



august

2015

## **A Letter from the Editor:**

It has been quite a journey with this little publication. What began in 2005 as a MySpace/e-mail zine between two teenage girls – Kylee from Indiana and I has now evolved into a global project, not only about rock n roll anymore but about human community. Though Kylee and I no longer talk (please reach out! I'd love to continue doing the zine with you!), the zine still lives on. At the time it began we both dreamt of it being a .pdf zine, but neither of us at the time (believe it or not!) had the means to put the zine together that way or knew anyone who could. But we had MySpace as a means to find, talk to and arrange interviews with bands all over the world, as well as independent record labels (Fueled by Ramen, amongst others). All too aware of the historic times we were growing up in during the Bush Jr. administration, we also wrote essays (for fun! what teenager would ever do that? we did!) about anything we could think of that affected us – whether it was the pain we felt seeing how prejudicial our world was becoming, our personal battles with depression or the closing of CBGB's. I look back at those times we worked together and what we created, who we met and what we accomplished as a beautiful silver ribbon lining the skies of our otherwise boring and difficult lives.

By 2013 when I brought the zine back we had completely lost touch with each other. I was (still am) in college and working a great deal in a national nonprofit program, putting on events and programs within our community through campus. The laptop I got in 2010 that died in early 2011 due to an AVG virus update was revived (though I lost everything previously to that) by the end of 2012 and I wanted nothing more than to bring back my zine, and make it count. I got programs necessary to design the zine the way I always desired it to be and completely reformatted it. I would be the editor and people anywhere could submit poetry/creative writings/essays/stories/artwork/d.i.y. things that I would put together every month. I still interviewed quite a few bands all around the world and also added a trading card series. I saw something from the 1980s and played around with designing and thought it would be a great addition to honor the bands themselves – all optional to them of course, with band-approved photos. I should've printed them myself and laminated them for the bands...but alas that's one thing that's changing this time around.

I know – third time around with this seems pretty sketchy right? The zine went on hiatus after May 2013's issue. It wasn't a sustainable program format. I needed help on the zine but I was so afraid to ask for it. Part of me also felt I wasn't ready for it mentally. I wasn't as in-touch with the world and as cerebrally mature as I really wanted to be for the zine at the time. I was learning though along the way. I soaked in higher knowledge like a sponge, even if I couldn't fully process everything yet. I was in a growth spurt.

The two years hiatus has been ultimately the most beneficial thing. That summer of 2013 was when Edward Snowden came out with his revelations about our United States' global surveillance programs. It didn't shock me. They used many of these same tactics under the Nixon administration, why wouldn't they use them on people all over the world? It didn't scare me, personally, but it did plant a seed in my brain. To think within everything he, Wikileaks founder Julian Assange and whistleblower Chelsea Manning were uncovering and shouting to the world (amongst so many brave others) was going to change our future forever. It was everything I wished to happen – people who rebelled against this current political system for the people of the world and their lawful and humanely right to know what's being done to them on a global scale: the massive con game that is the United States government. Before I proceed further, I will clarify my stance. I am most certainly not Republican but I am not a Democrat either. If I did have to pick between the two I'd never be on the side of the reds, that's for sure. Also for the sake of this publication and my place as a journalist, as its owner and editor, I am politically independent and objective to all sides of the political spectrum. As a sociology major I know society is far too complex to blame problems on one single person or one single office. There are countless levels of bureaucracy within the world. These layers combined with social group interactions, changing value systems and economics are what cause the major sources of change within the world, and in particular in America.

I roll my eyes everytime someone tries to blame President Obama for something. It's an easy way to spot the brainwashed. These are dangerous people. Ignorance and/or misinformation combined with hatred and discriminatory prerogatives are what's accelerating the collapse of the entire world. It is up to the citizens now to do something, and I cannot imagine not doing the zine right now.

2015 has been one of the toughest years of my life, personally. The zine gave me hope though. When I'd be at work on a slow day and life would get me down I would jot down ideas that began pouring infinitely from me that it even frustrated me my writing was so slow. So many ideas. The best one was to change the format of the zine completely. I would only do it if I could find/form a team of people to work with, and with it being a non-paying volunteer effort essentially, at the same I can't expect the same group of people to contribute to every issue. I sought advice from friends and especially my older sister. I promoted it with flyers all over town and at my college. Nearly two months passed before I received a response. One day the world literally just opened up and things began happening. It was that insane – and magical. I met people at school interested, and one contact snowballed to another and I found so many creative projects and people in my community. On a lark one morning I posted about the zine in some Facebook groups associated with varying themes of the zine – Riot Grrrl, Socialist groups, Grassroots organizations, zine groups, artists, poets, writers, journalists – all sorts – and that skyrocketed with so much feedback! I could never have predicted that. It's been a blessing to meet so many – and become friends with so many talented people around the world, and work with them and really do this. I've had to overcome a great deal of pain and abuse through my life that did not get any easier this year. The people in this team are so beautiful, talented, creative, exciting, caring and dedicated. Each of them posses extraordinary brilliance, complex minds and that same seed in their brains they have planted creatively. Together we know the power of art, the power of voice, the power of words and human thought and ability. We may not change or save the world, but we can in our own ways impact the world.

The mission of Pretty Vacant zine is to make a positive, artistic and unifying impact on the world. We live in a sort of dark ages period in a post-capitalist Western society that without serious collaborative efforts may accelerate a global destruction. Many of us at the zine grew up in the last truly great American generation. We can remember when restaurants, stores and traffic lights did not have cameras or metal detectors. We remember what it was like to know your neighbors and go visit them often. We remember a time where we could trespass on vacant land and old buildings to explore and hang out and not get arrested or killed. If we were hungry and roughing it on the streets we could steal a can of beans without much repercussion. We remember the excitement in visiting record stores, buying new cds and tapes. We painted walls in major cities. Creative expression wasn't only encouraged, it was everywhere, and it was beautiful and we were inspired; always inspired. We may never live in that kind of world ever again but we can bring back to social consciousness some of these things and make the effort to reconnect with each other in this new age of disconnect. We can encourage creative/critical thoughts and expressions. We can promote independent bands making their own albums, pressing their own vinyls, tapes and CDs. We can support independent artists, inquire where they get their passion and ask how it is they're able to overcome their self-doubt and insecurities that so discourage human expression.

We can bring awareness to nonprofit organizations within communities all over the world, who work so hard every day for social good but get so little respect or reward for the difference they're able to make in people's lives. I spent seven years working in nonprofit at my college and within my own community and I want to honor everything I've done up to this point by helping all nonprofits reach all over the globe. There are so many organizations in so many places that do extraordinary work that deserve your attention and rely on your donated items, your volunteer efforts and public support.

We can also bring awareness to the grassroots campaigns the world over. My parents' generation had Abbie Hoffman, Jerry Rubin, Gloria Steinem and John Lennon. In America there's an obsession for the past that the old days are better than the present. There's this apathy when it comes to living in the moment. Folks, this very moment has already given birth to so much more than what the last generation had. Now through technology we're able to take matters into our own hands and make our voices and creativity loud and clear. We have at our fingertips the progress of the past and we can be cognitively critical of what they did right and what they did wrong. We can use this to help our present for our future. Because of our technological advances, today we have Anonymous, Wikileaks, Greenpeace, the Occupy movement which has spread all over the world to stand up against a whole spectrum of political matters, and we also have the #BlackLivesMatter movement. These are powerful times to live in. There is reason to be excited for the difference we can make. We have so much work to do, but it is good work that is in our own hands to make of it what we can. The most important thing is that we do not view this selfishly as time out of our day or to get ourselves in the history books. Every day is a gift and with that we can do extraordinary things to make a difference in peoples' lives. So what if it's in a small way? So what if we're one of thousands or millions standing up for what's right? What's important is that we try, we make the effort. And so long as you do, we're here to help bring global unity to your cause in any way possible.

It's up to us. All of us. Together.

-- Meggy Kate Gutermuth  
Owner, Editor-in-Chief of Pretty Vacant zine

P.S. Kylee— If you ever want to come back to the zine there's always place here waiting for you.

# D.O.Y. FUNK FOR ART PUNKS

BY JOANNE SPOTSWOOD

Hey fellow ArtPunks,

Art is hard. Creating is hard. Sometimes I even think that being creative is the hardest thing that there is. Speaking as an artist, I get so frustrated when I can't think of anything to make – I could draw anything that I can see perfectly – well, not perfectly of course, but pretty damn well. But when it comes to creating something new, thinking of WHAT to make, or how to create the scene in my head, I don't even know how to begin. We reach out and ask others for help or we might pick up a project we put down a long time ago, but sometimes that's not enough. I have a few go-to projects when I find myself having a creativity block, so I want to go ahead and talk about my favourite: Zentangle.

So a Zentangle isn't exactly known for it's name. It's one of the simplest projects there is, and really helps boost creative thinking and originality. All you need for this project is:

A piece of paper (preferably not notebook paper)

1 or more objects with round bases

Black Pen (I use my illustration pens)

That's it. So simple. Take your round object, and trace some circles onto your paper, make as few or as many as you want. Make them in different sizes or all one size; it doesn't really matter! You have the freedom to choose your set up. My paper turned out to look like this:



All that's next is to fill it. What should you use to fill it? Whatever! This is your creation, and you choose how it works. I like to keep it simple and draw different patterns in each section of the tangle, but you can do whatever you like: patterns, different scenes in each one, maybe even a little poem in each or different song lyrics, whatever. The point of the exercise is to make you consider all the different ways you can fill each section, and to keep you creating, even when you can't think of a thing to create.



This is an example of one of my finished Zentangles, but PLEASE send in your own finished Zentangle! I want to see what you create, and how you make it your own.

You can e-mail Joanne at [maryspots95@gmail.com](mailto:maryspots95@gmail.com).

# Headphone Just Album Reviews



by Joanne Spotswood



“Vol. 1” by Thirteen  
(2015)

[Buy on iTunes](#)

## Review by Meggy-Kate Gutermuth

Romeo Kiss (both versions) - Opening riff has a very commercially successful sound. It's high energy, which is what people want. It's ageless and will encourage people to keep it on their favorite playlist. It's what will make people want to attend your concerts, see you in person and see what you're about. The entire track itself is brilliant hard edge rock n roll which is underplayed on the radio currently and needs to be played more. Personally I prefer the original version. The way I see it, having a female lead with such a growl and snarl in her voice will hook women in its inspiration and attract men with its raw power and sensuality. That's what I love about this track.

I Let Go (Her Goodbye) - Being from the Southeast United States I see this track being successful in this market. It's honest, simple and I could see this being very beautiful to perform on stage. I love the blend of acoustic rock with hard rock — the two entwine and complement each other in a perfect balance. Tracks like this have always been successful. It isn't my favorite so far but that's only because lately I've been in a more high-octane mood with my music.

I Let Go (His Goodbye) - I am digging that you have both male and female versions of your songs. That's unique. Most bands would just do duets (Lacuna Coil for instance comes to mind) or have certain tracks that are exclusively for her and exclusively for him (Sonic Youth for example), and this keeps the playing field fair within your band and I admire that. The vocals bring back memories of my teen years with bands like Buckcherry, Seether, Saliva, etc. I think it would be fascinating to release both a male and a female version of a song and see how each of them perform on the markets, or even release one now and one later kind of thing. Personally I wouldn't release a more ballad-like track as a first single. Hook them with a high-energy track and then give them a ballad.

The Siren (Hypnotize) (Review of both versions) - I can see this track as being an anthem for bad girls everywhere. Let's face it, it's fun to be one, and those that aren't want to be. I'd love to see a video with this track. An edgy tease video, but not running on sexual imagery cause it's so overused but perhaps woman-taking-on-a-man competitive imagery. Even if you blended the two versions together of the male and female — do parts of the video with the feminine vocals and then parts with the masculine to tell both stories in one. For commercial vitality I'd still personally rank this as number 2. Both versions, the male and female of this song have their own qualities to bring to the table. The male energy invites competition and lives for the chase but the girl is determined to make her rules the standard. Both are threatening, assaulting and highly addictive.

Time (Review of both versions) - While I love the lyrics, the melodies, and could see its wide appeal, it isn't my choice as a first single. It's beautiful, gentle, and I could see it used in movies, on television, at weddings all over the world and during a great concert set with candles lit around. The lyrics are incredible and if you release it as a single around Valentine's perhaps it'd be a massive hit. It's beautiful and I can see it transcending genres and age demographics.



Photo from Facebook Page

## Creep List, *Unrest in Peace*

Review by Bob McGough Puwc

In April of 2015 the Montgomery (Alabama) music scene lost one of its most beloved, quirkiest members. Mark 'Manson' Flowers, front man for the horror punk band Creep List, passed away within two days of finishing the recording on their latest full-length album. Titled in his honor to *Unrest in Peace*, it is classic Creep List.

Recorded in their practice space, the Creep Shed, it has at times a raw, unpolished sound that rather than detracting from the album, it adds an element of vitality missing from many modern releases. It is quintessential horror punk, with lyrical content ranging from the typical (vampires, poltergeists) to the truly macabre (necrophilia, torture). The bulk of the lyrics were written by Flowers, who sings all of which he wrote. Drummer Lindsey Grey and guitarist Timmy Fangs have a pair of songs each that they wrote and do lead vocals on, giving the album a pleasantly varied feel.

The music is no holds bared punk for the most part, with brief divergences into classic rock and even metal at times. Clear influences from a number of seminal bands can be heard throughout, from Buddy Holly to the Misfits. Featuring songs both old and new, it has a solid sound sure to please fans of the genre.

In summary, *Unrest in Peace* is a fitting tribute to Manson, a legacy that he can be proud of. Cheers Mark.

(Disclaimer: the author assisted in producing this album)

by Mandi Joan Marcotte



by Brandon Rawlinson

# Who? What? Where? When? Or Reviews

## **Live Review: Joan Jett & The Blackhearts at Nassau Memorial Veterans Coliseum (5/20) by Nicole Rosenthal**

Let's all face it - Joan Jett has never been one to simply "be back". She has always been in, whether you like it or not.

Leather-clad and sporting the same energetic kick that has stuck with her throughout her entire career, Joan Jett and the Blackhearts opened for The Who on 20 May 2015 as part of The Who's "The Who Hits 50!" North American tour at the Nassau Coliseum in Uniondale, NY. Celebrating Jett's influential, lengthy musical career though an explosive catalogue spanning more than 40 years, the setlist combined major hits sprinkled in with a rarity or two.

Commencing with lavish sparks and the signature white, shattered heart projected against the backdrop of the stage, Ms. Jett herself primed the set with "Bad Reputation", truly evoking the first time I fell in love with the Blackhearts a decade ago.

Jett then welcomed the overbearing crowd with "Cherry Bomb", a true call to the past for longtime fans of the successful, all-girl band The Runaways (albeit it was a little disappointing not to hear Cherrie Curie in 70's rocker-chic underwear rocking out to the hit). Gritty, punch-you-in-the-face guitars swelled and shook the venue alongside Jett's emitted vocal rasps and growls as explosive pyrotechnics illuminated the stage.

Even though minimal crowd engagement, Jett has yet again managed to captivate a mass audience in just under forty minutes. As the coliseum lights were gradually adjusted back to a striking fluoresce and the remainder of the seats were beginning to be filled, Jett hopped off the stage in an energetic glow - just reinforcing the fact that, after 40 years, simply nothing has changed.

### **Setlist:**

Bad Reputation  
Cherry Bomb (The Runaways)  
Do You Wanna Touch Me (Oh Yeah)  
You Drive Me Wild (The Runaways)  
Light of Day  
Love Is Pain  
The French Song  
Make It Back  
I Love Rock 'n' Roll  
Crimson & Clover  
I Hate Myself for Loving You

Follow Nicole on Twitter: [@punkorocks](https://twitter.com/punkorocks)

# INTERVIEWS

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The Slants  
Portland, Oregon  
USA  
[www.theslants.com](http://www.theslants.com)

Interview by  
Meggy-Kate Gutermuth

Your band has accomplished some incredible feats in the world, and it has been an honor to speak with you and feature your accomplishments along the way. The Slants have performed for troops overseas, you've spoken with TED Talks and helped raise a million dollars for cancer research.

Tell us, what has this journey taught you and how has it impacted those currently in and previously in your band?

**Tyler:** "It's a long way to the top if you want to rock n roll". We've lost a lot of band members over the years, and the most common reason that they had to leave was because the demands of the band and life as a touring musician conflicted too much with their personal lives. There are many sacrifices involved in following this journey, but those sacrifices don't seem as big when you love playing music as much as I do.

**Ken:** We can make a difference one day at a time. So what else can we do? Take it one performance, one venue, one convention and one day at a time.

**Simon:** I think it's always important to remember where we came from and to not take anything for granted. Seriously, it's an honor and privilege to be able to share our art with others. One never knows how long it will last or where the adventure will take you but I think it's important to stay humble, enjoy each moment, and

and to take moments to celebrate along the way.

**Do you as individuals and as a collective feel you've done what you've set out to do? What do you see yourselves doing in the future?**

**Tyler:** It is interesting because we set out to be known as musicians, but are best known around the world for our case against the Trademark Office. Hopefully in the future, our notoriety will shift towards our music!

**Ken:** I still see us growing as a group!

**Simon:** There are always more places to see, more stages to play, and more food to eat. We're working on solidifying our lineup now - and once we find the right people, we'll be back in the studio and back on tour. It's what we do and we love it.

**What/Where is your dream venue of performing?**

**Tyler:** I would love to play at the Gorge Amphitheater in George, WA. It is a 20,000 seat outdoor venue perched on the edge of a cliff with sweeping views of the Columbia River and Canyon. Watching a concert at this venue at sunset could be compared to a religious experience.

**Ken:** Happy to perform anywhere, but MSG, Hollywood Bowl, Radio City Music Hall and The Moda Center just to name a few.

**Simon:** I've always wanted to tour through Asia, especially in Taiwan. It sounds like things are working out so we might be able to do that in the very near future...

**For our readers who are not familiar with your currently legal case, in short, in 2010 you filed in the U.S. Patent and Trademark Office to register your band's name, The Slants, and you were denied, as they cited it was a "racial slur". The efforts of your extensive fan base as well as Asian rights groups have made a great impact to bring about this discussion and garner support, but legally it seems the offices won't budge.**

**Can you give us an update on your case, any progress and tell our readers how we can help?**

**Simon:** We're currently sitting before the Court of Appeals for the Federal Circuit – in other words, one step below the Supreme Court. Right now, we're just waiting for some final papers to go through, then it's onto oral hearings before a full panel of judges. At this stage, we'll be arguing if the law that the Trademark Office is using is constitutional or not. But we're not alone – the ACLU, Cato Institute, Rutherford Institute, and many other organizations just filed on our behalf.

**Right now, not much can be done other than asking people to continue sharing the story ([like this article](#)), talking about why it's important to talk about these outdated laws, and how we should change racist government policies.**

**Tell us about your band's LivBar. Who's idea/recipe was that? Who makes them? What's the best tea or coffee to drink them with?**

**Tyler:** I met some reps from LivBar at TedxSalem before Simon's talk and The Slants' performance. After tasting a LivBar and talking to them about what sets LivBar apart from other nutrition or meal bars, I knew that they would be a great company for our band to develop a relationship with. I immediately went to find Simon, who quickly solidified the relationship. LivBar asked us for ideas on what ingredients should be included in The Slants LivBar, so Simon and I brainstormed on ingredients commonly associated with Asian cuisine such as coconut, ginger, sesame seeds, nori, rice, etc.

**Simon:** We gave LivBar some suggestions, then they sent a box of 5 potential flavor combinations for us to try out. After conducting some blind taste tests in the band, we picked our favorite one, which included green tea, cherry, and lemongrass. I usually like snacking on them with some coconut water, but it's also good with a rich espresso as well.

**Having performed for many large audiences as well as many small ones in your humble beginnings, what have the two areas of thought taught you? Is the fame and glory what you hoped it would be? What matters to you most as creative people? What is the music industry like for mainstream rock n roll today? Is it harder or easier to grow professionally as musicians?**

**Tyler:** At concerts with smaller audiences we get to spend a lot more quality time interacting with each attendee, which we really love, however, we get to share incredible energy that is reciprocated back to us exponentially with larger audiences. The fame, even though it is not huge, has enabled us to reach a lot of fans and empower young Asian Americans across the country to be proud of their heritage, which is more than I had ever hoped for! The music industry has changed drastically over the last 10 years and it is difficult to predict which direction that it will go, but I feel like many artists have more control over their creative direction than ever before because of the shift of power away from large record companies. Retaining that creative control is what matters the most to me as a creative person.

**Ken:** If someone can relate to the music or be moved by the lyrics, then we have done our job. I strive to grow everyday as a musician.

**Simon:** We still often play for smaller audiences; things seem to be in constant flux. Thankfully, the support of our fans has been incredible. One thing I learned is that it isn't about the size of audience – every fan that shows up still deserves the best possible show that we can give them. Another is that you never know who may end up in the audience. We've made some surprising friends and fans over the years by maintaining that attitude. Also, it's vital to stay committed to the art – making music – and not let that get lost in the process of pursuing “success” in the music industry. There are always distractions pulling us away, but bottom line, it's about creating something that is meaningful for us as well as listeners.

When I first interviewed you when I began the zine as a teenager using a really bad e-mail format, social media was relatively novel, and today it practically runs our lives. How has social media in particular and its reach impacted you as a creative and as a band? Are there certain areas of it that you wish had restraints? What advice would you give to bands that are starting today in how to use it in their favor if they do not know how?

**Tyler:** Social media hasn't necessarily changed the band creatively, but as an independent band, social media has made it possible to reach where we are today. For bands starting today, I would recommend that they pick up a copy of Simon's book, *"Music Business Hacks: The Daily Life of the Self-Made Musician"*.

**Ken:** It makes the world smaller, but each person has a chance to express themselves! It's harder to get noticed but that can't stop you from trying.

**Simon:** This band pretty much started near the beginning of the social media revolution – I still have old posters promoting our Myspace page. That just shows how far social media has come along and how it will constantly change. My advice is to not get hung up on the actual channels themselves; there's no guarantee that Facebook will continue to reign, that Yik Yak or Yelp might rise further, that YouTube will always remain to the top place for videos, or that Pinterest won't develop more useful applications for musicians. Instead, focus on the audience you're trying to reach and the most effective ways of connecting with them. In the end, that's what social media is supposed to be for.

Are you currently working on new music? I saw you're confirmed for Kumoricon this upcoming Labor Day weekend. For those of our readers who may be interested in attending, can you tell us about the convention and when and where we can see The Slants at this event? Are there other conventions you regularly attend or would like to perform at in the future? What's in store for 2016?

**Simon:** We're working on a couple of projects right now, some of which will be released by the end of the year. In the meantime, we've got a few big anime conventions and shows coming up. All of the details are up at [theslants.com](http://theslants.com). We'll also be announcing a big international tour very soon...

Thank you so much for taking the time to do this interview for us!



**The Slants on Facebook**



**The Slants on Twitter**



Interview with Lusai of  
Jai Jas  
Tapachula, Chiapas, México

[Official Facebook Page](#)

Interview by [Lee](#)

**How long has the band been together?**

**We have 2 years playing with this current lineup.**

**How did it start up?**

**The group was formed when Micho and I met in highschool.**

**How often do you play shows?**

**We try to play a show at least once a week .**

**Are there plans for an album?**

**Yes, we are currently working on an EP that will soon be released.**

**What musicians or bands have had or have influence on your lyrics and music style ?**

**We really like Arcade Fire. Their music seems to have purpose with a lot of heart and a lot of hope, which has helped us to develop our message in our music.**

**Is your group influenced by the politics of Mexico?**

**Yes, we're very concerned about the situation in our country. And as musicians we are also aware of searching for ways to make some change through music.**



**Follow Jai Jas on Twitter**

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**CHEERBLEEDERS**

**PHILADELPHIA**

**PA**



**CHEERBLEEDERS  
ON FACEBOOK**

**Interview by:**

**Meggy-Kate Gutermuth**

**Thank you for doing an interview with us here at the zine. First off, introduce yourselves and tell us a bit about your band. Only one track of yours off your Demo #1 album is over two minutes long, and only barely by nine seconds. What's your songwriting process like? What fuels each of you creatively?**

**My name is Caitlin and I'm the guitarist of Cheerbleeders, Summer Rice is the singer. We started this band together last year. Mare Lemongelli is the drummer, and Mike Ortiz is the bassist. Usually when songwriting I will find a riff that I really like and we make summers lyrics fit, other times she will hum or sing a melody which I will then transpose onto guitar. It is a truly collaborative process for us when it comes to songwriting.**

**It's refreshing to know there are angry girls out in the world who are not afraid to voice their opposition to our patriarchal world. Women have said for generations things need to change and they haven't changed too much. What do you see this generation being capable of that others have not?**

**Never before has any generation has such a great accessibility to knowledge of all kinds. For this reason I believe young people today are much more capable of becoming aware of information on a global level.**

**Do you believe social media has played a part in degrading and ostracizing women or do you think it has empowered us? Can the Neo-Grrrl bands of today and artists like yours use social media to take over the world, like cable TV did in previous generations? How would you destroy the patriarchy?**

**I don't think that social media has had any dramatic effect on the status of women. If anything it has only helped to perpetuate the upkeep of the status quo. We use social media to promote and book shows so it is extremely helpful. I think that social media provides a good avenue to connect with people, discover music, and news sources. However, it is up to us how to use it and I think the effect it has on anyone personally is a mere reflection of their personal interests; rather than some big influential force. I would "destroy the patriarchy" by not concerning myself with what others expect or want me to do. I believe that for the expectations of women in our society to change we need to act purely upon**

...our own ideas and pretty much ignore anyone who tries to get in our way.

**What would the world look like as a matriarchy? Do you see potential for that to happen in the future? Do you see potential in equality? How would you expect this would impact the artistic communities in the US and in particular in feminist punk rock?**

**I see a definite potential for equality in the future. Artists have a huge impact on society moving forward in a conscious way. I wouldn't claim to know how to change the world but I know that changing my own perception of myself and what it means to be a girl by making the decision to unteach myself what I was socialized to believe girls are supposed to be interested in; has allowed me to really do whatever I want unapologetically.**

**Tell us what your concerts are like. I read somewhere you have "lesbian mosh pits"? So moshing isn't dead? Have you been able to perform in venues that still allow it?**

**Our shows vary greatly depending on the venue and who is on the bill. There are definitely mosh pits a lot but I was pretty much kidding around when I said "lesbian mosh pit".**

**Are you in the process of creating new material?**

**Right now we are working on our debut self titled album. It should be finished later this summer.**

**What are your favorite forms of deviance?**

**As far as this band is concerned my personal favorite form of deviance we have displayed is our totally unintentional yet extremely poignant inability to find any niche group to fit in with. If we are playing a show with a bunch of hardcore punk bands we sound so soft in comparison. If we are playing a show with rock n roll/indie bands we are always dramatically louder and faster than everyone else.**

**What would you say to teenage girls who want to find their voice?**

**To teenage girls who want to find their voice, I say it is all you. Discover what it is you really enjoy doing and give it life yourself the way no one else can. Believe that what you have to offer is worthy; others will agree when they see you. Never let anyone convince you that you aren't good enough. Stop comparing yourself to others because what you have to offer is something entirely of your own. There will always be fear associated with putting yourself out there, but you need to work through it and never let it keep you from doing or saying anything you want to do or think is right. You will meet resistance, just keep on moving in the direction of your vision and you will amaze yourself.**

**Thank you so much for taking the time to do with us!**



**The Homewreckers**

**New York, New York**

[Homewreckers' Official Site](#)



[Homewreckers on FB](#)

Interview by: Meggy-Kate Gutermuth

Tell us about your band. You're from the New York City area. How did you meet?

J: Cristy and I met at a Plus Ones show in Philadelphia in 2005.

Cristy C Road: But we were internet friends before cause we were lonely pop-punk gays.

J: So I came up to Cristy and I was like "do you write a zine? I recognize you from your drawings" and I was like.... "Oh my god I feel like a celeb...."

CCR: ahhhhh nooooo..... Me and J started playing music in 2008; but it took me really long to actually feel comfortable doing anything with the songs I wrote.

J: Yea, Cristy kicked me out of our band.

CCR: Noooo, I hated playing guitar!!

J: Yeah, I used to come over and we used to write songs and then she found other people to start a band with....

CCR: [sad face] So this entire band existed and they asked me to sing so I was like YOLO. But eventually they kicked me out because they didn't want to sound like Jawbreaker, and I thought that's fair, but I should start playing guitar. So I called J and I was like....dude....alright.

AnaMeili: I met Cristy after buying her book and not knowing who she was. That same night I ended up at a Homewreckers show. I had just arrived from Ohio and this band, Pretty Pretty (from Ohio), were playing. I saw her book on the merch table and I was like "Oh, I just bought this!" --- Then you gave me a free demo.

CRR: Oh cool, I'm nice.

AM: And then we probably hung out at Rock camp, and then we played a show together, and then I joined this band!

Jamie Nieves: I briefly spoke to J at Smash it dead last year.... Then we didn't talk for a while. I ran into Cristy outside of a Girlcrush show and we exchanged a couple of words, but that was it for that interaction---

CCR: Yeah but it was cause you loved Girlcrush (J's other band) and chanted at all of their shows! And I thought that was cool and wanted to be your friend....

CCR: Yeah but it was cause you loved Girlcrush (J's other band) and chanted at all of their shows! And I thought that was cool and wanted to be your friend....

JN: Then Al (fellow Brooklyn queer punk organizer and musician) volunteered me to play drums for The Homewreckers. It didn't work for like the first half hour --- I was really nervous and shit---

CCR: But then I was like "*you can feel free to Travis-barker-douche-out on those drums!*"

JN: and then I started playing and it was cool.

CCR: I also hadn't played music with other humans in a while cause we had taken a break from life.

### How did your environment fuel your creativity?

J: I don't know, I guess by becoming more cynical and jaded???

AM: I think NYC sucks all of the energy out of me, but I do also feel like NY has also lead me to so many great chance meetings. I've just had a lot of run-ins with people who I'm really glad I've met. I moved here because I had a place to stay, because I have relatives here--- but there's so much more creative momentum here than there was in Cleveland (where I was living). I can feel like people here are more motivated about their projects; everybody is doing shit and everybody is in a million bands. So that makes me feel more motivated to do lots of stuff.

J: Yeah I moved here primarily for pop-punk, to be honest.

CCR: Me too, lets get real.

J: I agree there is a lot of creative people here, and more of a hustle to make money and doing your art. So there's more motivation to work hard at it, because you also have to pay all this rent to be here.

CCR: I love that you have to be obsessed with it to make it work. So I'm really obsessed, I've been here for 11 years. I love that everyone is doing so much rad stuff, and I love that there is so many different communities of art and music, within and outside of punk. For me, the access to different punk communities and music, especially Latino punk scenes, is really important to fuel my creativity. One thing that sucks is a lot of all-ages venues shut down--- there's a venue now called Silent Barn. Its basically the only place we play shows. I'm down for a 21+ show at bars that have good vibes; but its just nice to make punk accessible to young people.

AM: Yeah its hard to find them... They're out there though, I like Palisades.

CCR: Yeah there's also a lot of history here, with punk and queer communities co-existing, and you're not going to constantly see that unless you're living in it, but when it happens its really amazing, and hopefully accessible. We just played with In School (NYC based all queer women of color Hardcore) and Swarm (Philadelphia based dance/percussion/performance collective) and the energy these different kinds of performances created was really special and rare.

J: Yeah I'm not that jaded about Brooklyn. This is the first place where I've found people like myself who are both queer and punk (not to discredit that they definitely exist elsewhere).

JN: Well, NY makes you hungry. Its so dense with people, so you have to find your home. Finding the queer punk community, and a punk house to live in, really helped me. It feels good to be able to get out of bed, go to a show, not talk to anyone there, and still feel safe. Playing music here is also especially sweet because you know you only have a certain amount of time to devote to that, when you're working 40 hours a week. It just matters more when you get to play your music.

## How would you describe your power (collectively)? Where does it come from? How does it replenish itself?

AM: It feels good to be playing with other queer people of color. It was a lot harder to make those connections in Ohio. That energizes me- I'm not sure if that's the same thing as power? It feels good.

CCR: True. And we don't have to explain ourselves when we're introducing a song, or even talking to one another of stuff that pisses us off throughout the day. It's really hard for me to commit to a project where I feel tokenized or invisible. It sucks to explain why something is important.

AM: Yeah, like why it's important to play a certain show or support a certain benefit.

CCR: And how do we describe our collective power? IT'S A PEGASUS. It's a neon Pegasus.

AM: With fangs.

CCR: But it poops floral.

AM: How does it replenish itself?

CCR: DUH With CRYSTALS.

JN: And Pot.

CCR: and a hot bath.

AM: And also gnawing on bones.

CCR: In the jungle and coastal areas.

## Do you face objectification as an all-girl [queer] band? If so, can you tell us some examples? Do you know others who have? How did you hide the bodies of those who did the objectifying? (tongue-in-cheek of course)

AM: We were actually not an all-girl band. So before we talk about this question, we wanna communicate that mis-gendering people or assuming people's genders is a really big problem....

CCR: all queer, and 75% girl-identified, yes, but all of our genders are important and the experience of being queer or trans is just as vital as that of being a woman [and in our case, women of color].

AM: However, I do have run ins with general disrespect due to the way that I look. When we played Punk Island, I run into these 2 dudes when we were looking for the entrance; one of them asks "What brings you here" so I respond "I'm playing" [I have a guitar on my back]. He was like "Really?? You're playing??" So I asked why he sounded so surprised. He tried to cover it up by mentioning how I was arriving so late in the day.

CCR: Which is also annoying cause we're headlining, muthafuckaaaaas.

AM: Yeah and I think the sexism in punk kept me from making the music I wanted to make for a really long time. When I was young, I remember feeling like the best I could do was be some rock guy's girlfriend. It took a long time to get over that, but now I'm over it! And that feels good.

CCR: Sometimes I don't even call it objectification, I call it rude douchebaggery. And there's different levels of this: some shows have a feminist agenda, or some are apolitical drunk parties and maybe there's a scary dude in the corner. In those environments I'm expected to be a certain way; so dudes get all "Man why do you dress like that [femme, booty shorts, cleavage, etc.] and sing about the government and your feelings, what a bummer"--- Its like, "we liked when you were this hot girl we could objectify, but now that you have this feminist agenda, what do we do?" At the same time, in feminist punk spaces that aren't incredibly queer, I've been demeaned in other ways; as if people are disappointed that I'm wearing makeup, for shaving my legs, for wearing high cleavage [and high heels]. Its a totally white-washed way of observing "feminism". Something I appreciate from the queer punk community that I'm a part of here now, were all trying to survive. If showing our tits make us feel good that day, then great. If wearing a button-up shirt makes us feel good, then great, work. Its not like navigating feminist spaces that are predominantly straight and white.... Its funny, because in punk spaces that are predominantly people of color [in cities like LA and Miami] femme visibility wasn't as demonized. I remember going to a show in Long Beach and women were in high heels and amazing hair do's and that is the kind of feminism I participate in. BUT.... that's a whole other conversation about white feminism.....Speaking of which, since oppression is relative, there's that next level of being objectified as people of color, or sensationalized as trans people or depressed people, then it all goes beyond identifying as a *girl*, or being assigned one at birth.

...so dudes get all “Man why do you dress like that [femme, booty shorts, cleavage, etc.] and sing about the government and your feelings, what a bummer”--- Its like, “we liked when you were this hot girl we could objectify, but now that you have this feminist agenda, what do we do?” At the same time, in feminist punk spaces that aren’t incredibly queer, I’ve been demeaned in other ways; as if people are disappointed that I’m wearing makeup, for shaving my legs, for wearing high cleavage [and high heels]. Its a totally white-washed way of observing “feminism”. Something I appreciate from the queer punk community that I’m a part of here now, were all trying to survive. If showing our tits make us feel good that day, then great. If wearing a button-up shirt makes us feel good, then great, work. Its not like navigating feminist spaces that are predominantly straight and white.... Its funny, because in punk spaces that are predominantly people of color [in cities like LA and Miami] femme visibility wasn’t as demonized. I remember going to a show in Long Beach and women were in high heels and amazing hair do’s and that is the kind of feminism I participate in. BUT.... that’s a whole other conversation about white feminism.....Speaking of which, since oppression is relative, there’s that next level of being objectified as people of color, or sensationalized as trans people or depressed people, then it all goes beyond identifying as a *girl*, or being assigned one at birth.

AM: As far as feeling like an object, I always encounter men who suggest that my value on stage is based on how I look--- like “people are gonna enjoy watching you cause your cute” – ignoring the fact that I’m performing my music. Like this dude at Guitar Center insisted on watching me while I was trying out gear. I asked him to leave, but he said he was helping me build my confidence. At that point, I was like “I am practicing by myself right now” I actually don’t have a shortage of confidence.

CCR: I want my fashion and expression (that I might have worked really hard to put together) to be something I can enjoy, mutually with other people, but not at the expense of the integrity of my music.

**What advice would you give to a girl too sheltered, brainwashed, afraid and insecure to compete against boys in rock? Who and what made each of you fearless to go after this and take on this male-dominated industry?**

J: I don’t identify as fearless.... However, I think rockcamp really helped me as a kid; I would record a lot of songs on my own and not share them with anybody. RC helped me figure out that I'm awesome. I know I have to make my music, but it takes a lot to be able to share it with other people.

CCR: FYI this goes for girls, queers, and musicians on the margins of white male dominance... basically.

AM: I started with folk music, and acoustic. I met my friend Fiona [my bandmate in my other band, Cutting Room Floor]. We were folk musicians who really wanted to start a punk band, but were intimidated and didn’t really know what to do. It was really great to have someone else who was on the same page as me, and not feel so alone in that.

J: I feel that way about Cristy!

CCR: [tears]

J: Yeah, when we both started playing music, you were in a similar place of not wanting to play guitar. It was easier to not worry about fucking up when you are all figuring it out together. It was stressful to play, at that time, with other boys, and feel pressure to constantly do it right. You shouldn’t have to feel that pressure to play punk music.

CCR: I feel the same- it felt good to figure it out together because although we sucked, we knew how deeply devoted we were to pop-punk; but also to the model of punk that didn't follow strict rules around what it means to harmonize, or what women vocalists should look and sound like (like bands such as Crimpshrine and Ambition Mission). Pop punk was just always what I wanted to do; and a lot of my heroes were definitely straight guys; so when I would discover women or queers playing pop-punk music, I would definitely feel closer to the dream. Cinder Block from Tilt was the first woman who I saw perform the kind of pop punk that I deeply love. I also loved Ambition Mission (whose frontperson Annie went on to start This is My Fist), Drunken Boat, Allergic to Bullshit. Pansy Division also deeply affected me, being queer men with an overt queer agenda. I was like... how does this even happen? And they toured with Green Day! (\*note to readers, CCR and J are historically obsessed with Green Day. Cristy's name is actually a Green Day song title. Etc.) Seeing these bands exist made me feel like I could probably do this. It took a long time for me to even start playing music with J, but I remember this era that really motivated the creation of the Homewreckers. There was all these bands playing around town: The Measure, Cheeky, Zombie Dogs, Carnal Knowledge. All amazing queer women and women of color playing seriously amazing music that was so perfect and meticulous. After a point, I started developing new definitions for safety in punk. Sometimes a women's space wasn't the answer, as my community included people of all genders. Sometimes I've been in women's punk spaces that are incredibly white. I'm really excited about a lot of bands who are playing now—Downtown Boys, Aye Nako, Penguin, Skarroñeros, In School, Bitchtits.

JN: When I saw People Watchin', and I heard Sadie Switchblade introduce a song and say "This is about getting called a faggot and wanting to kill the person who called you that" and then immediately began shredding--- it drove me to want to play music more, especially with queer musicians. That really mattered.

CCR: Yeah People Watchin' played that crusty pop sub genre of punk that I love... which was actually not inherited by straight guys.

J: My advice for the kids is to share your songs even if you don't think they're any good. Because sometimes, believing that they're good comes way later on.

AM: My advice, in terms of girls or queers approaching an industry that doesn't always value us--- all those , things that you think straight men know, they don't actually know more than you. I remember feeling like they all inherently knew more about music always; like it was this thing I had no access to. My advice would be that, just because they act like they know more, it doesn't mean that they do. Whatever you know is enough. The more you make music, the more knowledge you gain, so don't be afraid to look uncool because your progress is unique.

JN: When you're approaching the straight boys club, and you're neither of those, its always better if you don't go alone, I think. If you can, even if its just one other kid in your town, because they don't take us seriously. Sometimes having one friend support you in your creative endeavors is enough to feel strong.

CCR: So, I make visual art, so its been easy to connect with people over this one thing that is very focused on a certain ideology (queer, Latina, feminist). The music we play is way more universal, people might be solely into our sound or lyrics or politics; so the fact that people claim it for all these distinct reasons could lead you to situations that feel really isolating or unsafe or unseen. So this feeling of having bandmates can really make everything feel less isolating. I think its really important to allow yourself to feel powerful from your band; without letting the larger community throw you off.

**What has been the best concert you've ever played? And the worst? What did it teach you?**

CCR: Our first show since our long break was with the amazing Downtown Boys—they address so much about race, and gender, and class, and immigration, and their shows become these incredibly amped dance parties full of queer people of color yelling. We were so honored to get to play their record release show with In School (NYC all women of color hardcore) a few months ago. We played first, but everyone showed up on time.

J: Yeah it was really great to play to so many people after being on hiatus for so long. My other favorite show was when we played Tijuana, Mexico, it was our first time out of the country, Cristy got to introduce all the songs in Spanish (which she mostly just gets to speak at her moms house). I guess the most awkward show was this weird punk show in Brooklyn--- there was really intense skinheads there. They were probably SHARPS (Skinheads against racial prejudice) but the vibe was so serious that it made us feel awkward about introducing songs, like “we don’t wanna lick your balls tonight” --- but afterwards all these women came up to us and were so excited to have seen us, so that made everything ok.

CCR: I remember the skinhead show. People weren't pogo'ing or skanking, that's for sure! I grew up in the ska and Oi scene in Miami, FL, so I don't want to exclude myself from those communities, as a lot of bands [especially in places like Miami and NYC) have political agendas that I want to be a part of, whether its singing about racism or class. But the same goes for now as it did in high school: if we cant talk shit about the hetero-patriarchy at your show, we probably don't want to be there..... And yes, I loved that TJ show. It was so special to be in a Spanish-speaking country with such a rad punk community. We played with Parche De Ira. Also--- there was this show we played in Philly in 2010. We had never played there, so people had never really heard us. We had only been a band for about 2 years; but people still managed to dance the fuck up and jump on us! It was a super packed basement and reminded me of seeing Against Me! and This Bike Is a Pipe bomb in a basement in 2001. Best feeling ever. .... Anameili just set up a show that felt similarly. With her acoustic project and Jamie's folk punk band, Possum.

AM: Yeah, It was the first house show I set up in the city so it felt really magical. It had this band FOSTER PARENTS, who feature this young queer kid, so I want to support their music. I think my favorite thing was singing unamplified- I haven't in a long time with just my voice and no microphone--- I can actually hear the nuance of the sound my voice makes. The mic kills a lot of that nuance--- being there, surrounded by people, it reminded me of the first punk show I had ever been too. That was an acoustic house show with a punk duo-- that energy is what made me start loving punk. That feeling of being enveloped by a group of people, most of whom I thought were rad, getting back to basics and standing there, with just your voice.

JN: That was a great show.... really rad energy. I used to just play acoustic guitar and scream a lot at parties, people would be like “oh look, Jamie is playing a show over there” --- that used to happen a lot. People were just like, *oh , ok this is happening*, so they would walk over with their beers.... This show had the same feeling and I liked that. Probably the worst show I've ever played was a show I booked when I was 14, I ended up \$40 in the hole because the promoters swindled me --- it was this whole shit.

AM: When I think of the worst show, I think of this show Cutting Room Floor played in Erie Pennsylvania, our drummer Alyssa's least favorite place on earth; but we always end up there. The show it self was with a lot of bands who had high school boys singing misogynistic songs and/or doing Blink 182 covers. There was hardly any women there, and we were all just really mad. We played a raging set, it was the worst show environment, but we played a great set, because we were all so enraged. So we played all the hard screamy songs and went for it.

CCR: We should do Blink 182 covers. Also--- what I learned from all this is to straight up not play with bands where we have to silence ourselves for. If people need to debate our stance on anything, they should go to another show.

## What's next for your band?

J: We've got a bunch of shows, were putting out a record.

CCR: OMG We are putting out this record titled 'I STATEMENTS' that we recorded about 2 years ago? I don't know, the last 4 years feel like a big blob. We've had a lineup change since then, and we were actually a 3 piece when we recorded. I'm really stoked to be releasing these songs, some of which we wrote a long time ago; although I'm equally stoked to have this new lineup, and new cool things happening to all of the songs when we play them live. It took long because mixing took a minute, then waiting to see how we would get it mastered took another minute. We worked with friends for the whole project. Jade Payne who plays in Aye Nako and is an amazing sound engineer mastered it, so that was cool. Mike Krechner who recorded us usually works with metal bands, so that was really exciting for me. I was like "YES GURL MAKE IT THICK." After that happened, we started working with Mooster Records from Chicago, (who put out our last split 7" with City Mouse and a lot of pop-punk) and also Nervous Nelly who are a queer punk label from Nashville, who are about to release the G.L.O.S.S. EP! So the whole vinyl pressing process has also taken a lot of time.

J: But its coming out in August, on a really nice day. Lots of sunshine. It's gonna be great, there's a lot of art by Cristy Road.

AM: Its weird for me cause I'm not even on it, so even though im eagerly waiting its release, I've listened to it 100 times to learn all the songs!

J: Our record release show is August 28<sup>th</sup> at Silent Barn.

CCR: With a lot of my favorite Latinx fronted local punk bands: Skarroñeros, Ratas En Zelo, and Heavy Negatives..... Also, were gonna play the warped tour August 1998. It's gonna be a special time warped tour where we launch space pods to play in 1998 with Rancid.

## Any Last words??

CCR: If you wanna play in a punk band and you end up making a living off it [you know, like Against Me]- Congrats! That is tight! However, if you wanna play in a punk band IN ORDER to make money..... please consider TV theme songs, they could sound so punk and you don't have to do that whole life's blood passion & DIY integrity thing that requires a lil' side part time job and the greatest self-sacrifice for art that you may never know.

JN: Yes. And on another note--- sometimes your language is problematic and if you need a lesson on how to improve it, you can email me at [jamienieves92@gmail.com](mailto:jamienieves92@gmail.com).

AM: .....we can use this time to educate people if you want?

JN: Nah, they can email me.

# Materials & Methods:

## Scientific Studies

### **I See White People (Part 1)** **by Rhiannon Mulligan**



Photo from: pixabay.com

**While living in California I find myself ignorant of the current segregation that still continues across the U.S.A today. I remember seeing images on the television of young groups of cheerleaders at some festival in the south. The cheerleaders were neatly distributed in groups of people with dark skin or light skin. You can physically see the distribution of people separated like water and oil.**

**However, as I said I live in California. It is easy for photographers to compose a picture to tell a specific story. Pictures are worth 1000 words, but that does not mean that I am seeing the whole story. Therefore I decided to do a quick and dirty study to see if there is real segregation in the USA today.**

**Theoretically segregation has been eliminated as far as the law is concerned. The Civil Rights Act of 1875 prohibited racial segregation in public areas HOWEVER it did not prevent segregation in schools. Next Plessy v. Ferguson 163, U.S. 537 (1896) sought to increase segregation. This was coined the 'separate but equal' act. Finally there was Brown v. Board of Education 347 U.S. 483 (1954).. yes, 1954. This was the break through ruling eliminating (at least on paper) segregation in the U.S.A.**

**In order to test segregation in the USA I used data from the United States Census Department. (<http://www.census.gov/popfinder/>) I picked the states using a random generator ([www.random.org](http://www.random.org)). After picking the states I would look up the number of counties in the state and randomly select a county. From there I would search the information on the census site for 'white' and 'black' people. After gathering the data I ran a two-tailed T-test to test if there is a significant difference between the population means. My null hypothesis is that there is no significant difference between black and white human populations in the United States. The T-test gave me a p-value of 0. I used an alpha of 0.05. Due to my p-value being smaller than the alpha I must reject my null hypothesis. Therefore there is a significant difference between black and white human populations in the United States.**

**One thing I noticed when I was observing my data is there is a huge difference in sheer numbers of "white people." Part of the reason why it looks like there is so much segregation could be because there are still way more white people to go around. Eventually I would like to analyze immigration numbers in the U.S.A. I would also like to look at segregation in cities since that is a smaller scale of people, so maybe I will notice more diversity that way.**

# [The Revolutionary Report](#)



Interview with M.C. McGrath, Founder & Director of Transparency Toolkit, a Non-profit organization composed of activists and open-source coders, who “Watch the watchers” - monitoring and exposing global-surveillance and human rights abuses, advocating for internet privacy for all.

McGrath is a graduate of Boston University, Boston University Academy, a [Thiel Fellow](#), [Echoing Green](#) Fellow, a researcher in the [M.I.T. Media Lab](#), a participant in [Google’s Summer of Code](#) and member of hackerspace organization, known as “[Builds](#)”.

<https://transparencytoolkit.org>

Interview by Meggy-Kate Gutermuth

**What motivated the three of you to unite and create your organization, Transparency Toolkit? Can you tell us about your projects, IC Watch and the Snowden Doc[ument] Search? How can citizens around the world use this information you’ve provided in their daily lives?**

Transparency Toolkit uses open data and free software to watch the watchers. People and institutions openly release immense amounts of non-obvious information about themselves – job listings, resumes, social media, contracts, etc. This data is great for uncovering new information about surveillance and human rights abuses, but it is often underused because it is difficult to collect and analyze.

So we started making tools to automate the collection process and help with analysis. Where needed, we also use these tools to make other sets of documents (like those disclosed by whistleblowers or released by governments) more accessible.

ICWatch (<https://icwatch.transparencytoolkit.org/>) is a database of over 27,000 LinkedIn profiles of people in the intelligence community. Many of these people are posting openly about their work on secret programs, saying things like “I know how to use xkeyscore and Microsoft Word” in their job descriptions. We searched for the names of surveillance programs and related terms, then released a database of the results. ICWatch includes people intercepting our communications, making extrajudicial kill and capture lists for the US Military, and interrogating people in Guantanamo.

The Snowden Document Search (<https://search.edwardsnowden.com/>) is a searchable database of all the published Snowden documents. It can be used to search the full text of the documents and also browse by information extracted from the document- countries mentioned, classification level, code-words, etc.

We have a few goals with our projects. In the near future, we are using these methods and tools to help investigative journalists and human rights lawyers with their research. Longer term, we hope to use open data as an independent, external check on power. This is data anyone can access and it isn’t carefully curated or controlled by governments, companies, people working on surveillance programs, or even whistleblowers. In a way, it’s metadata about all the operations of institutions. With open data, anyone can use these methods investigate the operation of governments and companies without waiting for others to release documents.

**In a recent interview with Wikileaks founder and activist Julian Assange, he noted your organization has been under threat many times by the American government. Can you explain to us and our readers the legal attempts to silence you and what motivates each of you to continue moving forward? Can you also tell us about your relationship to Wikileaks?**

All of the threats so far have been from angry individuals. Many of the people listed in ICWatch have contacted us asking for their information to be removed. Some of these requests are quite courteous, but we have also received more menacing responses, like legal threats, angry phone calls, and death threats. In light of these threats, WikiLeaks agreed to host ICWatch. This disincentivizes people from going after us as we actually cannot take the data down.

That said, it is quite absurd that people are upset about us simply republishing information they deliberately posted online (and in a very public manner) themselves. Due to the already-public nature of this data, we aren't particularly worried about continuing this work.

**There are those out there who may easily write you and many colleagues and this "NSA business" off as conspiracy theorists and denounce its realities and implications. How do you respond to critics of this global intelligence revelation movement?**

After the Snowden revelations, I have encountered very few people who totally discount people concerned about surveillance as conspiracy theorists. More often, I encounter people who are overwhelmed and think they can't do anything to stop surveillance. Or who think it isn't worth trying to stop because they have "nothing to hide".

It's easy to be overwhelmed in this situation. Surveillance is pervasive. The NSA is massive. The details about the programs themselves are quite technical. Most people seem to think mass surveillance is something to be dealt with by Congress, the courts, or some sort of 'expert'. But these groups are not addressing the problems quickly enough or well enough.

We hope to counter this by bringing surveillance down to an individual level and putting a face on the surveillance state. We can demonstrate that the surveillance state isn't just secretive institutions, collections of codewords, and complex technical details. It is also human beings- family, friends, and neighbors. Looking at surveillance from the people involved makes it more manageable and understandable.

**Many people around the world have the incorrect presumption that Edward Snowden himself possesses the classified global security surveillance documents that are continually being released to the public when in fact he gave them to various trusted media outlets to release on their own merit. Can you explain to us this grey area and why certain media outlets were more trusted more than others with documents of this nature? Your organization in fact compiled the Snowden Doc Search. Can you explain to us how these documents impact to the everyday lives of Americans? Do you update it regularly when new documents are released?**

Yes, we will be updating the Snowden Document Search as new documents are released.

The greatest impact of the Snowden documents is to prove that mass surveillance is real and pervasive. Other people, like Binney, talked about these issues well before the Snowden revelations. But the Snowden documents showed that the problem was much, much worse than initially thought by concretely demonstrating the existence of many absurd, all-encompassing surveillance programs.

Of course, while incredibly important, the documents themselves do not change anything. It's the stories written, public debate, software created to make surveillance harder, changes to laws, and legal cases that will actually stop these surveillance programs. And while there has been a lot of progress, we aren't anywhere near done yet.

**The project that first caught my eye about your organization, which I found to be chilling in its revelations, is IC Watch. Through it anyone can search within their city, state, province or country and find the resumes of current or recent employers within the U.S. or other global government intelligence operations. How dangerous is it that people we may know or know of in our daily lives may have secretly worked for one of these intelligence projects? Has that influenced our society in any way, by those working in these circles taking jobs within our community? Some of your most common Search**

**Terms are “Ramstein SIGINT”, “SIGINT Navigator” SIGINT” and “Fort Huachua satellite”. Can you tell us what these organizations are?**

The most surprising thing is that many people aren't secretive at all about having worked on secret intelligence projects – that is why ICWatch exists. All we did was search public LinkedIn profiles for known NSA codewords (like xkeyscore), locations/departments from which people do intelligence work (lots of drone-related work occurs at Ramstein and Fort Huachua), and other industry phrases (like signals intelligence or Targeting Office of Primary Interest).

We hope to demonstrate that surveillance programs are not run by some imaginary, perfect, benevolent state, but real people. People who might be our friends and neighbors. Fallible people, who can and do make mistakes (like posting about secret programs on LinkedIn). The humanity of the people behind surveillance programs is the most dangerous thing about the surveillance state. But it is also one of the most redeeming factors. I do not believe the people working on surveillance programs are evil. I think the vast majority are good people who do not want to harm others.

Understanding the people who work in the intelligence community is crucial- institutions are made of and perpetuated by individuals. There has been great work done on revealing secret surveillance programs and pushing for the reform of institutions, but this is missing a fundamental piece of the problem. By understanding the background, views, and thought processes of people in the intelligence community, we can better figure out how to reform, and ideally deconstruct, the surveillance state.

**Can you tell us about your tools, “LookingGlass” and “Network Graph Generator”? How accurate are their results? Are the tools themselves protected and safe for the average user from tracking by global intelligence?**

LookingGlass is our search software for searching the text of documents and browsing by various categories and fields. Both ICWatch and the Snowden Document Search run on LookingGlass. Like all of our tools, it is general case and works for any structured text dataset. The network graph generator is still a prototype now, but we have been working on network visualization and analysis tools so people can look more closely at the networks of people and companies involved in the intelligence community.

We don't log, but it is always possible that our servers could be compromised (it's impossible to guarantee 100% privacy and security). Additionally, unless visitors use [Tor](#) or similar tools, intelligence agencies can still see that they are visiting ICWatch. So, just like with anything online, it is good to use Tor and take other precautions.

**For more information about Transparency Toolkit, Check out their website at <https://transparencytoolkit.org>.**

**For their project ICWatch, check out <https://icwatch.transparencytoolkit.org/>.**

**For their project Snowden Doc Search, check out <https://transparencytoolkit.org/project/snowden-doc-search/>.**



**An Interview with Photographer  
Christine Lett  
from New York, New York**



**Official Instagram**

**Interview by Lee**

**How many years have you been a photographer?**

Depends, since I started studying or since graduating - anywhere between 10-15 years.

**How did you get started?**

I became interested in photography as a little girl, inspired by my grandfather who was a photographer. I took classes throughout High School, went to a community college and got my associates degree and then transferred to the School of Visual Arts, where I received my bachelors in photography.

**What has/does influence you?**

My grandfather had been my biggest inspiration. He had a dark room in his house and he worked as a photographer. He was always taking family portraits and having all of the family placed just right, and I remember family members complaining about how long it would take him to take just one photo. Now I understand why he took his time. I have a series called 'Trees In The Night', each photo is a 30 minute exposure, my grandfather wouldn't take that long but I always thought of him as I was taking the pictures for the series.

**What are your favourite things to take pictures of?**

Trees. Each tree has their own personality.  
And surfers. Not necessarily surfing but everything to do with their culture. I love to travel and photograph new things, lots of color. When I started photographing I loved black and white and didn't want to learn color. However, I had no other choice in my school then to learn color, and when I did I loved it and wouldn't turn back. Black and white and color have their own beauties. Although nowadays everything seems to be digital, I will always prefer film medium and large format. There is a completely different feeling while taking the photograph and the final print.

Photo by: Christine Lett



### What does taking photos do for you?

It relaxes me and makes me feel closer to whatever it is I am photographing without having to use words. I'm not one for many words. I would rather hide behind the camera and get to know you. It allows me to capture nature's beauty and show someone else something beautiful although they will see it completely different than I do.



Photo by: Christine Lett



Photo by: Christine Lett

### Any advice to people wanting to pick up a camera as a possible career?

Everyone's experience with starting a career is different.. if you find it hard to make a living as a photographer you don't have to give up, you can work other jobs while working on your career as a photographer. Do it because you love it and not for the money.

# Get Us to the Geeks



Photo by: Amber Davis

“Some Like It Weird: A Look  
Inside GTSouth”  
by [Shawn Jamison](#)

In what has been thought of as a sluggish and bleak section of Montgomery’s main artery known as “The Boulevard,” one local business called [GT South Geek and Gaming Tavern](#) seeks to inject a life-saving shot of adrenaline.

Perhaps you know of this place. Perhaps you have already formed an opinion. When I’m not being a part-time agoraphobe, I strive to be the type of person who will go to any club or entertainment venue once, no matter what I think it will be like. I usually don’t expect to find a congregation of nice, approachable people willing to play a game, share a table, or chat about whatever. You should not get the foreboding vibe that you have to be a gamer or a geek to have fun at GT South. Head bartender Amber Davis assures us “GT is a bar for people who don’t go to bars” noting that prior to working there, she always felt safe in the atmosphere provided by the tavern and had never been harassed. The primary feature of the bar is an array of gaming consoles hooked up to flat screen televisions lining the walls. Any patron can play their vast collection of games on Xbox 360, Xbox One, PS3, SNES, and other systems free of charge.



Photo by: Amber Davis

Thanks to the collaboration of his creative staff, owner Mike Taylor has begun regularly throwing the types of parties that you normally have to wait until Halloween to enjoy such as Ghostbusters night, Cosplay night, and Nerf Gun night to name a few. To date, they have also been supportive of local causes such as a Human Shelter fundraiser and hosting a local stand-up comedy night.



Photo posted on GTSouth Facebook Page  
March 14, 2015

While sporting a menu full of signature cocktails themed from Star Wars to Sharknado (I personally enjoy the pineapple-based Fallout), GT aims to serve not only top shelf staples, but a few oddball selections for those who might get stage fright at the thought of having to decide what drink to order. The beer selection continues to grow not only to include the standard brews like Budweiser but also local craft beer from Back Forty, Terrapin, and Sweetwater as low as three dollars each. Furthermore, GT South has progressed in the area of serving an interesting and unexpectedly nice selection of food in the general pub-style fare. You're invited to fuel up on a Tetris Burger, pizza, fried mac-n-cheese bites, or vegetable skewers. As local late night spots go, this one finds it's niche of low-pressure and high potential for fun.

**That's all, folks!**

**Next issue: October 2015**

**Stay tuned, new website as well as video interviews launching soon!**

**For video Interviews, Check us out on [YouTube!](#)**

**Want to join our team? Want to submit something?**

**Are you a nonprofit? Want us to lead a mic to your cause?**

**Are you a whistleblower? Activist? Are you just an ordinary Joey or Jane?**

**Are you a rock band with a show, album or just a dream?**

**It literally does not matter! All of these are great reasons to contact us!**

**E-mail us at [prettyvacantzine@gmail.com](mailto:prettyvacantzine@gmail.com).**

