



“But it’s Alright, Ma, it’s Life, and Life Only”: Radicalism as Survival

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Hunger stole upon me so slowly at first. I was not aware of what hunger *really* meant [emphasis added]. Hunger had always been more or less at my elbow when I played, but now I began to wake up at night to find hunger, staring at me gauntly . . . this hunger baffled me, scared me, made me angry and insistent . . . I would grow dizzy and my vision would dim. I became less active in my play, and for the first time in my life I had to pause and think of what was happening to me. (Wright 1977)

Hey, hey Woody Guthrie, I wrote you a song
‘Bout a funny ol’ world that’s a-comin’ along.
Seems sick an’ it’s hungry, it’s tired an’ it’s torn,
It looks like it’s a-dyin’ an’ it’s hardly been born.

(Bob Dylan 1962)

If no one seems to understand
Start your own revolution and cut out the middleman
In a perfect world we’d all sing in tune
But this is reality so give me some room
So join the struggle while you may
The Revolution is just a T-shirt away

(Billy Bragg 1998)

Introduction

Last February I was sitting in the Newark airport after having presented a paper at Syracuse University in a forum organized by Don Mitchell regarding the *Radical Politics of Hunger*. While sitting there during a nearly four hour layover I reflected on the forum as a resounding success, largely due to Don’s connections in the community and the degree to which we were able to draw anti-hunger activists and left-leaning intellectuals into an lively dialogue about the topic at hand. As I waited for my flight and reflected I also anxiously read Sharman Apt Russell’s (2005) *Hunger: An Unnatural History*. Though there was only one long paragraph about Kevin Carter’s life and death amidst 262 pages of other historical anecdotes that Russell used to articulate the destructive

causes and consequences of hunger, for some reason his story moved me more than any of the others. The combination of having been involved in the forum and the adrenaline hang-over it produced, coupled with reading Russell's book, resulted in a surge of mixed emotion that I can best describe as outraged utopianism. It was my "Newark moment" that prompted this essay.

Upon returning to Milwaukee I did some more digging about Kevin Carter; to better understand why in 1994 he took his own life.¹ Carter was a member of the self-proclaimed *Bang-Bang Club*, which was a group of South African photojournalists who worked to expose the inhumanity and brutality of South Africa's Apartheid system.² Among the many photos Carter took and published during the 1980s were those that captured the common form of public execution known as "necklacing". Necklacing is carried out by placing a gasoline-filled tire around a victim's body and setting it, and by extension the victim, on fire. These kinds of horrendous pictures undoubtedly raised global consciousness about the malicious and wicked nature of Apartheid and inevitably contributed to toppling the system.

In an effort to take a break from South African society, Carter took a freelance assignment in Sudan in which he was to take pictures of local rebel activities. While in Sudan, Carter experienced a life-defining moment. After arriving in the village of Ayod, he began taking pictures of men, women and particularly children dying from famine and starvation. In an effort to escape the misery, desperation and despair, one day he wandered into the brush where he hoped he might catch his breath; the opposite happened. Once in the brush he found a fragile and helpless little girl, who while trying to get to the closest feeding station became too weak to move, so she laid there huddled and whimpering. Given his reasons for being in Sudan, for exposing the inhumanity of war and intensity of human anguish, he began to take photos of the vulnerable child. Quiet and unimposing, Carter continued to take pictures until a vulture landed seeing the prospect of its next meal. Carter waited in the hopes that the vulture would reposition itself near the child, allowing him to better seize the moment, articulate the moment and convey the horror and terror of the moment to the world. However, once the vulture began to approach its would-be carnage and feast of flesh, Carter kicked at the bird and it retreated. As reports obtained from his friends and colleagues suggest, after the buzzard left, Carter sat under a tree and wept to God. However, he never helped the child (Macleod 1994; Marinovich and Silva 2000). This might have been because conflict photographers and journalists are taught never to put themselves into the situations they are covering. They must always remain objective observers.

Eventually, given the iniquitous spectacle captured within the photo, it was bought by the *New York Times* and printed on the front page of

the paper on 26 March 1993. For his efforts Carter won the *Journalism Pulitzer Prize for Feature Photography* in 1994. The photo's profound ramifications not only led to personal accomplishment, but also entangled Carter in a world of controversy. Upon the photo's mass circulation, questions emerged about the ethics of him benefiting from such misery, about the paper exploiting this child who in all probability died a ghastly death. And why had he not helped the little girl?

Kevin Carter committed suicide by means of carbon monoxide poisoning on 27 July 1994. He was in debt and a drug addict with many problems. In addition to these personal tribulations however, or so he wrote in his suicide note, he was also "haunted by the vivid memories of killings and corpses and anger and pain . . . of starving or wounded children, of trigger-happy madmen, often police, of killer executioners".

That Kevin Carter killed himself is of course sad, if not tragic. The life circumstances that contributed to him doing so, however, open myriad questions about how and why many of us wrap so much of our intellects, hearts and lives around engaging with the unjust realities produced through capitalism, patriarchy, colonialism, ethnocentrism, racism, homophobia, and many other corrupt and destructive power relations. Carter's story, if read critically, can help us recognize how little as radical geographers we have actually scraped the surface of the most important issues we *could* deal with, and the manner through which we *could* deal with them. The point here is not to romanticize Kevin Carter's death, but to use this historical moment as a way to engage the uneven sociospatial circumstances surrounding the emaciated dying girl in Sudan. Equally important though is considering the potential power of our craft as radical geographers if we focus on the most serious questions at the heart of survival and commit our craft to better engaging these questions.

While not as severe in a comparative sense, but nonetheless horrifying, are the conditions surrounding hunger within the inner-city neighborhoods of Milwaukee. From a general US context, in 2002 11% of US households, approximately 35 million people, did not have enough food to maintain a healthy lifestyle. Female-headed US households show the highest levels of hunger. Households with children experience food insecurity at more than double the rate for households without children. Black and Hispanic US households had food insecurity prevalence that was nearly three times those of White (non-Hispanic) households. Despite these material inequalities, the picture continues to worsen according to a recent report by the *National Student Campaign Against Hunger and Homelessness* (NSCAHH). According to the NSCAHH, 74% of agencies recently surveyed reported an increase in requests for emergency food. Between 2003 and 2004 poverty in Wisconsin grew faster than in any other US state; Milwaukee has the seventh worst poverty rate of any city in the US and fourth worst child poverty rate.

These data trends represent people struggling against poverty and material inequality just like as depicted within the picture of the emaciated Sudanese girl. While I would argue that neoliberal capitalism and the abstract interdependent and interrelated social relations that produce capitalism is/are imperative to understanding both of these stories, at the same time I recognize that at the foundations of both scenarios are issues of survival, of meeting basic human needs. While many hungry people in Milwaukee are not at immediate risk of starving to death, they still struggle for survival amidst brutal sociospatial inequalities that too often go unrecognized, unacknowledged and unchallenged by most within the US. Just like the power relations that almost certainly destroyed the Sudanese girl's life, in Milwaukee, race, gender and age figure into the picture of hunger because indeed these corporal dimensions make people in both Sudan and Milwaukee vulnerable to the uneven development produced under capitalism.

Whether imaging the profound and (melo)dramatic starvation and famine witnessed by Kevin Carter or the banal "food insecurity" and hunger experienced within everyday life in Milwaukee, the dialectics of the fleshy bodies in time and space are at the core of political economy and cultural economy alike; at the core of how race, gender, and sexuality lead to the production of space; at the core of everything we as collective bodies do, and yet, I would argue, they are not internalized within the logical foundations of our radical geographies. Why is this? Every child's life and death should be used to remind us all of what radical geography *should* first and foremost care about. The nameless and faceless people represented as "percent increase" in the demand for emergency food in Milwaukee and every other city in the world can help us refocus our intellectual and political efforts, to reconfigure our radical compasses. All of these cases, profound and banal, should make us angry and tearful, outraged and determined. We should both struggle to simplify and complicate the causes and ramifications of these all too human material inequalities, as did Richard Wright (1977) in his gripping autobiographical work *American Hunger* with which I began this essay.

So, what's left? Everything that is most important. That is, survival. It is time—well past time—for a *really* radical geography (RRG).³ What I aspire toward is a radical geography that does not take for granted the fundamental material necessities of human bodies surviving amidst dire material inequality. What I propose is a radical geography that is back to basics, a radical geography that is about sustained bodily existence at its root, at its core. What I am interested in is working to ameliorate the more grisly parts of "biopolitics" discussed by Foucault (1994:73) "as a phenomena characteristic of a group of living human beings constituted as a population: health, sanitation, birthrate, longevity, race". What I think needs more attention is the ghastly underbelly and deprivation that

is central to, and already included within, to some degree, the robust work done by feminist scholars on social reproduction.⁴ Radical geography should first and foremost be about recognizing that life depends on meeting material basic needs like food, water, shelter, etc. I think we must make meeting these fundamentals of life the core of our project, rather than taking them as somehow implied. This is because taking them as implied means that they too often get taken for granted and ignored. All of this is not to say that survival is the only part of our project, because obviously there are many other important emancipatory questions to be engaged and answered. Rather, I am suggesting that the impediments to survival serve as the *foundation* of our project from which we build our *RRG*. What I hope to see in a *RRG* are the sentiments that Bill Bunge (1971:242) ended *Fitzgerald* with when he said, “there is nothing more modest and more glorious than the story of human races’ struggle for Life itself”. This is so important because as Huey P Newton ([1970] 2002), co-founder of one of the US’s most successfully radical groups, the Black Panther Party (BPP), said “In order to exist, we must survive . . . if the people are not here revolution cannot be achieved, for the people and only the people make revolutions”.

Back to Basics

In contradiction to my understanding of *What’s left*, in the March 2005 issue of *Antipode* Ash Amin and Nigel Thrift discuss their view of what the geographic Left is all about. While I think they raise some valid and important points, I think for the most part they are diversionary at best. I think their discussion ambles into elusiveness and ambiguity and presents a challenge not only to radical or critical geography, but to the long-term potential of emancipatory theory/politics more generally. They suggest (2005:220): “It [the Left in geography] is multiple right from the start. It is the heir to many things. It is made up of many things. It is about many things. In other words, what we think the Left is about is a politics, an unending, always-changing politics. *And there is no anchor*” (emphasis added).

I am not in a position to “police” anyone, however, I do want to make a strong argument, and if need be, be openly critical about the need to prioritize the material grounding of radical geography around these basic issues of human survival. My gut reaction to Amin and Thrift’s open plurality, multiplicity and always changing politics leaves me wondering if through their desire to prioritize the diversity of political perspectives they realize how much they destabilize the material and logical foundations of survival. I do not think this is a small point that we can dismiss as obviously embedded within their argument, somehow implied because it is so blatant. In structuring the logic of their argument the way they do, Amin and Thrift ignore the physical torment and agony experienced by

the estimated 842 million people in the world suffering from hunger, the 35 million people in the US that do not have enough food to maintain a healthy lifestyle, the 6 million children that die annually from malnourishment in the world. They explicitly, if unintentionally, disregard human suffering, poverty and material inequality by not *anchoring* their politics, culture, economics, and everything else explicitly in the material foundations necessary for human survival. In this way their version of Left geography is like a boat lost at sea.

I do not think, perhaps naively, that it is doctrinaire to suggest that without food, human bodies cannot exist. This totalizing meta-reality cannot be disguised by difference, processes of *othering* or intellectual disagreement. I would argue at this foundationally material level that agreeing to disagree “is not enough” because this kind of open plurality zaps our ability to focus on these most important questions of continued existence. The material boundaries between life and death do not care how we think about these processes, or even if we believe they exist. And so Terry Eagleton’s suggestion (2003:103) is not only intellectually important and politically indispensable, but logically fundamental for us to refocus our efforts on these life/death questions when he suggests: “No idea is more unpopular with contemporary cultural theory than that of absolute truth. The phrase smacks of dogmatism, authoritarianism, a belief in the timeless and universal. Let us begin, then, by seeking to defend this remarkably modest, eminently reasonable notion”.

Why speak up now? Why risk calumny and anathema, beyond the fact the Castree and Wright (2005:7) asked for it? Like Marx (and many other people) I feel very strongly that different perspectives, at different times, by different people with different outlooks are essential, valuable and necessary for intellectual/political progress, but that all perspectives must be *anchored* in the material of foundations necessary for survival first and foremost. Without starting from the premise that in order to produce human history, humans must first live (Marx and Engels 1998:36), little else, maybe nothing else, matters. We cannot get to the importance of racism, patriarchy, homophobia, physical ability, and the myriad other roots of injustice if we do not first survive in order to think, in order to write, in order to teach, in order to act.

So how do we work to reconcile poverty, material inequality, life, death and everything in between? While new and innovative theoretical inroads are needed, let us not throw out the old ways of thinking just because some would consider them passé and not as sexy and provocative as they once were. To this end, as a junior scholar I appreciated Ray Hudson’s (2006) recent justification of Marxist political economy as still very useful for thinking about the interdependent social relations that produce uneven development. This is because uneven development has everything to do with the ability of communities to socially reproduce

and for individuals to survive. It is precisely because Marx and Engels seemingly cared so much about individual bodies, and recognized how their myriad differences made them unevenly vulnerable to capitalism, that they struggled so ardently to understand the political economic systems that too often produce human suffering.

That said, there is still a great deal of work to be done within Marxist geography to better incorporate issues of the body and identity. But this work is under way. And more importantly, the hybrid logical assemblages of survival and difference are already embedded within historical geographical materialism for us to further draw out and expand upon regardless of Marx's theoretical missteps and personal inattentions. This point was also made by Huey Newton when he suggested:

We [The BPP] sometimes have a problem because people do not understand the ideology that Marx and Engels began to develop. People say, "You claim to be Marxists, but did you know Marx was a racist?" We say, "Well; he probably was a racist: he made a statement once about the marriage of a white woman and a black man, and he called the black man a gorilla or something like that." Whether Marx was a racist is irrelevant and immaterial to whether or not the system of thinking he helped develop delivers truths about processes in the material world.⁵ (Newton 2002:184)

To this end, it strikes me that if we began from the premise that "Marx is to survival and material inequality, as Newton is to physics", we could get on with the work of thinking and working harder to create a *RRG*.

Radical is as Radical Does

Now that I have discussed the kinds of questions that I think need to be at the foreground of a *RRG*, I would like to briefly comment on how we might go about better engaging these questions. I am interested in this second larger issue precisely to validate how important I think different political perspectives are for a *RRG*. In July 2004 I had the opportunity to spend a week with a group of remarkable scholars at the Bristol *Summer Institute in Economic Geography*. One of the more memorable moments of the week for me, was while addressing the group of mostly junior scholars, Trevor Barnes urged us "to put more of ourselves into our work". My initial response to this was, "people want more of *you* in your work, because you're Trevor. Nobody gives a shit about me in my work". I suspect much of my thinking about this was based on the fact that I had been trained in a tradition that expected me to write in the third person and be apolitical in my scholarship; to be an objective observer. It was not until I found myself urging a first year PhD student "to put more of himself into his work" that I understood what Trevor was talking about. That is of course that through our unique positionality and

perspective we can bring much more critical insight and understanding to a *RRG*.

While I was thinking about using Kevin Carter's life and death for this essay, I made an effort to "fact check" the significance of Carter's biography from the perspective of those on the ground and engaged in the struggle in South Africa. A geographer working in South Africa put me in contact with a journalist who had worked with Carter⁶. Her name is Charlene Smith, and like a surreal lightening bolt, after she and I began to communicate I realized I knew her story quite well.

Smith began covering the South African anti-Apartheid struggle in 1976, when at the age of 16, she was both the *Star's* first woman and youngest crime reporter ever. About covering the Soweto massacre in 1976, she told me "I'd never seen a dead body before, the kids were my age and older and it completely changed and radicalized me." About her experience more widely, she went on to suggest:

I think 1985 was the worst year, there were 40,000 children in detention, it was hectic. There was also a lot of necklacing. Once in Uitenhage in about 1986 there was a big commemoration and I had always said I never wanted to see a necklacing, but all of a sudden right in front of me was this guy who was grey, he was so pale, and people were holding him and saying "necklace . . . necklace" and me being a little crazy anyhow jumped onto him and held on for dear life, saying, "No!" It threw everything into confusion because here was this small blonde, holding onto her notebook, holding onto this guy and a crowd around us, and the coms [pro ANC] said, "Charlene, Jesus, Charlene get off . . ." and I wouldn't, so they ran for some of the leadership and I wouldn't let go until the guy was safely escorted out of the area. I'm pleased I helped save a life.

With these kinds of experiences as a back drop, in 1999 Smith wrote a set of stories that have begun to transform South African social relations to such a degree that in 1999 the *Mail and Guardian* called her the "Woman of the Year". One such article started out by saying, "On 1 April this year I was raped in my home by a knife-wielding man. As a political journalist I had written of our fine post-Apartheid constitution and the greater rights it gave women and children. But as I waited at the seedy, cold and dirty offices of the district medical examiner, and had to fight for anti-retroviral drugs at private clinics to reduce my risk of HIV infection, I realised I had written lies". A different story about Smith said "Ms. Smith's courageous story a year ago almost single-handedly put sex crimes on the agenda in crime-hardened South Africa. She not only moved people with the story of her rape—and her dismal treatment afterward—but went on to lead public protests, counsel rape survivors in her home, and dispense advice to everyone from victims to prosecutors and foreign government officials".

Similar to the kinds of issues Charlene Smith has talked and written about, but more with an eye toward both internalizing the problems of the world and externalizing ourselves toward the production of a *RRG*, Bill Bunge, in a reply to Donald Fryer's attack upon his "The Geography of Human Survival", said:

Geography does not belong to geographers alone, anymore than medicine to doctors. People, plain ordinary people, have a right to demand good health from medical schools. Similarly, geography departments in the end must be accountable to the people among whom they lie. Academic geographers seem to feel they actually own geography. If things are mislocated in the cities that house geography departments, academics do not seem to consider these mislocations their business, their responsibility even in part. Even if these mislocations personally affect the children of these academic geographers themselves, what can they do? Why should anyone expect them to do anything? (Bunge 1974:482)

I find Bunge's response to be so powerful because when I consider why I am interested in a *RRG*, and why, how and when I began to grasp both what Bunge was getting at, and why the "fleshy messy things of everyday life" (see Katz 2001) are so important for a *RRG*, I think about my own children. Struggling with infertility for two years with my partner, adopting a baby from Guatemala, and then very unexpectedly one month later becoming pregnant, all while a geography graduate student served to fuse my life with my work in myriad and unexpected ways. When I first saw Kevin Carter's photo after returning to Milwaukee from the Newark airport, after thinking initially about the geography of hunger, my mind immediately moved to something that was not in the picture. I wondered long and hard about that little girl's mother and father. I wondered how they must have felt knowing that their baby girl was likely going to die at such a very young age, and that there was very little they were going to be able to do about it. I wondered so much about this because as my partner and I were being mentally and emotionally prepared by our adoption agency, one of the most important things we learnt is how to answer the big questions from your child about why you adopted them. As expected, several weeks ago, my son asked the big question: "why did *that* lady not keep me". As we were coached to do, and as made sense, we explained first that while his biological mother loved him very much, she felt she could not provide for him the things he needed to grow up to be a "big boy". The brutal and oppressive history of Guatemala and the inequality it has produced, which is inextricably tied to my family and serves as the context for our answer, is of course but one obligation of a *RRG* for scholars from the US.

The other set of questions that convinces me that a *RRG* must be more than just political economy, but also the stuff of everyday life,

comes from other parents asking us “is he actually your son?”, or more perplexing, when other children (and on limited occasions adults) have asked in front of him “why does your son look so different from you two, why is he brown and you white?”. I do not think one has to rehearse these conversations within their own families to understand how the social relations within the political economy of international adoption are embedded within the social relations of multiracial/ethnic families, or how bodily difference is dialectically connected to global/local political economy.

Thinking about the distress and agony that impedes survival, that contradicts the material underpinnings of life, that can annihilate the human spirit, can serve to dehumanize us all. As such, in addition to the intellectual and political capabilities we can add to a *RRG*, we must also inject our own humanity into our work. I like to think this is also what Trevor meant; I suspect it was. That we should strive to both internalize and understand the pain of others, but also inject our hope and conviction into their lives, or put another way; *radical is as radical does*. Of course, this means we actually have to know who *they* are, and we have walk to where *they* live and meet *them*, talk to *them* and work harder to understand *them*. In so doing, we will be much more likely to inject more of *ourselves* into to *our* work, more of *our* own outraged utopianism, *our* screams, *our* tears, *our* compassion and *our* love into *our* (and *their*) *RRG*.

Utopian Thought Yesterday, Today and Tomorrow

In the tradition of Blochian critical social theory and political engagement,⁷ synthesizing these fundamental questions about survival and social reproduction in conjunction with the personal effort it takes to open our own lives has all the makings of what some might call a “real Utopian” radical geography. To this end, not that long ago Michael Watts (2001:183) suggested, “Much could be said about these debates over ‘real Utopias’—though curiously geographers have had little to say about them”. It seems to have become cliché to care about, or at least to acknowledge that we care about, poverty and material inequality. And within much contemporary discourse and popular sentiment it certainly seems trite to think anything can be done about it. Capitalism, and the uneven development/destruction it produces is after all inevitable and natural, right? It is not just powerful capitalists that have everything to gain from us believing the inevitability of capitalism that has brought such apathy toward poverty, but I also believe our lack of engagement with these fundamental questions has made these issues more extreme. I wonder how many of us have settled for the inevitability of these notions because we are afraid of being laughed and being labeled naive and foolishly utopian? I would argue that there is a fundamental need within a *RRG* to mobilize the possibilities of utopian alternatives and refocus

on these issues once again. I think we must refuse, impossible as it may seem by its very definition, to settle for the brutality of contemporary sociospatial circumstances. To this end, Richard Rorty (2002:151) usefully suggests that for Marx (and Dewey), notions of utopianism were “the attempt to envisage a set of sociocultural institutions that would constrain the rich to steal less and the strong to enslave less”. This seems a completely reasonable goal to me.

Related to this is David Harvey’s (2000:195) suggestion, that “there is a time and place in ceaseless human endeavor to change the world, when alternative visions, no matter how fantastic, provide the grist for shaping powerful political forces of change”. An immediate response to which I can imagine me using this quote, or referring to this scholar in this context might predictably be from some geographers, “Oh here we go again about Harvey”. But why is it that David Harvey is so revered by so many? Is it simply a result of his theoretical prowess and critical intellectual acumen? While these characteristics undoubtedly play some role in his reputation, there is something else perhaps more profound. In his seventh decade, after being both praised and critically scorned, long after many people have given up hope, he’s got me convinced that he still *believes* that major political economic change is possible. He believes that alternative systems to those that feed on death and dismemberment of human lives and spirits can prevail. It was my sensing his belief in the possibility of an alternative society that in 1994 as an undergraduate student at Indiana University I one day walked over to Kirkwood Hall with my own copies of Marx/Engels, Hegel, Kierkegaard, Nietzsche in my backpack which I had purchased for a nineteenth-century philosophers course, and a library copy of *Social Justice and the City* in my hand, and changed from a double major in Philosophy and Religious Studies to Geography.

With some semblance in tone to the outraged utopianism that consumed me in the Newark airport, Bob Dylan’s ode to Woody Guthrie was loaded with insight when he sang, “‘Bout a funny ol’ world that’s a-comin’ along” that “seems sick an’ it’s hungry, it’s tired an’ it’s torn”. However, Dylan ends the verse on a very hopeful note, or at least I hear it as hopeful when he sings, “It looks like it’s a-dyin’ an’ it’s hardly been born”.⁸ We ought to take heart in the idea that a *RRG*, like our social condition more generally, is young in experience and has a long way to go toward improvement. I am often stirred to the degree that I can sometimes hardly contain myself about the prospect of a *RRG* if it seeks to better engage the lives of those whose lives have radicalized us. Such energy could work to create language and action that recognizes bodily difference and identity as crucial to understanding uneven geographical development. I say again, I think that geographers have only scraped the surface of what kinds of innovative radical geographies are yet to come.

I don't think any of my arguments are new or innovative. Rather, they are inherently mundane and rehashed from as long as nearly four decades ago, which is why I suspect it is so easy to ignore them and treat them as tired and stale. However, it is precisely because they are so ordinary that I feel they need to be stressed over and over until more scholars see the merits of grounding their radicalism in survival; until there is a tumultuous outcry from radical geographers to internalize the suffering in the world (which I think already happens a great deal), and externalize themselves through this suffering via their radical geographies (which I think requires more commitment still). Because these ideas are not new, I am sure that sharing them will lead some folks to pigeonhole me as the stereotypical "idealist/young radical". In preemptive consideration of this "accusation", I am at a loss other than by acknowledging the merits of the claim. All the actors discussed within this essay, from Kevin Carter and Bob Dylan to Huey Newton and Charlene Smith, were no doubt also stereotypical idealist/young radicals at one point and look at all the consciousness that they raised regarding the human condition. Why would I aspire to be anything else perhaps other than, one day, the stereotypical "idealist/older radical"?

In conclusion, while I advocate for a *RRG*, I am also aware that each of us must proceed at our own level of emotional capacity. It does no good to get so frustrated and discouraged by wanting to change the world or our local community that we lose the ability to cope, to maneuver through our everyday lives, to stay human ourselves. Sometimes our very existence, physically, mentally, and spiritually revolves around our ability to stay focused on emancipatory social change, but at a pace we can deal with. And sometimes our very lives depend on it. The case of Kevin Carter might help to offer insight into this.

When I asked Charlene Smith about what she thought about radical scholarship, and the potential for radical scholarship to produce emancipatory social change, she said:

There is a huge difference between sitting in offices reading and going out day after day into people's lives and their communities and their pain and their joy. We, as journalists, have a blessed profession, for those of us who still do journalism the old way—by going into communities—it is the most spiritually enriching work, it also hurts us, but I think if people allow us into our lives it means they want/need a voice, they want us to honor them by telling their stories, they want us to assume some responsibility for helping to change their lives.

The thing about Charlene's response is that most journalists *do not* put themselves squarely in the struggle in such intentional and deliberate ways as she has done. Most journalists have not risked so much for the sake of breaking down mainstream perceptions of social power relations. Most journalists do not put as much of themselves into their work as has

Charlene. Nor have as many journalists made near as much of an impact on transforming the world as has Charlene Smith. Just as Kevin Carter was obedient to his training as a conflict photographer and did not try to help the dying Sudanese girl, most of us have been trained to write in the third person, to be objective, to be uncritical and apolitical, to not put more of ourselves in our work. We have been trained to keep the pain and suffering of the world at arm's length. We have seen too many examples of geographers not knowing the real substance of the people they "research" and as a result take for granted the fundamental material humanity at the core of human geography. My limited interactions with Charlene Smith make me feel that we must ratchet up our level of commitment toward the geography of survival. The roots of material human life are mundane, but without human life there is no radical human geography. Thus, radical geography must be about the lives of the people; us and them. All power to the people! Damn, wait a minute, that's kind of catchy. Maybe I'll print it on a T-shirt and wear it when I present at the next AAG.⁹

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Endnotes

¹ I was a faculty member in geography at the University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee when I wrote this essay.

² Greg Marinovich, Ken Oosterbroek, and Joao Silva were the three other main members of the Bang-Bang Club

³ I recognize that "really" is a loaded word. I acknowledge the deliberate conceit of using it both literally and partially, but use it nonetheless to defend the "truth" that defines the material underpinnings of human survival. I also realize how silly it is to use the acronym RRG, but was urged to do so for the sake of reducing repetition.

⁴ I am thinking of scholars like, but certainly not limited to, Jennifer Hyndman, Cindi Katz, Audrey Kobayashi, Tamar Mayer, Linda McDowell, Linda Peake, Gerry Pratt, Melissa Wright.

⁵ Newton's biographical research into Marx led him to believe that Marx probably did not actually make the gorilla statement.

⁶ That geographer was Patrick Bond, who I would argue if I had more space in the essay, exemplifies as well as anybody that I have come into the contact with, the power and potential of a *really* radical geography; see <http://www.nu.ac.za>

⁷ In the tradition of Ernst Bloch, the German Marxist philosopher.

⁸ The main title of the paper is from Dylan's "It's alright, ma (I'm only bleeding)" from his 1965 album *Bringing It All Back Home*.

⁹ "All power to the people" was of course the rally cry of the BPP. Indeed, during the late 1960s and 1970s, thousands of radicals wore this very slogan on their T-shirts.

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