

UNIVERSITY INC.

(A Documentary About Corporatization
at The University of Texas- Austin)

by

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INTRODUCTION

"... revolution is afoot in higher education...and those who pay the piper (corporations and governments) will surely call the tune. The relevance of universities is on the line."

"Something plainly has to give, and the powers that be - corporations, governments, wealthy donors, and even parents - broadly know that the university must be reformed ... How can we think ... in an institution whose development tends to make thought more and more difficult, less and less necessary?"¹
David Harvey, Atlantic Monthly, 1998

"Everybody knows that the war is over,
Everybody knows the good guys lost.
Everybody knows that the ship is leaking,
Everybody knows that the captain lied."
Leonard Cohen, lyrics of "Everybody Knows"
from the CD Tower of Song

This report describes the production of my 54-minute thesis documentary video, UNIVERSITY INC. The video uses the closing of the University of Texas-Austin's repertory film program, a showcase for classic Hollywood/Foreign and independent first run cinema, as a model for interrogating the corporate ideology now guiding the university itself. This report is also an attempt to consolidate information that could not be contained within the film as reference for future filmmakers, scholars, and citizens who want to investigate the corporate structure and ideology of the University of Texas. Parts of this report will be

¹Harvey, David. "University Inc." *The Atlantic Monthly*, October, 1998.

republished on the McCOLLEGE TOUR web-site in the fall of 1999.

How has the fundamental experience of higher education changed over the last forty years? Have we exchanged educating citizens with indoctrinating consumers? What has become of student power? Have students ever really had any power at one of the most conservative, and now the largest, universities in America? And what are we going to do about it, not only students, but also staff, faculty and the citizens who subsidize public education? This report also functions as a challenge for someone to use the information contained within to fight for further change. Hopefully this report won't sit idle like so many other reports in that elephant burial ground, the fifth floor of the UT's PCL library.

PROCESS

"... we are haunted by the suspicion that the way we are is not the way we have to be. We are aware that the university should be more than a glorified trade school, that its ultimate purpose is to question the surrounding cultural and social institutions ... we ought to work not as a means of packaging products for the labor market but as a form of communication ... we ought to stimulate our students and readers to think, to criticize for themselves, to resist the established order whenever and wherever possible ... "²
Richard Pells

I stumbled across the above quote during an intense two-month research period over Christmas break of 1998-99. Here was an articulation of my own ideals about education and the role of the University in culture, an ideal that has constantly come into conflict with my experience of day to day pedagogy at UT. How little things have changed since 1976. We are still haunted by the same suspicion that something is amiss, that the actions of the university are not in line with its spoken ideals.

In the fall of 1997, the student, faculty and staff board of the Texas Union, the University of Texas' student union, announced that the Union Film Program would cease to exist at the end of the semester. The last scheduled screening would occur in December. The show was over. Reasons cited for closure included the standard rhetoric of managerial oversight: costs outweighed income, attendance

²Pells, Richard. "Firing Line." *The Daily Texan*, December 3, 1976.

had continued to drop since the early eighties, and budget constraints and downsizing now forced the board to look for "creative" ways to stretch the \$3.8 million dollars it collects from student fees for operation.

At the time, I was a projectionist for the film program and also a programmer for the Cinematexas Film Festival. An unbiased party I was not. I noted the closure with some dismay, but as student and local activists organized throughout the fall to save the theater, my mood was uplifted and I never really believed that the board would actually go through with its decision. I must note that I did not actively take part in this activism nor was I contemplating making a documentary on the situation. Throughout the fall, I was working on a script for a narrative film that I believed I would shoot in the spring of 1998 as my thesis project.

My role as activist and documentarian would not begin until that December, one week before the film program's closure. As the date loomed imminent, I checked out a VHS camcorder and began to record interviews and actions by the activists purely for posterity. I thought someone should be recording the end of this venerable 25 year old institution, and so I set out to do just that. After a few days of shooting, with over ten hours of footage on my

hands, I realized that perhaps what I was recording could be put to some use by the activists.

It was at that time that I ran into Spencer Parsons, a fellow UT graduate film student, who informed me that he had just contacted John Pierson, author of "Spike, Mike, Slackers and Dykes" and host of the Independent Film Channel's cable television show "Splitscreen". Spencer had informed Pierson of the theater's demise and suggested that footage from a planned wake on the last date of screenings should be aired on Pierson's show. I informed Spencer of the ten hours of interviews I had conducted and that was the beginning of beautiful relationship.

At this point, shooting was purely aimed at a six-minute piece for Pierson's show. The TV magazine style segment would track the semester's events leading up to closure, including: interviews with University Film Society activists Julie Dervin, Tammy Arnstein, Elizabeth Peters and Rachel Tsangari about UT's administrative stonewalling and obfuscation; interviews with film celebrities like Rick Linklater, Quentin Tarentino and Harry Knowles about formative film experiences at Union Film Program screenings; footage from a rally held in support of the theater earlier in the semester; and, the planned December wake. At this point, we were not thinking of using the closure as a paradigm to investigate larger

questions about the purpose and function of the University within broader culture. We were simply tracking what we believed was a stupid decision made by now recalcitrant administrators.

The role of Spencer and myself as documentarians from the beginning was fueled by the activist agenda of reinstating the film program. We actually believed that the airing of our piece would have some effect on the administration. Perhaps national embarrassment would cause the board to reconsider its decision or perhaps someone higher up the UT administrative food chain would reverse the edict. We were constantly challenged to stick to this agenda by the activists themselves, whom we have invited at every stage of editing to review our work. In particular, Rachel Tsangari, a graduate of the RTF film program and now an RTF lecturer, acted as our moral and ethical compass, keeping us on track during temptations to stray.

"Orson Welles, Not Taco Bells," ran on "Splitscreen" in May of 1998 and throughout the following summer. As far as we can tell, the segment had little or no effect. The program was never reinstated and we never seen any reaction to it from within the administration. So much for shame.

What the segment did do was provide us with a framework for constructing a larger piece. The segment was organized around identifying the problem, following

attempts to resolve the problem, and the problems eventual resolution. The problem was not only the closing of the film program, but also how the decision was made, the ideological criteria used by administrators to deem the program "unworthy," and the way the administration dealt with student and community activist opposition.

Stylistically, we used the formal structure of the "educational" film and grafted onto it a chorus of appropriated industrial management films from the 1950s-70s to comment upon the action. The actors in the films became personified stand-ins for UT administrative characters (Vice President of Student Affairs, Dr. Jim Vick, Union Director Andy Smith, and et. al.).

After the segment aired in May of 1998, I made the decision to retool the "Splitscreen" piece into my thesis project, UNIVERSITY INC. Instead of just expanding it, I decided to come up with an entirely new structure based on the flow of the whole academic year, dividing the film into three major sections (Fall, Winter and Spring) and then filling each section with stand alone sequences. Appendix A contains the project description from the Texas Filmmakers Production Grant that I applied to for funding in June of 1998. As one can see, the project was planned to be a mingling of personal, political, appropriative and

verite documentary stylistic strategies to arrive at some sort of general picture of the state of academia.

Through the course of editing, most of the personal elements were dropped, except the framing device of my mother and her experience as a student at Kent State University in the 1950s. In most cases, although sufficient as stand alone pieces, these personal segments interrupted the steady march forward of the narrative, and in several cases, turned attention away from the film program narcissistically onto myself as director. I spoke before of temptations, this being one of them I had to constantly resist. In a culture rigorously focused on exploiting the self as consumable commodity, it is difficult at times to distinguish between a tradition of self revelation and critique, framing yourself as also "part of the problem," and simple self-ego gratification. Hopefully, I avoided this trap as best as possible.

The rest of this report contains: a historical overview of UT's interaction with and containment of student activists from the 1940's through the present day, as reflected in our research and its relationship to the finished film, a budget for the film and the McCollege Tour (Appendix B) and a final analysis of what I believe are strategies that students, faculty and staff can use to fight corporatization at UT and other universities.

RESEARCH

"Did you ever have something to say and feel as if the whole side of the wall wouldn't be big enough to say it on and then sit down on the floor and try to get it on a sheet of charcoal paper - and when you had put it down look at it and try to put it into words what you have been trying to say with just marks - and then wonder what it all is anyway?"

*Georgia O'Keefe*³

At the Center for American History in the L.B.J. building on the campus of UT-Austin is an incredible archive of documents about and produced by the University of Texas itself. Vertical clipping files, photographs and internal reviews and memos trace the history of this behemoth institution from it's beginnings as one of the states first institutions of higher education to the bloated present, where over 48,000 students attend classes on a daily basis. The daunting question facing any researcher is where to begin?

Although production came first with research beginning late in the filmmaking process during Christmas vacation of 1998-99, we'll begin with research to lay the foundation of the production/investigation, supplying context. Our original research intention was to obtain facts and figures about present day budgets to support conclusions about administrative mismanagement that we discovered during production. But as with all good film research, the

³Cowart, Jack and Juan Hamilton. *Georgia O'Keefe*. Washington, D.C.: National Gallery of Art, 1987, 146.

information itself revealed new ways of understanding the problem and demanded further rethinking of the film's structure.

What our research revealed was a past replete with UT administrative abuse of students, staff and faculty. It would now be apparent that UNIVERSITY INC. would have to contain concise highlights from paradigmatic moments in the past that helped to define and shape the current relationship between students and the administration if the whole truth about the Union Film Program's demise was to be revealed. These highlights include: the Rainey Affair of 1944, Frank Erwin's tenure as member and chairman of the UT Board of Regents from 1962-1974, the Waller Creek Showdown of 1969, the privatization of the Texas Union Food Services in 1990s, and the redesign of the West Mall in the 1970s. What follows is a discussion and analysis of the research done into each one, including contextualization of how they work paradigmatically in relationship to the closing of the Film Program.

The Rainey Affair

"Debate over who runs institutions of higher learning is 'one of a handful of cosmic riddles that have befuddled the mind of man ... since Socrates. Although our contemporary hemlock involves things like salary cuts, denial of tenure and presidential firings, and although contemporary accusers are not named Anytus, Lycon and Meletus, the groups they represent are essentially the same..."

*Texas State Representative Ronnie Earle.*⁴

In 1944, then UT president Homer Rainey was fired by the UT Board of Regents for not carrying out orders to fire several identified Socialist faculty members who were opposing the Regents on state labor law issues.⁵ As Mike Cox, former journalist for the Austin American Statesman, details in his article "Who Runs UT?," Rainey had called a meeting of the general faculty on October 12, 1994, and outlined 16 instances where "...the regents had violated principles of academic freedom."⁶ This direct challenge of the board's moral authority and legitimacy could not be tolerated for long, hence Rainey's dismissal.

What are "principles of academic freedom" and why was it dangerous that the board of regents, the stewards of any university, had violated them? Below is a brief excerpt from the "academic freedom" entry in Carry Nelson and Stephen Watt's "Academic Keywords: A Devil's Dictionary for Higher Education":

"Academic freedom is the glue that holds the university together, the principle that protects its educational mission. It is the principle that guarantees faculty members the right to speak and write as they please without interference from the university, the state, or the public. It is the principle that gives both students and faculty in the

⁴Cox, Mike. "Who Runs UT?" *Austin American Statesman*, Jan 18, 1976.

⁵Burr, Beverly. "History of Student Activism at UT (1960-1988)." Master's Thesis, University of Texas-Austin, 1988.

⁶Cox, Mike. "Who Runs UT?" *Austin American Statesman*, Jan 18, 1976.

classroom the right to say whatever they believe is pertinent to the subject at hand. It is the principle that affirms there are no limits to what subjects and issues educational institutions may study, investigate, debate, and discuss."⁷

The regents clearly violated this principle when they demanded Rainey fire professors who were clearly exercising not only their rights under the loosely defined idea of academic freedom, but also their constitutional rights of freedom of speech as citizens of the United States.

After Rainey's dismissal, 5,000 students, over half of the University of Texas-Austin's student population at the time went on strike, demanding the reinstatement of Rainey and resignation of the current board of regents. They marched from the campus to the capitol carrying a coffin "draped in black, symbolic of their belief that academic freedom was dead in Texas."⁸ Many of these students were servicemen recently returned from the war in Europe, and several carried signs linking fascism in Europe with the Regents authoritarian machinations.

The Texas state legislature formed a committee and tried to investigate the regents following the dismissal, but the regents refused to send requested witnesses for inquiry. The legislators, out of fear for the own re-elections or their lives, balked and never used the courts

⁷Nelson, Carry and Stephen Watt. *Academic Keywords: A Devil's Dictionary for Higher Education*. New York: Routledge, 1999, 22.

⁸Cox, Mike. "Who Runs UT?" *Austin American Statesman*, Jan 18, 1976.

to subpoena witnesses and force the regent's hand.⁹ In the end, three regents resigned, but whether they were for or against Rainey's dismissal, no one knows. Instead of firing the New Deal faculty members, the remaining regents denied them tenure, and they left UT shortly thereafter.

Like the long suppressed childhood trauma in a Freudian fever-dream, this incident continues to reverberate through the subconscious of UT's history and is paradigmatic of the top-down, autocratic power dynamic at work in all levels through the University's hierarchy. The agenda is set by the board, spoken by the president's voice, enacted by the deans, assimilated by the professors and taught, through both content and by example, to the students. And like the childhood trauma that is repressed, the authoritarian nature of the board's decision making process and those of its President and mid-level management employees only continues to fester and grow.

If the legislature had acted in 1944 to limit the power of the regents, acted in the interest and as the representational will of the people, perhaps things wouldn't be quite as bad as they are today at UT. Although federal legislation eventually brought about labor reform in Texas, the regents, through their stranglehold of power

⁹"TU Regents Decline Call for Witnesses" *Dallas News*, January 12, 1944.

over the state's education system, delayed this as long as possible.

Most regent meetings are still conducted as closed-door sessions, private business meetings under state law, and are not exposed to the harsh light of critical inquiry and investigation. Under the Texas Open Meetings Acts, the regents can be briefed by UT staff members in private, as long as no deliberation takes place. No state agency currently polices these private briefings. This was questioned recently by Mary Ann Roser, a reporter for the Austin American Statesman, in her article "UT Regents Keep Debate Out of Public Eye." She asked Art Dilly, executive secretary of the board, exactly when deliberations and discussion take place. He responded by saying, "That's a tough one." With only four scheduled public meetings a year, the board's various committees meet in private briefings over 20 times a year. God only knows what is discussed or debated, since no public record is kept. When the regents do appear in public, it's normally only to announce unanimous decisions. An executive committee can convene during emergencies and make decisions for the entire board, again without public record or question. Secret meetings where policy is decided for over 100,000

state citizens and millions of dollars are up for grab does not bode well for democracy in Texas.¹⁰

Perhaps the most damaging precedent set by the Rainey affair was that regents could place their personal business interest before the humanitarian interests of the community who finance, through taxation, the university. The governor appoints regents in Texas for six-year terms. There is no clear procedure for their removal from power. Their decisions have the power of statutes under state law.¹¹ In effect, they are a parallel legislative body to the state legislature, commanding the citizens of the state's public university system without fear of interference. Conceivably, the legislature, who appropriates money to state universities' operating budgets, could force regents to resign by threatening to de-fund the university, but this has yet to happen.

UT Board of Regents

"No republic can long endure unless it is fully supported by a well-informed public. That is why open government is the very core of our Texas democracy. It is natural and fundamental that public business be conducted in the clear light of day."
*Dan Morales, Former Texas Attorney General*¹²

¹⁰ Roser, Mary Ann. "UT Regents keep debate out of public eye." *Austin American Statesman*, August 25, 1996.

¹¹ "UT Powers Delegated to Regents." *The Daily Texan*, September 27, 1974.

¹² Roser, Mary Ann. "UT Regents keep debate out of public eye." *Austin American Statesman*, August 25, 1996.

Who are the men and women that sit on UT's board of regents? According to an internal memo drafted by the office of the board of regents at UT in 1999, the appointment of 206 regents since 1908 breaks down as follows: 23 bankers, 32 oil/lumber/cattleman, 80 lawyer/judge/legislators, 25 doctor/dentist/pharmacists, 25 businessmen, 5 educators and no students. Currently, "eighty percent are men. Seventy-one percent are white. Almost all are busy professionals, and most have at least one degree from the University of Texas."¹³

They are what Marx would call the bourgeois, those either in control of the means of production for industry or industry's servants, including CEOs and lawyers for major state, national and international corporations. And as members of the bourgeois, it is only logical to assume that their interest in serving on the board of regents at the state's largest public university would tie into and overlap with their business interests.

It is useful at this point to look at the university's own stated hierarchical arrangement, from the Revised Sections of the Rules of the Board of Regents, before we talk about the role the regents play in the socialization of capital:

¹³Roser, Mary. "Regent hopefuls mostly male." *Austin-American Statesman*, February 15, 1999.

"ARTICLE II: Officers of Administration:
Section 1: The President of the University shall be the expert adviser and responsible agent of the Board of Regents and the chief executive of the University ... all other officers, teachers and employees shall be responsible to and under the directions of the president. He shall keep in sympathetic touch with the students...and shall personally and in cooperation with other officers and teachers help them to become loyal, useful and efficient citizens."

The Board then sits on the top of a hierarchy that is commissioned to make students "loyal, useful and efficient citizens." Loyal to whom, though? To the university? To the nation-state?

Bill Readings, in the introduction to his book "The University in Ruins," states that the University is "no longer linked to the destiny of the nation-state by virtue of its role as producer, protector, and inculcator of an idea of national culture. The process of economic globalization brings with it the relative decline of the nation-state as the prime instance of the reproduction of capital around the world."¹⁴ If the University then is no longer necessary for the production of "loyal, useful and efficient citizens" for the business of the state, it is necessary for the production of workers for the business of transnational corporations. The board, well-versed in the ideology of business, tied no longer to the needs of

¹⁴ Readings, Bill. *The University in Ruins*. Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1996, 5.

maintaining national standards of culture, will determine the efficiency of each department and program more and more by its relationship to the production of capital rather than the production of culture.

The Rainey affair pre-sages this shift. In Texas, the site of so much brazen robber-baron capitalism from cattle ranching through the late days of the industrial revolution with the oil boom of the 1930s-1970s, the inoculation of culture has never produced any lasting check to the free reign of capitalism. As an anti-union, right-to-work state, the power of collective bargaining and other rights taken for granted by workers in the NorthEast and Mid-West never reached the South. In fact, the worst violator of worker's rights is the state of Texas itself, which legally forbids state worker's from striking, the only effective threat workers have to check the power of employers.

The Rainey Affair was essentially revisited in 1974 when Chancellor Charles LeMaistre fired then UT president Stephen Spurr without public reason. The regents did not question LeMaistre's actions and were rumored to be behind the firing. Time magazine called the firing a "bushwhacking" and CBS national news ran a story.¹⁵ A.G.

¹⁵Fly, Richard "Dear Parents: Do you know where your children are?" *The Daily Texan*, November 2, 1974.

McNeese, chairman of the regents and at the time head of the huge Bank of the Southwest in Houston, said:

"I don't think the public has the right to know [the reasons for Spurr's dismissal] because they're in no position to evaluate,' those reasons. 'There's not a particle of difference,' McNeese said, between the regents and the board of a private corporation. In his view, the regents 'are not answerable to anyone for policy decisions. The format is the same as a corporation - the board makes policy - and does not mix into administrative decisions.'"¹⁶

Although the Spurr firing was ripe for use within the film to illustrate the undemocratic rule of the board, and by analogy the undemocratic nature of corporations, the Spurr firing itself was not directly related to the corporate interests of the board like the Rainey firing. Rumor had it that the regents dismissed Spurr for "failing to invite the right people to pre-football game parties."¹⁷ A report released by the chancellor cited "Spurr's opposition to building projects supported by the regents ... [,] refusal to relieve a top administrator from his post, funding squabbles over the Humanities Research Center and the president's opposition to a new regental policy on campus speakers." Basically, Spurr refused to carry out all the orders directed for him to carry out from the top. Again, the legislature refused to do its part and

¹⁶Dugger, Ronnie. "The 40 Acres Massacre" *Texas Observer*, October 20, 1974.

¹⁷Ashby, Lynn. "The Whys of Texas" *The Houston Post*, September 9, 1974.

investigate the firing, house speaker Price Daniel Jr. deciding instead to read a statement essentially asserting the legislature had the right to investigate if they wanted to. In this case, they didn't want to.

Again, it can be assumed that the power of the regents, particularly their money, casts a long shadow. Also, former president Lyndon Johnson's best friend, Frank Erwin, sat on the board. One can only imagine the political cache this friendship had in silencing dissent. In the end, although dramatic, the Spurr firing was eliminated from the film because the Rainey Affair contained not only a clear picture of the regent's authoritarian rule, but also a clear correlation between their capitalist agenda as CEOs and their role as indoctrinators and censors of cultural ideology as regents.

The Rainey Affair is related to the story of the closing of the film program in that it set a precedent for how the UT administration would make decisions and deal with dissent for the next fifty years. Because the board of regents decides all policy for the university, because the board's agenda is ruled by its interests in creating loyal workers for its industries, because the power of the board has never been checked by the people through the legislature, it should come as no surprise that lesser administrative entities within the hierarchy of the

university, like the Texas Union Board, should act in a similar autocratic fashion with a similar ideological agenda and frame of mind. As with any bureaucratic entity, the way the leaders act and make decisions filters down through the entire organization, becoming the organizations *raison d'être*.

Although union film program activists only followed the program closure decision up to UT Vice President of Student Affairs, Dr. Jim Vick, our research indicates that any attempt at reaching upper levels of power within the university with appeals of maintaining culture would have been met with similar resistance. Spencer and I reworked the route the activists followed in the fall in the second half of the film, going further by pursuing an interview with incoming president Larry Faulkner and researching how to gain an audience with the regents. Since the final film structure represents not only the actual flow of the academic year but also an investigation up the hierarchical ladder of the university organization, it made sense to place the Rainey affair at the end of the film. It serves as the film's climax, the excavated past that mirrors the present.

Because Spencer and I never did gain an audience with the regents, due to time limitations and also out of a feeling of powerlessness when confronted with our own

research, the Rainey affair serves as a paradigmatic example of regent accountability and ideological allegiance. Along with the Waller Creek Showdown story, it presents for future student activists at UT a history they normally have to discover over and over, on an issue by issue basis as they organize and work within the bureaucratic structure. With the breakdown of regent professions in another section of the film, the Rainey Affair explicitly lays bare the corporate agenda at work underneath the rhetorical surface university.

For those of us who believe in humanism, capitalism is constantly at odds with uplifting and sanctifying the value of human life. Capitalism's basis of value is capital alone and the corporation is the location and propagator of that capital. The project of the university for the last one-hundred years has been in many cases in identifying systems of value outside of and in opposition to capital, and also in identifying the threat of capitalism to these other value systems.

With the collapse of the nation-state into the corporation, and the victory of corporate ideology within the university, how will humanism as a way of understanding and valuing the world survive? How will students, faculty and staff-members have agency and power to determine their own course of action and make the university accountable to

their ideals. Only with change at the top. The regents and the administration get upset when students radicalize and protest, but this disruption is the only avenue available for accountability until the composition of the board changes. Right now, there is "no legitimate avenue of communication between the regents and the students through the system."¹⁸ Disruption is the only option until this change occurs.

Frank Erwin

"We don't fund anything we don't control!"
*Frank Erwin*¹⁹

Never a truer word was spoken. During his twelve-year term as regent member from 1962 to 1974, some of the most devastating blows to student power occurred at UT. Unlike the University of Wisconsin-Madison or the University of California-Berkeley, students at UT never gained enough power to create lasting organizations to check the power of the regents. The effects of this is still being felt today in decisions such as the closing of the film program and lack of administrative channels for redress.

During Erwin's reign the regents: fired the Arts and Sciences Dean John R. Silber for challenging regent authority; illegally financed the building of the \$1

¹⁸Hays, Susan "In Search of a Voice at the Top" *UTMOST*, March, 1989.

¹⁹"Ex-Regent Frank Erwin Dies." *The Daily Texan*, October 3, 1980.

million dollar Bauer house for the University System Chancellor; approved a \$60 million dollar construction program; appointed to their ranks members such as Walter G. Sterling, former member of the John Birch Society, the Houston Committee for Sound American Education and the Association of Christian Schools, all right-wing organizations; initiated the Texas Union West remodeling project after the Kent State shootings; attempted to defund "The Daily Texan" student newspaper and UT Student Government, two organizations responsible for breaking the Bauer house story; and oversaw the university as enrollment increased by 15,000 while faculty pay scales dropped to the third lowest percentile in nation.²⁰

On sharing administrative power with students, Erwin was quoted as saying that "on matters before the Board in which students have interest, less than 10 per-cent of our time is given to those matters and students have no right to be heard because they aren't trained."²¹ What "matters" could possibly be occupying the regents ninety percent of the time? Money. Big money and making more of it for themselves and their friends through construction contracts. During the Erwin years the name of game was

²⁰Stoler, Susie. *The Cactus 1974-75*. Austin, TX: Texas Student Publications, 1975, p. 266-272.

²¹"Student Regent Bill Opposed by Chair" *The Daily Texan*, May 6, 1969.

campus construction: \$16.5 million for an addition to Welch Hall; \$4.6 million for a Printing and Press Building²²; \$6.5 million for a swimming pool²³; \$60 million for a College of Fine Arts building, a 2.5 million volume new library and a 20,000 seat special events building²⁴, eventually named the Frank Erwin Center after his death in 1980.

Erwin's contempt for students and faculty power are exemplified not only in the firing of President Spurr, but also the firing of Arts and Sciences Dean John Silber in 1970, who argued with Erwin and then Chancellor Charles LeMaistre against the splitting of the College of Arts and Sciences²⁵. Professors across campus resigned in protest. The faculty council voted for a return to faculty governance on academic issues, to which Frank responded by saying, "there is no such thing as faculty autonomy at a state university...all power comes from the top."²⁶ Later that year, Erwin made the UT Student Government Budget, a budget funded by students with fees that was previously autonomous, directly under the control of the regents.

²²*The Cactus 1974-75*. Austin, TX: Texas Student Publications, 1975, p. 272.

²³*Ibid.*, p. 269.

²⁴*The Cactus 1971-72*. Austin, TX: Texas Student Publications, 1972, p. 320.

²⁵*The Cactus 1970-71*. Austin, TX: Texas Student Publications, 1971, p. 102.

²⁶*The Cactus 1974-75*. Austin, TX: Texas Student Publications, 1975, p. 269.

Willing to wield a weapon more mighty than words, Erwin used this new power to cut the Student Government Budget in 1971 to all but minimum salaries and supplies.²⁷ Rumor has it that paper clips had to be recycled.

The paradigmatic moment chosen for UNIVERISITY INC. to represent Frank Erwin, supreme UT regent and walking paradigm, is the Waller Creek Showdown of 1969.

Waller Creek Showdown

In yet another football stadium expansion in 1969, the University decided to cut down trees along Waller Creek, a particularly scenic stretch of east campus property. Twenty seven students and faculty members, including the Dean of the School of Architecture, climbed into the trees on the appointed day of their demise, ironically also Earth Day. Erwin personally directed the bulldozing, telling the police to pluck out the protestors and "arrest all the people you have to. Once these trees are down, there won't be anything to protest."²⁸ Erwin apparently clapped his hands each time a tree fell, commenting, "I'm disturbed that a bunch of dirty nothings can disrupt the workings of a great University."²⁹

²⁷ "Erwin: No More Wild-Eyed Schemes." *The Daily Texan*, March 18, 1974.

²⁸ *The Cactus 1974-75*. Austin, TX: Texas Student Publications, 1975, p. 268.

²⁹ Burr, Beverly. "History of Student Activism at UT (1960-1988)". Master's Thesis, University of Texas, 1988.

And the trees were chopped down. Students dragged limbs to the Main Building tower and stacked them up against several entrances at a noon rally attended by an estimated crowd of 400 people. A restraining order halted bulldozing about halfway through the afternoon. For about a week, students visited the site and planted saplings. On the following Monday, the order dissolved, the saplings were torn out and the job was finished.³⁰

The main parallel between the Waller Creek Showdown and the Union Film Program demise is the willingness of administrators to make management decisions and to stick with them even when confronted with overwhelming public outcry. Part of this has to do with their faith and knowledge in the rhythms of each semester. Unlike students, administrators do not leave every four years. They gain knowledge with each year in ways to dealing with activists, and have been on campus long enough to know the institution's history and success rate with fending off attack. Every administrator knows that student activism will dwindle by the end of the semester when final exams and papers are due. If they make an unpopular decision, they just have to wait it out until the end of the semester and dissent will die down.

³⁰*The Cactus 1969-70*. Austin, TX: Texas Student Publications, 1970, p. 94.

Also, administrators know how to work students through the system to sap their energy. In the case of the Union Film Program, students appealed the Union Film Program decision first to the Union Board itself in a hastily called town meeting in September. With over five hundred students in attendance, the Board, visibly nervous, announced that nothing could be done, but suggested to students that they work with other campus organizations and draft a proposal for ways to run a new program. Tammy Arnstein and other members of the University Film Society eventually drafted this proposal after a month of fact finding. It was given in early November of 1997 to Vice President of Student Affairs, Dr. James Vick, and the Texas Union Board, including Union Director Andy Smith. The Film Society was thanked for their commendable effort then sent on their way out the door. No one from either Dr. Vick or Andy Smith's office ever bothered to get back with them about the proposal. So much for working within the system.

To bring public pressure to bare on the University, the activists held a rally in October of 1997. Speakers included such notable local film enthusiasts as film director Richard Linklater, film critic and web guru Harry Knowles, Austin Film Society Managing Director Elizabeth Peters and founder Katie Cokinos, and UT professor's Rachel Tsangari, Janet Staiger, John Downing, Paul Stekler and

Charles Ramirez-Berg. At the rally, petitions were signed and over five hundred post cards, addressed to Dr. James Vick and Andy Smith, were mailed. At the November meeting with the Film Society, Dr. Vick asked Elizabeth Peters to stop Film Society members and their friends from sending him e-mails and postcards. Instead of acknowledging that this might be an indication that the program had its campus supporters and audience, Vick instead whined about how much of his valuable time had been wasted responding to these missives.

It is the firm belief of many Film Society members that Dr. Vick, Andy Smith and other UT bureaucrats had no intention of ever reversing the decision, no matter how many viable alternatives they were presented. A successful local independent cinema, the Alamo Draft House, drafted a proposal to take over management of the Film Program in the summer of 1998, including paying for theater renovations and projector maintenance. They promised to work with students on programming and to keep ticket prices low, only making a profit off sales from a concession stand they would build. Andy Smith and the Union Board rejected their offer, stating that they were concerned about too much privatization occurring within the student building. Smith didn't worry about this in 1994 when the union allowed Wendys into the Union, effectively dismantling the Union

cafeteria. And he didn't worry about ARAMARK, a multibillion-dollar food service corporation owned by Pepsi-Co, from taking over all catering in the building the following year. I guess it was just local companies he was worried about moving into the Union.

Spencer and I believe that all of the meetings and proposal writing was just a ruse to keep the activists busy while the semester chugged along to its inevitable conclusion. Unlike Erwin, Vick and Smith are craftier villains and know when to keep their mouths shut.

The story of Waller Creek was eventually placed about two-thirds of the way through the final film, right before our interview with Dr. Vick and a segment detailing the failed attempt of the University Film Society to get two of their members elected to the Union Board in the spring of 1998. The final quote of the Waller Creek sequence that summed up not only the Erwin years, but also predicted the tenor of future UT administrations, was from a "Daily Texan" editorial in 1980 at the time of Erwin's death:

"Frank Erwin was a real luxury: a villain who could enjoy his role. Most students hated him so much that they could not see that he was only a paradigm representative of the system and not the system itself. Now that he is gone, he will be replaced by lesser villains - villains who skulk instead of swagger."³¹

³¹Schwartz, John and Mark McKinnon. "Frank Erwin V.I.P." *The Daily Texan*, October 2, 1980.

West Mall Redesign

"In the 18th century, the architect Jeremy Bentham invented the Panopticon, the most efficient prison ever, featuring an arrangement of cells in a huge circular plan. In the center of the open circle stood a guard tower with views of every prisoner in every cell. In a current sense, panopticism refers to all the social sciences - psychiatry, criminology, pedagogy, and anthropology, to name a few - which provide technical information on the body to the legal and political apparatus." "*Mark Macek, The Polemicist*³²

In the final film, most of our research information on the redesign of the West Mall came from Macek's article in the short live Austin Marxist journal "The Polemicist." I will not bother to annotate all of the information gleaned from the article. The rare exception will be annotated. The Polemicist proved an invaluable resource. It basically was the only source of investigative journalism into the affairs of UT, outside an annual article in the Austin American Statesman, in the early 1990s.

The redesign of the Union and West Mall began in June of 1971 with the building of perimeter walls along Guadalupe St. from 24th St. to 21st St. and down 21st St. past the Littlefield fountain. Official reasons for the walls included prevention of soil erosion and beautification. According to Macek, the walls were the

³²Macek, Mark. "The Politics of Campus Planning." *The Polemicist*, May, 1990, p. 3.

first salvo by the Regents to erect a "barrier to circulation on to, or out of, the campus."³³

Why build a barrier? For one, campuses were hot beds of dissent in the 1960s and 70s, not only against the Vietnam War, but also against rigid authoritarian control, as exhibited by the Board of Regents for example. The Waller Creek incident was only one of many challenges to the Board's power. Board members, and Frank Erwin in particular, perceived this challenge by students as the byproduct of outside agitation. The only way to get the kids back in line was to attempt to cut off their contact with the outside world. After the Kent State shootings in 1970, the board was taking no chances, the wall being only the first in a series of flow control measures.

Like the introduction of photo ID's the following year (1972), the wall acted to physically segregate students from non-students. The walls were expanded in 1975 along 26th St. from Whitis to Guadalupe, and up Guadalupe to 27th Street. According to Macek:

"...The walls created funnel-shaped passageways from which crowds must exit. People running to escape arrest would be forced through these narrow exits and easily apprehended. This case might seem extreme, but the consistent repetition of this funnel-like passage in all of the outdoor spaces of the UT campus is a formal indicator of the walls' defensive use as riot control."³⁴

³³Ibid., p. 7.

³⁴Ibid., p. 7.

Maybe the "riots" the board feared were more demonstrations against the board's growing power. In particular, on November 10, 1969, Chairman Frank Erwin called in the Austin Police Department and the Texas Department of Public Safety to the Chuck Wagon, a Texas Union cafeteria, to arrest a runaway teenage girl. Located near the Union Theatre and "frequented by a lively combination of students, non-students, lollygaggers, and agitators," the Chuck Wagon was a hotbed of debate and discussion on campus.³⁵ When police stormed in and demanded everyone show IDs, the crowd resisted and a sit-in occurred. When the police eventually started arresting people, a riot broke out. 22 students were arrested.

When the Union Board of Directors voted that weekend to keep the Chuck Wagon open to all people, the Board of Regents held a telephone conference and reversed the decision. Although challenged in court under the Texas Open Meetings Act, the decision held firm when the case was dropped "due to lack of cooperation from [Travis] County Attorney Ned Granger."³⁶ Union architectural segregation continued in 1974 with the elimination of most large open spaces in the building, preventing student congregation.

³⁵Ibid., p. 6.

³⁶Ibid., p. 6.

The Chuck Wagon was replaced by the new Forty Acres Dining Room, almost half the size of the Chuck Wagon and surrounded by "glass partitions, heavy lockable doors, and complex passageways which regulate circulation."³⁷ Like Bentham's prison Panopticon, the new Union policies itself.

Agitators, read activists, were further hindered from taking power on campus in a move by the Regents in December of 1969. Student Attorney Jim Boyle had defended the right of Gay Liberation students to organize on campus over the objections of the Regents. The Regents acted quickly and stripped the attorney of his power to represent any student or group "with alleged offenses against the University."³⁸ With actions such as this and the institutionalization of student IDs, students were slowly turned into objects and property of the University. Today it is unlawful for any person on UT System property to refuse to identify himself to a system representative.

The most egregious example of administrative panopticism was the redesign of the West Mall. Prior to redesign, the West Mall was the main gathering and demonstration spot, easily accessible by the general public in a large swath of grass from Guadalupe. The week following the Kent State shootings, the West Mall was the

³⁷Ibid., p. 6.

³⁸Ibid., p. 6.

site of a gathering of 20,000 protestors, the largest demonstration in UT history. Before the 1973 reconstruction, the only way to disperse crowds from the informal space was the turning on of the sprinkler system.

"Renovations" consisted of removing the grass areas and replacing them with limestone planter boxes, widening sidewalks, and adding boxes around the trees. Eight trees were planted dead center in raised boxes. An over 50% increase in pavement on the West Mall occurred during reconstruction. A Student Senate resolution named the new mall the "Frank C. Erwin Memorial Highway." Over a third of the mall, through the planting of bushes and trees, and the construction of a large fountain, was now unusable. They "subdivided the large space and thereby subdivided the crowds." Another space became architecturally policed.

The university also created "free speech zones," limiting protest and ostensibly the Constitution to spaces the size of a large basketball court. Student groups have to register with the Student Activities office in order to use the spaces, thereby providing ample warning to the administration if there is going to be any "trouble." Public gathering is not allowed on the rest of the campus, and protestors have been arrested occasionally to prove the point. Hundreds were arrested in 1986 during South African divestment rallies, and in the spring of 1999, ten students

were arrested for sitting in at the Dean of Humanities office to gain an audience with her to discuss her controversial appointment of an unpopular head to the Asian American Studies Program.³⁹

According to Marsha Herman-Betzen, executive director of the Association of College Unions International, Unions originate from the days of debates at Cambridge and Oxford, and are "places where students are safe to express themselves." She goes further by saying, "a union is a laboratory for citizenship."⁴⁰ If the Texas Union is a laboratory, then administrators are scientists and the students are lab rats running through a maze, too distracted by the possible reward of a piece of cheese (grades?) to realize they are being socialized to accept on a fundamental environmental level their own enslavement.

Union Food Services Privatization

"The Union will be a very changed place. Students will suddenly find themselves in a shopping mall ... once occupied by a full-service cafeteria, theater, recreational center, and student spaces. Students will become clients of their own student union, there for the pleasure of the storeowners who may kick out anyone not buying something. Union workers will lose their jobs and their benefits, to be replaced by part-time and temporary workers."

*David Riddle and Patrick Burkart, "Daily Texan"*⁴¹

³⁹Ibid., p. 7.

⁴⁰*Austin American Statesman*, Sept. 12, 1998. Texas Union-UT Vertical File. Center for American History. Austin.

⁴¹Riddle, David and Patrick Burkart. "Where's the Debt?!" *The Daily Texan*, date unknown. Texas Union-UT Vertical File. Center for American History, Austin.

The major struggle at the Texas Union in the 1990s continues to be over the regulation of space, this time by corporations in collusion with the university administration. A quick breakdown of the governing body of the Union is in order at this point.

Briefly, the Union Board administers the Union. The Union Board consists of the Student Association president, two elected student representatives, two student representatives appointed by the SA president, one student appointed by a committee of student board members and three faculty members appointed by the UT president. Only three of the nine voting board members are directly elected by the student body, outweighed by the three student appointments and the president's handpicked faculty members. This list doesn't include the additional eight non-voting members, including minority liaisons, a representative from the office of the dean of students and the highly influential Union director, currently Andy Smith.⁴²

Unlike the directors for a corporation, or the Board of Regents for that matter, the Union board operates only in an advisory capacity to the UT administration. The UT president and Board of Regents have the final

⁴²Barton, Chris. "The Politics of the Texas Union." *Utmost*, Summer 1991.

responsibility for all activities of the campus, including most Union policies.⁴³ The board recommends the Union's budget to the President who either approves or disapproves. This budget includes a sum of money replenished each year mainly by student fees and income from Texas Union services like the gift shop.

The decision to privatize the Union's Dining Services (UDS) was made by the Union Board, then approved by then UT President Robert Berdahl in 1994, after two student referendums on privatization failed to pass by 76% in 1990. Union Director Andy Smith claimed that privatization was the only way to relieve debt supposedly created by the inefficient Union Dining Services. Through the miracle of creative accounting, Smith claimed that the Union had accrued a \$300,000 debt. This debt demanded privatization. When asked at three public forums in the fall of 1993 to explain how and why the debt was accrued and to demonstrate the accuracy of the figures, neither Andy Smith nor any Union board member could explain how the figure emerged from the Union's books.⁴⁴

⁴³Wissinger, Anna and Glynis Smith. "Press Release" *UT News*, December 16, 1977. Texas Union-UT Vertical File. Center for American History. Austin.

⁴⁴Riddle, David and Patrick Burkart. "Where's the Debt?!" *The Daily Texan*, date unknown. Texas Union-UT Vertical File. Center for American History, Austin.

Members of a group called Students and Workers Against Privatization (SWAP) began to politicize the franchising deal in 1993. By reviewing Union Dining Services financial statements, including the Union and UT's operating budgets for fiscal year 1993, they discovered that \$590,000 - over %20 of UDS net income - was transferred yearly out of UDS budget to cover overhead costs. UDS was carrying the bulk of the expenses for the entire Union! To claim that it was not profitable was simply a ruse to hide the burden of administrative overhead, part of which included Andy Smith's \$65,000 salary in 1994.

To make the case stronger, Smith also argued that privatization was necessary according to projected 1992/93 UDS losses of \$134,000. The projected loss was blamed on foot traffic decrease in the Union due to construction of the Union Wendys, ironically allowed on campus by the Union Board that year.

Brought on by this first wave of privatization, and Smith's creative accounting, ARAMARK, a \$6.1 billion Dollar Fortune 500 corporation and subsidiary of the even larger Pepsi-Co Company, replaced UDS as manager of food services in the Union.⁴⁵ Mysteriously, shortfalls continue every year at the Union, and more services continue to be cut,

⁴⁵Erard, Michael and Polo Rodriguez, "The Existing Texas Union Already Consumes Too Many Resources" *The Daily Texan*, Oct. 22, 1997.

like the Union Film program. But building renovations and contract labor continue, including a \$300,000 renovation of Campus Computers during the summer of 1997, followed by its closure in the Spring of 1998. Good management this is not and for all enterprising "*Daily Texan*" journalists, the story is a potential gold mine for uncovering scandal and possible kickback schemes.⁴⁶

Like Frank Erwin, Andy Smith has been the target of much student hatred. In the film, we did our best to avoid out right slander and tried again to place Smith's actions in the larger context of the administration's power grid. Smith, like Erwin, is a paradigm for the way the administration operates. He is not the embodiment of the administration itself, only its unconscious servant.

⁴⁶Vega, Mark. "Firing Line: Shortfall" *The Daily Texan*, April 1, 1998.

SUGGESTIONS FOR ACTION

First and foremost, the power structure of the University has to change if it is to be truly democratic. The establishment of a student and faculty regent chair would go a long way to incorporating the true citizens of the University into the power structure. Right now we have the illusion of representation. Jerry Haddican, a UT graduate who organized one such attempt to legislate a student regent in 1989, stated the rational best in the March 1989 issue of *UTMOST*:

"It's the Ministry of Truth and they're practicing doublespeak...they'll tell you time and time again that we have access to those regent meetings. All this does is disillusion and frustrate students. That's not what the system is intended to do, certainly not by the people of the state. The University is a master at bringing up stuff when it's too late for the students to do anything about it, and they know that. It's almost an art that they've perfected. A student regent would eliminate that."⁴⁷

While maybe not totally eliminating this lack of representation, a student and faculty chair would go a long way the keeping the university body informed of Regent shenanigans, thereby providing ample time to mobilize students and faculty to action when necessary.

Second, the provision that staff briefings to the Regents be conducted in private needs to be eliminated from the Texas Open Meetings Act. The business of the state and

⁴⁷Hays, Susan. "In search of a voice at the top." *Utmost*, March 1989.

thereby its citizens needs to be conducted in the clear light of day to prevent another regent from becoming an Erwin. Large sums of taxpayer money should not be shifted around behind closed doors. The public needs to hear Regent deliberations. Like it or not, they are political appointments and they are playing with our money. At the very least we deserve the right to question them about their actions in an open forum and hold them accountable to an impeachment and removal process like any other politician.

In order for any of this to occur, students need to be empowered with the knowledge of successful resistance through solidarity. It is our job as educators and media-makers to provide them with this lost history of social action, as seen through the power of unionization and political mobilization. Too often, the accomplishments of 1960s and 70s social movements are filtered through a revisionist history of their self-destruction through radicalism. Is this not the birth right of each new generation, to evolve and go through the birthing pains of revolutionary change for the disbursement of power? If our generation turns its back on activism out of fear of reprisal or the social brainwashing of capitalist consumerism, will we not be judged harshly by history? If we truly do recognize a new globalism, can we not see that

the challenge to authoritarian power at home could aid those in Third World nations struggling against U.S. industrial colonialism and the "farming out" of industrial pollution? An attack on the system from within can weaken the organism within, helping those working for change at the site of the crisis on the surface.

Finally, constant agitation and resistance is also necessary to break the administration's stranglehold on space. Impromptu gatherings, street-theater, rallies and demonstrations, without official permit, are needed to challenge the University's power, possibly taking administration reprisal to task in the courts to gain a constitutional hearing on the legitimacy of such regulation of space. Enough committee meetings and lunches. Certain issues like regulation of space need to be slowly cultivated in the federal courts to cement any lasting change.

While exhausting and eventually maybe beyond my grasp as a director to make it fully work, UNIVERSITY INC. hopefully will serve as a model to other students to take a good look at their immediate environment for critical inquiry. Although forgotten in our age of "personal politics," politics are personal when one realizes that an affront to one student group is symptomatic of the continually affront to all students human rights.

Good luck everybody!

APPENDIX A:

1998 Texas Filmmakers Production Grant Proposal

INTRODUCTION

A film leader counts down: 6-5-4-3-2-BEEP-Focus Chart. "Please focus the projector and adjust the sound level," a mechanical voice booms. In voice-over, I say, "My name is Kyle Henry. A student for over twenty years now, I've accumulated roughly \$90,000 in debt. I was hoping to say good-bye to academia at the end of the spring semester in '98, but a series events delayed my departure..."

SEPTEMBER 1997: The White Reflective Screen

"It was the end of a horrible summer and the beginning of a horrible fall and I was going to that school, that horrible school. And I picked up the *"Daily Texan"* [UT's student paper], which I never read ... I never read that shitty paper and there it was: Texas Union Theater is closing."

Rachel Tsangari, UT film professor and filmmaker

Andy Smith, director of the Texas Union at the University of Texas-Austin, announces the axing of the Union Film Program; the longest running student financed repertory film program in the country. It is the last surviving movie theater on a campus that at one time had more than six. Students, local film gurus (Rick Linklater, Harry Knowles) and national film nuts (Quentin Tarantino)

react in horror to news of the axing. What's happening when the nation's second largest university can't afford to pay \$30,000 on a film program but shells out millions on athletics? Why the hell have I been in school for over twenty years?

Credits display over a montage of iconic yearbook photos taken from my family's school albums (1945-1998): my mother in her cheer-leading outfit ('45); my father shooting from the free throw line, playing basketball for Medina High School ('46); my sister Lauren (age 7) in a sea of wooden school desks; my sister Lynn, mouth wide open, shaking a pompom at a pep rally ('76), etc. In voice-over, I say:

"As a kid, I'd flip through my mother's' college scrap book and dream of all the great times I was going to have. Unfortunately, the scrapbook was from Kent State University in the fifties. My mother went to school with the man who later became the president who presided at the time of the shootings, the one everyone blamed afterward ... along with the students. "He was a nice guy," she said. My sister later went to Kent in the 70's, only a few years after the shootings. I used to visit her on "little brother and sister" weekends. Occasionally, she would come home during the week when her dorm received bomb threats.

So it begins with Kent, the one my mother knew, and the one Mary Ann Vecchio knew."

CHAPTER 1: Cellular and Molecular Biology

Dissolve into a series of stage "yearbook" photos (studio shot Optura DV stills) of at least 50 current UT students. In voice-over we hear UT students answer these vox-pop questions:

1. What do you expect from a University education?
2. What are a student's responsibilities to a University?
3. What is a student union for?
4. What will you do after you graduate?
5. What do you expect out of this university's union?

A pattern emerges, a picture of a careerist student body that conceives of itself more as consumer than citizen, eating the University's product, whose only goal is to "get a job" and whose only responsibility to the University is to "follow the rules." Most seem to be majoring in business, advertising, or marketing.

October 1997: Rally to Save the Union Film Program

Student activists from the University Film Society mobilize the campus and the community to reverse the decision. A rally is held on the West Mall, with Rick Linklater and others speaking. Over five hundred people attend. A petition drive starts. The student activists in many ways look like the students from the staged photo sessions. Most are white, upper-middle class and "clean-cut."

Chapter 2: Economics

High speed photography of construction work on the already behemoth UT football stadium assaults the screen, timed to Steve Reich's grating aural collage "Come Out" in which Daniel Hamm says, "I had to like open the bruise up and let some of the bruise blood come out to show them."

Workers scurry like ants over the scaffolding as huge orange and blue cranes twirl overhead. The action is shot at various frame rates, alternating from one frame every ten seconds to a few seconds of real time motion, producing jarring, jerky images. The final shot is of the visitor's scoreboard, with the UT longhorn insignia surrounded by advertisements for Taco-Bell, Coca-Cola, Intel and Samsung.

Chapter 3: Archaeology

A Feng Shui expert leads us on a tour through the UT Student Union, a bad energy zone. Dissolve into an animation stand sequence comparing blueprints of the Union and West mall before and after renovations in the early eighties. In voice-over, Louis Mackey, a professor in UT's philosophy department, talks about how the space has changed from a gathering/activist point into a consumer space. From the blue prints, one can see how walls and trees have divided the space. End on a tracking shot of the Union food court where Wendy's, Chick Fillet and other fast food chains pass by. Slowly dissolve into a similar shot passing shops in a suburban mall.

November 1997: The Run Around

Student activists talk about their struggle and failure to engage university management in a dialogue about the Union Film Program. This is interwoven with excerpts from 50's industrial training films that teach managers how to introduce change and quell resulting dissent.

Chapter 4: Genetics

Scanned photographs of my family and segments from talk shows of people beating each other up are interspersed with this text permutation:

IS, THIS, NOT, MY, FAMILY

IS, THIS, MY, FAMILY, NOT

THIS, IS, MY, NOT, FAMILY

THIS, IS, NOT, MY, FAMILY

Chapter 5: Human Sexuality

At the end of the last talk show sequence, CUT TO the monotonous changing of channels on a satellite TV system.

In voice-over, I say:

"There was this guy I was dating ... no, rendezvousing with ... no, that is still too romantic ... rutting with, who had his TV on every time I went over to his apartment. It was always on. He said the on/off switch was broke. 'Just unplug it,' I said. Ignored. He like making out during the commercial breaks. And besides, it helped him fall asleep. When he was gone, people thought he was at home, so no one robbed him. And he also liked the sound of people talking in the next room when he wasn't in the TV room. Extended family over for a visit. You can't just turn the family off! So we sucked to 'Gilligan's Island,' and screwed to MTV's 'Beach Party,' and it all got to be too much one night when he whipped out a video camera and connected it to his tube brother. I couldn't watch him watching himself on TV give me a blow job. The sex that had been cold, dispassionate and twice removed now became three times fucked. After about ten minutes, I jumped up with a major case of the creeps and ripped the cord out of the wall. Shows over."

The flipping of images stops and the screen is sucked into a fading dot of light at the center of an old tube TV. Big bang in reverse. I say in closing, "and I don't really watch TV anymore. I don't tell people that I don't watch, because they think you're an elitist freak or something and they won't talk to you."

December '97: The Union Theater Massacre

The die is cast. The Union Board is intractable, student opinion be damned. The activists organize one last rally as a show of support and outrage. Only about a hundred people gather, scream and shout slogans. Orson Welles not Taco Bells. We Want Godard, Not Corporate Lard. Hey, Hey, Chick Fillet, How Many Films Did You Kill Today? Media arrive. We begin to perform more for the camera, more for the event's own eventual re-broadcast than actually living in the moment. Why didn't we throw bricks through the \$70,000 plate glass window? Why didn't we chain ourselves to the seats? The activists vow not to give up the fight.

Chapter 6: Psychology

Silence. A long tracking shot down one of the windowless, fluorescent lit, cheerless corridors of UT's Communication Building B. We hear a phone dialing, then TEX TALK, the automated information system for UT, asks us to please choose a menu option. A two-digit code is dialed then we hear a montage of audio clips from UT's telephone counseling and referral service, including TEX TALK tape's #10033 "Loneliness," #10030 "Coping with Anxiety," #10033 "How To Handle Fear," #10038 "Coping with Stress," #10431 "What is Depression," #10433 "Depression as a Lifestyle," and #10491 "Suicidal Crisis."

Chapter 7: Political Science

UT law professor Lino Graglia's infamous quote starts off this section as a simple title card:

"Blacks and Mexican-Americans are not academically competitive with whites ... It is the result of cultural effects. These cultures do not encourage achievement. Failure is not looked upon with disgrace. When people aren't good at playing the game, the game has to be changed for them. That is why students are taking black studies instead of core classes like chemistry."

This is immediately followed by footage from a rally held in September in response to Lino by Students for Access and Opportunity. The rally was also held to confront the board of regents about the Hopwood decision,

which eliminated affirmative action in student recruiting, and its relationship to diversity. In voice-over, I say:

"While we were fighting for the theater, other battles we're being fought, ones that were far more important. But there are linkages. The Union Theater was one of the few places in town where people of color, from both home and abroad, were seen on the big screen in Austin. They are gone now from that white, reflective surface. Minority enrollment continues to decline at the University."

This plays over slow-mo telephoto shots of waves of students walking around campus, the majority of which are white, upper middle-class. We end on slow paced, static shots of frat/sorority houses with rush and part signs out front. TV static is inter-cut between them. The changing of fraternities, the flipping of channels.

February 1998: Student Elections

Jeff Lockwood, a rowdy purple-haired activist from the University Film Society, decides to enter the fraternity and sorority infested waters of UT student politics and run for a student representative seat on the Union Board. In theory, we hope to get one our guys on the inside and create a ruckus. Maybe then we will get our film program back. See Jeff work the polls. See Jeff and filmmakers confront Andy Smith, head of the Union Board. See Jeff lose the election. With less than %10 of the student body

voting, the frat connection holds onto its status quo strangle hold. Things won't change at the polls.

Chapter 8: Foreign Languages

UT staff fight a "Fair Wages Campaign" to increase salaries. At a rally held in March, various speakers shout about the abominably low wages staff are paid. Signs held aloft indicate that starting salaries for %30 of the staff still qualify them for welfare. One speaker shouts, "We are living in the third-world, folks." Their march to the capital is overlaid with a foreign language audiotape teaching a U.S. tourist the basics of vacationing in a third-world country.

March-April, 1998: Storming the Union?

As the activists return to their classes, the filmmakers confront UT mid-level management about the decision. Two cartoonists name their "*Daily Texan*" strip "Fire Andy Smith" and stage a surreal performance/protest on the West Mall to no avail. We get a piece of the Union Theater closing aired on national cable broadcast, but a crucial title card listing phone numbers for viewers to call is yanked out by fearful producers. We enter the

piece in the Union's own video contest and win. At the awards ceremony, we demand audit of the Union's accounts. No one listens. No one cares. We finally appeal to the newly hired president of UT, Larry Faulkner. No one returns our phone calls.

Chapter 9: Philosophy

An animated look out my back window, which is divided into 20 separate "frames" (4x5 panes). Each pane of glass is shot at a different time of day, with different action occurring in each frame, so that the viewer sees a collage of colored light and foliage. It's my window meditation, the place that offers a brief respite from my education and a brief rest for the viewer.

May 1998: Death by Attrition

We conduct a final interview with the student activists. They are burnt out, disillusioned and moving on to other work in the community. A lot of ominous rumblings are heard about the future of student activism. We dissolve into an endless stream of students passing by, like so many cans of beans at a Hormel packing plant, picking up their diplomas.

George Harrison's tune "Let it Roll" begins to play. We inter-cut the march of graduates with a step by step process and demonstration of how to roll a joint. It's the end of the year, and the end of the Union Theater. One long drag. Fade to black.

I have received an education about the crushing group-think bureaucratic machinery of state education in America, about corporatization of academic space and the homogenization that it seems to require, and about the invasion of commercialization into very personal, private spaces of my life. I'm definitely ready to leave.

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Kyle Richard Henry was born in Houston, Texas on October 28, 1970, the son of Richard E. Henry and Elaine J. Henry. In 1993, he received a Bachelor of Arts in History and Art and Art History from Rice University in Houston. In 1994, he received a Bachelor of Fine Arts in Filmmaking from Rice. His short films have played at festivals in the United States and Europe. His pre-thesis film "American Cowboy" played at Los Angeles' OUTFEST 1998, Austin's South By South West Film Festival, London's Maverick Film Festival, and Marseilles's Vue Sur Les Doc festival. It was also chosen as a documentary finalist for the 1998 Student Academy Awards and toured film schools as part of the NextFrame festival. In September of 1995, he entered the Graduate School at the University of Texas to pursue a Master of Fine Arts in Film Production within the College of Communications, Department of Radio/TV/Film.

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