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## **Political Pie-Throwing: Dead Kennedys and the Yippie-Punk Continuum<sup>i</sup>**

MICHAEL STEWART FOLEY

By the time Dead Kennedys released their first LP, *Fresh Fruit for Rotting Vegetables*, in 1980, the band had established itself as the leading American political punk band, hailing from a city that seemed to specialize in political art. In many ways, the band and its music represented the culmination of nearly three years of subcultural political struggle on a host of issues facing not only young people in San Francisco but American youth everywhere – enough that, to this day, many of the city’s punk veterans refer to their experience in the “movement.” Political historians of the United States in the 1970s and 1980s have mostly ignored punk, but this essay examines Dead Kennedys’ early career as a way to illuminate the political experience of one segment of American youth in the late 1970s. Dead Kennedys plainly filled a political space once occupied by the Yippies. Dead Kennedys, in the tradition of the Yippies, used humor to call out the lies in American life, and then they followed a more clearly New Left model to name the liars, the abusers of power, and the people who let them get away with it. Out of this vortex of music, politics, and humor came not only a sense of clarity, but a sense of possibility.

In the summer of 1979, *Damage* magazine published its first issue with a cover portrait of the Dead Kennedys singer and political mastermind, Jello Biafra. Based in San Francisco, *Damage* specialized in West Coast punk news and features, and before long it enjoyed a national audience. In an apparent acknowledgment of Biafra’s and Dead Kennedys’ prominence in the West Coast punk scene, editor Brad Lapin not only put Biafra on the cover, but gave him a column.

Biafra’s first piece for *Damage* could have been written ten years earlier by Abbie Hoffman or Jerry Rubin, when they were still Yippies – members of the Youth International Party. He chose “Creative Crime for the Sober Seventies” as his topic, and proceeded to itemize a list of recent criminal stunts – from a man who left a hotel without paying for his massive room service bill to the Red Brigades who had become so efficient at bombing and kidnapping, “and their classy trademark, kneecapping,” that corporate and government officials “now live in constant fear of their lives” (Biafra, “Creative Crime” 29). In turn, Biafra urged readers to come up with their own crimes. In addition to making a case for crime as both art and adventure, Biafra argued for crime as a form of self-control. “The more you fuck with society,” he wrote, “the less society controls you” (29). There was no mistaking the central argument: to shake things up, to

leave the alienating, mainstream society feeling unsettled, would not only be fun but also fulfilling. “Everyone is fed up with being a corporate robot,” Biafra concluded. “We are all time bombs waiting to go off. An explosion a day and self-respect is on the way” (29).

By the time Dead Kennedys released their first LP, *Fresh Fruit for Rotting Vegetables*, in 1980, the band had established itself as the leading American political punk band, hailing from a city that seemed to specialize in political art. In many ways, the band and its music represented the culmination of nearly three years of subcultural political struggle for a host of issues facing not only young people in San Francisco, but American youth everywhere – enough that, to this day, many of the city’s punk veterans refer to their experience in the “movement.” It may or may not have been a movement, but it was at least a vital rebel culture and Dead Kennedys functioned as its most prominent mouthpiece, even if they were ignored by the mainstream and have been largely dismissed by historians.

Although the politics and culture of the 1970s and 1980s have become popular subjects for historians and other scholars of the United States in recent years, punk has largely been treated as an after-thought. In the rare instances when scholars of American politics do examine punk in this period, they interpret it primarily as a one-dimensional symptom of the kind of economic and social dislocation affecting the whole nation (Schulmann 153).<sup>ii</sup> Bruce Schulman is the most influential purveyor of the negative stereotype, even claiming that American punk lacked English punk’s “political edge.” But it is not only Schulman: historians of the United States are long overdue in taking seriously the political potency of certain subcultures. Instead, political historians of the 1970s and 1980s tend to focus all of their attention on electoral and party politics, a narrow range of social movements, and punditry. Youth politics, particularly as expressed in art, is ignored almost completely, and local political experience is often buried beneath all the attention given to national trends.<sup>iii</sup> These historians fail to acknowledge punk because they examine only mainstream politics, primarily with regard to major national questions. The result has been a narrative that limits discussion of politics in the 1970s to explain the rise of conservatism and an alleged post-1960s retreat from activism.<sup>iv</sup>

Consequently, Dead Kennedys and San Francisco punk make few appearances in these histories; when they do, it is to be scorned as merely irreverent and offensive. “A group calling itself Dead Kennedys obviously enjoyed flouting established notions of good taste,” Schulman declares without any further elaboration (153). He is right that Dead Kennedys enjoyed rattling the cage of mainstream America, but that only tells a fraction of the story.

This essay examines Dead Kennedys’ early career as a way to illuminate the political experience of one segment of American youth in the late 1970s. As cultural studies scholars have shown, young Americans’ political experience in this period was increasingly tied to the arts, especially music and performance; and they make the connection that most historians have so far missed – that young people turned toward

politics in art because they had seen previous social movements crushed in the early 1970s and no longer had faith in either traditional or progressive politics. It felt hopeless to keep playing a game that seemed rigged.<sup>v</sup>

Dead Kennedys gave full expression to that lost faith, but also demanded that their audience wake up and take deliberate action to change the world. Therefore, this essay is premised on the contention that Dead Kennedys' music and performances were a form of political expression and engagement that merits attention equal to that which scholars afford to electoral and social movement politics.<sup>vi</sup> "While revolution made by music is a joke," Greil Marcus once wrote, "rebellion sustained by music might not be." Maybe punk could not create a revolution,<sup>vii</sup> but it could provide the space – the fertile soil – where seeds of revolutionary ideas and action could take root. Certainly, Dead Kennedys' peers and allies seemed to grasp the band's rebellion-sustaining potential. "The Dead Kennedys are much more than this year's political gimmick joke band," wrote one punk critic in the Los Angeles zine, *Slash*. "In fact they might be one of the most important bands to come out of this scene" ("Dead Kennedys").

More than that, Dead Kennedys plainly filled a political space once occupied by the Yippies. Biafra's "creative crime" vision came out of a tradition of tackling serious political issues through public pranks. Although he later said that as a kid he did not know much about Abbie Hoffman "except that he annoyed the people that annoyed me, and was very skillful at it," Biafra basically became the Abbie Hoffman of punk.<sup>viii</sup> In one of the Yippies' earliest stunts, Hoffman and Jerry Rubin led a group of Yippies to bring trading on the New York Stock Exchange to a halt by dropping hundreds of one dollar bills from the viewing gallery to the trading floor. As traders knocked each other over to scoop up the fluttering cash, Rubin and Hoffman shouted, "This is what it's all about, real live money! Real dollar bills! People are starving in Biafra!" As Rubin later wrote, "We introduce[d] a little reality into their fantasy lives" (117).

Later, the Yippies garnered greater media attention when they threatened to levitate the Pentagon and, during the 1968 Democratic National Convention in Chicago, promised to drop LSD in the city's water supply, date daughters of delegates, and run a pig for president. The irreverence on display in such plots carried on in a concentrated form in punk.

Indeed, the pranks that Jello Biafra and Dead Kennedys carried out in the late 1970s owed a lot to a satirical tradition in American politics that extended from Charlie Chaplin, Lenny Bruce, and the Yippies (and continues, more recently, through Billionaires for Bush and *The Onion*). David Spaner, a Vancouver Yippie who worked with Hoffman in New York and later managed anarchopunk band Subhumans, reminds us that the Yippies "invented political pie-throwing."<sup>ix</sup> That is as good a name for the kind of satirical politics Dead Kennedys practiced, under Biafra's direction, on their first 45s, LP, and in their public engagement with a range of political issues.

Perhaps surprisingly, Dead Kennedys' Yippie approach to American politics possessed a utopian quality we associate less with the 1970s than with the 1960s. Given that punk is so often seen as the antithesis of the sixties' countercultural idealism,

associating it with utopia may seem ludicrous. How could an art form associated with nihilism have been utopian? To grasp that we have to overcome the conventional wisdom – that Dead Kennedys were cynical to a fault, content to kick America when it was down, radical poseurs for whom radicalism was just another way of transgressing button-down conservative America.

Rather, Dead Kennedys, in the tradition of the Yippies, used humor to call out the lies in American life by following a more clearly New Left model to name the liars, the abusers of power, and the people who let them get away with it. Out of this vortex of music, politics, and humor came not only a sense of clarity, but a sense of possibility. To think what could be done in a space where people were honest, true, and committed to building a micro-model of a better society! The theatrical Jello Biafra, pantomiming songs and diving into the crowd – long before such sudden plunges from the stage became commonplace – encouraged the audience’s visceral response to East Bay Ray’s sinister-sounding dirty surf guitar, and the rhythmic wallop of Klaus Flouride’s bass and Ted’s drums. As during hardcore shows forever afterward, audience and band became one and, at least in the years before muscled frat boys and skinheads began pummeling one another, those pogging in the area in front of the stage – not yet named the “mosh pit” – followed basic rules of decorum, an equality of experience practically guaranteed for all. One emerged exhausted, thrilled, enlivened, and cleansed of America’s dirt.

In fact, Dead Kennedys first LP, *Fresh Fruit for Rotting Vegetables*, was arguably the most important, articulate, and accessible document of dissent to come from American youth in an age when it is generally assumed that American youth had given up. It is a political document for a generation, even if most of the generation missed it because they were listening to the nonthreatening music of Billy Joel, the Eagles, and the Bee Gees. Even on university campuses where, contrary to popular perception, dissent never faded away completely, most campus political groups focused on single issues; only tiny doctrinaire Marxist splinter groups offered any kind of comprehensive critique of American society, but almost no one was listening to them. With *Fresh Fruit*, however, Dead Kennedys took an accessible, wide-ranging, multi-issue critique to a much broader audience.<sup>x</sup>

Dead Kennedys may have formed in the 1970s, but the band owed its politics to a sensibility born in the sixties. In fact, like all American punk, the Kennedys made music not only in response to the dismal conditions of the seventies, but also in an effort to carry on vital forms of sixties political culture. That is, an artistic movement defined in part by its contempt for hippies actually tried to call forth the better spirit of the sixties. This only seems like a radical reinterpretation because it runs counter to longstanding myths.

In most tellings, the excesses of the 1960s led to the dire circumstances of the late 1970s that made punk possible and, in fact, necessary (Solnit 90). But such interpretations are based on a caricature of the sixties, one that emphasizes the nut jobs, the cults, and violent extremists who made up a tiny minority of this generation; as such, they serve to reinforce conservative arguments that everything wrong with the United

States today grew out of the 1960s. The reality, in fact, is that it was the excesses of men in power, men *abusing* their power – in the Vietnam War and at home, in the forms of a ballooning war budget, hapless management of the economy, and spying on the American people – that drove the American dream off the end of the pier and into the murk.<sup>xi</sup>

Punks understood this – and were palpably angry about this state of American political culture – because they had been children in the fifties and sixties. Some, like Patti Smith, had been born as early as the mid-1940s; others, like Henry Rollins, were born as late as the early 1960s. The core population of punks were born in the late 1950s, like Jello Biafra of Dead Kennedys, and were among the last American children to be sold on the boundless promise of the USA. As they grew up, they watched the whole project fall apart. Even as they witnessed the Kennedy assassination, the violence of racial segregation and the Vietnam War on television, most of those kids who would become punks continued to receive a steady dose of propaganda about the greatness of their country, but by the time they started writing songs, they made it clear that they were not buying the propaganda. “Ask not what your country can do for you,” the Avengers’ Penelope Houston would eventually scoff, “it’s what your country’s been doing to you.”

Although the San Francisco punk community included former Beats, hippies, and even a few Vietnam veterans, most punks were too young to have been part of the political and cultural rebellions of the sixties. They were ten years old in 1968, 14 years old in 1972 – old enough to be aware of the upheaval taking place all around them, but not old enough to fully take part (though future Dead Kennedys Ray Pepperell and Geoffrey Lyall, and DKs artist Winston Smith were among the older punks who had been shaped by the politics and counterculture of the sixties).<sup>xii</sup>

Many of the younger punks had first fashioned themselves as hippies, but their timing was bad: they moved into the counterculture just as it was being coopted by the mainstream and otherwise fading from view. As a result, punks subscribed to the widely held perception that sixties rebels – politicians and hippies both – had packed it up, given in before the revolution could be won. As Peter Urban, the radical manager of the fiercely political band, The Dils, noted years later: “For most of us who were early punks, there was a sense that ‘they let us down, they sold us out, they told us one thing and they didn’t deliver.’”<sup>xiii</sup> That meant it was time for a new revolution.

The three primary members of Dead Kennedys – Eric Boucher, Ray Pepperell, and Geoffrey Lyall – came from middle-class families that were politically engaged during the 1950s and 1960s. Each developed, independent of each another, a political analysis similar to Urban’s. The parents of each band member supported the civil rights movement and opposed the Vietnam War. Each has vivid memories of the Kennedy assassination and, in fact, justified the band’s seemingly offensive name as an attack on “Me Generation” complacency. According to lead singer Jello Biafra (née Erich Boucher) it “started with the Kennedy assassinations, because the Kennedy assassinations torpedoed the American Dream.” That might sound like a bit of a stretch

– there were many factors involved in the American Dream’s sinking, after all – but the still important was the focus on the Dream, America’s promise, and the failure of Americans to fight for it in the 1970s. “Everybody’s out for themselves,” Biafra told one interviewer in 1979, “and the people who were saying something in the Sixties now just want to sit around and get stoned.”<sup>xiv</sup> By 1978, young people faced stark realities. “Punk,” Ray said in an early interview, “is the only protest music left.”<sup>xv</sup> And San Francisco remained an American protest capitol.

By the time Dead Kennedys started playing the Mabuhay Gardens in the summer of 1978, in fact, San Francisco had established itself as home to the most political punk scene in the country. No other scene saw punks joining with other activist groups to fight evictions of people who were decidedly not punks. No other scene saw punks holding benefits for striking Kentucky miners, striking railroad workers, falsely convicted Black Panther Geronimo Pratt, the “No on 6” campaign, the city’s Gay Day Parade, or Dessie Woods, a woman sentenced to 22 years in prison for killing her rapist with his own gun. No other scene had the concentration of bands that seemed to specialize in political critiques and anthems: Negative Trend, the Dils, the Avengers, UXA, Dead Kennedys, Flipper, the Mutants, No Alternative, and more. And no other scene had a print culture so thoroughly devoted to political engagement. *Search & Destroy*, arguably the most influential of all punk zines, routinely featured a “Politics of Punk” column and threaded political questions into almost all of its legendary interviews. When *Search & Destroy* closed up shop after eleven issues, both *Damage* and *CREEP* filled the void with an intense focus on political questions, from national to local. Brad Lapin, who covered punk all over the United States as editor of *Damage* thought then and thinks to this day that the San Francisco scene was unquestionably the “most self-consciously political ... San Francisco was *ridiculously* political,” he says. “It was hysterically political!”<sup>xvi</sup>

Although San Francisco punks grew up shaped by the civil rights movement and the Vietnam War, much of their political engagement and expression came in reaction to the things they could see around them, in their own city. That was a climate in which Dead Kennedys thrived. It started with two innocuous sounding ballot initiatives called Proposition 13 and Question 6. The success of Proposition 13’s so-called tax revolt forced the city to cut costs, closing 26 schools and laying off 1200 teachers. In the same season, early polling on the Briggs Initiative made it seem likely that scores of additional teachers would lose their livelihoods simply because of their homosexuality (in the end, the initiative was defeated). Then followed weeks of madness, first as reports came from South America that hundreds of members of the People’s Temple, a cult-like religious community until recently based in San Francisco, had committed suicide by drinking cyanide-laced Kool-Aid. The Reverend Jim Jones, spiritual leader of the People’s Temple and former San Francisco Housing Authority member led 913 to their deaths in his jungle utopia in Guyana. Then, just days later, former city supervisor Dan White climbed through a window at City Hall and shot to death both Mayor George Moscone and Supervisor Harvey Milk.<sup>xvii</sup>

Dead Kennedys started to build a following in San Francisco just as the city seemed to have fallen through a trap door into hell. In between the Jonestown massacre and the Moscone and Milk murders, the band played a show on November 22 (the fifteenth anniversary of John F. Kennedy's assassination) at the Mabuhay Gardens, the city's answer to CBGB's. The provocative choice of date for a band called Dead Kennedys amounted to one of Biafra's "creative crimes," but it obscured the development of a more sophisticated political program. First and foremost, Biafra's lyrics betrayed a New Left analysis and sensibility. Whether he was aware of it or not, as a child of the sixties, he had absorbed the New Left's key intellectual contributions. In 1965, Students for a Democratic Society president Paul Potter – during the first major protest against the Vietnam War – declared it was "naming the system" that made the war possible. Biafra, like other punks in San Francisco, took naming the system as a primary tactic. They thought of themselves as researchers and reporters, sounding alarms in their songs and their zines – naming the various corrupt systems and spreading the word to the wider community in hopes of sparking some action, if not a revolution.

As an extension of naming the system, Biafra and other punks in San Francisco built (again, in New Left fashion) a prefigurative community, a microcosm of what they hoped their city and country could one day be. That was fundamentally a place of truth, a place where the usual "bullshit" peddled by politicians and their corporate backers was stripped away.

Prefigurative politics, as the sociologist Wini Breines writes of the New Left, is based on a utopian vision (cf. Breines). Perhaps because punk was so often associated in the mainstream press with nihilism and mindless anarchy, we do not often link punk with utopianism. Here, though, the work of theatre scholar Jill Dolan is especially helpful. Dolan, writing about a one-woman performance theatre, describes how audiences gather "hoping, perhaps for moments of transformation that might let them consider and change the world outside." That desire in punk to be, as Dolan describes it, "part of the intense present" of a throbbing, pulsating sweaty crowd at the Mabuhay Gardens or the Deaf Club offered the audience, "if not expressly political, then usefully emotional, expressions of what utopia might feel like." To apply Dolan's utopian performative analysis to punk and specifically to Dead Kennedys, we have to accept her notion that "to enact an ideal future, a culture has to move farther and farther away from the real into a kind of performative."

Dead Kennedys, to be sure, did not articulate a systematic vision of what an American utopia might look like – they did not attempt to write a new Port Huron Statement – but they did offer a critique of the pathologies afflicting their country and in so doing presented a utopian glimpse of a possible future. They imagined a place where beasts doing wrong (in the form of illegitimate authority) were named, a place where not only the bands, but everyone (the fan, the peer, the fellow critic) cut through the "bullshit" that seemed to dominate American life. They may have had sixties antecedents, but the combination of message and music was different, lifting the audience through headphones or live performance to moments marked by *possibility*.



Dead Kennedys' brand of political critique, sharpened in the steamy clubs of San Francisco, gained national and international attention with the release of their first two singles, which led the band to land a record contract for a full-length LP. In Jello Biafra's lyrics, no one was spared. He attacked liberals, conservatives, yuppies, the military, religious charlatans, hippies, and frat boys. Most of all, he cut down the complacent audience to not accept or participate in the problems sinking the city, state, and nation.

In the band's first single, "California Über Alles," Dead Kennedys criticize both the shape-shifting governor, Jerry Brown, and passive Californians who did not stand up to him. Biafra plays the role of a dictatorial Jerry Brown, the man who will be "Fuhrer one day," but criticizes especially those he would "command" and "control." Biafra's primary concern, he told multiple interviewers, was the "Me generation," the self-centered Americans who, in the sixties, rebelled, but by the mid-seventies were drifting towards acceptance. "People seemed to be wanting to be told what to do," which is how one could explain "more people turning to totalitarian mindfuck organizations" like est, the Naropa Institute, and the Moonies. "This kind of placid attitude was the sort of thing that leads to fascist takeovers," he told *Search & Destroy*. "People don't bother to get up and stop it. It just sort of happens." That is where Jerry Brown comes in.<sup>xviii</sup>

For many people, targeting Jerry Brown and his "zen fascists" for commanding a "suede/denim secret police" seemed written purely for comedic purposes, but Biafra was not joking when following the Yippie formula of delivering a serious message via slapstick. To the Dead Kennedys (and other San Francisco punks), Jerry Brown seemed beholden to no principles, save the advancement of his own political career. Despite a liberal pedigree as son of former-Governor Pat Brown, the younger Brown spoke frequently of working in "an era of limits" and of intentionally defying easy categorization by moving "left and right at the same time – you watch me."<sup>xix</sup> Indeed, one had only to look back on the previous year's political battles – over Proposition 13's tax revolt, the Diablo Canyon nuclear power plant protests, and the Briggs Initiative – to see a peculiar brand of leadership.<sup>xx</sup> Although Brown had been outspoken in his opposition to the Proposition 13, for example, once it passed, he moved swiftly to make drastic cuts to the state's social services budget. When liberal leaders met with Brown to criticize the cuts, he told them they should "abandon the rhetoric of the 60s in the light of the realities of the 80s."<sup>xxi</sup> On the Briggs Initiative, Brown, running for reelection, remained largely quiet, waiting until late in the campaign to come out against it.<sup>xxii</sup> Similarly, he spoke out of both sides of his mouth regarding battles over nuclear energy. On the one hand, he opposed nuclear power, calling it "the next Vietnam," but on the other, he cracked down on the No Nukes movement, sending the state police to arrest 487 protesters at the Diablo Canyon.<sup>xxiii</sup>

It made sense, therefore, that Biafra would target Brown in the lyrics of "California Über Alles," but the singer consistently made the point that the song aimed primarily to criticize the Californians who let Brown get away with his prevarications and craven political flip-flopping (Foley, *Front Porch Politics* 238–240). By Biafra's estimation, the public needed to reject complacency and their passive acceptance of all the New

Agey “bullshit” of the day – from meditation to jogging – that made them so easily manipulated and, ultimately, repressed. “Mellow out or you will pay!” Brown commands ominously.<sup>xxiv</sup>

From the fall of 1979 to the spring of 1980, in the wake of releasing their first single, Dead Kennedys refined their Yippie-style politics into high-profile political pie-throwing. They specifically targeted the San Francisco political and business establishment, the mainstream music industry, and a nation of Yuppies-in-waiting.

When Jello Biafra, the creative crime advocate, got himself on the November ballot as candidate for Mayor of San Francisco, many observers – ranging from some punks to pundits – dismissed it as a publicity stunt. But just as Jerry Rubin once ran for mayor of Berkeley, initially as a prank and later more seriously, Biafra’s joke turned out to be, even as political theatre, not a joke at all. It was also another example of the utopian performative, puncturing elaborate lies with comedic needles of truth.

The two leading mayoral candidates, incumbent Dianne Feinstein and supervisor Quentin Kopp, along with the media-anointed alternative candidate, David Scott, all had real estate connections; Feinstein was, herself, a landlord soon to marry a major real estate developer. For punks, as well as many other marginalized constituencies, there seemed little difference between the two frontrunners, and not much distinguished Scott from the other two except that he was gay. Voting for any of these three seemed sure to be seen as a vote in favor of the miserable status quo: yay to tourists, carte blanche for developers, with police on hand to crush dissent.

The cover page of Biafra’s photocopied campaign leaflet captured his surprisingly sincere response to such an apocalyptic vision. It laid out its central theme clearly:

San Francisco’s spirit must not be crushed in the name of law and order and tourist dollars. The current administration has stepped up what they call a ‘cleanup’ of the city. They give big business a free hand while the creative forces that make our city tick see a steady rise in harassment by the law.  
Should San Francisco lose its face and become just another cold, efficient American city?  
Not if the city fathers hear a loud enough NO.

The last line is a clear indication that although Biafra could not expect to win the election, he hoped he might just muster a sufficient protest vote to make a difference in the life of the city.<sup>xxv</sup>

Getting on the ballot was straightforward, if not easy; anyone over the age of 18 who collected the signatures of 5,000 registered voters could get themselves on the ballot. Initially, Biafra signed up only about 500. “It hasn’t been an easy task,” Ginger Coyote, editor of *Punk Globe* and campaign staffer, wrote at the time. “The system is set up to thwart the efforts of the individual, and for this and other obvious reasons, Biafra’s potential supporters haven’t bothered to register.” Even so, Coyote noted, “Corruption still reigns supreme in the City by the Bay,” and one could pay the equivalent of 25 cents per missing signature to get on the ballot. Consequently, Dirk Dirksen hosted a “Biafra for Mayor” benefit on September 3rd, and raised the necessary \$1,125 in filing fees.<sup>xxvi</sup>

Consistent with the punk ethos, Biafra and a host of volunteers who made up the campaign staff ran it as an entirely DIY affair. Dirk Dirksen, promoter of punk shows at the Mabuhay, organized a fundraiser to get Biafra's name on the ballot. Dirksen, *Damage* editor Brad Lapin, *Punk Globe* editor Ginger Coyote, *CREEP* editor Mickey Creep, Target Video's Joe Target, Klaus Flouride, and plenty of others held meetings at Target Studios on South Van Ness (the building also housed *Damage*) to plot strategy. The actual campaign events were few, but got plenty of media attention. A "whistle stop tour," for example, started with a rally at City Hall, followed by stops along the BART line down Market Street. Kathy "Chi" Penick, Dead Kennedys' manager, carried a sign that said "If He Doesn't Win, I'll Kill Myself." Other inspiring placard slogans included "Apocalypse Now," and "What if He Wins?" Biafra, led the procession "kissing hands and shaking babies."<sup>xxvii</sup>

Although such events undoubtedly led some to regard Biafra's candidacy as a joke, his platform addressed important issues, even if he couched his solutions in humor. Regarding the recent history of police abusing their power, Biafra proposed, on the one hand, to rebuild community spirit by erecting statues of Dan White around the city so that residents could vent their frustrations by throwing things at them. On the other hand, more seriously, he called for requiring cops to run for election every four years, with half the force subject to yes or no confidence votes by the neighborhoods they patrolled. Similarly, he suggested that "too much time and money is being wasted on outdated laws and victimless crimes." Police, he argued, should crack down on organized crime and white collar crime, and focus less on "nightclub raids, petty drug busts, prostitution, etc." The vice squad, he said, should be eliminated altogether. Most important, as part of a proposal to establish a board of bribery that would "set fair standard rates for liquor licenses, building code exemptions, [and] police protection." He made sure to add, "and protection *from* the police."

In the same way, Biafra aimed a number of his platform planks at the equally powerful real estate interests which caused so much grief in the city. He claimed to be keen to clean up Market Street, too, but at the opposite end from the Tenderloin, in the part of town where Bank of America and Bechtel, among other corporations, kept their headquarters. There, he said, "Those who maintain offices ... should wear clown suits from 9 a.m. to 5 p.m." He also proposed that to do away with urban blight, the city should start with the newly opened Pier 39 complex. "It should be condemned as a public nuisance and torn down by the public on a specially declared holiday." More soberly, he responded to the housing crisis by proposing that squatting be legalized for low-income San Franciscans in vacant buildings then being used as tax write-offs by their owners. "In San Francisco, land of the homeless," he later said, "there are so many buildings left empty... it's obscene." And, if elected, he would roll all rents "back to their pre-Proposition 13 levels" minus another 10% to make up for the money paid to landlords when they raised their rents in spite of the passage of Proposition 13 (a rent control initiative, Proposition R, would also appear on the ballot in November). Finally, since Proposition 13 had led to funding shortfalls that resulted in 7,000 city workers

being laid off, Biafra proposed hiring them back as panhandlers, at a fifty percent commission, with instructions to concentrate on rich neighborhoods and ritzy department stores.<sup>xxviii</sup>

Such a platform demonstrated that Biafra's campaign was, as his leaflet said, "No more a joke and no less a joke" than any of the other candidates. For every proposal that mainstream voters would likely have regarded as preposterous – moving the city jail to the Sunol Valley Golf Club so all prisoners could get the same treatment as Dan White and the Watergate criminals – there was another – banning private automobiles from the city – that made good sense. His campaign technique was to "take a particular issue and illustrate it in the most maniacally graphic way possible and let the people decide for themselves what they want to do about it." *Punk Globe's* Ginger Coyote predicted that Feinstein's support did not run deep, and that all of the other challengers save for Biafra were offering "politics as usual," she suggested that "anything's possible."<sup>xxix</sup>

In contrast, of course, the city's political establishment actively minimized Biafra's campaign and especially the issues he raised. The *Chronicle* and the *Examiner*, which had a joint publishing arrangement (the *Chronicle* came out in the morning, the *Examiner* in the afternoon, with a combined edition on Sundays), split their endorsement, with the *Chronicle* supporting Kopp, and the *Examiner* supporting Feinstein. Supporters praised Kopp for his financial acumen, while others thought Feinstein the better manager. A story aimed at informing voters of where the two leading candidates stood on the most pressing issues proved to be tone deaf on issues important to anyone below middle class. For example, the discussion of Kopp's and Feinstein's housing proposals focused only on building more houses and said nothing about poor people, rental units, or rent control. In a profile of "mayoral also-rans" (note the past tense, even though the election was two weeks away), in which the *Chronicle* gave the most attention to Biafra as "the most colorful in this year's crop of minor candidates for mayor," the paper mocked his "classic Goodwill suits" and implied that all he cared about was "being outrageous."<sup>xxx</sup>

Dianne Feinstein told Brad Lapin that Biafra's platform had "nothing to do with the real issues," but the media's attention and the candidates' forums showed otherwise. When Feinstein made a show of taking a broom to Market Street, to demonstrate her intention to clean it up, Biafra responded by dressing in a boiler suit and bringing a Shop-Vac to Feinstein's neighborhood, Pacific Heights, where he pretended to vacuum the streets, sidewalks, and lawn in front of the mayor's house. As a campaign stunt, it seemed no more or less ridiculous than Feinstein's sweeping of Market Street. Moreover, as Mickey Sampson pointed out, the candidate's forums were the most illuminating because "there was Biafra, who was both more serious than any of them [the frontrunners], but also less so." Feinstein grudgingly acknowledged that Biafra had "made the race more interesting," but more important, it became clear that plenty of non-punks took him seriously and actually saw something worth supporting in his campaign.<sup>xxxi</sup>

On election day, Biafra polled fourth, with nearly four percent of the vote (6,591 votes total) in a city where punks numbered in the lower hundreds. Most important, the combined tally for Biafra and third-place David Scott forced Feinstein into a run-off with Kopp. In what the *Chronicle* called a “night of surprises,” the run-off was the biggest. “It wasn’t [just] the punk population of San Francisco that voted” for Biafra, Klaus told an interviewer. There were not enough punks, particularly given how young most punks were and how many were unlikely to be registered voters. “It was more of a cross-section of people.”<sup>xxxii</sup>

There is no question that Biafra’s campaign inspired most of the city’s punks. The “finesse” with which he “balanced form and content, lunacy and illumination” during the campaign, Brad Lapin wrote in *Damage*, showed that he was serious and, therefore, attracted “hopeless idealists and hardened cynics from punks to high school teachers.” Maybe they saw it as a protest vote or maybe they bought into the campaign platform. Either way, it was an impressive achievement, particularly since, as Vale reminds us, Biafra was both “so young,” and his campaign “so outrageous.” “We all loved that he ran for mayor,” Ruby Ray now recalls. “It was just so crazy that he did it and that he went through with it.”<sup>xxxiii</sup>

At the same time, in the diverse punk community, Biafra’s mayoral campaign found its critics. More often than not, just as in the movements of the sixties, the negative reviews revealed divergent philosophies about political change: politicians vs. Yuppies, “serious” organizing vs. satire. The criticism one hears the most is that the campaign was merely “political theatre.”<sup>xxxiv</sup> The serious proposals in Biafra’s platform seem to have been obscured by the ruses about businessmen in clown suits and citizens venting frustration at statues of Dan White. “The problem with taking the approach of satire,” Peter Urban later said, is that “people can stand there and they can laugh at it, and they can walk away with the same ideas they had when they came up.” So, even if the core political analysis is there, it is being conveyed “in a way in which they don’t have to take it seriously.”<sup>xxxv</sup>

These kinds of disagreements over strategy and tactics date back to at least the French Revolution, if not earlier, whether they take place in an anarchic subculture or in an organized social movement. Hardcore organizers in the New Left and the antiwar movement could point to the successful precedent set by “serious” civil rights activists, while the Yuppies could take credit for capturing the national media’s attention in their Pentagon protest and at the Chicago Festival of Life. Indeed, Jerry Rubin labeled one of the chapters in *Do It!*, his movement memoir/Yippie manifesto, “Revolution is Theatre-in-the-Streets.” For him, writing in 1970, “the goal is to turn on everybody who can be turned on and turn off everybody else.” In that regard, Biafra’s mayoral bid seemed to have succeeded. The key to the Yippie political tradition, the Canadian Yippie and Subhumans manager David Spaner pointed out recently, was to be “part black bloc and part borscht belt” because “if someone’s laughing with you, it’s hard for them to hate you ... there’s a certain bond being formed.” Besides, as Biafra himself suggested a few years after the campaign, “Historically, the ‘Merry Prankster’ has had a lot more to look

forward to than the humorless politico who sits around moaning about the ‘struggle.’ What better way to survive our anthill society than by abusing the very mass media that sedates the public?” It all goes back to asserting some self-empowerment – and maybe having some fun – amid the wreckage.<sup>xxxvi</sup>

In the spring of 1980, as Dead Kennedys audience grew thanks to “California Über Alles” and, perhaps, the mayoral campaign, the band unleashed its most imaginative prank on the music industry. Organizers of the third annual Bay Area Music Awards, or the “Bammies,” invited Dead Kennedys to play at the live awards show at the stately 2,300 seat Warfield Theater downtown. Biafra saw an opportunity and accepted the invitation gleefully.

Dead Kennedys showed up for the Bammies rehearsal and played a “light hearted parody of California Uber Alles,” but they had other plans for the live show, which was being simulcast by radio station KMEL, a hip, commercial top 40 station on the AM band. It was, perhaps, the least punk place to be on that night in San Francisco. Over the course of the evening, Journey’s *Evolution* won Best Album and the band’s singer, Steve Perry, was named Best Male Vocalist; Bill Graham won the Public Service Award, and Jerry Garcia of the Grateful Dead was named Bay Area Musician of the Year. Music luminaries and other celebrities such as Carlos Santana, Boz Skaggs, Van Morrison, Taj Mahal, Greg Kihn, Eddie Money, Ronnie Montrose, Bill Graham, David Bromberg, Francis Ford Coppola, and quarterback Joe Montana joined a couple of thousand fans of FM radio rock in a venue that was the furthest thing from dingy punk clubs like the Mabuhay or the Deaf Club.

Subsequent accounts in the punk press did not do justice to the quality of Dead Kennedys’ prank; to fully get it, one needs to listen to the recording [on the compilation record, *Give Me Convenience or Give Me Death*]. In terms of confrontation, it nearly rises to the level of the 1966 Royal Albert Hall recording of Dylan responding to cries of “Judas!” by turning to his band and saying, “Play fucking loud!” In the middle of this stilted Bammies production, Dead Kennedys came out, each member dressed alike in a dark raincoat, black trousers and, barely visible, a white collared shirt with a large ‘S’ spray painted across the chest. Ted kicked off ‘California Uber Alles’ with its characteristic drum attack, and Klaus followed with the bass line. But just after Ray comes in on guitar, Biafra waves the band off, shouting “Hold it! We’ve gotta prove we’re adults now,” he says to the audience. “We’re not a punk rock band, we’re a *new wave* band.” They then dropped their raincoats to reveal that they were wearing skinny new wave ties, alright, but each hung down over the spray-painted ‘S,’ making four big dollar signs. The band then broke into a simple Knack-like new wave riff as Biafra started singing about selling his soul to become a “prefab superstar.”

Biafra wrote the lyrics to this new song, “Pull My Strings,” just for this occasion, and thanks to the high end sound system in a theatre with excellent acoustics, the industry audience members could understand every insult aimed directly at them. The song has two choruses, one which is played over the melody for the “My Sharona” chorus but substitutes the words “My Payola.” The *pièce de résistance* came in the

second chorus, when Biafra's character, worried, sang "Is my cock big enough, is my brain small enough, for you to make me a star?" while custom-themed video provided courtesy of Joe Target played on the screens on either side of the stage. This chorus, like the rest of the performance, went out live over the KMEL airwaves, along with titters from the audience and a handful of cheers. Ray then launched into an obnoxiously long Journey-style, guitar solo (even playing with his teeth) while Biafra, Klaus, and Ted yawned dramatically. Incredibly, Biafra then got the audience to clap and sing along, "Is my cock big enough, is my brain small enough, for you to make me a star?" When the song ended, Biafra trotted through all of the insincere end-of-show clichés: "Thank you very much ladies and gentleman, we sure do love you, we'll see you next time, we had such a good time," shouting "Rock and roll!" as they left the stage.

As pranks go, the Bammies stunt certainly rivals the Yippies dumping dollar bills on the floor of the Stock Exchange, at least for its success in critiquing an entire industry to its collective face. And, like the mayoral campaign, it offered a utopian performative glimpse of rebellion, of what could be done to those in power if one only dared to confront them.<sup>xxxvii</sup> Of course, to anyone in the industry, to anyone *invested* in the mainstream music business, Dead Kennedys' full frontal assault with a live performance of "Pull My Strings" seemed suicidal. But as Biafra alluded in the song, and as he repeated in many interviews hence, taking this kind of action was essential to preserving one's self-respect. What mattered was truth – being true to oneself, to one's community, and to anyone else who would listen.

Indeed, early that spring, Dead Kennedys released their second single, "Holiday in Cambodia," which took aim at the status conscious and the arrogance among youth in America who were *not* standing up to reject all that had been planned for them. The singular power of "Holiday in Cambodia" stems from the mix of the menacing space-punk vibe most notable in the song's introduction and the blending of a critique of privileged Yuppie wannabes with the imagery coming out of killing fields-era Cambodia. The inspiration for the lyrics to "Holiday" grew, like those for "California Uber Alles," out of Biafra's experience in Boulder. He told *Slash* that after he got out of high school, he had the sorry experience of regularly delivering pizzas to students at the University of Colorado, once home to the cultural rebels who inspired him as a kid. In 1977, though, he found only "stupid, rich kids" who thought they knew everything. In "Holiday," Biafra implicitly laments the total lack of outrage. He critiques the shallow life of the song's subject, where he substitutes "braggin' that you know how the niggers feel cold and the slum's got so much soul" for actually doing something about poverty and inequality.<sup>xxxviii</sup> He blasts him for being concerned only with status – likening him to Dr. Seuss's star-bellied sneeches – and for being so willing to "kiss ass while you bitch so you can get rich." To teach him a lesson, then, Biafra sings to this vacuous rich kid, "it's time to taste what you most fear" – to be taken from his comfortable pointless life and be sent to Cambodia where, in the context of Khmer Rouge genocidal reeducation policy, he will "work harder with a gun in your back for a bowl of rice a day." The pure malevolence of the killing fields is conveyed in Klaus's ominous bass

line and the angular bursts of gunfire from Ray's guitar. If a guitar riff ever succeeded in conveying terror, it is Ray's on "Holiday." Combined with the acerbic lyrics, the overall effect is chilling.<sup>xxxix</sup>

Biafra revisited some of these same themes in "Terminal Preppie" on *Plastic Surgery Disasters* and in the unrecorded "Dreadlocks of the Suburbs." In "Terminal Preppie," his complaint is with the same kind of university students, business majors, who aspire for no more than looking good "on paper," but are mostly interested in getting drunk. The pot-head rich kids in the ska-inflected "Dreadlocks of the Suburbs," are guilty, Biafra told an interviewer, of "relating to how cool it must be to be poor in Jamaica." Like the students in "Holiday in Cambodia," they may be ignorant or stupid, but they are, at a minimum, con-artists. The pretension required for privileged American youth to relate to life in the slums, whether in the U.S. or Jamaica, requires a lot of work, and it is a waste of time when what is needed is a revolution. Thus, in all three songs, Biafra shames his subjects for being at the worst end of the "Me generation" spectrum: they are not even self-seeking; rather, they are self-satisfied, ignorant, and in "Terminal" and "Holiday" possess a sense of profit-seeking entitlement. Why not send them, then, on a holiday to Cambodia?<sup>xl</sup>

In the fall of 1980, Dead Kennedys released their first LP, *Fresh Fruit for Rotting Vegetables*, which represented in many ways a capstone project in bringing the band's Yippie-style political engagement to the masses. The record, which included "California Über Alles," and "Holiday in Cambodia" extended the band's efforts to wake people up, to alert them to the ills plaguing American society, and to shame them out of complacency. There is no small amount of the macabre on the record, as the band used themes of serial killers, weapons of mass destruction, and despair to frame a cathartic sonic attack. Although the Dils famously wrote songs called "Class War" and "I Hate the Rich," the Kennedys made acts of class war central to their sardonic approach to politics. In "Kill the Poor," for example, Biafra enacts the wealthy musing about using the neutron bomb to clear slums and, thus, save money on welfare. Several songs later, in "Chemical Warfare," he imagines saboteurs unleashing lethal gas on a country club. In between, "Let's Lynch the Landlord," functioned as an anthem for punks in San Francisco and elsewhere who wanted to confront not only unscrupulous landlords, but their cronies in City Hall. Meanwhile, songs like "I Kill Children" (narrated from the perspective of a serial killer) and "Funland at the Beach" (about the sabotaging of an amusement park ride that leaves "crushed little kids" lying on the boardwalk) conveyed the morbid fascination with which punks observed some of the social illnesses that seemed to afflict American society in the 1970s. The songs at once portrayed a kind of sickness that seemed more frequently on display in those years while also, perhaps, a grudging admiration for the ways in which such monsters unsettled the mainstream.

*Fresh Fruit* also, through its references to the military weapons and the draft, signaled the Dead Kennedy's interest in late Cold War militarism. These were themes that the band continued to explore once Ronald Reagan took office as president. Indeed, Biafra re-wrote the lyrics to "California Über Alles" to address Reagan's saber-rattling



escalation of tensions with the Soviet Union, with reference to war-fueled corporate profits, and named it “We’ve Got a Bigger Problem Now.” In 1982, when the second LP, *Plastic Surgery Disasters*, came out, it, too, featured additional critiques of federal government shenanigans, all justified in the name of protecting the country, in “Bleed for Me,” and “I Am the Owl.” Those songs, however, lack the Yippie-like sarcasm of the earlier songs. That Yippie style of punk – much like the original Yippie political method – proved difficult to sustain over the long-term.

If Americans are typically portrayed as retreating from civic engagement and activism in the 1970s and 1980s – of turning inward when they were not right-swinging politically – Dead Kennedys and their music tell a different story. As the Yippies of punk, the band played a central role – along with many San Francisco punks, artists and others – in writing a soundtrack of collective resistance for American youth after the sixties. As with punks everywhere, participation in the scene felt like being part of a secret society, as if one knew something – and were experiencing something – that no one on the outside knew. Dead Kennedys were the most prominent artists to take part in a larger utopian project of claiming space – physical and sonic – for truth, for a resistance to neoliberalism both in the city and in the music industry. As children of the sixties, in a city perhaps uniquely associated with the rebel politics of that decade, punks carried on with a fundamentally utopian agenda collective resistance; the visceral transformative moments generated by the live and recorded performance of bands like Dead Kennedys were anything but nihilistic.

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## Notes

- <sup>i</sup> Portions of this essay appeared earlier in Michael Stewart Foley, *Dead Kennedys' Fresh Fruit for Rotting Vegetables* (Bloomsbury 33 1/3 series, 2015) and are reprinted here with the kind permission of the publisher.
- <sup>ii</sup> Of all the major recent histories of the 1970s and 1980s, only Cowie (*Stayin' Alive*) mentions punk, but he does so only to point out that Dead Kennedys did not critique America from a class perspective. Otherwise, cf. Schulman and Zelizer; Hodgson; Perlstein; Patterson; Stein; Berkowitz; Jenkins; Sandbrook; Bailey and Farber. For recent challenges to this approach to American political culture, cf. Cowie; Self; Foley (*Front Porch Politics*).
- <sup>iii</sup> Exceptions include MacLeod and Mattson.
- <sup>iv</sup> Curiously, there is a much more robust historiography of rap and hip hop than there is of punk, perhaps because scholars of hip hop have situated the art form and the subculture around it within a longer continuum of political activism. Even so, very little of this work has been integrated into the period-defining national narratives above. For more on rap and hip hop, cf. Patricia Hill Collins, and Jeffrey O. G. Ogbar.
- <sup>v</sup> Those same cultural studies scholars tend to overstate the impossibility of political protest in this period (when, in fact, the nation saw far more grassroots protests than usually acknowledged), but they are right about the perception of political impotence among young people, especially punks. Cf. Nevin Willard; MacLeod. For more on the diversity of grassroots protest in the 1970s and 1980s, cf. Foley (*Front Porch Politics*); Hall; Berger.
- <sup>vi</sup> Until recently, Dead Kennedys surprisingly received virtually no scholarly attention. But in the last few years, two books and at least one new article have appeared: Michael Stewart Foley (*Dead Kennedys Fresh Fruit for Rotting Vegetables*); Alex Ogg (*Fresh Fruit for Rotting Vegetables: Dead Kennedys, the Early Years*); David G. Fletcher (“‘Mellow Out or You Will Pay’”: The Society of the Spectacle in Dead Kennedys' Fresh Fruit for Rotting Vegetables and Other Late Cold War Literature”).
- <sup>vii</sup> Though the East German punks later standing atop a crumbling Berlin Wall may have disagreed.
- <sup>viii</sup> Biafra (Interview with author).
- <sup>ix</sup> Spaner (Interview with author).
- <sup>x</sup> For more than half a century, at least, scholars have demonstrated that music, in the words of philosopher Susanne Langer, “is a tonal analogue of emotive life.” More recently, it has become accepted among political scientists and cultural studies scholars that “music is no longer to be understood as an instrument of, or accompaniment to, politics; it *is* politics.” We know that music, for example, not only exposes us to other worlds, but engages us in those worlds as much as in our own. And the Birmingham school of subcultural studies long ago – in fact, around the time the songs on *Fresh Fruit* were being written – demonstrated how the creation of an alternative narrative is a form of resistance. Cf. Langer (27), and Street (173). Hebdige famously called punk “an oblique challenge to hegemony” (132). Cf. Willis.
- <sup>xi</sup> Biafra (“Make No Mistake, the 70s Sucked” 8).
- <sup>xii</sup> I’m grateful to David Spaner, Peter Urban, and Geza X for sharing their ideas about different ends of the baby boom generation, subgenerations, and all things demographic in American punk.
- <sup>xiii</sup> Urban (Interview with author).

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- <sup>xiv</sup> Biafra (Interview with author); East Bay Ray (Interview with author); Fluoride (Interview with author); Ypsilantis (Interview with Jello Biafra); “Dead Kennedys: Disease with a Bullet”; Biafra (“Eric Meets the Moose”).
- <sup>xv</sup> “Dead Kennedys!” (*Search & Destroy* 4).
- <sup>xvi</sup> Lapin (Interview with author); cf. Ordway (22); Happy Geek (*New York Rocker* 1.15, 44; 1.16, 58; 19, 39); Coyote (29); Hines (*Slash* 2.9, 12; *Slash* 3.4, 10).
- <sup>xvii</sup> Shilts (264-272); Clendinen and Adam Nagourney (403); Epstein; “Moscone, Milk Slain” (1).
- <sup>xviii</sup> “Dead Kennedys” (*Search & Destroy* 3-5; *Zigzag* 12–14; *Slash* 2.4, 24; *NME* 21); “Dead Kennedys: Disease with a Bullet” (*Sounds* 3, 11); “California Uncaged” (27).
- <sup>xix</sup> Cf. Bell (267). A 1976 book by J. D. Lorenz, a disgruntled former Brown aide, alleged that the governor had once linked this kind of deliberate shape-shifting to achieving total power. “Politics is a jungle and it is getting worse,” Lorenz quotes Brown as saying, “People want a dictator these days, a man on a white horse. They’re looking for a man on a white horse to ride in and tell them what to do. A politician can do anything he wants so long as he manipulates the right symbols.” At first, Lorenz thought that Brown was issuing a warning about the state of American politics, but he later concluded that Brown saw himself as the man on the white horse (*Jerry Brown* 142).
- <sup>xx</sup> Biafra later acknowledged that his pet conspiracy theory about Brown was wrong and that, in fact, Ronald Reagan posed a greater threat. Hence, the reworked version, “We’ve Got a Bigger Problem Now,” that came out on the *In God We Trust* EP.
- <sup>xxi</sup> Brown’s seemed like a shameless effort to appease the voters who would decide on his reelection in the coming months, even though, as the journalist Robert Kuttner showed at the time, public opinion polls showed that, except for welfare programs, “California voters did not want to see public services reduced.” Still, Brown embraced slashing budgets so enthusiastically after Prop 13 that Howard Jarvis cut a television spot that was widely seen as endorsing Brown for reelection. Cf. Kuttner (94); “Lowell Students Demonstrate” (4); “Peppy S.F. Rally to Fight School Cuts” (4); Bell (277).
- <sup>xxii</sup> It took former governor Ronald Reagan opposing Question 6 to tip the balance, saying that “whatever else it is, homosexuality is not a contagious disease like measles.” On November 7, Californians voted No on 6 by a 59 to 41 percent tally. Cf. Foley (*Front Porch Politics*, 89–92); “Nix on Six” flyer, in author’s possession.
- <sup>xxiii</sup> The following June, after Brown had been reelected in the wake of the Three Mile Island accident, the governor returned to describing the Abalone Alliance as “a growing force to protect the earth.” But two years later, when the NRC approved Diablo Canyon’s operating license, Brown sent the National Guard to help police arrest nearly 2,000 protesters over several weeks.
- <sup>xxiv</sup> “Dead Kennedys” (*Search & Destroy* 9, 3–5)
- <sup>xxv</sup> “Jello Biafra for Mayor: Why?.” The story of Biafra’s snap decision to enter the mayoral race is well known to Dead Kennedys fans and is recounted in some detail on his spoken word album, *I Blow Minds for a Living*. Jello Biafra, “Running for Mayor,” *I Blow Minds for a Living*, LP. Alternative Tentacles, 1991; Interview with Jello Biafra (62–63); Flouride.
- <sup>xxvi</sup> “Biafra!” (*Punk Globe*).
- <sup>xxvii</sup> Flouride interview; Fresh Fruit for Rotting Eyeballs DVD; Weems interview.
- <sup>xxviii</sup> Jello Biafra for Mayor leaflet; Biafra (“Running for Mayor”); Interview with Jello Biafra (62–63).

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- xxix “Jello Biafra for Mayor”; Biafra (“Running for Mayor”); “Biafra: 6,591 votes!!” (18); “Biafra!” *Punk Globe*.
- xxx “Kopp vs. Feinstein” (1, 6); “An Eclectic Bunch” (5).
- xxxi “Biafra: 6,591 votes”; *Fresh Fruit for Rotting Eyeballs*; Sampson interview.
- xxxii “Dead Kennedys” (*Zigzag* 12–14); Pheno.
- xxxiii “Biafra: 6,591 votes!!”; Reid interview; Vale interview; Ray interview.
- xxxiv Lapin interview; Gray.
- xxxv Patterson interview; Falconi interview; Urban interview.
- xxxvi Rubin (132); Spaner interview; Interview with Jello Biafra (64).
- xxxvii Selvin; “Pull My Strings”; Flouride interview; “SF” (35); Deeks (36); Jello Biafra, email to author.
- xxxviii Biafra thought long and hard about using the N word before deciding, at Geza X’s urging, to leave it in because it better conveyed just “how condescending the subject of the song is to people of lesser means, to people of color ....”
- xxxix “Jello Biafra” (40–41).
- xl “California Uncaged” (27).