

REGARDING THE REFERENDUM TO GIVE
LEGAL OPTIONS TO VICTIMS OF CRIMES
RESULTING FROM PORNOGRAPHY

TO CAMBRIDGE CITY COUNCIL

SEPTEMBER 11TH 1985

DEAR CITY COUNCILLOR:

THOUSANDS OF YOUR CONSTITUENTS, MANY WHO HAVE VOTED FOR YOU, HAVE REQUESTED THAT THIS REFERENDUM BE PUT ON THE BALLOT THIS FALL SO THAT ALL CAMBRIDGE RESIDENTS CAN HAVE A SAY - DECIDE FOR THEMSELVES IF THEY WANT THE VICTIMS OF PORNOGRAPHY TO BE ABLE TO HAVE LEGAL MEANS OF PROTESTING THEIR ABUSE. INSTEAD OF ABIDING BY THE WISHES OF THESE THOUSANDS OF PETITIONERS, YOU PERSONALLY HAVE TAKEN IT UPON YOURSELF TO DECIDE THAT THE CAMBRIDGE LAWS REGARDING REFERENDUM QUALIFICATION SHALL BE BROKEN AND THE CITIZENS OF CAMBRIDGE SHALL BE DENIED THE RIGHT (WHICH THEY'VE PREVIOUSLY ENJOYED) OF DECIDING CERTAIN ISSUES IN THE VOTING BOOTH.

WE, WHO HAVE TENDERED THE PETITIONS TO THE ELECTION COMMISSION, HAVE ALL LIVED IN CAMBRIDGE FOR OVER 10 YEARS AND HAVE TAKEN AN ACTIVE PART IN MAKING OUR CITY A BETTER PLACE TO LIVE. WE'VE VOTED FOR YOU, CAMPAIGNED FOR YOU AND ASSUMED YOU HAD OUR BEST INTERESTS AT HEART.

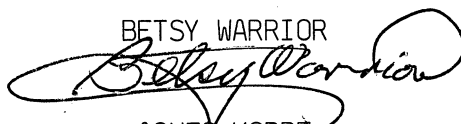
THE ISSUE OF CENSORSHIP, WHICH IS IRRELEVANT TO THIS REFERENDUM, IS BEING USED TO DISCOURAGE PEOPLE FROM SUPPORTING THE REFERENDUM AND TO STRIKE TERROR IN THEIR HEARTS IN A WELL ORCHESTRATED CAMPAIGN OF DISINFORMATION THAT WOULD PROTECT PORNOGRAPHERS FROM ANY ILL EFFECTS OF THEIR WORK - NO MATTER THE COST TO WOMEN.

NEED WE POINT OUT THAT APPROXIMATELY SIX THOUSAND CAMBRIDGE VOTERS SIGNED OUR PETITION AND THE WORK INVOLVED IN SUCH A PETITIONING EFFORT THAT WAS DONE IN GOOD FAITH ACCORDING TO THE LETTER OF CAMBRIDGE LAWS?

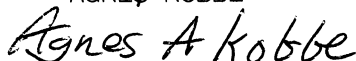
YOU, AS A CITY COUNCILLOR, HAVE A SWORN RESPONSIBILITY TO ACKNOWLEDGE YOUR PETITIONERS AND ALSO ADHERE TO THE CITY LAWS AS WE HAVE.

SINCERELY,

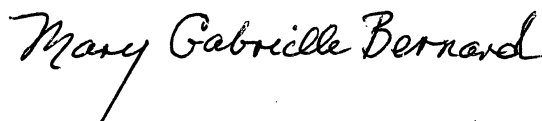
BETSY WARRIOR



AGNES KOBBE



GABRIELLE BERNARD



BETSY WARRIOR
BATTERED WOMEN'S DIRECTORY
46 PLEASANT ST., CAMBRIDGE, MA. 02139
(617-492-5630)

September 1985

As a long-time activist for human rights and women's rights and a long-time resident of Cambridge I would like to make clear my endorsement and support for the referendum coming up this fall that would offer women some legal redress if they suffered harm through pornography. Having worked and lived in Cambridge first in 1956 and presently for the last 11 years, the welfare of Cambridge women is of some importance to me, and the referendum initiative promises to give Cambridge women, and all women, some protection against the more extreme repercussions of pornography.

My experience as an activist for the past two decades on issues such as rape, tenants rights, welfare rights, civil rights and battered women has pointed up the importance of bringing such issues to public attention so they can undergo the critical scrutiny that they have so long been shielded from and which has allowed them to flourish in a privileged silence of well-guarded privacy. All the work done by feminists on wife beating, rape, incest and sexual harassment, and now on pornography, has been attacked as an invasion of privacy, as airing personal, therefore privileged, behavior ("dirty linen") in public. These attacks have tended, and intended, to exempt the perpetrators of harm from any responsibility, and their victims from any support, redress or help.

The work of organizing the first shelter for battered women in New England, in which I participated, was met with similar shrill denunciation as "breaking up the family", breaching the individual's right to privacy and interfering with the sanctity of the home; just as earlier, the defense of rape victims by feminists was decried as abridging the rights of rapists and as exposing them, and battering husbands, to the whims of vindictive women. The referendum for the victims of pornography is being met with the same misrepresentations and deliberate misinformation that serve to protect pornographers as effectively as batterers, rapists and incest perpetrators have been served by myths that have protected them from responsibility for their actions.

In the case of the pornography victim's referendum, instead of the justification of the privacy and sanctity of the home, the public is being served up the red herring of "censorship". Yet anyone who has read the referendum is well aware that it in no way prescribes or advocates censorship. On the contrary, the framers of the referendum want pornography to be known for what it is, not hidden by a "plain brown wrapper" or festering in the privileged privacy accorded taboo subjects like rape, incest and woman beating; which are transformed into entertainment through pornography.

Those who, with so little regard or such casual contempt for the rights of women, have never taken the time to read the referendum, yet denounce it as "censorship" reveal their ignorance of the referendum and their disregard for the rights of women by their very denunciation on the grounds of "censorship".

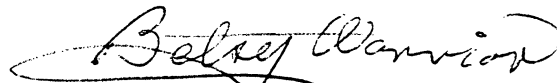
The pornography industry and their advocates and protectors will have something to fear from women who are injured by their work if the referendum is passed. For the first time, victims will be allowed to legally take their case before the public and have put on public record the content and intent of misogynistic pornography as well as the concrete effects it can have on women's lives. Those who misrepresent the referendum as "censorship" have no history of fighting censorship in regard to textbooks, films, video games or T.V. shows that have been suppressed because of their derogatory portrayals of people other than women. So anti-censorship activism, even if it was relevant to the referendum, isn't the motivating force behind the pro-pornography alliance.

One doesn't have to be a political genius to realize that the statistics (showing a woman is being beaten every 18 seconds, a woman is raped every 3 minutes, a dozen women are murdered every day in the U.S.) show that there is no group of people more brutalized by another distinct group than women are by men. Though the statistics are for the United States, Cambridge contributes its share, and women the world over suffer a similar fate.

While it's argued that we already have laws against the "excesses" of pornography like rape, physical abuse and child molestation, anyone who has a passing interest in these issues (rape, battering and molestation) knows of the years of painstaking work, effort and dogged determination that feminists have put into drafting, proposing, amending and passing legislation to protect the victims of these acts: victims who were supposedly already well protected. And still we have a long way to go in reeducating a citizenry that is daily bombarded with the most grossly misogynistic images of women; images which influence attitudes and dictate and distort our treatment by co-workers, strangers, family, our employers and the courts.

It is therefore my hope that the referendum to protect victims of pornography in Cambridge passes resoundingly so that such victims will no longer suffer only in the silence of invalidation and public apathy, but will receive the legal consideration others are now entitled to.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Betsy Warrior". The signature is written in dark ink and is positioned above the printed name.

Betsy Warrior

Snuff—The Ultimate in Woman-Hating

Beverly LaBelle

Following the first feminist anti-pornography actions in the early seventies, organizing ceased. More serious and crucial battles (or so it seemed at the time) were being fought in the arenas of reproductive rights (birth control, abortion, self-help health care) and crisis intervention (against crimes of sexual violence such as rape and woman-battery). During this five-year period the pornography industry grew, unchallenged by women. Slowly the so-called "pretty porn" of the earlier *Playboy* days changed, became more anti-woman, more exploitive, and finally more violent. New magazines like *Hustler* and *Penthouse* appeared on the racks; X-rated movies like *Deep Throat* and *Emanuelle* were released to "legitimate" theaters, with some small murmurs of upset here and there but generally without protest.

In 1976 a film surfaced which was to change all that: *Snuff*. Billed as a movie which recorded the real murder of an actress for male sexual stimulation, it attracted hundreds of eager men at X-rated and neighborhood theaters around the country.

Snuff is the name of a highly publicized movie which purports to show the actual murder and dismemberment of a young woman. It achieved notoriety because of the carnage of its final five-minute sequence.

The film first surfaced in 1975 shortly after the New York City Police Department announced that they had confiscated several "underground" South American pornographic films containing actual murder footage. These films were given the name "snuff" films because the actresses were murdered (snuffed out) in front of the cameras in order to excite the jaded sexual palates of a select pornography audience that requires death rather than mere sex as an aphrodisiac. The curiosity of the regular pornography market was whetted by this police discovery, and the idea of a commercialized "snuff" film was born.

The scenario revolves around a South American cult that is dominated by a man named Satan. All his followers are lovely young women who are willing to rob, beat, and murder at his command. Before joining this select cult, each woman must undergo an initiation of torture in order to seal her commitment to Satan. There is a small amount of rhetoric about killing the rich in revenge for the sufferings of the poor, but this minor theme never achieves prominence and was obviously added in an attempt to justify the violence of the film. The cult also holds some confusing occult beliefs similar to those depicted in Saturday afternoon "horror" films. However, the producer did hope

to draw a parallel between Satan's devotees and Charles Manson's "family." The similarities between these two groups are too numerous and too obvious to be mere coincidences. Undoubtedly the image of Charles Manson as a new prototype of sex and violence was deliberately emulated in *Snuff*.

The plot is fuzzy, but eventually it becomes clear that the cult is planning a ritual slaughter to avenge both the suffering poor and the demon god of their "religion." The band of mystics proceeds to murder a number of random people, none of whom appear to be members of the elite classes. In one scene a cult member revenges herself upon her ex-lover by castrating him with a razor. The actual cutting is not shown—just scenes of his face contorted by agony. Perhaps the director felt that this scene of a man being destroyed by a woman would be too repellent for his male audience to depict graphically. After that gruesome scene, the blood-crazed devotees prepare for the long-awaited sacrifice of their "perfect victim," an unborn child ready to burst forth from the womb of a beautiful, blond woman (the reincarnation of Sharon Tate, no doubt). First they shoot her wealthy lover, and then they surround the bed where she lies, cowering in fear, with her enormous stomach protruding beneath the satin sheets. The dagger is held high in an invocation to the "powers of evil" and then plunged savagely into her stomach, which explodes with the sounds of gushing blood and gurgling amniotic fluid.

Then silence for a moment before the camera pulls back, and we see the production crew of the film talking about the success of that final scene. A pretty young blond woman who appears to be a production assistant tells the director how sexually aroused she was by the stabbing finale. The attractive director asks her if she would like to go to bed with him and act out her fantasies. They start fumbling around in bed until she realizes that the crew is still filming. She protests and tries to get up. The director picks up a dagger that is lying on the bed and says, "Bitch, now you're going to get what you want." What happens next goes beyond the realm of language. He butchers her slowly, deeply, and thoroughly. The observer's gut revulsion is overwhelming at the amount of blood, chopped-up fingers, flying arms, sawed-off legs, and yet more blood oozing like a river out of her mouth before she dies. But the climax is still at hand. In a moment of undiluted evil, he cuts open her abdomen and brandishes her very insides high above his head in a scream of orgasmic conquest. The End . . . Fade into blackness. There are no credits listed in the final moments of the film.

BH 8/30/85

Chinatown leaders: Film disclaimer not enough

A **DISCLAIMER** that filmmakers intend to add to the controversial film "Year of the Dragon" is not enough to undo the damage done by the movie's stereotyping of Asian Americans, members of the Chinatown community said last night.

"The images are so strong within the film that a disclaimer does nothing," said Julian Low, who helped organize a boycott of the movie when the film first opened locally several weeks ago. "I think they should just pull the film."

The movie deals with a war between police and Chinese gangsters in New York's Chinatown.

Low, a member of the Asian American Resource Workshop, called the film "disgusting" and said it was "the most racist, anti-Asian film I've seen in a long time."

"(The movie) encompasses every negative stereotype of Asian Americans possible," said Low.

"What makes it worse is because there is so little Asian American history in the history books, this reinforces all the negative stereotypes."

MGM-United Artists Studios agreed to add a disclaimer to the film after outraged Asian Americans charged the movie was distorted and racist.

The disclaimer, which reads in part, "This film does not intend to demean or ignore the many positive features of Asian-Americans," will be sent to theaters in Los Angeles and New York.

Cinema operators in Boston said they do not yet know whether a disclaimer will be added to the film before local viewings.

— BEVERLY FORD

When the Dream Turns Sour

Growing up in the Soviet Union, Alexander Cherkasets used to tell his mother that someday he would move to America—the land he considered “a bulwark of truth and justice.” In 1979, the dream came true. Cherkasets, then almost 30, quit his job at a Moscow travel bureau, won an exit visa and immigrated to New York City. But there, driving a taxi, he watched his dream turn sour. He came looking “for something close to the perfect society,” he says, and he didn’t find it. In 1982 Cherkasets went to the Soviet Embassy in Washington and asked to return home.

Cherkasets says his disillusionment has little to do with his economic prospects—or *toska porodine* (homesickness). He simply wasn’t prepared for the seamy underside of freedom—the sort of street life that the Soviet government, with its nearly unlimited police power, refuses to tolerate. “I didn’t know that in New York thousands of people with bags could walk around completely abandoned, with their legs covered with sores, and not only without a place to live, but no help to hope for,” he says. Though he enjoyed walking into a bookstore and buying whatever he wanted, pornography shocked him—and the freedom of speech that once attracted him began to seem like a license for excess. Pornography, he concluded, “isn’t an element of freedom—it’s spitting in people’s faces.” Driving his cab, he says, “I see narcotics being sold on the street. Openly! Where are the police or the FBI?”

Ethnic Tug: Living in an alien culture also aroused feelings in Cherkasets that Soviet propaganda had failed to inspire—a sense of being Russian, of duty to the motherland and of guilt about leaving it. He began to feel there was

something “shameful” about his decision to leave. “It’s like being born in one family, then getting invited to live with another family, with a better apartment and better food,” he says. “So you leave your family and go live with the other one. You can’t do that without feeling disillusioned and ashamed.”

There is no reliable count of how many Soviet émigrés, like Cherkasets,



Cherkasets: A new feeling for the motherland

would like to return. Cherkasets says many would move if they could, at least to Europe. But immigrant-aid groups who work with the Soviet community maintain that most émigrés are content and that very few have departed. Whatever their numbers, those who do wish to leave usually find that the road home is treacherous. The official Soviet line is that emigration is very close to treason. As Alexander Cherkasets expected, his request to return was refused.

STEVEN SHABAD in New York

Porn pix hold clues to finding victims

INVESTIGATORS combed through hundreds of sexually explicit letters and snapshots yesterday from the collection of a Boston child porn suspect in an effort to track down his young victims.

One official said, “We’ve got two shopping bags full of letters with names and addresses to check out.”

U.S. Postal Inspector John G. Dunn Jr. said some of the letters confiscated in suspect Mark Lawrence’s posh Whittier Place apartment are postmarked as early as 1971.

The suspect allegedly used newspaper and maga-

zine ads to correspond with boys under 18 years old and lure them to his home for photo sessions.

Authorities said they do not know whether any missing children or runaways were among the boys photographed by Lawrence, a 64-year-old freelance advertising writer.

But John Soboleski, director of Society for Young Victims, a New England child advocacy group, said he’ll ask permission to compare Lawrence’s photographs with pictures of missing kids.

“We’ve felt right along that a lot of kids who disappear turn up in pornography,” he said. “Some-

thing like this so close to home shows people they really have a reason to worry.”

Lawrence, whose late father was founding editor of the respected U.S. News and World Report magazine, is being held without bail. He was arrested Wednesday night.

There will be a court hearing Tuesday to decide what psychiatric hospital he should be placed in until trial.

U.S. Customs spokesman Ed Callanan said that, in addition to finding boys who may have been involved with Lawrence, investigators will look for international child porn links.



Bob Sturgis

Let 'er rip ... Melissa Farley, left, and Nikki Craft take Penthouse to task at B. Dalton's bookstore.

involvement in it in a slide presentation at First Unitarian Church, 31st and Harney Sts.

Approximately 50 people attended the presentation, which started with a slide of Craft's sister, who had committed suicide.

Craft said writings found after her death indicated that she slit her wrists and took an overdose of prescribed antidepressant medication because she felt she didn't measure up to society's standards of female beauty and behavior.

Never content

"Not all women slit their wrists," said Craft. "They die inside with Valium, with cleaning house, because they can't live up to these illusions. They are forced to live their whole lives never quite contented with themselves."

Craft was careful to explain that her organizations were not against sex, nudity or freedom of expression. She showed slides of herself and members of her groups being arrested at Cape Cod for going topless in protest of what she called the "hypocrisy" that allowed men to remove their shirts on a hot day but required women to cover their breasts.

Craft went on to show slides from Penthouse magazine portraying Japanese women tied with ropes, hung from trees or cast on rocks with their hands bound.

She showed a series of slides from Hustler magazine that had been titled "Dream Lover," depicting a man in black leather beating a nude woman and, at one point, pushing her head into a toilet.

Another series from Hustler showed a woman being gang-raped on a pool table. Craft pointed out that this series ran several months before a woman was raped on a pool table by several men in a New Bedford, Mass. bar.

While not drawing any parallels between the two, Craft did show a page from Hustler that appeared after the New Bedford incident. It depicted a postcard of a nude woman on a pool table, with the caption, "Greetings from New Bedford."

Craft, who said she herself had been raped at knife-point when she was 15, maintained that men believed the images they saw in publications.

"What this magazine is saying to men is that women enjoy being raped, enjoy being murdered. It is a misrepresentation of women that is used to sell. Women's bodies are used to sell every imaginable type of product."

She specifically pointed out the advertisers in the Penthouse December issue.

"These companies should be boycotted," she said. "Sanyo, Casio, Magnavox, Canon, Panasonic are all using violence against women to sell their products."

Unmolested magazines

"When you see these images of women with knives being jabbed at them and their heads shoved into toilets, ask yourselves why nothing in the world is sacred except ... their precious magazines on newsstands, and why they can advocate the rape of women and be able to stay on news stands completely unmolested, safe under the First Amendment."

"We want pornography taken out from under the bed and put on coffee tables. We want it discussed and rejected as lies and slander."

—Nikki Craft

She explained the name of one of her organizations, Citizens for Media Responsibility Without Law.

"We don't need laws to get this off the shelves of every store we walk into. We don't need the government saying 'get it out.' We want pornography taken out from under the bed and put on coffee tables. We want it discussed and rejected as lies and slander."

"We want women to realize that having violent pornography that represents women being raped and enjoying it is like Jews having Nazi material in their own house."

"People who believe stereotypes and lies about other human beings are bigots, and men who believe lies about women being passive and enjoying being raped ... are bigots."

"As soon as society calls them the bigots that they are, you won't find (these) magazines being sold in every store. You won't need the government to get it out."

Craft said that many of the arrests resulting from the groups' actions were never brought to trial. She pointed out the case of her topless Cape Cod action.

Indefensible

"When they saw we were going to fight the law in court, they dropped the charges. They know how indefensible their laws are," she said.

Craft and Farley showed many of the same images used in Craft's presentation at the Playboy Club. They declined to tear up the Penthouse there, saying that they'd wait till they got to the book store and use one off its shelves.

After being told to leave the Playboy Club's "private property" by an unidentified man, Craft, Farley and seven to 10 supporters went to the B. Dalton bookstore at 5106 S. 108th St.

At the bookstore, signs with enlargements of the Penthouse photos with captions reading "Brought to you by Canon" and other advertisers in the magazine were handed out to members of the group. While Craft and Farley went inside, the sign-holders stood outside before cameras from local television stations and chanted slogans, including "Violence in the media equals violence in society," and "Pornography is the theory, rape is the practice."

Out of stock

Inside, Craft and Farley asked attendants where they kept their pornography.

"If you mean the Playboys and Penthouses," replied one, "we're all out."

"We were just here two days ago," said Farley, "and you had them then."

"Well, we're out of stock now," the woman replied.

Craft had brought the copy that had been held up at the Playboy Club, and she and Farley stood in front to the rack they said the magazines had been displayed on.

"Somehow an image of a tortured, stripped and mutilated woman is described as sexual entertainment," said Farley, as she and Craft held the magazine between them before the T.V. cameras. "This type of imagery promotes violence against women. This is how we respond to that portrayal."

Craft and Farley then began tearing the Penthouse into small strips, throwing them to the floor.

Craft explained while she was tearing the magazine that B. Dalton's office had conferred with her by phone and said that the company's distribution policy was being reviewed. She said that corporations decide what they will distribute and what they won't and the First Amendment didn't oblige them to sell anything they didn't want to.

She said the company's attitude showed that the tactics of her group were working.

After the magazine was destroyed, one of the men in Craft's group picked up the pieces and asked an attendant where she would like to have them thrown away. The woman offered him a trash can behind the counter.

When asked how she felt about the store she worked for carrying the magazines, the attendant said, "We carry a lot of things I don't personally buy, but no one forces me to buy them."

Craft spent the rest of the time in the store talking to reporters about future actions. She said the group was headed for Illinois and then North Carolina.

Referring to comments from several of the customers in the store that private property should be left alone, Craft said, "Some people have gotten very angry. They think we're against the First Amendment. But I think we're educating people."

Continued from page S1

political terrorists of women," Craft explained. "It's a real attempt to legitimize violent pornography. It's too much to bear that these kinds of profits are made off of women."

Pornography has become a life and death issue for women, she said. Citizens for Media Responsibility fights it with civil disobedience and demands "corporate and individual responsibility" for "the multi-billion-dollar pornography industry [that] disseminates hateful propaganda that results in real harm to real women."

Craft moved to Oshkosh, Wis., last year to work for the Naturist Society, which promotes nudity. A ceramic artist by training, her home is crowded with art, books, filing cabinets, unfiled papers, and memorabilia from more than a decade of activism.

With a soft Texas accent, she pulled out magazines, album covers, slides, flyers, and media reprints to demonstrate exactly what she means when she talks about violent pornography and the effect activism can have in stopping it.

She joked that she is trying to set a world record for arrests; she's up to 35 arrests so far. She told how her work is constrained by its unpaid nature, but not by lack of ideas or support.

Her career as a "volunteer social servant" for social change may have been inspired by memories of her own rape 20 years ago at age 15 at knifepoint. Police refused to take action against the man, who eventually raped seven other women and served one year in jail.

One of Craft's first efforts was the 1974 founding of Women Armed for Self-Protection in Dallas, Tex., which taught women how to use guns. "Men and women were created equal," read one of the group's posters, "and Smith & Wesson makes damn sure it stays that way."

In 1975 she disrupted a Rockwell International stockholder's meeting to protest the B-1 bomber. Two years later, the Kitty Genovese Women's Project published the names of rapists in Dallas County.

While attending college in Texas, she fought censorship in order to show films from the New York Women's Film Festival that were deemed pornographic by the local vice squad.

In 1979 she destroyed copies of a records by a group called Scorpion that had a nude 12-year-old girl seductively posed on the cover with broken glass in her vagina. It and other records, such as "Black and Blue" by the Rolling Stones, "trivializes and even encourages violence," Craft said.

In 1980, while attending the University of California at Santa Cruz, she destroyed a special showing at the school library of 10 prints called "The Incredible Case of the Stack O'Wheat Murders." In the photos, the female victims were depicted nude, splattered with chocolate syrup to depict blood. Nearby each was a stack of wheat pancakes.

The photographer's pamphlet accompanying the show said the photos allowed "discreet pleasure...from the portrayed transgression of another body." The vast amounts of syrup were "humorous."

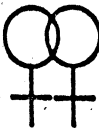
Craft, commenting that "Blacks would not tolerate the 'humorous' prints of Klan lynchings," tore up the prints and doused them with chocolate syrup. She called her work, carefully photo-

See CRAFT page S5

SISTER Spirit

SECTION THREE/VOLUME 10, NUMBER 52

Thursday, June 27, 1985



Craft fights porn through radical action

by Sue Burke

The rampage started last October in Des Moines, Iowa. A group of women and men entered the Blue Nude Bookstore and later that same day the Bachelor's Library. At each store they tore up a copy of *Hustler* magazine. They were arrested.

In November, they were arrested again at a third Des Moines bookstore, again tearing up *Hustler*, along with committing vandalism.

In December, they took their rampage to California, Wisconsin, and Illinois, while continuing their destruction in Iowa. They tore up *Hustler* and *Penthouse*, burned *Penthouse* publisher Bob

The May 'Penthouse' magazine featured a centerfold of a nude woman with a newspaper nearby telling of the strangulation murder of a woman.

"This is the support network for political terrorists of women," Craft explained. "It's a real attempt to legitimize violent pornography. It's too much to bear that these kinds of profits are made off of women."

Guccione in effigy, and made statements to the media. Often, they were arrested, jailed, and fined.

In 1985, they've been to five states and plan to take the "Rampage Against *Penthouse* and *Hustler*" to more cities, perhaps including Chicago. They originally called themselves the Preying Mantis Women's Brigade (with an active men's auxiliary), but after meeting a conservative group called Citizens for Decency Through Law, they formed Citizens for Media Responsibility Without Law, also called Outlaws for Social Responsibility.

The ringleader is Nikki Craft.



Nikki Craft as "Myth California" wearing warpaint.

Craft wants you to look at the magazines she tears up. "All too often critics of pornography are stereotypes as censors," she explained. Her group is in favor of nudity and sensuality. They oppose censorship and violent pornography.

"Hiding it (through censorship) would short-circuit the process of discussion of what it is. People need to examine it. Men who read it need to be seen as bigots," Craft said. "We want a society that will not tolerate making violence and pain look attractive."

It all started five years ago, she said, when *Hustler* ran its "women as meat" issue, which featured a cover photo of a woman being ground into hamburger. The rampage against *Hustler* was renewed and extended to *Penthouse* after its December, 1984, issue included pictures of Asian women tied up, hung from trees, and hurled onto rocks, all in sexual provocative positions and clothing.

A new *Penthouse* Publications magazine, *New Look*, added fuel to the fire. Its premier May issue described itself as a "high energy" video-style magazine of "action, adventure, and beautiful women." It alternated photo documentaries of military commando units or big-game hunters with photos of women with ropes trussed tightly into their genitals, women being threatened with weapons, and more hanging Asian women.

The May *Penthouse* magazine featured a centerfold of a nude woman with a newspaper nearby telling of the strangulation murder of a woman.

"This is the support network for

See CRAFT page S4

graphed, "The Incredible Stack O'Prints Mutilation."

Later, after she was nominated for a campus award by her arresting officer, a college official, and 400 students, she donated another copy of prints and a book about the controversy to the library. "I did not want the right nor the responsibility to make the decisions" about what belongs in libraries, she explained.

During the next few years in Santa Cruz, Craft helped stage colorful protests and made connections between two issues: the Miss California beauty pageant and anti-nudity laws.

At the pageant, raw meat was tossed on stage, blood strewn outside, and floats including a woman wearing 35 pounds of lunch meat under the slogan "judge meat not women" was paraded around the city. In 1983, during a protest with the theme "weight slavery," Craft vomited Kellogg's Corn Flakes and Nestle Crunch Bars.

Kellogg's and Nestle are important sponsors of the pageant, and the corn flake box has featured pictures of beauty queens.

It is telling, according to Craft, that the Jaycees, who often organize beauty pageants, do not allow women members. "Here is a bunch of to-be businessmen learning how to sell women's bodies. That's pimping. There are empires being built on the bodies of women."

The pageants are "just a front to find the women that [commercial sponsors] need to fit into their narrow mold. It is incredibly arrogant that a small group of volunteers and corporations can get together and pick the representative of all women," Craft said.

The mold is so narrow, she said, that in 10 years, Miss California has had only a one-inch variation in her figure. That narrow mold encourages eating disorders such as anorexia and bulimia—self-starvation and forced vomiting—to achieve the "perfect" figure.

To highlight that, Craft, crowned as "Myth California," threw up the sponsor's products, satirizing it as a "small price to pay" to fit into the "mold of white womanhood."

Other pageant protests, which got Craft arrested for illegal uses of corn flakes, stressed that using women to sell products endorsed women as sexual objects and thus endorsed rape. "If products can't sell on their own merit

then they shouldn't be sold," she declared.

Men not only try to control how women look, she said, but try to control what women can do with their looks. That is why she promotes nudity.

Craft was arrested in 1982 for sunbathing topless on a beach. This led to a series of protests, on both the West and East Coasts, and to the formation of the "Cross Your Heart Support Network." The network organized 100 topless women and men for a rally in downtown Santa Cruz on the day of the city's annual Fies a Day Parade.

Nudity laws, she said, "enable men to undress us when they want us undressed. They want their fantasy protected. They want their women flat on their backs, silent, airbrushed, and hairless." Women, in swim suits or in the nude, can be trotted out with male permission only to sell products or to satisfy the sex industry.

Topless laws may seem trivial, Craft admitted, but only "as trivial as where you sit on a bus." Nudity laws are one bar in a cage, she said.

The Cross Your Heart Support Network puts it this way: "Pornography's eight billion dollar a year industry requires strict adherence to puritanical ethics. To market the torture, rape, and maiming of women in the name of free speech and entertainment requires first and foremost that women's bodies be viewed as 'forbidden fruit'."

Craft explained, "We know it's not going to solve anything by taking off our shirts. Men do more to keep women in line than the law does" by threatening women who act out of line with rape.

An anonymous male caller to a Cross Your Heart member labeled the group as "dykes" who "need a big cock shoved down your throat."

Commercial sales of products using women's bodies has caused sexual images of women to become more violent, Craft said. "Just cunt shots of women have stopped selling so they've had to move into violence to sell magazines. They do it to promote advertisers. Advertisements appeal to dreams, fears, hopes, and insecurities to get people to buy products," Craft said.

What works for ads to control consumer purchases also works for the articles and photos that compose the content of a magazine, she said. "It's a bill of goods," she said, for publishers "to turn around and say the content—the very meat of what they sell—is not going to affect us." She cites a *Hustler* photo display of a woman being gang

raped on a pool table as an example. Three months after it appeared, a woman was gang raped on a pool table in New Bedford, Mass. She supports the idea that "violent pornography is the theory—rape is the practice."

In 1981, Preying Mantis Women's Brigade and its auxiliary declared that "Hustler magazine has been tearing up women long enough. Now it's time for women to tear up *Hustler*." During the first week, 550 copies of the magazine were destroyed. By the end of the campaign, 25 stores dropped the publication from its sales.

Those that did not received an award in the form of an ejaculating penis for "acting to protect men's right to rape." The penis award "works wonders for keeping us from being aligned with the right wing," Craft said.

The Brigade focuses on what Craft calls "illegal tactics with a media focus. We always discuss first amendment rights. We always discuss nudity." The group calls for more, not less, of both. Sex is not obscene, the Brigade and its allied organizations stress.

That attitude, Craft has found, is not the attitude of those who have created many of our current laws. The laws are so contradictory, she said, that she was once arrested for opening a *Penthouse* in a shopping mall and showing it to passing shoppers.

She stresses that her tactics and philosophy are not the only possibilities. "We need a lot of approaches," Craft said, voicing respect for the work of Andrea Dworkin and Katherine A. McKinnon, who favor outlawing violent pornography. Craft said their work

has been important because it has established violent pornography as a violation of women's right to safety rather than as obscenity or lewdness.

Craft and the Rampage Against *Penthouse* and *Hustler* are advocating a boycott against *Penthouse* advertisers: Panasonic, Canon, Magnavox, Sanyo, Casio, and B. Dalton book distributors. The Preying Mantis Brigade is urging Guccione, the *Penthouse* publisher, to take off his clothes, dress up like one of his models, and pose for the camera.

Craft encouraged men to be involved. "It's really important for men to evaluate and make statements on pornography instead of apologizing for it."

She offered few comments on the issue of gay male pornography. "It's not my place" to tell gay men what to do, she said. "That's their territory." But she cautioned that pornography for women has gone from fantasy to horrible reality, and urged gay men to be careful about the commercial fetish of violence and sex.

Craft had advice for activists. Oppression is so complex that to contemplate action of all of it is "immobilizing." Instead, she said, "take an area and work on it."

And, she added, be sure to document it. Her actions often appeal to the media so that the acts will be recorded for all women and men—and if the media won't be there, she has sometimes hired her own photographer.

"My responsibility is to push society even as little as I can in the right direction," she said. "We have to make people responsible for what they do."

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S-656

Comm. from Betsy Warriar, Agnes Kobbe and
Gabrielle Bernard regarding the referendum
to give legal options to victims of crimes
resulting from pornography.

In City Council,
September 16, 1985

9/16/85 -
N/S
Placed on file
Prepared for the
Calendar Item -