got me started in drawing comics. Actually, the very first comic I ever did was, I think, around 1965 or 1966 for the *L.A. Free Press* (I had been living in Los Angeles). That was a very small little four-panel thing, basically about a cat falling in love with a

flower. To make matters weirder, I did it in French and they published that.

I came to New York in the summer of 1966 and a friend of mine, Eve Babitz, was the managing editor of *EVO* [*East Village Other*]. I knew Eve from Los Angeles so I went and visited her. I met Allan Katzman, who was the publisher, and Walter Bowart, who was the editor, and did a little bit of hanging out with Walter, kind of maybe dating him, going to a couple parties with him, stuff like that. I loved the *East Village Other*, it was much more adventurous than the *Free Press*. The *Free Press* was quite political. *EVO* was more, I guess it was also political, but in a very hippie kind of way. The layout was much bolder. It was less like a real newspaper and the *Free Press* was still almost like a newspaper, but not quite. So I did a little drawing for them of my character Suzie Slumgoddess. I went by the office and no one was there, so I just kind of stuck it under the door. Next thing I knew it was published, and that's kind of how it started.

# 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).







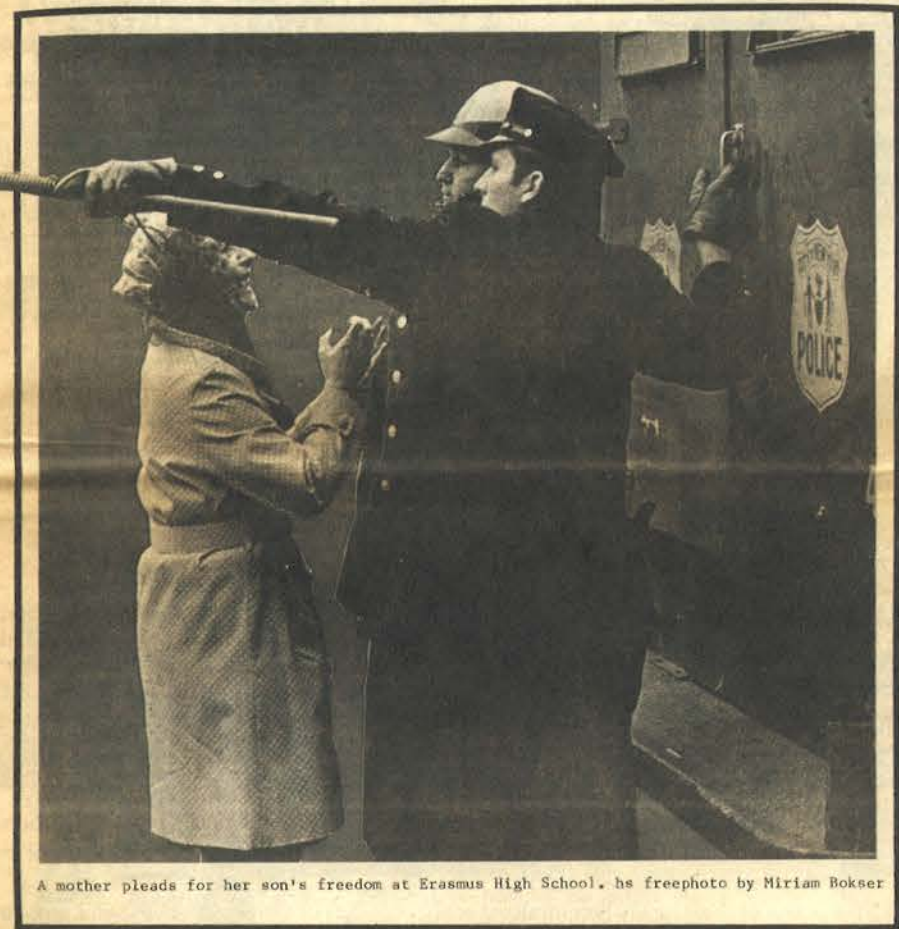
# new york HIGH SCHOOL FREE PRESS

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

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



## 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.

