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THE GREAT POSTAL CRISIS OF 2007

A Message From Nation President Teresa Stack

Many of our loyal readers have been following what we've come to call "The Great Postal Crisis of 2007." In short: In May of 2006 the United States Postal Service proposed a postal rate increase for magazines that would have affected all publications more or less equally. The increase, a whopping 11.6 percent, promised to be a significant burden but one that magazines had time to plan for and was, if not just, at least justly applied.

Time Warner, the country's largest publisher with over 130 titles, felt otherwise and proposed its own rate plan, one that unsurprisingly benefited large national magazines like *People* and *Sports Illustrated*, and simultaneously shifted the postage burden to small independent titles like *The Nation*. Shockingly, postal regulators chose the Time Warner plan over the USPS rate proposal.

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FROM THE INTERN PEN TO HER MAJESTY'S GOVERNMENT

Once upon a time, D.D. Guttenplan, of The Nation's London bureau, was an intern at the magazine. (He is also married to former intern Maria Margaronis.) We asked him to contribute this piece on another fellow former intern who's gone on to great things.

I first met Eddie Miliband across Andy Kopkind's kitchen table in Vermont in 1989. Kopkind, *The Nation's* longtime associate editor, always hosted the new class of interns to a couple of weekends on the farm

he shared with his partner, John Scagliotti. My recollection of Miliband is of a dark, intense young man of obvious intelligence who wore lightly whatever baggage came with being the son of a famous man—his father, Ralph Miliband, who had been one of Andy's tutors at the London School of Economics, was the most eminent British Marxist theorist of the 1950s and '60s, a founder of *New Left Review* and a scourge of the British Labour Party, which he regarded as hopelessly reformist. "Eddie charmed everyone in the office with his English manners, his modest mien and his boyish pink cheeks," recalls copy chief Judith Long, still a bit misty at the memory.

Fast forward to 2005 when the former *Nation* intern, now known as "Ed," was elected to Parliament from Doncaster North, a former coal mining area in South Yorkshire. In Par-

liament, Ed (age 37) joined his older brother, David (age 42), who was elected in 2001. Unlike David, who headed Tony Blair's policy unit before becoming an MP, Ed Miliband, who followed his brother to Oxford but then

studied at the LSE before spending ten years as a close advisor to Chancellor Gordon Brown, has always been associated with the Brown faction within the Labour Party. Indeed, at the 2005 Labour Party Conference, Brown supporters, eager to dissociate themselves from Blair's disastrous policy in Iraq, sported buttons proclaiming "My Favorite Miliband Is Ed."

But the differences between the brothers, at least on matters of policy, were always more apparent than real. Certainly, both Blair

and Brown regarded the Miliband boys as ministerial material: Blair appointed Ed minister for charities and the voluntary sector, and when Brown became prime minister in June he promoted Ed's brother, who had been Blair's schools minister, to foreign secretary, making them the second pair of brothers in modern British history to serve together



The Rt Hon Ed Miliband MP

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The results: *The Nation* now faces a postal increase of 18 percent, or almost \$500,000 annually. Other small titles will face similar increases, some as high as 30 percent, while the largest magazines will see much lower increases and in some cases rate *decreases*.

America's founders understood the First Amendment would be worth little without a postal system that encouraged broad public participation in America's "marketplace of ideas." Thomas Jefferson, along with James Madison, paved the way for a system that for more than 200 years offered low-cost mailing incentives to small publications of information and ideas, subsidized in part by larger profitable magazines. Now that historic foundation has changed, putting the future of *The Nation*, along with many other publications, at risk.

The new rates went into effect on July 15, but *The Nation* is fighting hard to reverse this radical restructuring of postal policy. In a true bipartisan effort, we've joined forces with diverse titles including *The American Conservative*, *The American Spectator*, *Ms.*, *Mother Jones*, *The New Republic*, *Foreign Affairs* and many others, partnering with the formidable media reform group Free Press in a massive grassroots letter-writing campaign to Congress and postal regulators. *The National Review* and *The Nation* penned a joint op-ed on the issue for *The Los Angeles Times*. *The New York Times* and *The Boston Globe*, among others, have editorialized against the increase and the unorthodox rate-making process.

And Congress has taken note: At press time, Representative Danny Davis, chair of the House subcommittee with post office oversight, had scheduled hearings for late October, and the newly appointed Inspector General for the Postal Regulatory Commission is looking into the rate-making process. It will be difficult to reverse the decision, particularly with the largest media conglomerates on the opposite side, but stranger things have happened.

Meanwhile, readers like you have responded to our crisis with a stunning outpouring of support. We asked for your help through a series of e-mail messages and we've been humbled by your tremendous generosity. To date, over \$300,000 has been donated by our loyal readers, making a huge dent in our new \$500,000 annual postage expense. It's just another example of how *The Nation* would not exist without the remarkable support of our Nation Associates. We cannot thank you enough.

To learn more about the postage crisis and how you can help independent magazines, go to www.stoppostalratehikes.com.

in the cabinet. (Edward and Oliver Stanley, two sons of the Earl of Derby, joined Neville Chamberlain's cabinet in 1938.)

Ed Miliband now rejoices in the dual titles of minister for the Cabinet Office and chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster. The first title puts Ed at the heart of British government. The Cabinet Office is responsible both for coordinating the cabinet-level committees that define government policy and for overseeing the Civil Service to ensure that policy is executed according to the prime minister's priorities. The grand-sounding chancellorship of the Duchy of Lancaster is essentially a sinecure, with very few fixed duties, but which entitles the holder to a seat in the cabinet. Francis Walsingham, Elizabeth I's spymaster, held the post, as did Winston Churchill (who went on to higher things) and the British

Fascist leader Oswald Mosely (who went on to prison).

With one of the safest seats in Parliament Ed Miliband is likely to be a major influence on British politics for years to come. In addition to his governmental duties, he remains at the very center of Prime Minister Gordon Brown's inner circle, and has recently been given the job of drafting the new Labour Party manifesto, setting out the party's case for re-election. Ed's wide range of responsibilities also make it a good bet that at some point he'll find himself across the dispatch box from Nick Clegg, the Liberal Party's shadow home secretary, also a former *Nation* intern!

For more information on Ed Miliband and his activities you may go to his constituency website: <http://www.edmilibandmp.com>. Ed has also set up the Left Book Club Online: <http://www.leftbookclubonline.org>. ■

LETTERS@THENATION.COM (AND HOW IT GOT THAT WAY)

Nation communication coordinator Habiba Alcindor gives us a behind-the-scenes look at the letters-to-the-editor process at the magazine.

When Victor Navasky became editor of *The Nation* in 1978, one of the first things he did was move the Letters page from the back of the magazine, where it sat alongside the crossword puzzle, to the front, and he printed authors' responses alongside the letters in the same issue. "In the readers' surveys, it's always one of the most widely read things in the magazine," says Navasky. More than providing additional commentary, the Letters page shows that *The Nation* respects what its readers have to say.

When *Nation* copy editor, now copy chief, Judith Long took over the Letters page in 1990, she says it was "kind of stuffy. It didn't sound like real people writing in. Some academic would opine about German politics, then our own academic specialist on Germany would write a reply, and that would be it—that week's Letters page." There had been little interest in the task of sifting through and editing the incoming correspondence, which in those days arrived by mail and, later, fax.

Judy started out adding spice to the section with headlines like "Willke's Zygote Gets My Goat," which sat atop some letters on a piece

called "Is an Embryo a Person?" (Nov. 13, 1989). "I try to find humor where I can," she says with a twinkle. Judy heavily edits most letters into the concise and eloquent form in which they appear on the page. That way, she says, more letters can make it into print.

E-mail has revolutionized the way Judy runs her section. These days it's mainly e-mailed letters that appear in print because old-style letters arrive after deadline and require time-consuming inputting into the computer. Also, the miracle of e-mail has dramatically increased the volume of correspondence. In some cases, Judy responds to readers who feel frustrated about world events and who write what Judy refers to as "general venting letters." In other cases, she's forced to put filters on her e-mail to block those who e-mail repeatedly or copy her on everything they send out. "Some people send ten or fifteen a day!" She also gets "crazy things that aren't really letters to the editor. It's hate mail—they don't know where else to send it." Some unedited quotes from Judy's "kook file":

"THE AMERICAN PEOPLE ARE DISGUSTED WITH YOUR ATTACKS ON THE PRESIDENT YOU ALL; MAKING JACKASS

OF YOUR SELFS SO KNOCK IT OFF YOU GOD DAMN PATHOLOGICAL LIARS. . .”

or

“you godless heathens must have the hearing of a dead person... please move to cuba where they have free health care, great schools, low prices on oil, and many other utopian aspects you white flag raisers LOVE!!!!SOON!!!!”

or

“Dear magazine cowards...How dare you scumbags support Jeremy Cahill who talks about our mercenaries killing poor iraqis, WHILE OUR BOYS CONTINUE TO BE KILLED ALMOST DAILY. Jeremy Cahill is nothing but a goddamn coward hiding behind a fucking pen while our brave soldiers fight. He is so worried about the type of BULLET the mercenaries are using to kill our enemies but is he worried about the bullets being used to kill our boys. I WILL NEVER SUPPORT ANYTHING YOUR COMPANY EVER DOES AND I WILL TELL EVERYONE I KNOW NOT TO SUPPORT THE ANTI-AMERICAN MAGAZINE YOU ARE TRYING TO PROLIFERATE. GO TO HELL AND TELL JEREMY GO TO IRAG AND FIGHT FOR HIS COUNTRY THEN WE WILL LISTEN TO HIS OPINION. —ART FOGARTY US ARMY...p.s. I dare you to print this email.”

Asked how many e-mails she gets a week, Judy says matter-of-factly, “Hundreds and hundreds and hundreds and hundreds.” But how many are actual letters to the editor? Seventy-five. How many are letters to the editor that we wouldn’t publish because they’re off the topic, off the mark, too long or just not very good? Another hundred. On average there’s room for only about five to fifteen letters on the weekly page. Judy says a constant frustration is that so many excel-

lent letters come in that can’t be printed for lack of space. A new feature on our website, Web Letters aims to alleviate this problem. (To write your own Web Letter: go to www.thenation.com, click on any article and then the Web Letters link in the central tool box.)

So, how do letters make the final cut? One criterion for designating a letter a “must run” is if a person or organization negatively portrayed in an article writes in to refute the author’s statement. Letters from writers who complain that their books received inaccurate (read, unfavorable) reviews are also “must runs.” These exchanges are the basis of many Letters sections. The best such exchanges, says Judy, add new information to the article under discussion, or illuminate opposing viewpoints. The Exchange in the March 12 issue on Bob Moser’s February 12 cover article, “The Way Down South,” is a great example. Thomas Schaller, author of *Whistling Past Dixie: How Democrats Can Win Without the South*, and a slew of regular readers (including one who sent a photo of a pickup truck with bumper stickers, also featured in the Exchange) debated Moser, who feels the Democratic Party must take its message to the South.

When *The Nation* receives a “bazillion” letters on one topic, an assortment of them must run. Last winter Christopher Hayes’s “9/11: The Roots of Paranoia” (Dec. 25, 2006) whipped 9/11 conspiracy theorists into a letter-writing frenzy. “We got more mail on that than anything I can remember,” says Judy. “I printed it all out—I had to keep refilling the printer. It took an entire ream of paper. Practically broke my arm carrying it home. I thought, ‘Oh, this is cruel. This is—literally—a heavy burden!’ When I read the article, I thought, ‘Oh, no! Oh nooo! The mail

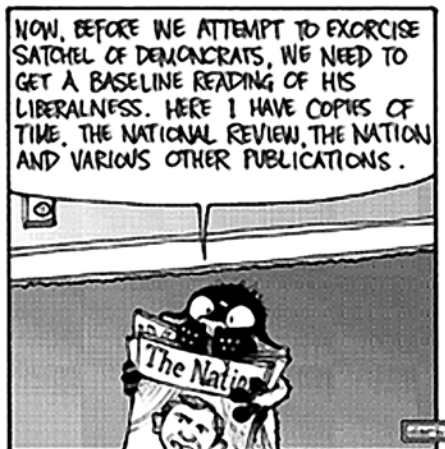
is going to pour in!” Judy also braced for the backlash from Daniel Lazare’s February 5 review, “My Beef With Vegetarianism.” “I thought, ‘Uh-oh—get ready! Every vegetarian on the planet is going to write in.’” Sure enough, it generated a mountain of mail. “Were they mad!” says Judy. “And I thought vegetarians were such peaceful types.”

Lately *The Nation* has been receiving letters from the parents of soldiers fighting in Iraq. Judy publishes as many of these as she can.

Sometimes letters that seem like good candidates can turn out to be meretricious. “I got a letter today and thought, ‘This one’s great!’ It was complimenting Eric Alterman’s last column and also making what I *thought* was an interesting point. I forwarded it to Eric with a ‘seems like a must-run!’ He wrote back, ‘Don’t print! This guy is a nut!’”

Judy loves letters that are fun. Letters about ads have been some of the most playful. “People are angry, but they’re also pretty clever,” Judy admits. “Readers wrote in about the Fox News ad we ran a couple of years ago calling it Faux News, Fox Fascist News, GOP Pravda, White House Press Release Central—it was fun.” (One of the letters, displayed on the *Nation* office refrigerator for several weeks, came with the offending Fox ad wrapped around a toilet paper roll.) “These letters are mad as hell, but it’s about an ad—who cares? I don’t feel personally attacked. Sometimes I do with editorial letters because I think, ‘Well, I agree with this editorial.’ And people write in ‘You idiots!’ But with the ads, or topics like our occasional redesigns, it’s just fun.”

Speaking of redesigns, Judy’s favorite Letters page of all time was her assemblage of comments about Milton Glaser’s 1996



GET FUZZY: © Darby Conley/Dist. by United Feature Syndicate, Inc.

redesign of the entire magazine. “Horror of horrors, Calvin Trillin on paper the color of infant diarrhea!” lamented one reader. Another called it “compelling evidence that a couple of old geezers suffering from residual literacy saw a copy of *Wired* and went on a confused design rampage before they were captured and spirited back to the Dying Designers Rest Home.”

Cartoons in the magazine guarantee a lively Letters section. Robert Grossman has a particular knack for offending readers with his irreverent caricatures. His ax-wielding, cross-dressing Babe Lincoln drew angry letters from queer, straight, gay and feminist communities, as well as fans of our sixteenth President. The cartoon depicted a bosomy Honest Abe decked out in nineteenth-century lingerie, high heels, white gloves and a stove-pipe hat (see Jan. 24, 2005 issue). “It’s Party Time,” Grossman’s December 4, 2006, cover illustration of the victorious Democrats celebrating the November Congressional elections, piqued a reader because of the cleavages with which he endowed the lady Dems. “Do you not recognize this as sexism?” she wrote. Another reader was upset that in a cartoon showing the partiers playing guitars, trumpets and tubas, Grossman had assigned Barack Obama a “trivial” triangle. He called it a racist snub “reminiscent of Stepin Fetchit.” Judy took an informal poll of the office to see if *Nation* staff agreed about Bob’s sexism and racism and published the—hilarious—results. The icing on the cake was Talking Heads drummer Chris Frantz writing a response to that letter. He defended the triangle as “a fantastic groove machine.”

Even the occasional pop culture figure weighs in on the Letters page. When a reader wrote in to say she’d glimpsed soap opera villain Lucinda Walsh reading *The Nation* on *As the World Turns* (Jan. 13, 1997), actress (and Radcliffe grad) Elizabeth Hubbard wrote a letter confirming her subversion (March 10, 1997): “Lucinda has successfully read on the air...Gore Vidal’s *United States...Moby-Dick* (a long plane ride prop), *The Last Days of Socrates* and Aeschylus’ *The Persians* (why not!), the *Oxford Book of English Verse*. Also various refugee-oriented and human rights books because I’m a shameless advocate. Though never! ever! has Lucinda been allowed by the Powers That Be to touch the Bible—she’s a villainess!”

Whether or not your letter is published, rest assured that Judith Long, *Nation* Woman of Letters, will give it a read and care what you say. You can reach her at letters@thenation.com. ■



VETERANS WELCOME *THE NATION* TO JUNEAU

Ruth Baldwin, communications director of The Nation Institute and associate editor at Nation Books, went on her first Nation Cruise this summer and reports back to us about a memorable antiwar rally in Juneau.

When the ms *Oosterdam* docked at Juneau, Alaska, on July 30, *The Nation* received the warmest of welcomes from our most northern state. Hundreds of supporters gathered at an antiwar rally explicitly to greet speakers and passengers from our tenth annual seminar cruise, which included editor and publisher Katrina vanden Heuvel, Mayor Rocky Anderson of Salt Lake City and consumer crusader and former presidential candidate Ralph Nader.

The Nation has its own historic ties to Alaska’s capital—Ernest Gruening (1887-1974), the magazine’s managing editor from 1920-23, was a native New Yorker who gave up practicing medicine for journalism. By the early 1930s he had built a national reputation as an expert on Latin American affairs, prompting Franklin Roosevelt to appoint him chief US policymaker for Puerto Rico, and he went on to serve as Alaska’s territorial governor from 1939 to 1953. Known as the “Father of Alaska Statehood,” he was elected one of Alaska’s first US senators in 1958. A courageous dissenter, Gruening is perhaps best remembered for his vehement opposition to the Vietnam War, being one of only two Senators who voted against the Gulf of Tonkin Resolution in 1964. He was defeated for re-nomination in 1968 by fellow Democrat Mike Gravel, currently a candidate for the 2008 Democratic nomination for president. With relevance to the current quagmire in Iraq

in a 1969 *Nation* editorial Gruening said “the most important issue facing our nation is to get out of the war in Southeast Asia. All our other issues and problems are slighted, impaired and unresolved until we halt the fighting, stop the concomitant continuing drain of blood and treasure, and turn to the long-neglected and pressing needs at home.”



The rally was organized by Phil Smith of Veterans Against the War, and convened at Marine Park in a spectacular setting in which rainforest-covered mountains sloped down to meet the ocean. The gathering opened with a traditional Tlingit (native Alaskan) welcoming song and dance performed by local Gary Waid, that perfectly set the tone for the shared ideas and voices to come. “We in Juneau go arm in arm with you,” said Alaska State Representative Andrea Doll. “We are also not afraid to stand up and speak our voice. We’re not afraid

WRITER PROFILE: CHRIS HAYES

One of The Nation's newest contributing writers, Puffin Foundation Writing Fellow Christopher Hayes, focuses on politics, labor, criminal justice, the environment and community development. Emily Douglas, a spring 2007 Nation intern and freelance writer spoke recently with Chris about his development as a journalist, intellectual interests, and the "unique milieu" in which he grew up.

to come down here today and be part of this and to speak out and fight for all the things that this country truly does stand for." Doll's comments were complemented by those of vanden Heuvel, who reminded those gathered that "we often go against the grain. We take unpopular positions."

All of the speakers spoke out against the war in Iraq. Anderson told the crowd that they must "stand up for our country. Stand up for what's right. Stand up for our Constitution and the rule of law." Nader likened the Bush Administration to a criminal gang that has hijacked the White House, and reminded us of our personal responsibility to act upon our conscience. He called upon everyone present to express their disapproval of the war to Congress: "It's not going to change until every one of us ceases being a spectator and focuses on 535 members of Congress."

At the end of the rally, Phil Smith, in the spirit of generosity that defined the day, offered vanden Heuvel a contribution towards *The Nation's* postal-rate campaign. As Holland America's ms *Oosterdam* steamed away toward the icy waters of the Hubbard Glacier, we were left with memories of an inspirational day in which leaders and citizens from across the nation had joined together to register their protest against the Bush Administration and its disastrous war, yet had also found kinship through shared ideals and values that stretched all the way from New York City to Juneau, Alaska. ■

Soon after the rally in Juneau, we received the following e-mail:

"Thank you Katrina vanden Heuvel and everyone else at *The Nation* who took time out of your Alaskan cruise today to speak with us and let us show our welcome. We are fortunate to attract many good foreign affairs speakers to this small capital city of Juneau, but getting to hear a few powerful, inspirational words from Ralph Nader and Rocky Anderson really meant a lot and kept us buoyed in our struggle to have a loud enough voice for peace and justice here in the crimson red state of Alaska. Katrina...please keep up your important, fantastic work and know you are admired and loved for your genuine warmth of spirit. You are a true Freedom Fighter in the noble tradition of Molly Ivins. Many thanks and blessings."
—Pagan Hill, Juneau, Alaska

The son of "kind of saints," Chris Hayes grew up in the Bronx in the 1980s. His father, a former seminarian, was a community organizer who founded a number of Bronx-based community groups and his mother worked in arts education. Raised in the Catholic social justice tradition, Chris and his family regularly attended alternative Mass. During his childhood, his parents had an "amazing circle of friends" who were all organizers with a thoroughgoing "lack of self-righteousness." At the time, Chris says he saw "the contingencies of my life as normal," and it was only after encountering people from different backgrounds in high school and college that he realized how unusual his upbringing had been.

A philosophy major at Brown University, Chris long intended to become a professor, but when "academia fatigue" struck at the end of his undergraduate years, it occurred to him that journalism could become his way to "get away with learning and writing for a living without being an academic." During his senior year he began writing a column for *The College Hill Independent*, an alternative weekly at Brown, covering the movement for an ethnic studies program, John Ashcroft's confirmation and Mark Rich's pardon. He was soon "hooked."

After graduating in 2001 he moved with his partner, Kate Shaw, to Chicago, where he started to write for a leading alternative weekly, *Chicago Reader*. Unlike in New York, where, as Chris says, "starving artists spend more time starving than making art," in Chicago Chris found it possible to establish a fledgling writing career with a combination of writing and waiting tables. In the beginning, Chris pursued "journalism of import" to a fault; he looked for compelling issues rather than good stories. Now, he says, "you learn to take an issue that's important and you find the story—the events, the conflict, the protagonist, the narrative."



In 2002, Chris and Kate together wrote a 10,000-word story on a woman sentenced to six to seven years in jail for spilling hot grease on her abusive ex-husband. Chris calls this experience "my own version of journalism school." They worked on the piece for six months, visiting the woman in prison, submitting Freedom of Information Act requests for police reports, conducting interviews, and reading court transcripts. After the piece

appeared, the woman's sentence was reduced by half, in part, Chris believes, because the governor's staffers had brought the piece to the governor's attention.

From then on, Chris worked his contacts—first at *The American Prospect* online, then *The New Republic* online. In 2004, he began working at *In These Times*, and in

2005 became a senior editor there, covering issues related to politics, labor, criminal justice, the environment and community development. "My conception of politics is very structural and organizational," Chris says. When he started covering politics, he wrote for a small leftist magazine far from DC, and he was, as a reporter, unknown. Out of necessity he approached politics from the bottom up. "I couldn't get sit-downs with candidates," Chris explains. But ultimately that worked to his advantage: "If democracy is functioning as it should be," Chris says, "a democratic politics is made up of so much more than candidates." He remains interested in movements themselves more than the individuals that front them. In a lengthy piece for *The Nation* in December 2005, "Can the Democrats Win the Ground War at Home?" Chris profiled the grassroots organizations, both large and small, that sprung up around the 2004 election and assessed their long-term feasibility.

In the fall of 2005, the philosophy major went back to school. For an *In These Times* piece, "What We Learn When We Learn Eco-

nomics,” Chris enrolled in 101-level economics class at the University of Chicago, wanting to “tease out the hidden ideological armature in ostensibly scientific, nonideological contexts” like introductory economics. There is a “large gulf,” Chris observes, between how ordinary people see and reason about capitalism’s functioning and how the elite do—and this, Chris senses, is an “untold political story.” It’s a “self-delusion of leftists that the masses just need to be roused by a siren call,” says Chris, but he does believe that people “on the whole” do not share the neoliberal views of the economics community. Theories that reconsider supposed givens are “gaining currency,” says Chris, “because of rising inequality and expanding global resistance to neoliberalism.” This burgeoning interest in economics has informed Chris’s recent work, whether he’s looking at tax breaks that essentially function as earmarks (“Memo to Dems: About Those Earmarks”) or increasing economic populism and the difficulty of protecting minority rights within a majoritarian economic justice agenda (“The New Democratic Populism”).

Chris recently led a seminar for the current class of *Nation* interns, where he dispensed common sense and unimposing advice on how to break into writing, including the aforementioned choice of a city, pitching to alt weeklies and writing “novel” pieces. As a totally unknown writer, “no one cares what you think about health care,” he pointed out. Chris pitched his first successful stories on the death of a legendary community organizer in Chicago (Gale Cincotta), a community-oriented bar that was being shut down and a design competition at the Chicago Housing Authority. He encouraged the interns to learn the difference between a topic and a story and, without the slightest bit of gloating, revealed that he no longer has to write “on spec”—i.e., without a firm commitment from a magazine to publish his piece. He reassured humanities majors that they still have time to develop expertise in, say, life sciences or economics. He emphasized the importance of on-the-ground reporting and developing a “beat,” and told us that if all else fails, tell the story in chronological order.

Chris and Kate just moved to Washington, DC, where Kate will clerk for Supreme Court Justice John Paul Stevens. Chris says he “owes the city [of Chicago] a lot.” Being a political reporter in Washington can’t hurt his career, but it will, he points out, be harder to do the kind of reporting he’s done and likes doing. Still, with the Democratic takeover of Congress and a presidential election afoot, it could hardly be a more exciting time to be there. ■

TALK...TALK...TALK...

Join a local Nation Associates discussion group. Contact the group coordinator in your area listed below. If you are interested in starting your own group, contact Peter Fifield at 212-209-5427 or associates@thenation.com. If you know of active groups that are not listed here, please let Peter know.

ARIZONA

- Phoenix Metro Area ▶ Barbara Cortright ▶ 480-968-3006

CALIFORNIA

- Brentwood (LA) ▶ bernlandis@verizon.net
- Carmel ▶ Ruth Smith ▶ 831-620-1303
- Orange County ▶ Allan Beek ▶ 949-548-4193 or 949-645-1419 ▶ abeek@flash.net
- Pleasanton ▶ John Haas ▶ supervalue10@aol.com
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- Chicago City ▶ June Dreznick ▶ 312-670-0966 ▶ jdreznick@earthlink.net

IOWA

- Cedar Falls-Waterloo ▶ Louis Hellwig ▶ 319-266-5363 ▶ shellwig@cfu.net

MAINE

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MARYLAND

- Baltimore Area ▶ Monica Kennedy ▶ 410-737-6629

MASSACHUSETTS

- Boston Area ▶ Sam Pilato ▶ 781-643-0038 ▶ sam@alcove.arlington.ma.us
- Northfield ▶ Louise Hoff ▶ 413-498-5830 ▶ Louisehoff2@yahoo.com

MICHIGAN

- Grand Ledge ▶ Richard Currier ▶ 517-627-4591 ▶ trichard@michcom.net

MISSOURI

- Kansas City ▶ Janelle Gann-Austin ▶ 816-734-5044 ▶ jgannaustin@yahoo.com
- St. Louis Area ▶ Mary ▶ 314-352-5155

NEVADA

- Las Vegas ▶ Harold Barling ▶ 702-736-6905

NEW JERSEY

- North Jersey ▶ Trudy Anschuetz ▶ 973-746-4135 ▶ TGOBLUE1@aol.com
- Bridgewater/Somerville ▶ Roz Hendrickson ▶ 908-526-5215

NEW MEXICO

- Albuquerque ▶ Shelly Smith ▶ 505-453-2159

NEW YORK

- "Tom Paine" Albany Co. ▶ Frank Barbaro ▶ 518-326-2767 ▶ pattyB514@aol.com
- Long Island (Huntington) ▶ John Valenti ▶ 631-549-3926
- NYC: Bronx (Riverdale)/Westchester ▶ Florence Gold ▶ 718-549-1601
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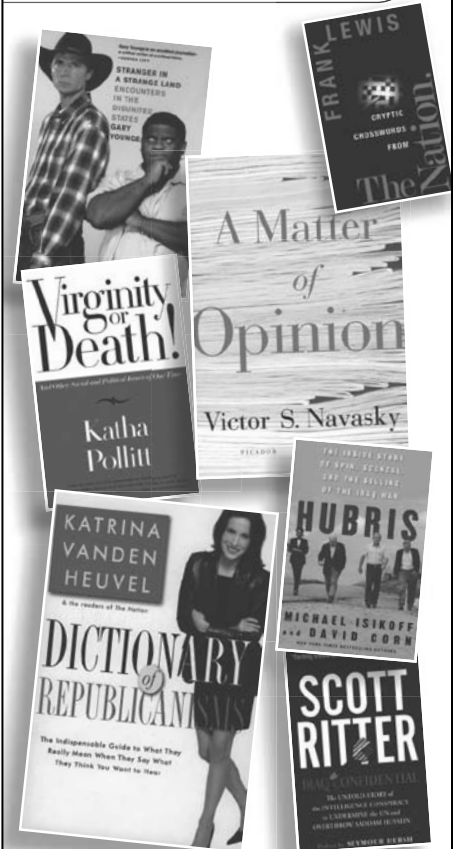
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THE NATION'S SECOND ANNUAL STUDENT CONFERENCE

On June 25 student journalists from across the country came together at the Center for American Progress in Washington, DC, for a day of workshops, panels, seminars and discussions with editors, reporters and cultural critics from The Nation and publications like Slate and The American Prospect. Habiba Alcindor reports on this conference cosponsored by our magazine and made possible by the generous financial support of our Nation Associates.

Campus Progress packed an incredible amount of talent within the walls of its 2007 Student Journalism Conference. Approximately 120 students traveled to Washington, DC, to rub elbows with journalists from radio, print and the blogosphere.

In contrast to last year's conference—where many of the students wrote articles in addition to being activists or pursuing other professions—this year's students seemed more interested in becoming career journalists. Most of the speakers moved to questions quickly if not immediately, creating a collegial, interactive environment that the students really enjoyed.

Brenda Weigel from the University of North Carolina at Asheville valued the “practical advice” she received from panelists, such as how to build a portfolio and how to blog online, which was the subject of “The Art and Act of Blogging.” In this workshop, Ezra Klein of *The American Prospect* touted the unlimited space of blogs as an excellent way for fledgling journalists to explore topics in as much depth, frequency and obsessive detail as they choose. Ann Friedman talked about her experiences writing on her friend's blog *Feministing*, and how links become “currency” when establishing a presence on the Web. Chris Rabb of *Afronetizen* shed some light on the way cyberspace “mirrors the vices and virtues of offline society,” and then gave technical tips about types of blogging platforms for those who want to get started online.

I snagged John Owen Ream, one of the pioneer writers of Nebraska's oldest political blog, the Omaha College Democrats Blog, just as he was coming out of this workshop. He found the session informative and seemed very much in his element. When Ream said he's “always read *The Nation*,” he really meant it. The son of two *Nation* subscribers, he explained how he started out looking at the cartoons before

he knew how to read, then graduated to Calvin Trillin poems, then letters and finally articles. Of the conference he had this to say:

“Sometimes it feels like the really liberal parts of our lives are sequestered off from the Democratic politics side of our lives. You get to vote for Bill Clinton, and then you also get to read Chomsky, but you don't get to do both at the same time. So to have Campus Progress, which is the more mainstream, Bill Clinton-y kind of organization, pair up with *The Nation*, it was really exciting for me.”

I also spoke with Diana Jou, Julianne Hing and Patrick Appel, editors of *Jaded*, a UC Irvine-based magazine that distinguishes itself with its eye-catching cover art. Hing described the magazine, which began as the voice of the Asian Pacific Students Association, as a “corral” for “verbal content, visual content, political beliefs, as well as our interest in people, pop culture, a little bit of everything. We just put it all together in a media form.” Not surprisingly, these students found the conference session “From Proust to Paris Hilton: Covering Culture and the Arts” most helpful, in addition to being “a very lively discussion.” Here, *The Nation*'s Richard Kim and Christine Smallwood gave students a sense of why culture matters, both as a conduit to politics and in its own right. After the session, Smallwood, who recently started her own magazine, *The Crier*, [see “Staffers Moonlight as Publishers” in the previous issue of *The Nation Associate*] chatted with the *Jaded* editors informally about the joys and pitfalls of publishing. “I know *The Nation*,” said Appel, “so seeing the people and hearing them talk about their work adds a level of personality to the magazine.”

Like last year, panelists encouraged students to take the path less traveled in order to get the story. The two keynote speakers, Barbara Ehrenreich and Eric Schlosser, are known nationally for sparking widespread debate

about humble, everyday subjects—minimum wage labor and fast food, respectively.

Washington correspondent Ari Berman told of how he'd been scooped by writers from mainstream papers on two big stories, but that because he lacks institutional constraints and doesn't depend on regular access to high-level officials, he was able to write better articles. Tara McKelvey, a senior editor at *The American Prospect*, spoke about how she pored over documents and interviewed prisoners and their families to get the story about abuses at Abu Ghraib for her book *Monstaring: Inside America's Policy of Secret Interrogations and Torture in the Terror War*, even when the military brass wouldn't return her phone calls.

In the session “Covering the Law, the Constitution and National Security,” legal correspondent David Cole advised attendees that a law degree is an ideal tool for piercing the government's endless (and occasionally flimsy) lies. On the other hand, Jeremy Scallion, who exposed the seamy underbelly of military privatization in his series of reports on *Blackwater*, emphasized during the session “Digging Deep” that investigative reporting is often a labor of love undertaken by dedicated individuals who may or may not be full-time professional journalists or even college graduates. Laura Flanders and Roberto Lovato discussed the importance of movements in their workshop, “Beyond the Beltway.” While Flanders noted that “typically, the heart of the story is left outside of mainstream reporting,” Lovato was able to cite examples of immigrants who have worked to effect positive sociopolitical change despite the fact that their citizenship status frequently places them on the margins of American society.

Ryan Thoreson, one of the senior editors for *The Harvard Perspective* and a blogger on Harvard's *Cambridge Commons* felt that he'd gained an appreciation for “what progressive journalism entails,” and commented on the diversity of information presented, such as the investigative journalism panel and the blogging panel: “To see all that in one conference is so much different than the aggregated panels that I've gone to at other conferences.” (Incidentally, we're pleased to announce that Thoreson is the winner of the *The Nation*'s second annual Student Writing Contest. His winning essay was recently published in the magazine.)

For more information about the Student Conference and all of our student-related activities at *The Nation* or to support our efforts, please visit the student portion of our website at www.thenation.com/student. ■

REMEMBERING JOHN BARTKUS

Michelle O'Keefe, The Nation's circulation manager, remembers a dear friend and former colleague.

“E at more chocolate, or whatever your heart desires.” These were the last words in an e-mail to me from our graphic designer, John Bartkus, before he died this spring from a swift and relentless form of cancer. I guess it was his way to comfort me while I struggled to complete a direct mail campaign without him.

I first met John over a decade ago when he wandered into our offices looking for design work. Normally, I didn't like taking cold calls from any type of salesman. Their services were either too expensive or they didn't have a clue as to what this magazine was about. So I'd shoo them away, then feel guilty afterwards, as if I were Willy Loman's final sales call.

However, it was John's kind eyes and jovial sarcasm that made him totally irresistible to me. He specialized in circulation promotions and had a strong affinity for *The Nation*. His fees were reasonable; he worked quickly; and in a very short time he became my right arm during numerous direct mail campaigns and holiday gift promotions.

From a graphic designer's standpoint, *The Nation's* circulation department is probably the least sexy place to flex your creative muscle. Our winning promotions have always been very text-heavy with very little visual design. Once in a while John would try to sneak in a funky typeface or odd color to liven things up a bit, but he often found his hands tied back down to our standard Times New Roman and PMS Red 032.

The holidays always brought him more creative license. I would throw him an extra

color (usually Pantone Green), the same way a stingy boss gives out a cheap bonus. He was always grateful for these “little extras” and after stinging you with a few sardonic quips, he would design those campaigns with clean simplicity and grace.

Through the years I came to rely on John for so much more than just design work. He calmed me down when deadlines were tight and copy was late. He made me laugh as we created trillions of blow-in cards that

we knew would just end up on the floors of bathrooms and subway cars. Most important, he taught me that no matter how mundane or piddly the promotional task at hand is, you need to stand back and appreciate its impact: bringing in thousands of readers to *The Nation*. Unlike so many other publications that aren't even fit to line bird cages, *The Nation* is a journal that makes a difference. And that's how John slept at night, working on the many causes

he believed made a difference in this world.

He left a lot of fingerprints around my desk. His business card is still on my bulletin board, his phone number still in my cell. I continue to shake my head in disbelief as I browse through old e-mails, searching for past designs amongst the tiny tidbits of his humor.

After 9/11, John made a point to archive all of his work onto a disk for me. His Post-it note reads, “In case one of us drops dead, let's both keep this in a safe place.” That disk is now in my desk drawer, underneath a pile of Milk Duds and Hershey Bars. The chocolate does help a little, as I try to find a way to carry on with just one arm and his fingerprints. ■



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NEW RELEASES



Less Safe, Less Free: Why America Is Losing the War on Terror. By David Cole and Jules Lobel. New Press. Retail \$26.95 (cloth); **Associates \$16.95.** At home and abroad, the Administration has cut corners on fundamental commitments to the rule of law in the name of preventing future attacks—from “waterboarding” detainees to disappearing suspects into secret CIA prisons to attacking Iraq against the wishes of the UN Security Council and most of the world when it posed no imminent threat of attacking us. In this brilliantly conceived critique, two of the country's pre-eminent constitutional scholars argue that the great irony is that these sacrifices of the rule of law, adopted in the name of prevention, have in fact made us more susceptible to future terrorist attacks.



Hubris: The Inside Story of Spin, Scandal, and the Selling of the Iraq War. By David Corn and Michael Isikoff. Three Rivers Press. Retail \$14.95 (paper); **Associates \$11.95.** Former *Nation* Washington editor Corn and *Newsweek* correspondent Isikoff reveal what was really behind the US-led invasion of Iraq. “There have been many books about the Iraq war... This one, however, pulls together with unusually shocking clarity the multiple failures of process and statecraft that led so many people to persuade themselves that the evidence pointed to an active Iraqi program to develop weapons of mass destruction.”

—*Washington Post*.

“The most comprehensive account of the White House's political machinations...fascinating reading.”

—*The New York Times*.



The Shock Doctrine: The Rise of Disaster Capitalism. By Naomi Klein. Metropolitan Books. Retail \$28.00 (cloth); **Associates \$20.95.** The best-selling author of

No Logo shows how the global “free market” has exploited crises and shock for three decades, from Chile to Iraq. Whether covering Baghdad after the US occupation, Sri Lanka in the wake of the tsunami, or New Orleans post-Katrina, she witnessed something remarkably similar. People still reeling from catastrophe were being hit again, this time with “disaster capitalism”: losing their land and homes to rapid-fire corporate makeovers.



The Genius of Impeachment: The Founders' Cure for Royalism. By John Nichols. New Press. Retail \$15.95 (paper); **Associates \$8.95.** This surprising and irreverent book by *The Nation's* Washington correspondent makes the case that impeachment is much more than a legal and congressional process—it is an essential instrument of America's democratic system. Articles of impeachment have been brought to Congress sixty-two times in American history. Thomas Jefferson himself forwarded the evidence for impeachment of the first federal official to be removed under the process—John Pickering in 1803. Impeachment is as American as apple pie.



Learning to Drive: And Other Life Stories. By Katha Pollitt. Random House. Retail \$22.95 (cloth); **Associates \$17.95.** Katha Pollitt is well known for her wit and her keen sense of both the ridiculous and the sublime. Her award-winning Subject to Debate column has been called “the best place to go for original thinking on the left.” Now Pollitt has penned a collection of reflections ranging in subject from her philandering boyfriend to a general late-midlife sense of loss. Pollitt recently explained in *The Nation*, “It's a collection of personal essays, only two of which have been previously published (in *The New Yorker*), about love, sex, betrayal, motherhood, divorce, proofreading pornography and the decline and fall of practically everything, including myself.”

HOLIDAY CLEARANCE SALE:

Letters from Young Activists: Today's Rebels Speak Out. By Dan Berger, Chesa Boudin & Kenyon Farrow, \$5.95

American Prometheus: The Triumph and Tragedy of J. Robert Oppenheimer. By Kai Bird & Martin J. Sherwin, \$10.95

Cinema Nation: The Best Writing on Film from *The Nation*, 1912-2000. Carl Bromley (Editor), \$4.95

Failed Crusade: America and the Tragedy of Post-Communist Russia. By Stephen F. Cohen, \$7.95

Guerrilla Radio: Rock'n'Roll Radio and Serbia's Underground Resistance. By Matthew Collin, \$4.95

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Blue Grit: True Democrats Take Back Politics From the Politicians. By Laura Flanders, \$18.95

After the New Economy: The Binge and the Hangover That Won't Go Away. By Doug Henwood, \$9.95

Who Let the Dogs In: Incredible Political Animals I Have Known, By Molly Ivins, \$12.95

I'd Hate Myself in the Morning: A Memoir. By Ring Lardner Jr., \$7.95

These United States. John Leonard (Editor), \$12.95

Cryptic Crosswords From *The Nation*. By Frank Lewis, \$10.95

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Unnatural Disaster: *The Nation* on Hurricane Katrina. By Betsy Reed (Editor), \$10.95

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Target Iran: The Truth About the White House's Plans for Regime Change. By Scott Ritter, \$13.95

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Perpetual War for Perpetual Peace. By Gore Vidal, \$4.95

Open House: Of Family, Friends, Food, Piano Lessons, and the Search for a Room of My Own. By Patricia Williams, \$8.95

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