

Anarchy in Murfreesboro

Emma Goldman & Zines Come to Tennessee

Anu Bonobo

2007

Murfreesboro, Tennessee is hardly known worldwide as a hotbed of radical activism, underground publishing, or anarchist feminism.

Other than a small but surprisingly relevant independent music scene and a handful of college professors and students at Middle Tennessee State University (MTSU), the overwhelming political mood of the place gravitates to the far right.

But some exciting, recent events have put radical perspectives on the map in Murfreesboro. Last year, the Women's Studies Program at MTSU adopted Emma Goldman to appear on its official National Women's History Month button. Along with announcements about Goldman in a campus newsletter and a public screening of the PBS documentary about her life, people in the community began to read and study her works. Later last year, when people heard that funding for the Emma Goldman Papers Project at the University of California was in danger, several instructors and administrators at MTSU offered to raise consciousness and money. In late 2006, a benefit was organized for the Emma Goldman Papers at a local bar featuring performances by local bands as well as readings from Sunfrog and pieces from sex-positive folksinger Shiloh Circle, both of Pumpkin Hollow.

The night of the show, organizers discovered that the large venue had also booked a Christmas party paid for by a local conservative patron. Since our event was a benefit with entertainers, we controlled the bar's microphone. When Shiloh Circle shared her salacious numbers, some offended conservative attendees complained to the management and almost got the event cancelled. Recalling Goldman's insistence that sexual freedom issues never take a back seat to other radical concerns, Shiloh Circle showed that in the South, some things are even more challenging than anarchy—namely her erotically explicit lyrics.

After negotiating with the irate club-owners not to cancel our show in mid-set, one of the organizers reflected, "It's not anarchism and anti-war sentiment that they objected to, but rather the references to anal and oral sex." After the mood cooled, one of the club employees invited Shiloh Circle to perform at a private party in his home!

Since that event, a handful of MTSU faculty members continue to promote Emma Goldman's legacy and bring information about and donation boxes for the Emma Goldman Papers' Project to various MTSU functions.

But that's not the only recent, radical development in Murfreesboro. To keep educating the public about (among other things) alternatives to right-wing Christian capitalism, the Linebaugh Public Library in downtown Murfreesboro has opened Tennessee's first zine library.

With over 100 zines, including the *Fifth Estate*, the collection hosted its first open house on March 24 with a talk by local zine publisher Jerianne Thompson. Members of the Fifth Estate collective are expected to participate in future events in support of the library.

Demonstrating the strong institutional support for the collection, library director Laurel Best, explained, "We're excited about offering this new collection. We hope it will demonstrate the library's support for independent media within our community, as well as our dedication to serving the interests of young adults."

Go to www.undergroundpress.org for information on the collection.

fifth Estate

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<https://www.fiftheestate.org/archive/375-spring-2007/anarchy-in-murfreesboro>
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