deal with darkness without repressing it and, at the same time, without feeding it? "That's a scriptural idea, Donna," Larry says a little smugly. "If you do not acknowledge the sin in you, the dark places in you, you are not only a liar, you are in a sense in bondage to the dark forces."

Though we don't see homosexuality as a kind of evil, this idea is also the driving ideology of gay liberation: If you don't acknowledge this hidden, forbidden impulse, it will overwhelm you. In the gnostic gospel of Thomas, Jesus says: "If you bring forth what is within you, what you bring forth will save you. If you do not bring forth what is within you, what you do not bring forth will destroy you."

It is a beautiful idea, and in so many ways it is true. But what this model fails to take into account is the other way desire works, not through repression but through stimulation. There is an important sense in which sexual desires and other private cravings are not "private" at all, but social; not about the inborn nature of the individual, but about the cravings incited by the family and the culture.

(As Althusser says, paraphrasing Pascal: "Kneel down, move your lips in prayer, and you will believe.")

If it's hard to tell where our "darkness" comes from, it's equally hard to know the source of our "light"—the things we believe will save us. Focus's agenda of helping people in pain isn't just cheap icing it throws on to distract us from its right-wing cake; its right-wing goals and nurturing agenda are one. "Many of the young women who go into porn have been sexually abused," Paul tells me grimly. I already know, and I add inwardly that most of the men have been, too. Paul's agenda on pornography is very different from mine, but our concern for people who've been molested seems to be just about as intense. I often pause in the middle of watching porn videos because I'm ambivalent about watching the actresses re-enact the circumstances of their abuse. Probably they believe that it will bring them to truth. ■

THIRTY YEARS AFTER A MASSACRE OF DEMONSTRATORS, MEXICANS WANT THE TRUTH.

Remembering Tlatelolco

SCOTT SHERMAN

Mexico City

On October 2, 1968, approximately 10,000 people, most of them students, arrived in the vast colonial plaza of Tlatelolco for a demonstration. It had been a tense and intoxicating summer, culminating in the military's occupation of the leading universities, but the students had no reason to expect that a mass murder was about to occur. At 6:04 PM green and red flares dropped from helicopters, soldiers burst into the square, tanks blocked the exits and an elite plainclothes battalion stormed the speakers' platform on the third-floor balcony of an apartment building, where the National Strike Committee, the leadership body of the student movement, was stationed. "The initial reaction of the people," recalls Raúl Alvarez Garín, the students' foremost leader, "was to run toward the stairwell, shouting 'the committee! the committee!' They tried to defend their leaders and were repelled." The gunfire lasted for sixty-two minutes, then started again and continued for hours. Late in the evening, when the shooting finally ceased, scores of demonstrators lay dead and wounded—children and the elderly among them. Historians surmise that bodies were taken away and burned, and sanitation workers arrived early the next morning to wash away the blood.

RON BARRETT

The slaughter, in the heart of Mexico City, was carried out at the behest of the long-reigning Institutional Revolutionary Party (PRI), which, to this day, has kept the details concerning Tlatelolco shrouded in secrecy. But thirty years later, in newspapers and on television, at countless roundtables, art exhibitions, readings and demonstrations, Mexicans are demanding the truth about that terrible event, and many are calling for judicial retribution. The thirtieth anniversary is also an occasion to reassess seven decades of authoritarian rule, and to come to grips with a precarious democratic transition.

Five years ago, prominent intellectuals formed a committee to investigate the massacre, but they accomplished little. With the PRI in control of both Congress and the presidency, and with the left at its nadir, there was insufficient political will to force an inquiry. But the electoral earthquake of July 6, 1997, changed the equation. Cuauhtémoc Cárdenas of the center-left Democratic Revolutionary Party (PRD) was elected mayor of Mexico City in a landslide victory, and the PRD, whose ranks are filled with '68ers, became the second-largest party in the lower house of Congress. Among the PRD's first successes was the formation of a truth commission to investigate what Octavio Paz called the "tangled web of ambiguous facts and enigmatic meanings" about Tlatelolco.

The anniversary's haunted and elegiac quality derives in large part from the government's unbroken silence regarding the organization, execution and cover-up of the massacre. But this year the official secrecy was in stark contrast to the vigorous public recitation of the student movement's history: its birth in a scuffle between competing groups of high school students; the police repression that immediately brought university students into the fray; the creation of the National Strike Committee, composed of democratically elected representatives from dozens

Scott Sherman's articles have appeared in the Los Angeles Times, *the* Utne Reader *and* Lingua Franca. *He writes frequently on Mexico.*

of schools; the committee's moderate demands, which quickly blossomed into a larger call for democratization; its insistence that negotiations with the regime take place in public, to preclude the possibility of co-optation; the heady synthesis of creativity (roving brigades of actors staged mock street-corner debates to win public support) and militance (chemical engineering students made Molotov cocktails in university labs); massive rallies of 200,000 people; and the events of August 27, when demonstrators taunted the paranoid and insecure president, Gustavo Díaz Ordaz, who saw the mobilization as a communist-inspired effort to undermine the Olympic Games, set to begin in Mexico City on October 12.

"Tlatelolco was a very complicated military operation," says Sergio Aguayo, who has just published a book on the subject. "And the degree of violence used was unprecedented." But those responsible for the violence have been unfailingly loyal and secretive, and a host of questions remain unanswered: Why did the state use such brute force? (The official justification, long discredited, was that students initially fired on soldiers with submachine guns.) Did the president, the interior minister or the military hierarchy order the operation? Did a government sniper shoot José Hernández Toledo, the general leading the attack, so it might be blamed on the students? Did a handful of young people attempt to defend themselves with small-caliber pistols? Finally, how many perished? "That is a question the government has systematically refused to answer," says Raúl Alvarez Garín, who was among the 2,000 people arrested that night, some of whom were tortured. Estimates of the casualties in the plaza range from twenty-seven—the government's much-ridiculed official count—to 500.

These are just some of the riddles the truth commission attempted to untangle, but it quickly became clear that it lacked the political clout to do so. Ernesto Zedillo's PRI government released 3,000 boxes of declassified documents related to 1968, but then announced that countless other materials, including those of the military, would remain closed on grounds of "national security." Former student leaders responded with full-page newspaper advertisements demanding complete access to the archives. Yet the PRI refused to yield, and without the military archives and the testimony of essential government protagonists, the truth commission was stopped in its tracks.

The battle over the archives is only one point of contention in a larger and more complex discussion about Mexican society in 1968. One of the most hotly contested disputes concerns the behavior of the armed forces. On September 21 Cárdenas himself ignited controversy when he proclaimed that the army should be exonerated for its role in the violence. Speaking as the "son of a general," he insisted that the military, as an institution, does not merit public scorn and hatred for a decision made by a handful of officers and high-ranking government officials. His remarks cut to the murky heart of the central questions about Tlatelolco: Did the army have orders to assault the demonstrators? Or did the military unleash its weaponry only when confronted with sniper fire, which it may have attributed to students but which was almost certainly the work of government sharpshooters stationed high in the buildings around the plaza? In any case, movement veterans asserted that Cárdenas not only exonerated the army before all the facts were known but did so with selfish political

motives: to curry favor with the military hierarchy in preparation for the presidential election in 2000.

"The kids of 1968 asked for democracy today, and that demand cost them their lives," Carlos Fuentes wrote in his recent novel *Diana*, "but it gave life back to Mexico." In 1970, when the repression began to ease up, movement activists, although scarred and frightened, re-emerged. A few embraced guerrilla warfare, with tragic results; others joined the PRI; but most went on to energize and transform journalism, the arts, unions, NGOs, higher education and politics. In 1989, '68ers played a decisive role in the creation of the PRD, which, because of its growing electoral presence, now qualifies for federal funds to the tune of almost $50 million annually—an unthinkable development for earlier generations of Mexican leftists. "We are the generation of change, there is no doubt about it," says Sergio Aguayo. "And Tlatelolco was the dividing line. We are unable to forget. We are still haunted by what happened."

A crucial test for the '68ers will come in 2000, when a PRD candidate, in all likelihood Cárdenas, competes once more for the presidency. For the PRI, surrendering the beleaguered, lawless capital is one thing; to relinquish the presidential chair, with its enormous privileges—including the power to release classified documents—is a much gloomier prospect.

If the anniversary was occasionally marred by romanticism and nostalgia, it was also, for a large number of Mexicans born after 1968, a lesson in historical retrieval. On October 2, 30,000 people of all ages gathered in the rain for a raucous demonstration in Tlatelolco, where hundreds of candles were deposited at the foot of a monument honoring the dead. Many of the participants were high school and university students, who harbor their own grievances against the Mexican state and who paid effusive tribute to the grizzled veterans of 1968, bringing some of the latter to tears. Thirty years ago a handful of commentators, faced with the enormity of the crime, anticipated such continuity. "Someday a votive lamp will be placed in Tlatelolco in memory of all of them," the journalist José Alvarado predicted in the wake of the bloodletting. "Other young people will keep it burning brightly." ■

LETTERS
CONTINUED

(Continued From Page 2)

members include experienced and capable activists like Ron Daniels, Ted Glick, Jim Haughton, Arthur Kinoy, Kazu Iijima, Richie Perez, Sandra Rivers, Wayne Roberts, Mimi Rosenberg, the Rev. Al Sharpton, Muriel Tillinghast, Zoilo Torres, the Rev. Lucius Walker and Jitu Weusi.

Let's be direct: *The Nation*'s editorial was racist. It was white progressives acting as if people of color don't exist, or that their efforts and contributions to progressive politics don't really count. This subtle racism continues to undercut the needed alliances that must be forged if we are to stand a chance of turning around the ever-more-ominous, corporate-dictated conservatism of both Republicans and Democrats.

Will *The Nation* open its pages to this critically needed discussion of racism within the progressive movement? Will you even print this letter? Unfortunately, the answers to both questions are probably "no" and "no." We'd love to be proven wrong. CHARLES BARRON
Unity Party Chairperson

■ *We think the Working Families Party presented the best opportunity for New Yorkers seeking a third party that could mobilize a real base of working people and communities of color in support of a progressive agenda. Three of its six co-chairs are people of color, as are many of its volunteers, and a good deal of its vote came from minority neighborhoods.*

As we go to press it looks as though both the WFP and the Greens will cross the magic 50,000-vote threshold despite initial returns that showed both parties falling a bit short. (The Unity Party, by comparison, drew 10,500 votes.) So congratulations to both efforts. That said, no one should have much doubt as to which has more promise. The WFP has a multiracial base, substantial roots inside progressive labor and a talented core of organizers. The task of getting 50,000 votes for the WFP's uninspiring placeholder candidate was enormous and required terrific discipline and energy on the part of the unions and community groups leading the WFP. In contrast, the Greens ran a TV celebrity, which certainly got press attention and votes but did little to build the kind of turf- and workplace-based support a political force needs if it is to endure. Also, in the last weeks of the campaign, Green Party leaders went out of their way to disparage the Working Families effort, an attack the WFP did not reciprocate. That sort of campaign is welcome and, we hope, will be imitated.
—THE EDITORS

HAVANA BLUES

Hackensack, N.J.

■ Having recently returned from Cuba, I can confirm the grim realities Kevin Baxter describes in "Cuba's Suspended Revolution" [Aug. 24/31]. The emergence of social classes is not the only contradiction. My wife and I met with government officials and community leaders whose devotion to the revolution results in Orwellianism with a human face, exacerbated by relative ignorance of life beyond their island nation. An agronomist with a Ph.D. praised his free education and was startled to learn that US public education is also free. A pharmacology student did not know that penicillin exists in noninjectable form. Many linked the "special economic period" to the evils of the US embargo, but no one directly blamed the demise of the Soviet Union for the current economic disaster in Cuba. And prostitution, which has taken over hotel lobbies, bars and discos, is not really prostitution, we were told, in part because the desperate women who have adopted it to survive don't consider it such. The revolution in Cuba seemed as tired as its people are with coping with it. JOSEPH CHUMAN

Providence, R.I.

■ I read Kevin Baxter's article a week after returning from researching prostitution and visiting family in Havana. Most of what he said was right on target, but he didn't capture how pissed off Cubans are at Fidel and the revolution. Yes, we US leftists are disillusioned with Cuba, but we can't begin to understand the painful disappointment the Cubans feel. I asked fifteen or twenty people whether the majority of Cubans were *en contra* or *a favor*. All, except two government functionaries, said that the great majority were no longer with the revolution. One friend likened her feelings for Fidel to those of a woman who was once very much in love with her husband and begins to be disenchanted. People don't blame the embargo. The government does, but the people blame Fidel.

People are afraid to talk, however. Everyone, it seems, has a revolutionary living in their very house. The three friends I stayed with (who had been faithful revolutionaries until the Special Period) were all against the revolution. The sister of one—a hard-line Communist—lived in the adjoining apartment. We spoke in whispers.

People in Havana are sick of having to struggle every day just to get enough to eat. A joke heard in Havana: What are the three great successes of the revolution? Healthcare, education and sports. And the three great failures? Breakfast, lunch and dinner. JENN GUITART

EMENDATION

■ In "Clean Money, Big Money" [Nov. 23] we said a medical marijuana–related ballot proposition had succeeded in Washington, DC. That is almost certainly true. But the DC Board of Elections has not released the ballot results because a last-minute action by Congress—when it looked as though the initiative would win—made it illegal for the board to certify the results. A lawsuit challenging that action is pending.