

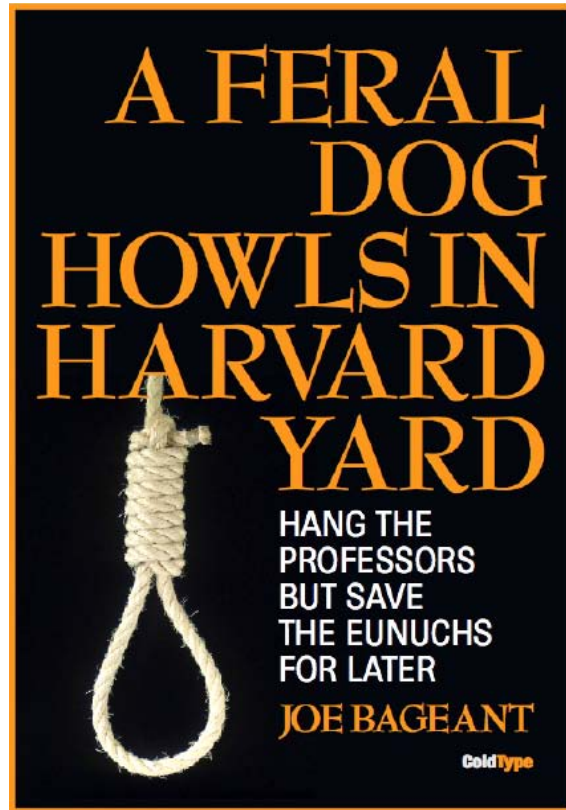
A FERAL
DOG
HOWLS IN
HARVARD
YARD



HANG THE
PROFESSORS
BUT SAVE
THE EUNUCHS
FOR LATER

JOE BAGEANT

ColdType



Joe Bageant is the author of the forthcoming book, **Deer Hunting With Jesus: Dispatches from America's Class War** from Random House Crown on working class America, to be released in June, 2007.

A complete archive of his online work, along with the thoughts of many working class Americans on the subject of class may be found at www.joebageant.com.

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JOE BAGEANT: A FERAL DOG HOWLS IN HARVARD YARD

It is time to close America's universities, and perhaps prosecute the professoriat under the RICO act as a corrupt and racketeering-influenced organization. American universities these days have the moral character of electronic churches, and as little educational value. They are an embarrassment to civilization. — Fred Reed, American expatriate writer and "equal-opportunity irritant."

If there is one bright spot in the bleak absurdity of slogging along in our new totalist American state, it is that ordinary working Americans are undisciplined as hell. We are genuine moral and intellectual slobs whose consciousness is pretty much glued onto an armature of noise, sports, sex, sugar and saturated fats. Oh, we nod toward the government bullhorns of ideology, even throw beer cans and cheer when told we are winning some war or Olympic sports event. But when it comes right down to it, we could generally give a rat's ass about government institutions and are congenitally more skeptical of government than most nations, especially nations that get things like good teeth and free higher education for their tax dollars.

Surely, there are governmental facts of life no working American can escape, like the IRS, but no ordinary person is dumb enough to actually trust political parties, banks, the courts or the news media. Born with the organizational instincts and global awareness of a box turtle, we take the most torpid political path — we call it all bullshit, pay lip service, vote occasionally, then forget about our government altogether until April 15th of the next year.

As inhabitants (you couldn't really call what we practice citizenship) of a nation that is essentially one big workhouse/shopping compound, American life is simultaneously both easy for us and rather dangerous to the rest of the world. For instance, when the corporate state's CBS-ABC-CBS-FOX-NBC-XYZ television bullhorns told us some warthog named Saddam Hussein blew up the World Trade Center and probably fixed the NFL ratings too, Tony the electrician said, "Well, OK then. Sure, go ahead

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and bomb the fucker.” Then he flicked to the Home and Garden Channel, where the guy in the plaid shirt is explaining how to get a skylight installed without leaking. Thanks to American industrial molecular science, there’s yet another new sticky stuff miracle from Dupont, a tube of which costs about as much as the entire friggin roof. After the obligatory Dupont public relations sponsored tour of the plant where the goo is cooked up, plaid shirt guy gives “application instructions,” meaning he tells you how to squirt it out of the tube. And somewhere along the line, between the plant tour and watching the goo dry, Tony gave “informed consent” to the war in Iraq without even knowing it, or for that matter, giving a shit.

This sort of life has its advantages, such as never having to analyze the institutions that manage us — not that we’d know how even if we cared to. That’s what television is for. Right? Given our short attention spans, compliments of the business state’s 100-channel national nerve system (three minutes into the show and the blonde hasn’t taken her bra off or killed anybody yet, CLICK!) diversion fills the void of understanding as a nation of clueless mooks knocks around the new American emptiness, wandering the mall food courts, and maybe half-heartedly looking for a pair of size XXXL 50-inch waist long wicking NBA shorts (they actually make ’em), but generally is just bored.

But hold yer drawers there, hoss, because we nevertheless do possess a seed of existential angst, however tiny, despite claims to the contrary from the liberal intellectual managing class and leftist professors. And that makes us potentially unmanageable politically speaking, potentially dangerous even (it’s the length of the fuse that is deceiving.) We may be being led around by our stomachs and our dicks with our eyes taped shut, but we’re not total ideological slaves yet. Because even the worst ideology requires at least a modicum of thought, and as a people with no authentic intellectual culture we haven’t enough collective intellect or education these days to pull it off.

Meanwhile, when it come to pulling off, that small American class in charge of all things intellectual is doing just that, jerking off a whole nation. Admittedly, it’s an unenviable job, but there are people selfless enough to do it. These poor intellectual bastards constitute the most servile class in America — the Empire’s house niggers. It is their job to maintain the semblance of ideological control over the pizza gobbling herd (America eats 126 acres of pizza a day!) for the Corporate States of America, which entertains no breach of official ideology, that collection of clichés and things that sound as if they ought to be true, according to our mercantile mythology and conditioning. So it is the American intellectual’s gig to weave some philosophical and ideological basket of American Truth out of mercantile folklore and smoke in such a way as to appear to hold water when viewed at great distance by the squinting millions out there in the burboclaves, office campuses, construction sites and fried

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chicken joints. If the result was not so abysmally eye glazing, tedious and predictable, it would be an act of pure alchemy, truly spinning gold from chaff, turning mud bricks into bullion. Like we said, somebody's gotta do it, but the question remains as to why anyone would choose to. Answer: It beats working.

"Blessed are the thinking classes, for theirs is the kingdom of tenure." — **Jesus to the Boston University Philosophy Department**

Though they never admit it, and especially to each other, these professors, book editors, intellectual critics, and social and economic "theorists" are very class conscious, privileged and understand that they occupy their desk chairs at the pleasure of The Corporation. You don't have to stand back very far to see they have been the spin masters of the business class from the outset, and have either held America together, or kept the fuck job going from the beginning, depending upon the class from which you are viewing American history.

Of course they are only human. Like any group of people with a class advantage, they prefer to keep on drinking cognac and pissing it out upstream from the rest of the Pepsi swilling herd. So this class sticks together, despite its prissy intellectual disputes in journals and critical publications. They produce "criticism" for the New York Times Book Review, or The National Review, etc., which may even be lively at times, and often full of that vacuous wit that garden variety liberals so love because it revolves around a few threadbare names and dead ideas they learned during their college days or masters degree indoctrination.

But the thinking classes' main job is to serve as intellectual hitmen for the ruling elites, the business class, which doesn't come all that hard for them, having been all stamped out of the same dough on the Corporate system's university conveyor belt. Most are utterly convinced they are original and thinking for themselves, which in the university scheme of things means absorbing vast amounts of text, fermenting it in some sort of a second stomach and regurgitating it as a concentrated cud, supposedly unique because they alone coughed it up. The few who understand that this in no way resembles original thought usually keep mum, and keep their jobs in publishing or academia. Or they flee screaming in despair once they figure out what is going on.

Then, too, there is a huge number for whom America's university system is a sheltered workshop; people who simply could not survive in the real working world, which, miserable as it may be, nevertheless demands a modicum of practicality and some scant ability to socialize. I once dated a university professor with a doctorate in linguistics who, honest to god, let her Irish wolfhound shit all over the house and completely destroy every piece of furniture in her place until she was forced to sleep

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in the attic crawlspace in a sleeping bag, and she actually did not understand why nobody ever accepted her dinner party invitations. She was not, by the way, brilliant or eccentric. Just completely helpless and out of it in her own little corner of academic goo-goo-land. Yet out there on the plains of Washington State University hers was a reasonably respected intellect.

Now you can skin the cat (or that goddamned wolfhound) any way you choose, but if you want to be a really respected intellectual, you must serve business and power. You must serve the only apparatus capable of allowing you exposure enough to make a lunge at respect, which after all, merely amounts to being allowed to create something scientifically useful to the Empire's goals, or in other cases, achieve that weird localized hothouse plant celebrity as an intellectual one finds on every campus. Either way, you'll never make as much money as Ann Coulter, who is infinitely more useful to the Empire and the business class that runs it than any intellectual can ever hope to be.

Pistol whipped with the "business end" of a good education

The United States has the most obsessive business class in the world. This would be no big deal if it did not direct the minds of the nation's population thorough its public relations indoctrination industry. This is a matter of life and death for the financial pickle vendors, sub-prime mortgage shysters and CitiBank, Morgan Stanley and other high financiers who have come to actually own this country. There is only one threat to their empire of debt: people acting in the interests of ordinary society — which in the rest of the world is known as socialism. Consequently, we have no socialist politicians and no socialist journalists in our entire press and media, which is simply unimaginable in civilized places such as Europe. It is important that the working class thinks it has the self-determination they learned about in high school civics classes designed in the universities, that they feel any kind of individual power at all, which basically comes down the tepid power of consumer choice, which makes them malleable, and intolerant of any voice that suggests otherwise. But if even one iota of class awareness were allowed to flourish here, well, much of the American business class and the entire Yale University faculty would be hiding out in Argentina.

Without class interests and class awareness there can be no genuine politics or political parties. So, to the everlasting relief of the business classes, and with thanks to our university system's poli-sci, history and social science departments, we have neither. Despite all the media's political white noise, we have a depoliticized society. It may be that the Internet is changing things. It surely is the most refreshing opportunity to come along maybe in all of modern American history, and it does put heat on some political campaigns. No arguing that it influences certain influencers in society, to the degree that anything besides advertising influences anybody in the con-

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sumer republic. Problem is though, how do you create critical political mass in a depoliticized society? Most people don't vote and when it comes to actual participation in politics, opportunity is zilch. If you are not from the relatively privileged political and business segments, what the hell access is there for the individual to participate, except in one of the two business based and supported parties offered? Even at the local level. Anyone who has tried to affect one of these parties locally knows you either play entirely by the party line or stand isolated, over in the corner of the Holiday Inn meeting room with your paper plate of stale salami and Triscuits and keep your mouth shut and let the Rotary Club's big dogs bark. "Save the class dissidence bullshit for your next Al-Qaeda cell meeting, buddy!"

It is 1958 and I am twelve years old, living on the edge of niggertown in Winchester, Virginia and hiding out in the Handley Public Library from the redneck bully kids. I am reading a somewhat pompous but erudite biography of a Harvard dean and wondering how such a mythical magical being could possibly exist in the same country and on the same planet as me. A place where my dad came home from the gas station every night, skin penetrated by and forever smelling of motor oil and cigarettes. Yet this man in this book, this Harvard dean who apparently ate fish eggs called caviar (I looked it up in the dictionary,) was a bulwark against something called McCarthyism, hated some people called communists and was friends with a fellow named John Kennedy. His name was McGeorge Bundy, which meant absolutely nothing to me, neither at the time, nor even later when he became one of the Kennedy administration's gurus who launched the Bay of Pigs and the cranked up Vietnam War. Still, reading about him beat the hell out of being bloodied by the red-faced inbred yokels who plagued the 10-block walk home from school. That same year I read Allen Ginsberg's "Howl," a copy of which was given me by an older kid, a fellow habitu  of the decaying old Southern library, the queer son of the local insurance agent. It changed my life forever:

"America when will you be angelic?
When will you take off your clothes?
When will you look at yourself through the grave?"

Learning is a fickle thing. You never know which parts of it will turn out to be important and you don't really need any credential or even much literacy to begin the journey. After reading Howl I was pretty sure I was a class dissident, even though the word was not even in use yet. Before a word is born,

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there is a mumbling in the heart that cries for a name.

All these years later I find great comfort in that there are any number of genuine class dissidents and original thinkers still nested within the university system, nursing happy-hour pitchers, writing poetry, formulating perfectly rational antidotes to our national delusions, even though they serve now as mere manikin proof of the great academy's tolerance for diverse ideas. They have been rendered eunuchs, but at least they are dissident eunuchs with health insurance. But I have always enjoyed living in or visiting major university communities. Recently, I had one of the most meaningful evenings in ages with the dissident crowd at the University of Pennsylvania in Philly. Thankfully, such dissidents prefer to congregate there instead of, say, Bob Jones Cult College or wearing the secret Mormon underwear of Brigham Young University. It felt like old times. It felt free. Sort of. Still though, there was a nagging feeling that these people were an endangered species. And also that they were actually philosophers and bards and artists, noble pursuits once esteemed by universities and the intellectual class, but somehow now fall under the category of dissent — which in America is code for terrorist sympathizing malcontents.

From the viewpoint of university administrators, my puny philosophy department, and even the entire humanities division, looks rather like some vestigial organ... The business school is the heart, the natural sciences are the brain, and we, who read Plato and Descartes, Homer and Montaigne, are the appendix, just waiting to be excised once and for all. — Justin E. H. Smith, Concordia University philosophy professor.

Meanwhile, until appendectomy happens, there are the nation's intellectual hall monitors to deal with. Most of America's intellectual class, like any privileged one that expects to maintain privilege, the intellectual class must be self-policing. So real dissidents and original thinkers are ignored and we watch B. F. Skinner's extinction behavior practice put into action. Smile and ignore the dissident to death professionally. Sometimes though, in spite of the best pest eradication efforts in the garden of academe, there sprouts a weed so completely antithetical to the great lie that he or she cannot be ignored. And if the offending party is particularly unlucky, he or she may be discovered by one of the political hacks sponsored to "elected office" by the Corporation, usually a Republican congressman looking for threats from within this very republic of eagles under god. Then all hell breaks loose. First the dissident is publicly discredited and demonized by an organized media lie campaign. After that, an appointed academic committee somehow discovers that his or her credentials, even after 25 years in the university system, are fraudulent and that there are some

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serious questions about his or her sexual appetites, not to mention his or her whereabouts on September 11.

I once thought I understood the ways in which America removes those who would point to the essential global criminality by which all Americans draw their ration of bread. But as I watched this process be conducted on my friend Ward Churchill, I realized how the extraction of these people from society has become an exquisitely brutal form of public surgery, certainly chilling on the face of it, but even more horrifying for the entertainment value it provides for the cheap seats in the Coliseum. I've known Church for over 30 years and though I've never completely agreed with what I considered his somewhat violent take on things, I agree with him now. Not simply because the system took out another of my dissenting friends, but because for the first time I could see how the dismemberment of a thinking citizen's identity and life is conducted, tissue by tissue, through carefully sharpened lies and fraudulent moral and intellectual charges. In his starkest truth telling about the genocide perpetrated upon indigenous peoples, and in his now infamous description of the Empire's "little Eichmanns" occupying the World Trade Center towers, Church came too close to the truth about the kind of psychic violence that underpins The American Way, the unacknowledged kind that is executed by America's most servile class, the bureaucratic, managerial and intellectual classes that maintain a system which could never survive the light of truth or anything resembling real justice.

It is because of guys like Church that the American intellectual establishment must conduct the self-policing of their own class. So a carefully nurtured and sustained system of intellectual critics finds faults, finds problems in the basic thesis or critical thinking or premise of any writer or thinker whose observations do not match the national hallucination being sold by the system's elites (to whom they must cater without appearing to cater.) Even the supposed intellectual left does this. In fact, probably does it best of all through its staunch assertions of the evils of free market capitalism, even though free market capitalism does not even exist and has never been practiced (more on that later). Most born into the establishment's intellectual class are born blind, rather like kangaroos or possums inside safe dark middle or upper middle class marsupial pouches where they experience nothing except what feels good as defined by the moist darkness of their nurture. And when they emerge they feel entitled to be where they are and honestly cannot see the system itself, never giving it a thought until they go off to college and, between spring breaks and beer parties, learn to experience and define reality through texts.

Those who do see the system for what it is are either worn down by the sheer mass of our institutions, or construct elaborate mental architecture to bridge over and avoid the truth. While their efforts are often applauded taken up by fellow intellectuals – post modernism has been the latest of these, and like all such constructions,

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contains a maybe one or two fly-shit sized specks of truth — they are utterly lost in the national machinery of fabrication. Text is not reality. Hell, reality isn't even reality in this country.

It is not too hard to grasp why unlettered but intuitive — and not a little bit vengeful — Chinese peasants in their revolution killed, humiliated and imprisoned the intellectuals. If Mao got one thing right it was that those intellectuals who pretend to ignore the existence of class, or refuse to live at the level of the most common class, are actually class exploiters, and entertain the pretense at their own eventual peril. No amount of text, no amount of ideology or pretense can ultimately protect us from reality, something which Americans are about to learn the hardest way possible.

When it comes to the state sanctioned American intellectual establishment's support of charade and pretense, the biggest fraud of all has been the notion of capitalism and free markets. There never was a free market and, as Howard Zinn has so often demonstrated, every single industrialized nation was built on protectionism from the beginning. Even a cursory study of economic history shows that not a single developed nation in the world has ever followed the rules of free market capitalism. Not one. Early America built its textile industry on protectionism from the British. A hundred years later our steel industry came about the same way.

That is not to say the rules of free market capitalism are never observed. The rules of free market economics are for ramming down the throats of Third World or otherwise uncooperative peoples. Especially those tracking crude oil through the marketplace on the soles of their sandals. Yet there is scarcely a college or university, or business or school of that mumbo jumbo ritual called "economics" in this nation that does not teach "free market history" and free market "solutions" to such problems as the devastating eco collapse in progress, or that millions of babies shit themselves to death from dysentery or die for lack of a plain old drink of clean water.

Watching doomsday on HBO

Free market capitalism may have been a fraud from the git-go, but at least there was once a version which accepted the notion that any market needed customers. Once upon a time business in the industrialized world needed its citizen laborers as customers, as consumers, which implied they be paid at least enough to buy the products of the businesses and corporations that beat their asses into submission along America's assembly lines and hog slaughtering plants. That was called American opportunity and prosperity and it looked pretty damned good to millions of war ravaged Urpeen furiners trying to decide whether to eat a wharf rat or the neighbor's cat for dinner. As for the Third World, they could eat dirt and do native dances for what few tourists existed then (otherwise called the rich), but mainly they should stay out

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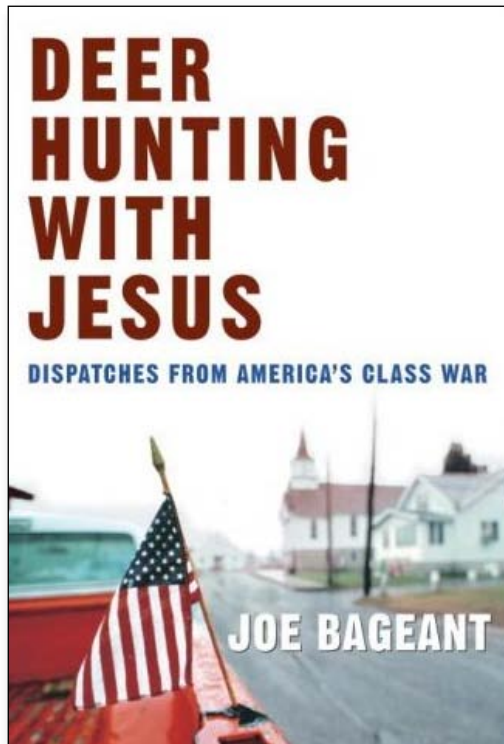
of the way of "our" natural resources in their countries.

At any rate, when the citizen labor force, by their sheer numbers, held most of the dough in their calloused mitts, there was no avoiding them by the business classes. But now that so much of not just this nation's, but the world's wealth, has become concentrated in the hands of so few, that is no longer a problem for the rich. People are cheaper than ever and getting more plentiful by the minute. So work'em to death, kill'em, eat'em if you want to. Who the fuck cares? The international rich, the managers and controllers of the new financial globalism and the world's resources and the planet's labor forces, whether they be Asian "Confucian capitalists," masters of Colombian Narco state fortunes or Chinese Tongs, New York or London brokerage and media barons, or Russian oligarchs, hold increasing and previously unimaginable concentrated wealth. They look to be a replacement for the mass market, indeed even a better one with fewer mass distribution problems, higher grade demand and at top prices.

Until then however, the real dough is still in the energy game, the big suckdown of hydrocarbons, that plus convincing Americans to burn up their own seed corn. Academics, economists and scientists offer "free market solutions," such as ethyl alcohol from corn — which most readers here know requires more petroleum to grow than energy it produces, and will deprive the rest of the world of much needed food — just so Americans may continue motoring the suburban savannah lands, grazing on Subway Cold Cut Combos and Outback's Kookaburra Chicken Wings.

But even when the last Toyota Prius is forever moldering in the globally warmed deserts of Minneapolis, we proles will not be totally unprofitable creatures. Yesterday I read a gem of an economic paper asserting that in the emerging information, amusement, service, and "experience and attention economy," it is vital that "private business capture ownership and control of the public's knowledge and its attending rent streams." Apparently it's not bad enough that we become a third rate gulag of impoverished nitwits. They are going to charge us for the privilege.

Oh, dammit to hell anyway. Like a lady in Philly told me last week, "Joe, you're always so grim about these things." She's right. It's not the end of the world. Just the opening act. There is still quite a bit of this ugly little drama to be played out. But I can say one thing with certainty: This may be, as the economic intellectuals assert, the new American "attention economy," but I sure as hell ain't gonna to pay to watch.



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"Many friends and readers will notice that the title has changed to *Deer Hunting With Jesus: Dispatches From America's Class War*. The original title was *Drink, Pray, Fight, Fuck: Dispatches From America's Class War*. Contrary to what one might suspect, the name change had not as much to do with the word "fuck" as it did the fact that a book was recently released with a very similar title. Then too, when I started putting the title "Drink, Pray, Fight, Fuck" on the web, it kicked off some merchandising by small scale entrepreneurs of ball caps, tee-shirts, etc. bearing the four words. Which is no problem with me – I like to see the little guy printing tee-shirts make a buck" – JOE BAGEANT

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