

HOROSCOPE

BY SOUP
CAN SAMSTAFF
PSYCHIC

Gemini (May 22-June 22) Friends leave you high and dry? That's fine. There will be more of them. There always are. **Cancer (June 23-July 23)**

Leo (July 24-Aug. 23) Don't be afraid to speak your mind this month – especially when it comes to calling a spade a spade. OK. So you look like shit. Really. Pull it together.

Virgo (Aug. 24-Sept. 23) Obsessing over trivial and useless shit? Everyone does it. Just do it less and you'll be a lot happier with yourself (and so will everyone else).

Libra (Sept. 24-Oct. 23) You know you're a Portlander when you start complaining that it's not raining after two weeks of sunshine. Take a cold shower.

Scorpio (Oct. 24-Nov. 22) Being a leader sucks. Being looked at like a leader sucks even more. Don't do it this month. Let others around you fail or succeed on their own.

Sagittarius (Nov. 23-Dec. 22) I'm tired of writing about your future. Every month we do this, and every month Soup Can is having to tell you that energy is in the air, take advantage of it. And every month you just go on about your business not really ever paying attention to other people's feelings or needs. Typical. Oh, Christ. You'll get screwed again. **Capricorn (Dec. 23-Jan. 19)** Rebound sex? I'll take two. So should you.

Aquarius (Jan. 20-Feb. 19) Grass is greener on the other side of the fence? Pretty green over here, too. Can we just take the damn fence down and have the best of both worlds? Try giving a little to get a little this month.

Pisces (Feb. 20-March 20) You're so vein. Oh, don't worry. So is Soup Can. Be vain, but do it with kindness.

Aries (March 21-April 19) I've run out of answers for you. I've run out of answers for myself. I suppose we've simply run out of answers for ourselves. Sound familiar? It's the Mayor's slogan, dummy. Use it or lose it.

Taurus (April 20-May 21) Did you see Santa Claus on the cover of this issue? It's that time of year again. He's making a list – a parolee list, a secret list, a felony list... Judging by the look of things, X-mas is going to suck this year. Do something nice for a stranger already.

CORRECTIONS

Street Roots strives for accuracy, but we're human. So we also strive to correct errors in our paper whenever possible. Please report any errors to our managing editor, Joanne Zuhl, at 503-228-5657, or write to joanne@streetroots.org.

Labor King Conclusion

BY JAY THIEMEYER

Recently I was reading about a literary critic studying late-stage productivity among writers and musicians. He found these aging geniuses tended to display "intransigence, difficulty, and unresolved contradiction," as well as impatience with "coherent sense."

I could dig it. It reminded me of someone I knew at that Lighthouse mission. The young burly minister, the proselytizer, fifteen years 'away from drink' who delivered the rote sermon full of fire and brimstone, the phosphor. We were sinners all! he'd scream, and doomed to Hell! if we didn't find Redemption right there and then! (And we wouldn't get any of that fine fish-eye soup or a bed for the night or shower (but no change of clothes)), if we didn't surrender completely! and admit what we were! and give it UP! for the Lord! (PRAISE Gawd!)

Every single one of us, I swear, every single night, made our way to the front to be healed, saved, fed, bathed and bedded. We were like small children following the need of our dirty, tired bodies and the minister's call. It was a miracle.

We grew numb to his act, a sad thing in itself. First time I watched this man's performance, my mouth fell open I was so absorbed. In fact, I was mesmerized. He was athletic, which I expected, but his voice was operatic. Grand, round, it filled the room, with its plain blond, well-ordered pews, and tired men, slumped and rendered down and gazing quietly forward.

Not all of us who paraded to the front were just desperate for a bed. I got the feeling that he moved all of us. He was the real thing when at full throttle. He told us he had suffered enough in his time as a sinner, and he was finished.

The Devil had had his way with him for way too long and he had been ready to come into the fold. And there was no amount of temptation that would lure him away. He didn't have time to play. The devil didn't play, he reminded us. He wanted us to see what he saw, and not fail ourselves the way he had failed himself and the ones he loved for so long. So damn long, he would say. And we all knew what he was talking about. He might have been a showman with a captive audience, but somewhere inside him there was an irreducible nugget of truth and that's what he managed to get through to us. He gave freely what had been given to him. That there was a way out and he had found it. He was glorying in it and we could too. Come with me to Him, he'd say. Over and over in a thousand different voices, soft and fierce, low and high, every permutation of: **Amazing Grace can be yours!** If you just come with me on the path of righteousness!

And some fell into his thrall like it was truly Heaven-sent. It was an amazing call and response. And not a one of us failed to go to the front with him. Miracle.

Almost 25 years later, when I visited Atlanta to attend the U.S. Social Forum, I went by Open Door Community to see if anything was the same, if there was anyone

left there that I knew. The location hadn't changed but it was summer and all the clerical family who had started it up to help the homeless, Progressive Presbyterians, graduates of Candler Seminary at nearby Emory, were off on retreat for the summer. Only the men and women who lived there, having been taken in from the street, still only a handful for the dozen or so beds the large brick house had to offer, were managing things.

When the door opened, I was greeted by a face I recognized from the years before. He was gray now and wore a trimmed beard. He smiled, though. Something I hadn't seen before. I was impressed by that. He was momentarily, unnecessarily

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embarrassed; we both knew that the mighty were especially liable to fall a great length and it had happened to him. It had simply been what was intended and he accepted it. With a smile. I be damned. He was smiling and I had to smile right back. We had to laugh. He was a good man and it was good that he realized I saw that. Didn't agree with him or his religion, but I knew a good man. We shook hands and he invited me in for coffee.

The huge old house was ours. It was cool inside. Hot as hell and twice as humid outside on Ponce De Leon, but cool and comfortable inside. I told him what I was in town for and he invited me to attend the vigil that evening for Hightower I believe the man's name was. Troy Davis would be vigilled days later before I left town. Two men sentenced to die in the Georgia electric chair. He and I focused on what was going on now.

By now, we had learned that what was intended was to be there for another man (or, sadly, an endless stream of men) due to die in the chair. Sentenced by some cracker judge in this godless redneck state. No show there. Nothing to dance and sing about there. Just godless men hiding behind a god they made up to co-sign their hate.

He finished off our afternoon by telling me he'd see me at 7 down at the neighborhood church. 'Go to the side door. A man named Bill is secretarizing.' We had more in common than I knew. Back in '82, sitting in the back of that mass of tired men, I thought he was as distant in his espousal of a hateful god as could be imagined. That there wasn't a single thread that bound us.



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