

A Our theoretical framework comes from a school of anthropology

that undertakes ethnography from the point of view of the material culture of the culture in question. The notion here is that material culture carries and creates and organizes various kinds of cultural meanings. More particularly we understood that the world of adolescence is now an extraordinarily rich and varied world. This was not the case even three decades ago. A woman who was a teenager in the 1950s told us that then you had only two choices: you could be mainstream or James Dean. Now there are as many as fifteen possibilities. There is a kind of archaeological accumulation of possibilities. There are new stylistic innovations that take place. Instead of fading, the older ones continue to exist as possibilities. We wanted to look at this world of choice. Teenagers are called upon to make a selection from this world. These choices made as stylistic decisions have profound ideological and political implications. This is not just wacky dressing up. The choices that people make from the envelope of stylistic possibilities reflect an ideological position and that is what we wanted the show to present: the cultural, the ideological, the social and political meanings with which each of these stylistic categories is charged.

Comments by

MARIAM DURRANI, ANDREW KIM
AND
ALBERT KIM OF THE
CLASSROOM STRUGGLE ON
CKLN 88.1 FM.

"It was refreshing to see that the introductory video was done by a person of colour. I thought that was pretty cool, the first thing we saw. And a female too."

"And I also enjoyed the exhibition of clothing styles and people reminiscing about their youth from 1930 to 1980. We really liked that part because it made us aware of how styles come back, even though it's different now."

"When we got into the present we didn't like the

way that teenagers were put into specific little boxes: preppies, hippies, b-boys and b-girls.

And you really only focused only on downtown schools. And there's a

certain way in which lesbian and gay youth dress and you really didn't cover that."

"When we went through the exhibit we thought that this is a white-washed exhibit. It seemed centred towards parents."

"I know about the b-boys and the b-girls that in the things they wear there is a political statement they're trying to make. And some groups really hate each other. You should have brought out the emotions of youth, the raw emotions of wanting to belong and not wanting to belong."

"The section on racism, sexism, environment and so on should have been much more specific. That's what kids want to talk about. When we went into racism we didn't talk about the police and tension between coloured youth and the police. When we went into sexism it was like you just asked what's your opinion about sexism and they just rambled on. They are big issues. You should have broken them down: there's not just dating, there's inter-racial dating, homosexual dating, parents' input into your dating, who you date, age-ism. The topics are way too broad to make any sense to us whatsoever."

"What's the use of telling the adults what they already know. Tell them what they don't know."

"Youth have much more to say. We wish you had asked questions that challenged the kids and made them think. It seems a bit too empty. The issues are way too sugar-coated. If this is supposed to be about us then we get the feeling that it's not us. You should have brought in issues: the Gulf War, what do you think about that? The feminist movement, what do you think about that? You could have asked them about all these things. If my parents came in there they would not see the reality of what students are thinking now."

"As a student I want to talk about the youth that are trying to fight racism and sexism in their high schools. And about their families, how they limit you."

"The youth that were interviewed were the ones who think of themselves as the popular ones. The youth who don't think of themselves as being popular weren't interviewed."

IMPRESSIONS OF AFRICA



BY STAN FOGEL

At

the Egypt Air office in Cairo where I went to purchase my Cairo-Nairobi, Kenya ticket I was greeted by a dazzling Cairene. She made me forget Cairo's monumental traffic jams, its obsessive beggars, its monuments ringed by tour buses. Instead of baksheesh, a handout, I would have handed out myself...as ransom. In the dense dark souk or market, which travel books invariably describe as colourful, I would have shopped for her; on buses where one belch produces a ripple that, in their crowded confines, registers on the Richter scale I would have ridden to the movies. The movies, themselves, make Bruce Lee kung-fu films seem like they were done by Bergman, but I would have watched them avidly.

All this I told her, but nothing, surprisingly, wooed her as much as the succinct statement of my profession: "Professor of Literature." I do not know whether there are entomologists out there who make "them" swoon merely by muttering "Bugs," but periodically the love of literature, long since forgotten by a jaded academic who says it for his supper, erupts in his presence. Such was the case here. Despite the line expanding behind me, which no doubt joined the one winding around the Sphinx and/or the pyramids, crowds being a Cairene's constant companion, the Egypt Air clerk told me at length her own lofty goals. She was a student of English literature in Cairo who worked part-time in the airline office. Her love was Jane Austen. And Egypt's authors? As easily as if she could blow the city's



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smog from the sky, she dismissed her countrymen and women and lived in the England of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries invested with value by English professors who, I am convinced, are spread around the world preaching a sherry party utopia of urbane speech and English gardens. Although I would have gone to that kingdom with her had she enveloped my hand in those elongated fingers of hers that can make poetry out of a pen writing "Fogel," "flight time" and "date," I had to leave her where she was. Jane Austen's prose, I could have told her, reads like it was written by blunt fingers, but I said she should do graduate work in Canada at my university where she would no doubt find "Paradise Regained." Even though other blunt fingers produced that text, it was one, I promised her, I would amend with my own more poetic digits.

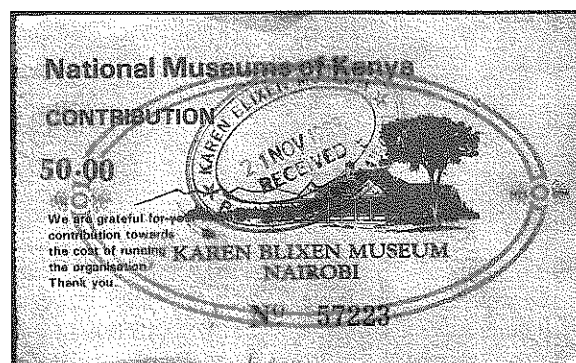
I gave her my academic address and moved on to Nairobi where her literature lesson was repeated. Still, the frisson of that encounter or ones like it are what propel me around the world or around the block repeatedly, if legs I long for stand there. I am at my best in those situations. I'm gracious, attentive, sensitive to nuances that are otherwise to me like the boulders that built the pyramids. Most monuments are built from those latter, large chunky blocks. I can only respond as an archaeologist when I glean something erotic. Then I'll sift for hours through the equivalent of a desert stretch of sun and sand for the Tutenkhamenish gold of a profile or a glance or an accidental grazing. Such rigorous commitment of a devotee has made me renege on my already announced departure. This time for sure, savouring the possibility of the airline clerk's postgraduate studies with me, I promise you I'll move on to Nairobi.

Straight to Nairobi's bookstores, in fact, where a Kenyan literature student with the taste of the Cairene's did the shopping. Indigenous writers are on the bottom shelves and are spoken of derogatorily. Theirs, so the Brit-bred aesthetic goes, is an unrefined, raw product not nearly as crafted and magnificent as *Out of Africa*. The book which Karen Blixen wrote as Isak Dinesen is

everywhere--and usually it's the glossy new edition with the glossy new cover photograph which clearly shows the book's secondary status to the movie. Aptly named is *Out of Africa* because, except for the African men and women shuttling around to facilitate the amours and intrigue of a bunch of, what else, jaded Europeans, and except for the other background shots of lush nature, the book and film could certainly have taken place out of Africa, say in a Florida health spa. It wouldn't have had, however, the cachet of a continent that is still paraded by travel agencies as unspoiled; thus, it would have failed as anything except, done a lot more raunchily, an x-rated romp for the home video market.

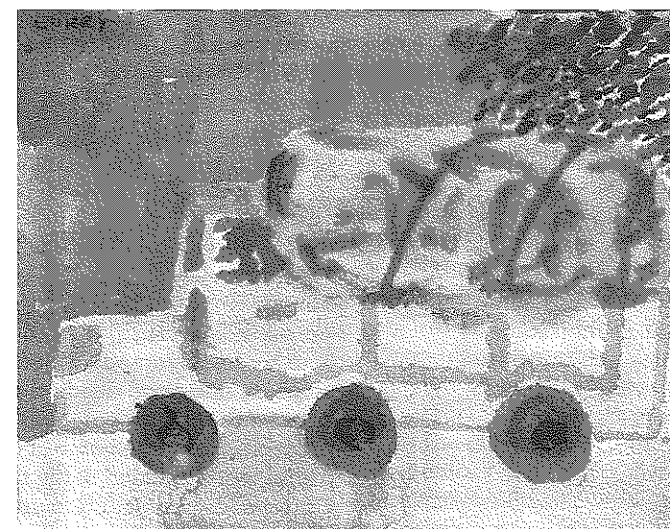
The Blixen house, too, is there for those who can't get enough of the expatriate ambience. It's a nice country house in a suburban setting, without mystique except, again, for its African allure. Although the house is now a museum kept up for tourists, down the road is a golf course still crammed with rich, lolling white men and women served by deferential Africans. Segregated by club fees rather than culture now, it offers about the same ratio of integration that Beverley Hills, California does, though a few African government officials made privately wealthy by the public purse keep the golfers' handicaps from too closely resembling apartheid.

If this weren't enough, there are safari-going tourists to provide after-the-fact dress rehearsals for the set born out of Africa. While the Kenyans I met professed little interest in the organized camping trips that seem to rank among the highest of supposedly authentic travel experiences, they are the *sine qua non* of adventures for what is becoming hordes of Europeans and Americans. So my friend, Julie, and I went on a safari; we had a driver/guide. His pecking order firmly in place, he was determined to spot us or have us spot a cheetah. Despite Julie's illness, the lingering stomach malaise that took hold in Cairo and kept her company over roads and trails designed to torture her and that had gotten quite acute as we wandered the Masai Mara National Park where wild animals do roam in abundance, Emile refused to take us directly back to our hotel. Sensing that a cheetah lurked



nearby, he wheeled around and around in the tall grass, elephants, giraffes, wildebeestes, zebras and even lions a mere scherzo to his grandest revelation. Prostrate in the back of the van Julie would not have been able to see the cheetah unless it leapt through the hole in our retractable roof. Regardless, we were on the hunt and, Hemingwayesque, we were going to win big; if hers was going to be a short life, it would be a short, happy one. Sure enough we sighted a cheetah. Emile, sensing a large tip tied to his adroit hunting and manoeuvring, coaxed the van to within a few feet of the animal. Lazily the cheetah lolled, oblivious to our van and the six or seven others that gave the grassy spot the look of a snack bar parking lot. Oblivious themselves to the sounds of metal purring more loudly than the cheetah, if purring is what cheetahs do, the satisfied safari-goers trained their video cameras onto the animal, thereby getting a protracted still, the cheetah immobile throughout. Pleased that our score card was complete, score card being literally in evidence in many of the game park lodges, Emile finally returned us to our hotel.

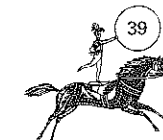
The only times that he was ever that assiduous again were when we stopped for our travel breaks at those way stations that, given all the energies of the sellers who lurk there, turn into equatorial "five and dime" stores. Whenever we passed a village where the signs "Butchery" and "Hotel" were juxtaposed over two dingy but fascinating looking establishments that were side by side, I would suggest we stop. Emile would then mutter that such places were too dangerous, that butchery and hotel were co-operative enterprises and that more sublime snack and toilet facilities existed. Whereupon he would stop at an emporium selling nick-nacks to hundreds of other tourists, their vans and land rovers as familiar as yet another sighting



of a herd of wildebeestes. Lest one harbour any illusions about the remoteness of these remote tourists traps, they were dispelled for me when I was given a sales pitch by a guy wearing a t-shirt with a reproduction of a Chicago, Illinois newspaper headline dated May 29, 1989. The news item celebrated something only a Chicago baseball fan could ardently respond to: the ascension to first place the day before of the Chicago Cubs, a team rarely ensconced in such august realms. Since it was barely five months after the date on his t-shirt, I assumed in jest he was an avid if slightly dislocated Cubs fan and tried to talk batting averages, the merit of day versus night baseball, the beauty of Wrigley Field, etc. His only interest in averages was the seller's equivalent of the Dow Jones. His Cubs t-shirt had been bartered for and I quickly realized anything I had I had, in his mind, as currency. Pens--he was reaching into the van now--and clothing could augment the Kenyan shilling and cement a sale for spears, ashtrays, tiny machine-made animals.

Outposts offering such nick-nacks litter the land. One can no more relax at one of the rest stops than one can walk uninterruptedly on Kenyan beaches. The minute one leaves one's hotel, itself protected by guards, one is confronted by a stampede of elephants, or rather hawkers of those replicated wares. Instead of oases of tranquility by the Indian Ocean, itself edged with seaweed that makes swimming unpleasant, one gets portable shopping malls, the males selling their wooden wares, the females their bodies. In the shallows of the ocean, within sight of the hotel, prostitutes splash and play languidly until their silent siren calls are heard by a hotel guest who reels one in. Augmented by hordes of school children, too young it seems to sell but old enough to demand sponsors for them to walk, run or whatever in some charity-a-thon, the bazaar offers everything except an uninterrupted time.

It seems most tourists are happy with the attention. The irony of burnt white bodies, fat and soft, served by black ones, thin and attentive, goes unnoticed. The hotels, both in the game parks and along the ocean, do their best to conform to the definition of the generic tourist hotel. What gives them a little twist in Kenya is the abundance of no doubt negligibly paid busboys, baggage carriers and maids etc. who hover. In the dining room of our Mombassa beach hotel cutlery came and went at a more rapid rate than the buffet visits by the Germans in tour groups. Also, bills are dealt with and money transacted in a way that can only be described as raw capitalism. No New York disdain or French hauteur here; coins are picked up and pocketed as quickly





as they are placed on the table. The attention, finally, makes one feel claustrophobic. Still, being served soufflé fritters while monkeys dangle overhead and watching hotel watchmen complete their patrols with bows and arrows instead of guns and nightsticks offer a little hint at least of what we think of as the offbeat. Offbeat in a less flattering way is the phalanx of paparazzi-cum-tourists whose uniform is a mixture of the great white hunter and Bill Blass or Pierre Cardin. Khaki safari clothes that look like the roughest ride they've had is in a washing machine adorn everyone. Starched and ironed the clothes are invariably set off by enough jewelry that, should a trek up Kilimanjaro ever be attempted, varicose veins would turn hikers legs into road maps from the exertion. No Sherpa has been asked to carry more. While the men's bellies batter their durables and their cameras bounce over the bulge, the women's accessories to safari style include their long painted finger nails. Long enough to pick lice off offered monkey's bellies, but they never do, glowing manicured nails mark the modern hunter as made of the stern stuff...that makes nails unbreakable. Then, of course, there are the Clint Eastwood caricatures with the white hunter, black beard syndrome who stride aggressively to the bars of the fashionable hotels to wrestle a pack of Camel cigarettes and straight whiskies into submission.

Throughout the game parks there are occasionally wondrous sights: for instance, baboons frolicking on the golf course of the Aberdares Country Club, the course with the highest elevation in the British Commonwealth. At dusk out they come to dive into the sand traps and abscond with any balls hit by golfers foolish enough to think of playing through. Treetops, the lodge Princess Elizabeth was sequestered in at the time of her father's death and her subsequent promotion to Queen, features one of the true colonial anachronisms, a hunter whose safari outfits are worn more and much more worn than those of the overnighters he greets many days of the year. In a voice rich with the understatement



Edward Oyugi, before being arrested for the second time by the Kenyan government. He is currently awaiting trial.

and experience of an old man of the parks, he tells us of his days as Elizabeth's hunter-protector and of the dangers and delights of an area he knows better than the meaty back of his hand. Tourists inspired by his pep talk stay up all night to stare quietly and at close range at the animals that wander obliviously up to the salt lick that is floodlit for Treetops' guests.

The official Kenya that is available to tourists can yield many pleasures even if they come from overhyped safaris. Still, it should be noted that the rutted, boulder strewn roads that convey most visitors to their rendezvous with "wild" animals offer a meaning other than that of an impoverished country doing the best it can to ferry people about the country. My visit to Kenya coincided with ex-U.S. President Jimmy Carter's visit. I might have had the same august view as Carter presented of Kenya's President and the country he governed as models of African stability and good deeds were it not for the fact that I was watching the televised proceedings in the home of an African friend who chuckled softly throughout Carter's formal reception and toast to Kenya. Afterwards, we chatted about what we knew best, university life. While I carped ungratefully (but aptly in my milieu, huh?) about the rigors of teaching a hundred students and hanging out in a conservative university ambience that made academic life a snore, my friend Edward offered a scenario of hundreds of students lectured to without a microphone, of supplies having to be paid for by himself, of salaries that barely sustain the sipping of an occasional Kenyan beer. Books were difficult to get, sabbaticals were unfunded: the list of horrors to a pampered North American academic read like a life sentence to a mid-

American junior college outfitted with one concrete building and a favoured basketball team.

Still, I felt a kind of kinship with the complainant until I was told the following: six years ago Edward was at home when a bouquet of soldiers knocked on his door, invaded his home, searched it thoroughly, questioned him on the Marxist texts he as a sociologist had



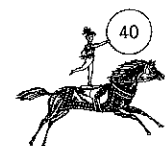
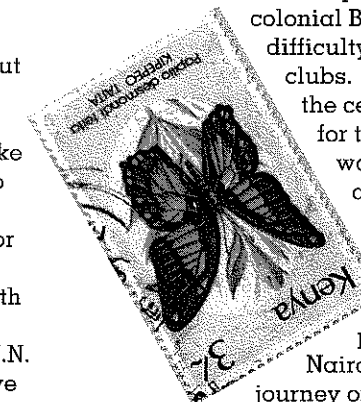
plenty of, then hauled him away. Blindfolded he was taken to a prison where he was placed in solitary confinement. For four years he was held without trial, always in solitary confinement. Finally, on a hunger strike and with Amnesty International's support, he was summarily released without explanation or apology. He had been shanghaied from his home and subjected to a good many abuses simply for being on the executive of his university's faculty union. Had he not been married to a woman who was not Kenyan and whose embassy was apprised of his detention, perhaps an even worse fate would have ensued. (Edward told me these things in an easy narrative manner.) An amiable but charismatic person, he was returned to the faculty he had disappeared from, but without the rank and status he had previously attained. He joked that the most difficult adjustment he had to make after being released from prison was to the comfortable bed that for four years had been supplanted by a concrete floor and one woollen blanket.

The remaining days I spent with him he conducted Julie and me around the unofficial Kenya. Tourist dollars, U.N. money and aid money from abroad have clearly not been channelled by the one party state into a party for all. All the clichés of poverty and degradation that

mix with some modern Nairobi apartment buildings, lavish hotels and quirky monuments built to assuage the ego of Kenya's leaders were in place and placed in full view for me. Edward, himself, lives on the border between the power brokers who have already once attempted to break him and the majority of Kenyans who have much less than he does. He lives in a middle class section of Nairobi in a large new house with ample grounds and servants to tend to them as well as other domestic tasks. Sitting cosily in his living room sipping a beer, I thought, previous to his opening up to me, that he, like many academics around the world, had made his comfortable pact with a world that for the most part is paternalistic towards some academics' tenacious scrutiny of the social order. The house has bars on the windows and doors; there are even bars blocking the sleeping quarters in case ruthless intruders manage somehow to get by the second line of defense, the first being the barbed wire fences and dogs that surround the house. This, I was assured, is a necessity to repel the have-nots in a society where few have. Caught in the middle of corruption Edward must lecture hoarsely during the day about the conditions of his country, then retreat to his home where he barricades himself against people disadvantaged by those conditions so that he can take the time to reflect on that iniquitous set of circumstances. Thus, the roads to the game parks and those around the shanty towns that ring Nairobi are paved with the good intentions of European and North American travellers and governments whose dollars line the pockets of a handful of men who, no doubt, prepare to drive over smoother roads in other countries.

The crew that apes the *Out of Africa* crew can put up with the momentary discomfort of bumpy roads. It's their trip-of-a-lifetime and, besides, comfortably padded hotel suites cushion them once they arrive at their destinations. That they are warned not to go out in the evenings, the mean streets so in part because of a mean government, is not much an impediment to a week or two of holidays. Like the gang that frolicked, making white mischief in the days when *Out of Africa* was lived instead of filmed, they are oblivious to the political and social milieus of the majority of the population. Why *Out of Africa*, in an era of burgeoning African self-assertion, should be filmed and the novel, the novelist and her coterie glamorized is a questions that can probably be answered by one word, nostalgia. Hollywood would have trouble raising money for an African project unless Meryl Streep's white face was allowed to peek out of a sea of black ones.

Although Kenya has a more secure sense of its nationhood than many African countries and although it has swept its colonial British masters out of power, there is a lingering difficulty with identity that goes beyond literature and golf clubs. At the New Stanley Hotel, a rather nondescript hotel in the center of Nairobi that is also the centre of safari activity for the region, two African women angrily upbraided a waiter in the coffee shop for ignoring them. They accused him of paying attention to later arriving white tourists by whom, they said, he hoped to be tipped profusely. Such friction rarely surfaces now that the African presence in the government is paramount. One of the more charming legacies of the colonial past is the train that slowly makes its way between Nairobi on the plains and Mombassa on the coast. The journey of a few hundred miles takes a wheezing thirty-six hours or so to accomplish. Stops along the densely populated strip are frequent and there is much coming and going. There are still



first class sleeping compartments, but they provide only a rumour of their former grandeur. The sheets, the towels, the uniforms of the porters and servers: all are remnants of the past, held together by contemporary starch. The train, though, has a rollicking, festive character that is not staged for the sole pleasure of so-called first world tourists. One doesn't have sealed off air-conditioned chambers from which one distinct set of people observes another. Not only is there no air-conditioning available, there is no toilet paper either. Probably because even the first class fare is affordable to many Kenyans, the cars are not mobile segregated parlours. In the dining car people are mixed at tables that still bear the semblance of a statelier era. Although the china and cutlery have done countless laps on the Nairobi-Mombassa track, they wear their faded stature well and the food on them tastes as if it made its way onto the circuit immediately before consumption. Easy circulation, so difficult for the traveller in much of Kenya, is possible on the train.

I remember laughing when I heard the story of Raymond Roussel, a quirky turn-of-the-century Frenchman who visited the continent of Africa in preparation to write a novel about Africa, but who, once installed in his elegant hotel suites, never left them. He is reported to have said the real Africa was less interesting than his own imagined one and would only contaminate his version. No Kenyan bookstore I know of carries the novel that Roussel published in 1910 as *Impressions d'Afrique*, probably because it is nominally about French West Africa. An English translation published in 1966 as *Impressions of Africa* may not even be in print. Still, if one prefers to read an outsider on Africa, if one prefers to read something that in a number of sense comes from out of Africa, *Impressions of Africa* is far richer than *Out of Africa*. It is extravagantly false; it parades its outsider status so palpably that whenever its fiction and the reality of Africa collide, it points out the weaknesses of outsiders' systems of making sense of Africa. That makes it different, indeed, from *Out of Africa*, which elevates the outsider, or from a number of other books and movies about the continent that purportedly offer sage, impartial insights into African culture or African sensibilities.

While I was in Kenya the local papers reported the banning of four Zimbabwean soccer players from further league play. It seems that at half-time of a game in which they were trailing, they urinated on the field at the behest of a witch doctor who advised them that was the way to rid the stadium of evil or harmful spirits. That this seems sillier or more unsophisticated than what takes place at half-time of American football games comes from watching too much American television and reading too many books that champion practices originating out of Africa. I think I would prefer to see a few steroid bulked behemoths urinate on the artificial grass on which they play that watch a few hundred marchers play loud, tuneless songs celebrating, all at once, the country, the state, the university and Disneyland. *Impressions of Africa* just as

fantastically records the coronation of Talu VII, Emperor of Ponokele and King of Drelshkaf. For his delectation Europeans, captured after a storm has wrecked their ship nearby, entertain the Emperor-King and his people by setting up a miniature Paris Bourse or stock market to take bets on the best performers and performances; by training two teams of cats in different coloured ribbons to play "Prisoner's Base"; by having one of their troupe, a marksman, shoot away the white of an egg to reveal an intact yolk. Other dazzling acts of European legerdemain are mixed with indigenous rites, none more or less ludicrous than the other. Roussel's Africa is more interesting than the spectacle-laden one available from travel agents anywhere. For a Kenya, to name one country, that is less fictional, you might try a tour conducted by my friend Edward; some of the places on his itinerary, however, are off limits.

Stan Fogel is trying to invent himself as a travel writer.

Visuals: J.J. INK



Teaching the Media in SCHOOLS

JOE GALBO

There is no doubt that the mass media are a crucial political and public issue. That is why media literacy at high school and university levels has been recognized as a crucial component of the curriculum. Today's postmodern culture requires a critical and active audience that not only can scrutinize the persuasive power of the word but also must increasingly know how to deal with the power of the image, for the image has become the dominant form of public address.

Ideally the mass media, both audiovisual and print, are supposed to offer a wide variety of voices and help sustain the political plurality of our society. For too long, however, the media have been allowed to develop pretty much as they wished in the pursuit of the commercial imperative and in the process have managed to undermine cultural considerations and to silence the very voices they are supposed to have aided. Broadcasting and publishing facilities are now in the hands of large global corporations. The media are one area where corporate control is at its most concentrated. Any attempt at meaningful change becomes particularly difficult since alternative programs and publications are either edged out silently and by stealth or drowned out by the stentorian voice of the corporate media.

There are ways to start taking some control over the very media that define much of our daily life. Community

radio, alternative magazines and community cable are some of the obvious places where people can begin to make their own culture and pursue their creativity. This is not to suggest that the television and radio spectrum should be immediately crowded with amateur TV and radio shows, but that professional and semi-professional alternative spaces can be created where ordinary individuals and groups normally excluded from the mainstream media--Native people, working people, lesbians and gays, people of colour and people with disabilities--can tell their own stories in their own ways without appropriation by the corporate world.

The educational system is another place where the cultural battle over meaning can be fought. Here, issues such as media ownership, as well as skills such as analyzing television and film, and rudimentary hands-on skills for students' own media productions can be discussed and taught. Once again there is no point minimizing the difficulties of these tasks. In today's educational curriculum there is little that prepares the student to make sense of the rhetoric of the image or the historical development and social implications of popular culture, and there is still less opportunity to study how to use the media for oppositional rather than for corporate

ARTICLES

