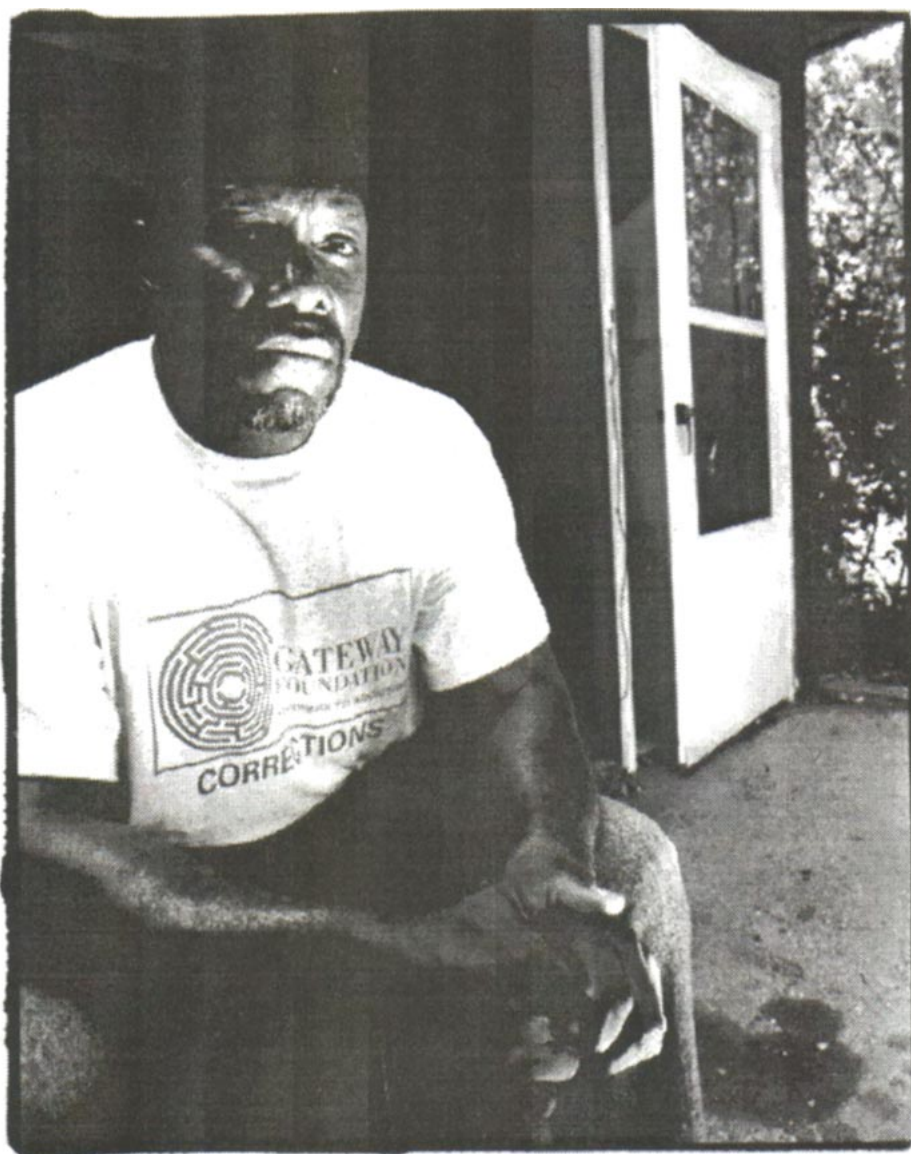


I N P E R S O N



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JUST SAY "WHOA"

*The turnaround of
Leon Dread*

Meeting Leon Dread is like meeting two men at once—the Dread of yesterday and an altogether different man, today's Dread.

The Dread of yesterday seems worth holding at a cautious distance. He was a stick-up man, a house-breaker and a car-jacker. He packed a sawed-off shotgun and a bag of heroin. He was stabbed twice, imprisoned five times, and has a rap sheet six pages long. He spent nearly 30 years caught up in an addiction to alcohol and drugs. He was, in the words of today's Dread, "a vicious animal, the worst kind of guy."

Today, Dread sits in the living room of his modest home in a south suburb of Chicago, gently bouncing his pig-tailed 2-year-old daughter on one knee. He proffers a glass of juice, smiles broadly and speaks with pride about the recent dinner sponsored by the City of Chicago's mayor's office that honored

ETC.

By Genevieve Futrelle
and David Futrelle

Sin City

A few years ago, the only "pornography" Cincinnati seemed to be able to locate was Robert Mapplethorpe's photography, in the city's very own museum. Undaunted by its 1990 failure to convict the Cincinnati Contemporary Arts Center on obscenity charges for exhibiting the photographs, Cincinnati has now turned its attention to the gay and lesbian Pink Pyramid bookstore. On June 30, the bookstore, its owner, manager and clerk were charged with pandering obscenity after the store rented a videotape of Pier Paolo Pasolini's 1975 film *Salò, or The 120 Days of Sodom* to an undercover member of the vice squad.

If the case goes to trial, the prosecution will have to prove that the film has no serious literary, artistic, political, or scientific value, and is therefore obscene. This seems a nearly impossible feat. As the National Coalition Against Censorship has pointed out in a letter to the prosecutor, Pasolini "is a world-renowned Italian filmmaker, novelist and poet of such importance that it cannot conceivably be claimed that this work is without such value."

Salò, a loose, allegorical adaptation of the Marquis de Sade's novel *120 Days of Sodom*, is set in northern Italy during World War II. The film, a favorite target of censors worldwide, includes explicit scenes of sexual torture and mutilation, and has been described by one Italian critic as "the most powerfully upsetting movie ever made." It's not exactly family entertain-

ment; in his 1994 *Movie and Video Guide*, Leonard Maltin describes the film as a "bomb," featuring "sadism, scatology and debauchery galore."

"I think prosecutors have made a grave error they probably don't understand yet," Jeffrey Louis Reed, director of a movie house in downtown Cincinnati, told the *Cincinnati Post*. "They are trying to prosecute one of the most major literary cultural artists of the 20th century."

According to Ben Kauffman of the *Cincinnati Enquirer*, First Amendment experts say the "prosecutors have little chance of winning." The three men charged, if convicted, would face up to 180 days in prison and \$1,000 in fines. The store, if convicted, could be forced to pay up to \$5,000. Perhaps the store should instead be fined for renting films that go over the head of the average undercover cop.

Turnabout

Sociologist Diana Russell, a longtime supporter of Andrea Dworkin and Catharine Mackinnon's anti-pornography crusade, has apparently been having trouble getting a book criticizing pornography into print—largely because the book contains so many graphically sexual images. Russell, who claims to oppose censorship herself, seems perplexed that efforts to censor pornography have made life difficult for her. It's "ironic," she told the *East Bay Express*, "that people who are offended by the images have made it so difficult and costly to publish a book critically analyzing them." Maybe not so much ironic as utterly predictable.

a number of doctors, teachers, police officers, journalists and Dread—today's Dread—as exemplary role models for youth.

As President Clinton gets ready to sign a crime bill that includes a "three strikes and you're out" provision that locks repeat violent offenders away for life, the story of Leon Dread deserves mention.

He has the background sociologists earmark as typical of a violent criminal: an African-American male, born into poverty in a semi-urban area by a single, 14-year-old girl. At the age of eight he was pulling his unconscious mother, an alcoholic who made a meager living through prostitution, out of bars and run-down nightclubs in their hometown of Gary, Ind. The young Dread looked up to the only men around: the neighborhood pimps, hustlers and numbers-runners. He says, "They told me not to go their way—to avoid street life—but they had money, cars, women, diamond rings, new suits. Their lifestyle was pretty attractive to a ghetto youngster who didn't have nothing to eat."

Today, when he visits Chicago schools as a volunteer in the police department's "We Care" program, Dread says he talks about role models. "I say, 'Hey, I understand the situation, but you have to start thinking. Find an adult you can trust, you can talk with.' I tell them to use their brains."

In the classes he visits, Dread tells his story, from beginning a criminal career at the age of 10 through his slide into drug addiction and a brief, violent stint in Vietnam, to another 18 years on the streets, during which time he committed hundreds of crimes. He then talks about "getting lucky" when in 1988 a judge offered him a choice: 30 years in the penitentiary or drug rehab. Dread opted for the latter and did what many both in and out of the prison system consider impossible: he got and stayed clean. Six years later, he's drug-free, married, working full time as a drug counselor at Cook County Jail and attending college at night.

He is not without remorse. "I'm just trying to do some good. After all those years of taking from the community, I need to give at least some small thing back," he says. Unlike other recovering addicts who shy away from their former haunts, Dread returns regularly to his old neighborhoods to talk to the kids. He's quick to note that times have changed on the streets, namely with the rise of a gangster culture that Dread characterizes as alarmingly cold-blooded, even to a seasoned pro like himself. "It's a wild, shoot-em-up hell out there now. In my day, we kind of wanted to live a long time. These youngsters here don't care. They don't want to be no more than 25 or 27."

Is there a remedy for this kind of urban malaise? Dread laughs. "You want to know what we should do to fix the situation? Ask the kids in the community. They'll tell you," says Dread. "Guys run up and down the streets shooting each other—it's the most exciting thing they've got going. These kids haven't had anything to show them the value of human life."

Dread advocates setting up programs to teach children how to cope with everyday pressures. "As adults, we've got to give them the skills to stop and think about the future, to set up an environment where peers will look out for one another. These days a kid will get shot for stepping on the wrong person's gym shoes. Most of the time, neither of them wants a problem. They're just not capable of thinking beyond, 'Hey, you disrespected me!'"

"It's a hard crowd to work," Dread says of his classroom audiences. "I have to reach back into the street thing and show them, 'Hey, remember, I got a Ph.D. in the streets. Where you're trying to go, I been there already.'"

—Sara Corbett

THE FIRST STONE

A CORPORATE-CHRISTIAN COALITION

By Joel Bleifuss

The old-time techniques that big business uses to influence lawmakers—campaign donations and lobbying—are being supplemented by a new and more powerful form of direct action, the systematic political mobilization of the corporation's "extended family." And one man who is helping America's largest corporations tap the political power of their extended family—employees, retirees, customers and vendors—is Ralph Reed, the executive director of the Christian Coalition.

Reed is a regularly featured speaker at conferences organized by the Foundation for Public Affairs and its sister organization, the Public Affairs Council, a network of corporate public affairs officers (PAOs) that is funded by an array of major U.S. companies and industry associations. At the council's "Annual Back-To-Back Grassroots Meetings," held last February in Sarasota, Fla., Reed delivered an address titled "State-of-the-Art Grassroots: The Christian Coalition Model."

I had the unenviable pleasure of listening in on the conference via tapes that were provided by *PR Watch*, a Madison-based quarterly that, in the words of a prominent PAO, "is dedicated to outing questionable PR and lobbying tactics." And nothing is more questionable than the un-Godly alliance of the Christian right and corporate America. Reed and the approximately 1 million members of the Christian Coalition's "extended family" are well on their way to taking over the Republican Party. As the right-wing marketing whiz Richard Viguerie put it, "A well-organized minority can often defeat an unorganized majority."

And no minority is as well organized as the Christian Coalition. Reed impressed the gathered PAOs with bottom-line figures that chart the ascension of the Christian right. Currently the Christian Coalition, founded in 1990, has more than 1 million members and 872 county chapters that are supported by an annual budget of \$20 million. According to Reed, the coalition has been growing by 10,000 members a week since Clinton's election. "By about the year 1996 or '97 the size of our annual budget and the size

of our mailing list will exceed that of the Republican Party," he said.

The Coalition plans to build that base, according to Reed, by reaching out to two demographic groups: pro-life Catholics and the 24 percent of the electorate who define themselves as born-again evangelicals.

"You're beginning to see the emergence of genuine grass-roots citizen-based movements that I think are going to be the future of American politics in the '90s and into the next century," Reed told the conference participants. He pointed out that both political parties are "in irreversible, precipitous decline." In Florida, for instance, 40 percent of the precincts lack a Republican precinct captain.

The Christian Coalition is preparing to fill that void, not with a party, but with what Reed calls "a civic league." By the year 2000 the Christian Coalition plans to establish 3,300 county chapters and 175,000 precinct organizations, one for each county and precinct in the United States.

According to Reed, the people who run America's corporations are unaware of this transformation in national politics. "If you are comfortable today, it probably means that you are going to be buried tomorrow," Reed warned.

"The corporate cultures of most of America's major Fortune 500 companies," said Reed, don't train their executives in what he calls "direct response" technologies that can mobilize citizens quickly.

For Reed, the law of the jungle prevails: "In politics there are only two kinds of shooters, quick ones and dead ones." If he is on target, the next senator in the Christian Coalition's home state of Virginia will be former felon Oliver North, and Sen. Chuck Robb (D-VA) will not know what hit him. "We will do in 1994 what we did in Virginia in 1993," Reed boasted, referring to the election of George Allen Jr., the Christian Coalition-backed candidate for governor. In Virginia alone, Reed said his organization has a membership of 38,500, and files on 175,000 voters sympathetic to various Christian Coalition causes.

The Coalition's success is based partly on technological wizardry. The group's Chesapeake, Va., headquarters are equipped with a phone system capable of generating 100,000 calls in a single weekend. Aided by a sophisticated computer system, the Coalition is in the process of obtaining the public voting records from every precinct in the United States—records that often include a history of which elections a voter has participated in and, if they voted in a primary, whether they picked up a Democratic or Republican ballot.

The Coalition provides each of its 872 chapters with the computerized voter rolls for their county. Using those lists the chapters build what Reed calls "a voter ID file." Volunteers and hired workers (who are paid \$5 per hour and must