
THE CITIZEN

for Social Responsibility

August/September 2000

On democracy.

"If a nation expects to be ignorant and free, in a state of civilization, it expects what never was and will never be."

Thomas Jefferson

This newsletter, the voice of the non-profit corporation of the same name, was started with limited funds, almost on what can best be described as to have been born on a "wing and a prayer." The prayer being essentially that we, by this enterprise, seek somehow to contribute positively in aiding to make this society more just to all of its citizens. Democracy entails thought and discussion, without this it will surely degenerate into a society led by a minority whose power increases while subjugating the majority, who are weaker, to a life of increasing hardship. Nearly 2,500 years ago a man named Socrates, a Greek philosopher, stated that power corrupts, and absolute power corrupts absolutely (Plato's Republic). The statement is as true today as it was then. Today there are no Caesars, Alexanders, Napoleons but there have been in recent memory a Hitler, a Stalin, a Mussolini, a Pinochet, a Franco, a Salazar, and many other lesser known dictators and tyrants.

We enter a new century, facing the same evils man has always faced and just as ill prepared to fight them as we have always been. In this light, we admire those who by virtue of courage and ethical backbone do not yield to the will of the powerful solely based on the argument of superior power and intimidation. To do so, opens the doors for this society to enter into an era of fear and intimidation, reminiscent of NAZI Germany and the terror that is fascism. My family left Europe because of fascism, because of the very causes that today we see begin to rise up in America. Europe of the 30's also was blind to the danger, even at the outbreak of war, there were many that still refused to see the evil, and most collaborated with an evil system as a "perceived necessity."

Jefferson's quote above is a caution for all citizens of a democratic society, that vigilance, and education are a necessary precursor for defending our *hard earned* democratic principles and to insure that those who have power, by virtue of politics or by wealth, not abuse that power, in favor of themselves and against the people of

this nation or of the world. An abuse of power can dictate circumstances that impact the lives of hundreds, thousands or even millions of ordinary citizens.

In this country those who have the financial means or political connections can virtually "buy" into the political arena. (The current senate race in NJ is just one notable example. Likewise, other aspects of our society resemble this path of empowerment; (1) Justice can only be obtained by those who can afford to buy the expensive time of competent attorneys; and (2) good health care can only be achieved by those who can afford to pay for it.)

However, who we sometimes forget about, are the ones who are "invisible" to ordinary Americans; those who control the media empires; who dictate how the news is presented, what is said and how it is said. We also forget about the tremendous power of persuasion yielded by the bureaucrats who control our nation's intelligence services like the FBI, the CIA, and the NSA. Bureaucrats, with immense power who in the name of national security, in the name of what is in the interest of our nation's well being can do as they like, without supervisory controls by either Congress or the very people, for whose welfare and in whose name they obtain their power.

We also take for granted an assumption that journalists are free to write about what is truthful and accurate. We assume that what is written and presented as "the news" is truthful. We think this way because by definition, such is the will of a democracy. However, truth is quite often what is permitted to be stated by the powerful of this nation, rather than what is actual. Protections afforded by the constitution, the courts or even by the authority of a free people, are seldom the last word on freedom of expression. A case in point is the downing of TWA flight 800 in July 1996. After four years of "investigation", we have been informed (REUTERS news release 11:02 am, J. Wolf) that the NTSB has determined the cause of the explosion aboard the aircraft to have been a short circuit which ignited the fuel stored in the wings. Is this the truth?

James Sanders, an investigative journalist published an account that supported Pierre Salinger's (JFK's Press Secretary) account that TWA 800 was shot down by "friendly fire", a U.S. missile which was fired in error

during a war games scenario being played out in the mid- Atlantic theater of operations by the pentagon at the time that TWA800 was airborne. Mr. Sanders published a book entitled *"The downing of TWA Flight 800,"* and recently in 1999 another book *"Altered Evidence"* where he describes how the truth concerning the accident has been covered up by those same bureaucrats who are supposed to be acting in all our names and for all our sakes. Mr. Sanders and his wife were subsequently intimidated by our nation's security services— the FBI— were arrested, and face criminal charges. Specifics concerning Mr. Sanders' investigation can be found at the Internet site www.Altered-Evidence.com. The page link on how to obtain his book (he published the book himself) has "mysteriously" been hampered by url and "page faults", and "unknown server problems." 230 people died on that flight; men, women and children, the least this society should do is illuminate the truth of what really happened.

Every day, we as citizens, are held accountable for our actions, we expect our leaders to be similarly held accountable, and so too should the military, and the bureaucrats of this nation, whoever they may be. If we permit by our collective silence, the existence of a class of individuals who can be considered "above the law" then can we truly state that we live in a democratic society? If we permit the selective prosecution, on trumped up charges, of people who have the courage to speak out, can we truly state that we live in a democracy? We urge you to read more about this tragedy and to purchase Mr. Sanders' book, whose proceeds are intended to aid him in his legal defense. (James Sanders, P.O. Box 336, Charles City, Va. 23030-0336). We here at The Citizen, wish Mr. Sanders well, for in the midst of tragedy and extreme intimidation he had the courage to seek the truth. (*Note: Mr. Sanders is in no way connected with The Citizen.*)

Politics as usual

By: Victor Saraiva

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Those of you who have read our previous issues know that our concern has been mainly with the issue of illicit drugs and how people, families and communities are being slowly destroyed by this cancer. We have taken issue with how government is treating the poor

and how racism is at the root of the great despair of those who struggle to survive in our inner cities who happen to be of African descent. The great tragedy in the city of Newark, is that the elected leadership of this city is mostly made up of African-Americans and yet the despair in the poor areas of the city, largely minority in make-up, is just as downtrodden as ever. While city politicians drive in large gas guzzling Fords and SUVs-, take trips abroad in the name of progress and in the name of supporting the children of Newark (such as the US Virgin islands trip)-all paid for with city funds; the poor of this city struggle to feed, clothe and house their families. As if this is not enough, the politicians of this city are literally giving away land at a \$1 a square foot to developers and land speculators, while increasingly "suspicious fires" continue to plague many parts of the city. I for one, say that our city is being looted, while many see to it that it is done "legally."

Recently Councilman Tucker attempted to bring to an end some of this "legalized looting" by seeking to end the city's policy of automatically providing newly constructed housing with tremendous tax breaks, which in the past have extended twenty-five years. The result was a massive protest by the construction firms, real estate attorneys and many land speculators who are amassing fortunes at the expense of the tax payers, the small property owners and tenants who are those who have struggled to live in this city, who have made certain neighborhoods livable, continue to call this city home, and who largely pay the bills of this municipality.

The current "land rush", and selective taxation promises to cause rents to skyrocket, cause many working class families to be unable to afford to live in this city and will thereby be forced to move out. The further effect on the current population will be to break the political muscle of the African-American community, who elected the first African-American Mayor of this nation, and whose numbers are already dwindling. The make-up of the population will change from one of working class, largely immigrant and minority people, to one largely middle class and non-minority in make-up.

Those who move out, according to 90's census statistics, will disperse to different states and regions, further diluting their political voice, and promising to relegate their interests to further poverty and despair.

What is occurring in this city is nothing less than "**social engineering**" whether it be by accident or by design. What is frightening is that if not by design, how

can we explain the US Department of Housing and Urban Development's unused funds in 1999 that amounted to \$2 billion, (*Star-Ledger 11/10/99*) while the city of Newark had over five thousand families waiting for subsidized housing ? How many thousands, or hundreds of thousands across this nation fit that classification ? Who speaks for them ?

During the great depression, millions were unemployed, yet the government implemented programs that more than anything gave the people of this country hope. The CCC, employed youth in re-forestation and flood control projects; the WPA, Works Progress Administration, shifted people from direct relief to work by providing training skills and actual government sponsored work. Artists, photographers documented the state of the nation within their critical perspectives and thus led to a later era of artistic enlightenment. Many historians still rely on their work to document a period of our nation's history. Carpenters built homes for the poor, built furniture which was then sold on subsidy to families who could not otherwise afford to acquire it. Millions of people helped one another to re-build America in this way. Agencies to protect ordinary Americans also came to be; such as the FDIC, SEC, FHA, Social Security, and laws such as the Fair Labor Standards Act, and Banking Acts that sought to control funds on deposit more strictly. So sound were these policies that we still use them today, three quarters of a century later.

Why can't similar programs be instituted today ? Why does our health care continue to reach fewer and fewer people ? Is this progress ? Why can't we organize the chronic unemployed into groups and teach them the necessary skills they need rather than just dole out monetary benefits ? Why can't the government sponsor companies if need be, to employ carpenters, electricians and the like and build homes for the poor rather than contract out the work to "bidders" ? By so doing we cut out of the equation, profits made by third parties at the expense of taxpayers and the misery of those who continue to wait for housing. Why not take the chronic unemployed men and women, who are able, from across this nation and clear the forests ravaged by fire, across the west, and begin re-forestation ?

► *"No one man is capable, without the aid of society, of supplying his own wants; and those wants, acting upon every individual, impel the whole of them into society, as naturally as gravitation acts to a centre."*

(The Rights of Man, Thomas Paine).

Thomas Paine, wrote these words to describe how society and the individual were linked to each other and how society had a responsibility toward each and every citizen, just as each and every citizen has duties and responsibilities to live up to. As long as there is one child that goes hungry, or who cannot get adequate housing, education or obtain proper medical care in this country; as long as this exists then we should all be ashamed to call ourselves Americans; citizens of the most powerful and richest nation of this earth.

On corruption and other events !

By: Victor Saraiva

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Corruption among public officials is not new to the city of Newark. We remember Mayor Addonizio's indictment and recently that of former Mayor Kenneth Gibson. There have been councilmen and councilwomen, municipal workers in several departments, even the Public Schools have not been spared. We especially remember comments made by the previous Superintendent of Schools in Newark who remarked that there was a pervasive evil entrenched in this district that made it very difficult to overcome. We know not if she was referring to specific people in power or the bureaucratic system in the Newark School district. As Superintendent she would have the power to change the bureaucratic system, so we therefore assume that she was referring to some other "dark" influence. The remarkable aspect is that no state or federal probe was ever instituted either at the Superintendent's request or at the behest of any other public official. Nor did the media pursue those comments, in order to shed light on why a State appointed Superintendent was having great difficulty in re-shaping the educational structure of the Newark Public Schools.

We remember also the perplexing murder of a former Newark School teacher who was about to bring to fruition the opening of a private alternative school to the city, and a Newark police investigation that implicated her dead husband, as the murderer, even though family and friends attested that the couple had always been very close. Needless to say that alternative school never opened.

Since April of this year we have written to city, county and state officials deriding the lack of access to reports of drug usage in the schools of Newark. The Newark Public Schools has incomplete and "lost" reports for the last three years. The state maintains that they only receive totals and that Essex county collects the school by school reports. Essex county officials have remained silent, not even acknowledging our letters. And we are left to contemplate the reasons for this ongoing malaise. Why are efforts to identify problematic schools being thwarted? Is this inefficiency? No, even inefficient workers take the care to answer letters eventually. Is this neglect? Is it corruption? Who pays the cost for this? Innocent children, our city, our society pays the cost for this! Can anyone see a pattern emerging?

On a separate but connected note, last year the *Newark Star Ledger* published an editorial, commenting on Councilman Augusto Amador's trip to his country of birth, Portugal, which according to him was done to sponsor a "summit-like" conference for fomenting a closer relationship between businesses in Portugal and in the United States. According to the *Star-Ledger* Mr. Amador was touting that the cost of the trip was being paid for by some Newark businessmen. In conclusion, the *Star-Ledger* editor noted that the image of little brown paper envelopes being passed around to collect funds for the benefit of public officials was improper and raised more serious concerns and questions, than any benefit begotten by such an affair.

We totally agree with the *Newark Star-Ledger* in its evaluation. Furthermore, we cannot understand what a councilman is doing traveling abroad claiming to be doing city business. Is this a City-State? Are there too few problems within our city boundaries to concern our elected officials, that extracurricular activities be the main course of concern?

We know that one of Mr. Amador's main financial campaign contributors has, among other things, been awarded city construction projects and does considerable business with businesses located in Portugal. We know also that Mr. Amador's community outreach office, on Monroe Street in Newark, is located in a building which is owned by this same financial supporter of Mr. Amador. And some of his other supporters do extensive business in import/export with Portugal and Spain.

Mr. Amador is not alone in such relationships with financial supporters. Mayor Sharpe James has also employed within his administration people related to

major financial backers of his political campaigns. One prior high level member of his administration was related to Jose Lopez, the proprietor of Don Pepe Restaurant. An individual who has recently spent close to five million dollars to acquire land near the projected Newark Sports Arena, which Mayor James is an ardent supporter of. Mr. Lopez is the same James backer that owns a building at 55 Liberty Street, leased by the City of Newark, housing the Mayor's Office of Employment and Training, (and the following City offices; City Planning, Division of Housing, Property Maintenance, Economic Development, Property Management, and Property Clearance), in a City leased building which has paid Mr. Lopez millions of dollars in rent. Why can't the city rehabilitate an abandoned building? Who winds up paying for such extravagance? Whose business are our elected officials looking after? What can come of such close ties to "the hand that washes the other"? Why is the press silent?

EDITORIAL

On a recent day trip into New York City the editor of *The Citizen*, was leaving Barnes and Noble on Union Square at around nine in the evening with his young son. To his surprise a well dressed man in his mid thirties was video taping him with a camera from an opposite corner of the street. Mr. Saraiva became aware of this because as he walked across the crosswalk in the man's direction only one other person was also within the camera's angle, but the cameraman sought to continue filming Mr. Saraiva even as he walked at a severe angle away from the camera, and still he filmed. Similar occurrences have happened with strangers taking pictures on subway platforms or while he has walked with members of his family near the park or at shopping malls. He has been the recipient of unending mailings advertising life insurance, and even for funeral insurance, though he never has solicited such mailings nor to his experience has he received such similar and numerous mailings before.

Recently when he solicited IRS tax forms for filings connected with our parent non-profit corporation, he received with the forms a solitary postcard to solicit information on how to care for his family's health. And this very week a mailing from the federal bureau of vital statistics came to his home address, although it did not list anyone's name on the address label.

If these are threats, it is indeed sad that we live amid such filth and gross evil. As Jefferson stated ignorance and democracy do not mix well. If these are threats, then they are threats to all Americans.

▶ *"...This nation was founded by men of many nations and backgrounds. It was founded on the principle, that all men are created equal. And the rights of every man are diminished when the rights of one man are threatened..." (Address to the nation June 11, 1963— John F. Kennedy).*

Letter to the editor:

Most here in the "good old USA" are unfortunately oblivious to the carnage around the world. The following poem was written by Xanana Gusmao, from East Timor. His words although written for his people, also echo the unheard cries of millions around the world; for social justice, for peace, for liberty. Human rights which too often are violated by totalitarian regimes which continually acquire armament and military training in the United States of America. It is more than painfully clear, that the time has come for "we as a nation" to re-assess our foreign policy, given a post-cold war world and question priorities. Otherwise we run the risk of endangering the survival of our concept of governance; *"of the people, by the people, and for the people."*

Providing assistance for self-sufficiency in agriculture, education, adequate health care, and nurturing the development of democratic principles for the "third world", are in essence, more beneficial for our own security interests than sponsoring militarism, goon squads, and state sponsored terrorism. As Xanana Gusmao reflects, children will remember the history of events.

* Manuel Lemos
Newark, NJ

TORN HOPES (10-8-95)

Timor
tomb of a soul
that did not appear
in the mists
of a history which was lost
in the distance of legends

Timor
mountain of bones
of a valor
which insurgent mouths
bless children
for the continuity of days

Timor
where death
is consecrated only in battle
to retain life
and recount history to children
who are born to remember

Timor
where flowers
also bloom
to embellish
unknown graves
"amid cold nights, unending"

Timor
where people
are born to die
for hope
within tears of pain
torn of meat

torn of blood
torn of life
tears of souls
in tatters
of liberty itself
which is obtained in death !

By: * Xanana Gusmao (*NOTE:Both letter and poem
translated from the Portuguese by Victor Saraiva)

More Information

1. On drugs can be found on the Internet concerning symptoms, treatment, referrals, research, and parenting at;

www.drughelp.org

www.casacolumbia.org

www.christians-in-recovery.org

www.redribbonworks.org

2. Concerning TWA flight 800

www.twa800.com/index.html

www.all-natural.com/images/times-8-15-00.gif

www.altered-evidence.com

MISSION STATEMENT

The Citizen for Social Responsibility was created as an educational tool which seeks to examine critical issues in our society which are not being addressed, by motivating public debate and discussion. It is solely an enterprise which does not seek profit as its reason to exist.