

***Slingshot* Turns 15!**

Jesse McCloud

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Slingshot's 15th birthday makes me feel kind of old, because I was in on it from just about its beginning. I was an English grad student at Berkeley when I became “Experienced,” to use Jimi Hendrix’s term. I was working on my dissertation, serving as Coordinator of the ASUC Recycling Project, where I met members of the *Slingshot* Collective. Most of us were Berkeley students. At the time, U.C. Berkeley was hardly radical. Despite the university’s reputation as a hotbed of dissent, a legacy of the ‘60s, there was a need for a leftist voice, and *Slingshot* filled that need. Those first issues were printed on white paper, sometimes subversively copied on university copiers, and funded by the A.S.U.C.

For one *Slingshot* article, marking the anniversary of the Free Speech movement at Berkeley, I went to the Bancroft Library Special Collections department, where I looked at their collection of radical papers from the ‘60s. I am proud to have contributed to a paper that will go into that collection commemorating voices of dissent against the repressive aspects of mainstream society. This despite remarks by “friends” which satirically contrasted my academic writing with the kinds of rhetoric of *Slingshot* I remain an academic—I have a job as a professor in a Southern university hey, it’s true what the right says about the “liberal academics” corrupting our youth!) —but the articles I write for *Slingshot* are read by a lot more people than my cerebral studies of William Blake and Victorian novels. *Slingshot*, I note, now has a circulation of 20,000, and is distributed nationally, including to an incarcerated population. *Slingshot* has allowed me to spread my strong views on things that confronted me as I became a mother: my belief in natural childbirth; my conviction that the practically universal practice of male circumcision in the U.S. is nothing short of genital mutilation. As an environmentalist, *Slingshot* has allowed me and the branch of the Sierra Club I’m involved with here, to express our opinion on clear cutting, pollution, and genetic engineering.

So, while teaching a class this semester on literary utopias, I read *Slingshot* as the collective shout of voices that promises an alternative to our present dystopian society, a wave of energy that may help to bring about an ideal society. Without voices of dissent, without resistance to a society whose values are destructive, distorted and demented, utopia will always remain “nowhere” (the literal meaning of the word). It is only by imagining an alternative and articulating opposed values that change will ever come. Viva *Slingshot*!

Inquire about *Slingshot's* offer to share bundles of papers to distro at cost. Cookeville, TN

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