

The Lumpen

and the City

by Ignacio Ibarra,
Centro de Trabajadores Agrícolas Fronterizos

The lumpen (lumpenproletariat) is an example what happens when a poor person consigns himself or herself to a life without dignity. The lumpen represents the level a person gets to when he or she is willing to better themselves individually without any morals or interest in the community. The lumpen includes criminals, drunks, prostitutes, drug addicts, etc.

Who uses them?

The state is the weapon the government uses to make the masses obey its laws. Examples of this are the police, the army, the courts, etc. The lumpen is recruited when movements are created whose interest benefit the poor or groups who find themselves dispossessed by the government. So as to not dirty itself the state searches for people who make up the lumpen and have them dismantle popular social movements.

For example, when a union is on strike, the boss or rancher finds the lumpen, commonly known as scabs, to subvert the strike. When the Sandinistas had won the democratic elections in Nicaragua, the government of the United States used the lumpen to create the Contras to overthrow their movement. When the Zapatistas of Chiapas took arms, the Mexican government with help from the United States created para-military groups to terrorize the communities in resistance. In this way the government utilizes the lumpen to stop popular movements that are not convenient for those in power.

How is the Border Agricultural Workers Center Being Attacked?

Today the lumpen are attacking the Border Agricultural Workers Center in El Paso. These drunks, and petty thieves harass both farm workers and the Center's staff. This Lumpen attracts police who many times take farm workers away leaving the criminal element behind.

Who Sends Them?

The lumpen looks for ways to displace the Center and its leadership. But, the lumpen is only a tool being used in benefit of the city's interests, and the interests of the groups that keep them in power. A recent article from the Diario de Juarez (10-3-02) explains:

"The first international bus route in the nation that will connect El Paso and Juarez is one step away from becoming a reality...The City has begun the process of purchasing land for an international transit

terminal at the base of the international bridge on Stanton street..."

We should remember that the Border Agricultural Workers Center is located between two international bridges. So the city is looking for a way to displace the workers and at the same time discredit Sin Fronteras because it is the only group that would oppose their displacement, and the so called development of the City of El Paso. Once they achieve this objective they will continue by removing other residents of "Segundo Barrio" who have lived in that area for many years.

A clear example of how the City of El Paso and the Association for Downtown business and development use their power is how they managed to prohibit farm labor contractors from recruiting workers along El Paso Street, where workers have gathered for many years. The city does not want people to be out on the streets at those hours because they say it scares away consumers that come to shop at the businesses downtown. In this same way it sends the homeless, whether they have psychological problems or addictions, to the outskirts of downtown, away from the commercial centers of the city.

Think

If the City truly cares about farm workers, why not focus on the miserable wages that workers are paid? Why do they not focus on the working and living conditions that exist in the fields? If it is true that they want every worker to sleep inside, especially during the cold season, then why not build a dormitory for the workers? If they insist that the center provide free meals to farm workers, why do they not help in reopening the center's kitchen?

This December a contract made between the Center and the City will end. This contract, signed almost 10 years ago, will give the property over to Sin Fronteras and the migrant farm workers. When the City hands over the title to the building it will lose control of the Center and will not be able to sell the building. So now the City is concentrating its efforts to take the property away, break its contract with Sin Fronteras, and sell the property to the highest bidder.

The Truth

The lumpen is a very dangerous element. They have nothing to lose. It is important that we know who they are,

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Our sacred responsibility . . . to remember and to act

by Antonio Eliaz López

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Miss JoAnn always flirted and teased me when I was a young boy. She gave me a perm when I was ten years old. Afterwards she kissed both my eyelids. Miss JoAnn was really a man that liked to dress up like a woman. She was Lena Horn beautiful.

I remember hosing down the bloody porch steps with my mother when Miss Joann was murdered in front of our house. My mother said her neck was cut wide open. Hookers hung out in front of our house that faced the Silly Pony Bar, Chente's and Chavarias. My mother made friends with some of them. Miss JoAnn came to eat dinner with my family many times.

When I would see her at Jimmy's food store, both of us buying our fifty cents or dollars worth of bacon, bologna or cheese she would touch my face and wink at me, touch my hair, "Tell your mama I said 'hey', go straight home, baby." I remember her thin, jet black, tall body. I remember how Miss JoAnn and my mother would laugh and joke filling our little house like a party was going on.

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One hot summer day, when I was nine years old, I was hanging clothes with my mother and we found a dead naked man at the edge of the empty lot that was our back yard. My mother put a pair of my father's boxers on him and covered him with a blanket and called the police.

A few days later a man came and returned my fathers boxers and blanket. He thanked us for finding the dead man. He said he was the dead man's "friend."

A new bar had opened on Bryan Street, The "69" Club. I remember seeing men dressed in black leather pants with big mustaches, pictures and writing on their arms and necks and muscles. Men on motorcycles and hombres de Mexico would go in there, too. My sister and I would see them while we sat at Dairy Queen listening to music and eating ice cream with our friends. I remember two men at the bus stop one morning on my way to school pointing, laughing at that big 69 sign.

The back door to the "69" Club faced the empty lot that was our back yard.

Miss Randy Coors just stopped visiting us one day. After I came home from school my mother and I would sit watching the Merv Griffin Show waiting for her to knock at the door. We began to wonder when she would show up again. She just stopped coming over to watch TV with us. I didn't see her at the park or outside the Silly Pony or anywhere. She just disappeared.

After what seemed like a lot of time her sister knocked at our door late one night. She had driven all the way from Tennessee. My

mother, sister and I piled into her little car and drove to a fancy funeral home on Commerce Street, downtown. My mother said that Randy Coors had been shot in the eyes. "Her eyes were just big purple holes", my mother told us.

My mother prepared a big meal the day they buried Miss Randy Coors. Mrs. Fitzhugh, an old white viejita from the big plantation style house on Fitzhugh Street brought lots of different colored rosas from her jardín. She and I put them in jars and all the vases my mother had and placed them all around the dining and living rooms. Mrs. Frierson, who never left her house because she could barely walk put on a big hat that day, and pushed her laundry cart filled with red Nehi sodas, fried chicken wrapped in tin foil, red coconut quequitos and walked herself to our house. All the people from the funeral came over to our house and we had a big party with lots of foods, sherbert punch, smoking and drinking. Some of the men went to the Silly Pony. The women and children and Miss Randy's friends stayed at our house and we ate all afternoon and evening and they laughed and joked and cried and told some stories.

It was last year's brutal murder of 16-year-old Fred C. Martinez that caused me to remember. The horrible murder of our Navajo, Nadleeh hermanito haunted me. Forced me to remember. Forced me to dig deep in search of the roots of hate and violence. Forced me to revisit my life, speak to others about his murder and examine statistics. Forced others to remember also.

I don't know how to end this written memory. I have written many endings yet, more spirits arrive each month telling their story. The number of brutal murders of Two Spirits continues to rise. On October 3, 2002, 17-year-old Eddie Araujo was beaten nearly unconscious, strangled with a rope until he appeared dead, then buried in a shallow grave. At the age of fourteen Eddie Araujo found the courage to finally live as the Latina he always knew himself to be. In the end it was his courage to live out his sacred contract with life that cost him his life.

The time has always been now to speak out and take action. It is our sacred responsibility to look out for the safety of our brothers and sisters wherever we are and at any cost. The number of brutal murders of Two Spirits continues to rise.

We must always remember Fred C. Martinez, Miss JoAnn, Miss Randy Coors, Eddie Araujo and the dead nameless man that lies in the back yard. The time has always been now to take action in our familias, nuestros barrios y nuestra nación.



Antonio Lopez, a longtime supporter of the Esperanza, focuses on indigenous and lesbian and gay issues. He is currently living in El Paso, Texas.

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micro-enterpreneurs. Like Berry reminds us, it's time to stop the large discount stores from using cheap labor costs and goods to destroy the locals' capacities to produce goods and services and subsist economically.

How many times have we wondered where a product came from? Or what history is behind a product? Or who produced it and how it was produced? How often do we think not only about the environmental or ecological costs but the human costs in producing the goods and services we consume? If we're worried about these issues, like we should be, then spending our dollars locally means that we reinvest in our communities instead of the sweat-shops and exploited labor. It's not easy to choose local products nor be conscientious consumers but, like our *antepasados*, let's



remember that a dollar spent in the community is a dollar spent on the community.

What does this mean for all us? Just a reminder. Many already support small and microenterprises. Let's just not forget to get out there and do our part to help the other Eric Lee's. There's no need for Four-Bucks Coffee when you can stop over at Jessica Cerda's *Café Latino* or Suzie García's *Espuma*; instead of Taco Cabana, think of all the homegrown taqueria's, like BJs and *Taco Haven*; instead of Goodyear, check out as the *Wheel Turns* on South Flores; instead of Home Depot, stop at *Esparza's Hardware Store*; instead of Kinkos, there's Munguías or Mr. Pencil or any dozen others; and, instead of the outlet malls, there's the Peace Market and other local cooperatives. In every category of goods and services, our communities have plenty of tailors, dentists, doctors, midwives, laundrys, grocery stores, *carniceros*,

barbers, plumbers, architects, painters, artists, day care providers, *jardineros*, *mecánicos*, *tienditas*, breweries, coffee shops and *zapaterías*.

As Berry reminds us, we can determine and maintain the "character and culture" of our communities. Before we lament the closing of another Eric Lee's, let's protect and patronize the local producers of community goods and services. The power is in our pockets.

ⁱ U.S. Department of Commerce, Bureau of the Census; Small Business Administration's Office of Advocacy, May 2002.



Arturo Vega is a professor at UTSA.

Community Meetings

Society of Friends Sundays at 10 am at Friends Meeting House, 7052 N. Vandiver, call 945-8456.

ELLAS, Latina Lesbian organization. Call for meetings and information, 210-473-0217.

San Antonio Lambda Students (SALSA) Last Wednesday of each month, 7 pm at the Main Library, 6th floor. Call 732-4300.

San Antonio NOW First Monday of each month at the Resource Ctr, 121 W. Woodlawn. Call Maggie Cronan, 673-8600.

Voice for Animals First Tuesday of each month at 7 pm, Brook Hollow Library, 530 Heimer, call 737-3138.

Parents/Friends of Lesbians/Gays (PFLAG) First Thursday of each month at 7 pm at the Resource Ctr, 121 W. Woodlawn, call 655-2383.

Amnesty International #127 Fourth Thursday of each month at 7:30 pm at Ashbury United Methodist, call 681-8370.

The **peaceCENTER** Tuesdays from 7 – 9 pm for discussion & exploration of nonviolent peacemaking, 1443 S. St. Mary. Call 224-HOPE or <http://www.salsa.net/peace>

Xicana Xicano Education Project Tuesdays at 6 pm at the Bazan Public Library, 2200 W. Commerce St. Call 437-5196.

DIGNITY S.A. holds mass every Sunday at 5:15 pm at St. Ann's Convent, call 735-7191.

Proyecto Hospitalidad Liturgy Thursdays at 7 pm at 325 Courtland, call 736-3579.

Habitat for Humanity holds Volunteer Orientation on first Tuesdays of each month at 1st Presbyterian Church, 404 N. Alamo, at 6 pm.

A Multicultural Worship Service is held Sundays at 11 am at **Spirit of Life Lutheran Church**, call Rev. Kay Johson at 691-5937 in sanctuary of Los Angeles Heights Methodist.

Circle of the Re-Formed Congregation of the Goddess Third Thursday of each month, 7 pm at the Esperanza, 922 San Pedro. Call 822-9105.

Fuerza Unida Third Tuesday of the month at 710 New Laredo Hwy., 7 pm. Call 927-229.

Bexar County Green Party First Sunday of each month at 2 pm at the VIA Transit Center, 1021 San Pedro, across from Esperanza Center.

Notas Y Más

Brief notes to inform **La Voz** readers about events, issues and happenings in the community. Send announcements for **Notas y Más** to: lavo@esperanzacenter.org or by snail mail to: 922 San Pedro, San Antonio, TX 78212. The deadline is the 12th of each month.

The Dallas Poets Community concludes its 2002 reading series with its annual *Moveable Feast*. This year's Feast reaches across the state and draws in writers and performers with a wide variety of talent. The reading will be held Wednesday, December 11th at 7:30 pm at the McKinney Avenue contemporary, located at 3120 McKinney Ave in Dallas. Among the writers presented are Pablo Miguel Martínez and Nancy Membrez of San Antonio. For more information contact: Bob McCranie bob@babmccranie.com or visit the web www.DallasPoets.org

Join the 1st UU Welcoming congregation as they seek to enhance understanding and acceptance of Gay, Lesbian, Bisexual and Transgender experiences. *The Common Elements of Oppression* is a forum that will be held on January 12th from 9:30 - 10:30 am and will "kick off" a workshop series. Workshops will be held every 2nd Sunday from 1-3 pm at the 1st Unitarian Universalist Church at 7150 IH-10 West. Call 344-4695 for info.

The National Association of Hispanic Journalists is proud to announce its 2002-2003 *Rubén Salazar Scholarship Fund* competition as well as the NAHJ 2003 convention Internship Program competition. Several scholarships for students pursuing careers in English or Spanish-language print, photo, broadcast or online journalism are offered including: The Newhouse Scholarship Program, The new María Elena Salinas Scholarship Program, The Cristina Saralegui Scholarship Program and The NAHJ Newsroom Bound Program. NAHJ also offers opportunities for students to have internships during the association's 2003 convention at the Marriott Marquis in the Times Square area of New York City which will run from

June 26-28, 2003. Scholarship/internship applications deadline is January 31, 2003. Check www.nahj.org/student/2003/Applica.pdf for applications or www.nahjdigital.org for more information.

Writings or graphic works that reflect the Dominican lesbian identity are being solicited for a new anthology that would be well received among the Latin American and Caribbean Spanish-speaking lesbian and feminist communities as well as in the Latina lesbian, feminist and immigrant worlds in the U.S. The deadline for submission of materials is March 8, 2003. To send submissions or to receive more information, e-mail Jacqueline Jimenez Polanco or Dulce Reyes Bonilla (co-editors) at dominicanlesbook@yahoo.com

Serving can change your life. Looking for dedicated people to help in cooking and serving healthy meals to people who are experiencing homelessness and the working poor. We serve in Milam Park and downtown S.A., two days a week. Call Linda or Joe at 271-3057.

Lumpen continued from page 14 and that we defend Sin Fronteras and the Border Agricultural Workers Center from them. Don't let them tell you different, the facts are clear:

-The lumpen is here to try and destroy more than 20 years of struggle for border agricultural workers.

-They are sent so they can displace workers from their center, and discredit Sin Fronteras; the only group that defends the voice of the migrant farm worker community.

The Truth is that the city cares very

The box and pulley are OUT!

The new elevator is IN!



Do your part to pay it off!

Call 228-0201 to make a one time donation, or sign up for a monthly donor plan...



Let's all pull together!

little about farm workers, and only uses them to achieve its political agenda.



For more information, contact the Centro de los Trabajadores Agrícolas Fronterizos at 201 E. 9th Ave, El Paso, TX 79901, 915.532.0921 fax, 915.532.4822.

The Centro is holding a toy drive for migrant farmworkers and their families. Email sinfront@farmworkers.org to make direct contributions. Locally, come by the Esperanza in San Antonio and drop off donations for Marissa to pick up and they will be delivered to the Centro.