

# Letters

## Letters Policy

We want you to sound off, whether it's to complain or to compliment. Or even if it's to elaborate on an article in our publication. Here are the rules: (1) You must tell us your full name, but we won't print it if you so request; (2) you must give your complete address—even though we'll identify you only by city—and your daytime telephone number; and (3) we reserve the right to edit letters for length and clarity or to withhold their publication. Send your thoughts to:

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## Jill and Marc and Mike

The current in-print row between Jill Stewart and Marc Cooper over L.A. historian Mike Davis is independent journalism/political commentary at its best! ("Peddling Fear," Nov. 19-25; "Attack of the Lilliputians," Dec. 24-30.) It is, a wise man once pointed out, through the clash of opinions that the truth is brought out. I commend the editors of *New Times L.A.* for having the testicular fortitude to let this play out over a period of weeks on your pages. Would that the Gray Lady would learn from you.

Michael Neister  
via the Internet

Bravo to Marc Cooper for finally taking on hideous Jill Stewart, the attack dog with the pretty hair. This is a "journalist" who'll never bother developing an argument when easy name-calling will do. She really doesn't deserve all that space in *New Times*.

K.O. Hawthorne  
Silver Lake

I have followed closely the attacks on the work of Mike Davis. In his defense of *Ecology of Fear*, Cooper appears to have fallen into the same trap that ensnared Davis. Cooper argues that Davis' critics are attacking Davis' facts when their real objections apply to his ideology. What neither Cooper nor Davis seems to grasp is that facts and ideology are not easily separated.

We construct ideologies based on the patterns we observe in facts, and we interpret facts

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based on the ideologies we construct. An ideologue's understanding of facts provides a perfectly legitimate mechanism for evaluating his ideology. Arguing that facts and ideologies are separate makes it impossible to use one to improve our understanding of the other, and produces exactly the sort of work Davis has delivered, distortions of fact that conform to a static, immutable ideology.

I stopped reading Davis' *City of Quartz* halfway through because I concluded that it was a poorly written book. When Salon, the online magazine, asked me if I had any comments on *Ecology of Fear*, I declined. I had not read the work. I have read it since, with a copy of the Schockley/Westwater diatribe at hand. Schockley's criticism is shrill to the point of being brittle, but this is something I am used to. He needs a writing coach, but he is mostly on target.

Davis has not yet responded substantively to the attacks on his work, and I am looking forward to whatever he has to say. If we are choosing up teams, I will stand with Stewart, Kotkin, Friedman, and the rest of the Lilliputians.

James E. Moore, II  
Associate professor  
Urban Planning and Civil Engineering  
University of Southern California

Everyone who values truth and fairness owes Cooper a debt of gratitude for exposing Jill Stewart's attack on Mike Davis for the mean-spirited, dishonest piece of journalism it was. Where were the editors who should have killed the piece in the first place? Stewart seems beyond repair, but you guys should have a higher regard for the reputation of your journal.

Richard Abcarian  
Venice

## Susan and Laura and the Digit

Once again, *New Times* is wagging its "Finger" like a schoolmarm, calling me names that aren't so much offensive as silly. "Queen Dildo?" ("Dr. vs. Dr.," Dec. 17-23.) I supposed that the "advice" provided, that nobody should ever pose "nekkid," was meant to be mordantly witty, but it comes across as more mean-spirited and prissy than Dr. Laura, Ken Starr, and Jerry Falwell combined. People like them make the world safe for fascism.

Since *The Finger* is so deeply concerned about me getting a life, let me reassure it that I have a wonderful life, thank you, full of erotic, rewarding adventures for which the digit appears to resent me terribly. Perhaps *The Finger* should get a brain—and a grip—and stick that "Finger" up his gaspipe. He'll probably really enjoy it. Soon he'll be calling for one of my notorious dildos.

Susan Block, Ph.D.  
Los Angeles

## Keven and Jewel and Neil

Keven McAlester berates Neil Strauss for his subjective cover story about Jewel in the year-end issue of *Rolling Stone*. (*Bad Teeth*, Dec. 24-30.) What Keven so diligently missed, and Neil so thoughtfully grasped, is the very subjective appeal that Jewel has.

Anyone who has met Jewel or had the privilege of seeing her play smaller venues, particularly in earlier years, understands Neil's insight. Jewel has an ability to discard the commercial fluff of the industry, providing verbal wit toward the preposterous ends it seeks. In the quieter moments of her shows, she is quick and earnest to share her thoughts and dreams with anyone and everyone. The smaller the crowd the more thought-

ful her insight. She talks of maintaining innocence and hope. She is quick to recognize and identify the trappings of "success," and quick to display her vulnerabilities.

That is why she is adored and cherished by so many. Not only for this "realism," but for the manner in which her music conveys hope. Jewel offers a different vision than one of sarcasm and pessimism. Which vision we choose to see is a conscious decision. Neil was captured by this vision and depicted it in the best possible way—honestly. Keven missed it completely.

Mark Nisley  
via the Internet

If Jewel and Keven were in kindergarten (not a big stretch), he'd be pulling her pigtails and calling her names. He wants her so bad, you can smell it. Boring!

Jon Swift  
Los Angeles

PS: *Rolling Stone* is a glossy piece of crap? No! Thanks for letting us know, Kev.

## You go, girl!

How did Jill Stewart get so bloody smart and gutsy about the people and politics of L.A.? I often photocopy and distribute her articles in my political science classes and am wondering if there is a published collection of same? And if not, why not? "L.A. Mummified"! Great!

I've been with the L.A. Community College District since its inception, and while those board members are a bit better educated, apparently, and a tad more sophisticated, again apparently, they're no less dishonest and/or simply full of it.

Chuck Jorgensen  
Los Angeles

## Take My Picture, Gary Leonard



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