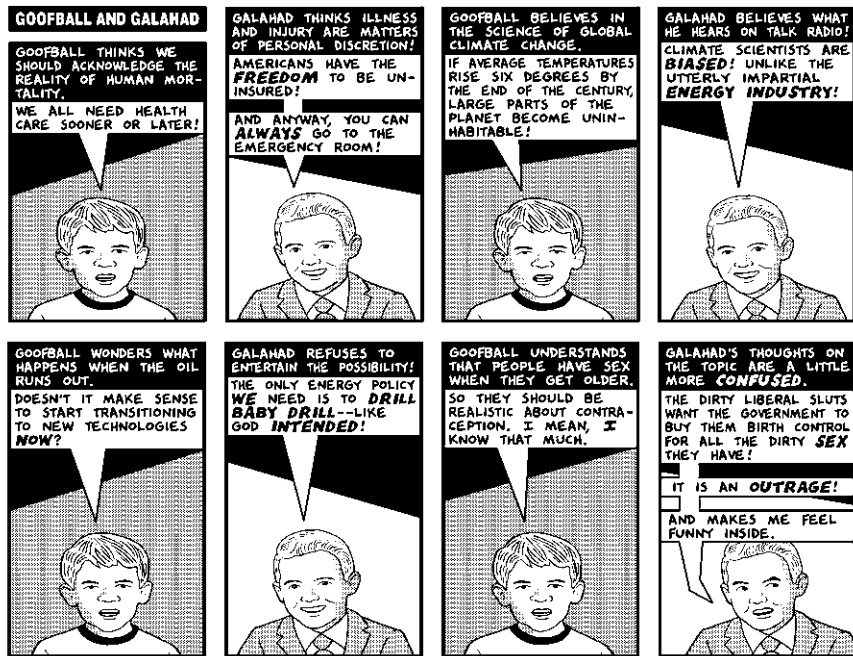


THIS MODERN WORLD

by TOM TOMORROW



NOTES FROM THE RIVERSIDE BY MARK HARRIS

Skyping with the Preacher

The vulnerability of our nation's Trayvons

What the bleep? Oh, a Skype from the Preacher. A moment later the Skype phone rang, I adjusted for video and audio. The Preacher was rocking Ysaye Barnwell: "For each child that's born a morning star rises and sings to the universe who we are. We are our grandmothers' prayers. We are our grandfathers' dreamings. We are the breath of our ancestors. We are the spirit of God."

"Let's talk Trayvon" he opened.

I had been clearing blackberries so I was in a prickly mood. "Sure," I said. "How do you tell the difference between inexcusable stupidity and racism, between willful ignorance and deliberate malice, however unconscious?"

"Well," he said, mimicking congregational sermon response. "In our neighborhoods, a child couldn't walk home without being known on sight in a four-block radius by at least one adult per block. Didn't need no guns. We used knowledge, we passed on wisdom, not fear. We treated each others' children as if they were our children. At the very least we would ask, 'Who is your family? Are you lost, can I help you get home?' We didn't mean send him to heaven. Can I get an Amen!"

Amen! "That was to protect them from people who were from outside of the community, including police officers who were proven Klansmen," he said.

"So," I asked, "you're saying Zimmerman's sin was not treating one of our children as one of his children? Or if that's a stretch, at least treat Trayvon the way we would treat a child we didn't know? And asking questions and offering assistance? Kind of a Platinum Rule thing: Do unto others the way they want to be done unto, even if, especially, if that's better than you?"

"Right" he nodded. "Philippians 2: 2-3. Fulfill ye my joy, that ye be likeminded, having the same love, being of one accord, of one mind. Let nothing be done through strife or vainglory; but in lowliness of mind let each esteem other better than themselves."

"But further," he said, "sin is willful disobedience. The history of the South is supportive of institutional and structural racism. This makes the Trayvons of the world uniquely vulnerable. Killing a potential Martin Luther King Jr., a potential Paul Robeson, a potential Beethoven, is simple self-defense to white supremacy. Many avowed racists are capable of making exceptions for specific favored minority individuals, but not for 'uppity' others they don't know, or the larger group. So Zimmerman can mentor and befriend some black youth and some black people, but see Trayvon as an enemy alien. He is obeying tradition. What some people call racism, others call tradition."

"So since you don't even have to be white to support white supremacy," he said. "Zimmerman becomes a pawn of a larger social structure. Thus, like (prosecutor) Angela Corey said in the CNN interview, it is to that larger structure we should pay attention. See the white supremacy chess game, not just the players"

"How are the Trayvon's in your community treated?" He asked.

"Don't ask. Not well," I responded.

Mark Harris is an instructor and substance abuse prevention coordinator at LCC.



LANE PEACE SYMPOSIUM

Democracy in the U.S. is in danger. Corporations have been elevated to a status above natural people. Over the last 125 years, through a series of decisions, the Supreme Court has ruled that corporations are persons with constitutional rights. The end game of these rulings is two-fold. The first is to limit the ability of democratically elected representatives to pass legislation to protect the general welfare of their constituents. Every time a constitutional right is granted to corporations there is a corresponding loss of citizen power. The second is to replace the role of people in government with the influence of corporations.

Corporate managed democracy in the U.S. is the joining together of Wall Street finance capital and the military industrial complex in the politics of empire. Wall Street loans money to the U.S. government, which deficit spends to finance military production and war. Perpetual war brings profits for all involved. The social welfare gains of the 20th century are casualties. Unemployment rises, homes are foreclosed and inequality reaches historic levels. Health care, education and social services are defunded and the prescription offered by corporate managed democracy is privatization.

What can be done? Two recent movements offer hope. The Occupy movement has identified the corporate controlled military industrial/finance complex as the culprit and the Move to Amend movement has identified corporate constitutional rights as the vehicle used to create corporate managed democracy. Both are working to build broad scale social movements focused on challenging corporate rule and creating people powered democracy.

On April 20-21, the Lane Peace Center's fifth annual Peace Symposium/Democracy Convergence is bringing the best of our nation's grassroots democracy activist to LCC. These include David Barsamian of Alternative Radio, David Cobb of Move to Amend, Ms. George Friday of the Bill of Rights Defense Committee, Ben Manski of the Liberty Tree Foundation for Democratic Revolution, Max Rameau of Take Back the Land, and David West of the Potawatomi Nation. Day One will be a series of keynote talks and day two a series of workshops on organizing to create democratic social movements. The symposium is free and you are invited to attend. For information and registration go to: www.lanec.edu/peacecenter or e-mail peacecenter@lanec.edu

Stan Taylor, Ph.D.
Lane Peace Center

THE PLAN WON'T WORK

The April 12 cover story about the Stahl-DeFazio forest plan was enlightening about its potential environmental consequences and political considerations. But if the idea is to replace the huge federal timber receipt payments to the O&C counties that peaked in the early 1990s, it seems to me that the more critical problem with the plan is that it won't work.

The federal government never paid the counties based on the acreage or board footage that was cut on the O&C lands; it shared with the counties the revenue it gained from selling the timber to the forest product industry, and that is also the Stahl-DeFazio concept. Problem is, by the mid 1980s when the massive federal cutting began, there were 2.1 million new single-family homes being built each year. That declined slightly over the '80s, but rebounded to the peak of 2.2 million homes in early 2005. Timber is purchased to make lumber. Lumber must be sold to make money, and its sale price is based on demand. At the end of 2011 there were about 700,000 housing starts in the U.S., and so far in 2012 it appears there will be even fewer. That means that, at best, timber sold from the O&C forests would command a price of no more than a third of the prices paid at the peak of O&C payments to the counties; and in those days, the harvest included valuable old growth.

At those prices, in order to replace the county revenue from the good old days, the "trust" would have to cut down all of the timber in the "management" half in about five years, and then there would be no revenue stream for decades to come. So what is the point?

David C. Force
Eugene attorney

BEN LINDER'S LEGACY

April 28 marks the 25th anniversary of the death of Ben Linder, a mechanical engineer from Portland who in 1983 went to Nicaragua to work on hydroelectric projects that today provide energy to the community, schools, clinics and campesinos. While working on a small dam in the remote northern region of San José de Bocay, performing the miracle of transforming "water into light," Ben and two other Nicaraguan co-workers were killed by Contra forces armed and paid for by the U.S. government.

In 1984, I had the opportunity to meet Ben in Nicaragua while I was at the national university. Ben, like myself, was one of many thousands of young volunteers from the U.S. and other parts of the world who wanted to witness and contribute to the rebuilding process in Nicaragua following the triumph of the Sandinista revolution over the repressive Somoza dictatorship. It was a time of amazing hope, dreams and struggle; it was a time of unnecessary war, pain and suffering.

When I met him I was moved (and a little jealous) by his enthusiasm as he described the work he was doing and how truly happy he was in Nicaragua. I was intrigued by the simplicity and perfection of his work and the difference it could make in the lives of poor farmers who were trapped in a war zone. Both Ben and I were deeply opposed to U.S. policy, yet Ben had a unique ability to rise above that and dedicate himself to improve the lives of the poor. Ben was not trying to be a hero; he sincerely wanted to make a difference in making the world a better place.

Ben gave his knowledge, energy, humor and love to Nicaragua and the world — let us follow his example and celebrate the life and mission of Ben Linder. Please join us