

# MUTANT SUPERPOWERS & LITHIUM PILLS

BIPOLAR  
ADVENTURE  
STORIES!



IT'S A  
BIRD!

IT'S A  
PLANE!

ITS BY  
SASCHA SCATTER  
OF THE ICARUS  
PROJECT!

FLY - 2K6

## Welcome to My World...

All of this writing was done between December of 2004 and December of 2005. It's a mix of stories, dreams, journal entries, meeting notes, late night visions, not-so-well-thought-out musings, and politically and emotionally charged shouts-outs to my totally fucking beautiful friends and the incredible people who make up our Icarus Project community. It's definitely **not** polished writing. All of these words were originally posted on the Icarus website forums and many of them are taken out of longer discussions with real live characters who you can usually find hanging out around here: <http://theicarusproject.net>.

**The Context:** The Icarus Project began in the Fall of 2002 as a website for folks struggling with the label of "bipolar disorder" who were distrustful of the mainstream medical model. My best friend Ashley McNamara and I started it because we were two lonely, crazy people trying to find other lonely, crazy people like us. Today, due to the hard work and passion of a bunch of brilliant folks, the Icarus Project has become an emerging radical support network for a whole lot of people all over the world who are trying to create a new culture and language for the extremes of consciousness that are labeled 'madness' and 'mental illness.' We're a bunch of big dreamers, but I've learned to respect the power of big dreams.

In some ways what you hold in your hands is my perspective as one of the founding members working with a young radical organization in its first year on the ground in New York City. I think it's an important document because it gives a sense of what some of us were doing at the beginning and the spirit in which we were doing it. Icarus is rapidly (and thankfully) branching out way beyond its founders into new directions and I have a hunch the history will become important later. We're doing some pretty exciting things with large implications these days.

But this is a very personal zine, sometimes embarrassingly self-involved, sometimes more about my relationship with my dead father than with the *Icarus Revolution*. In some ways this zine is a document of my particular breed of madness and manic-depression. I cringe reading some of these words right now because it's still too recent in time. You get to hear me rant about my superpowers. You get to hear me talk about wanting to throw myself in front of traffic. You get an inside view into my sketchy love/hate relationship with pharmaceutical drugs. It's grandiose and messy, and very very unselfconsciously human. I hope it captures some of the feelings I had while it was all going on and you can ride my bipolar wave like an adventure story with an illuminated treasure map. There are multiple levels of irony going on here, I hope you have fun navigating them.

I hope more than anything that these words make you feel empowered and inspired to tell your own stories, to learn to cultivate your own mutant superpowers, and to find other people to do it with you.

The Edge of Summer 2006

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "SCATTER" twice, once above the other, with a flourish at the end.

Icarus Project  
10th Anniversary Edition  
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# *Mutant Superpowers and Lithium Pills*

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## Dangerous Gifts

Writing for me has always been a pretty desperate attempt at fighting off loneliness. It's never been something that flows easily out of me. The craft of my writing feels very much like one of those '*dangerous gifts*' that we talk about a lot these days, something that allows me to powerfully communicate with the outside world while simultaneously threatening to keep me shackled to the computer screen, all alone and feeling like a desperate animal.

When I was a kid I hated school but I watched a lot of TV and read a lot of comic books. My favorite comic book was called the X-Men. It was about a group of mutant teenagers being trained by this older guy Professor X to learn to use their superpowers so they could fight against the forces of evil. I always wished I had superpowers. When I got older I started reading stories about shamans and medicine people in indigenous cultures-- people who were born really sensitive and had traumatic things happen to them that transformed their lives forever and gave them special abilities. In these stories there were always mentors and guides to help train them and set them on their paths as warriors and healers. Just like in the comic books.

At some point years later I started realizing that all the amazing people I knew in my life--the wildest ones, the ones walking the edges and pushing the social boundaries and mixing up all the cultural stuff most normal folks were too afraid to mix up--all of them were people who'd never really fit in when they were young, had been through their share of rough times, and had somehow figured out their own ways of blazing through the world. All the people I'd known in my life who'd been considered "mentally ill" and "mad" were like the mutants in the comic books, the misfits who had to carve their own paths or else be eaten by the world they came from. The mutant teenagers were me and my friends. But most of us never had mentors and guides to lead us through to the other side and teach us how to be superheros. We just had each other.

Those who are born mutants have it really rough: the modern world wasn't made for the likes of our kind. The mainstream's waters choke us and make us gag. Modern institutions and industrial standardization feel particularly cold and heartless to us because our spirits are so wild. We see the end of the world in flashing billboards and clear-cut forests. We feel the pain of others like it's our own. We can't hold down regular jobs or make regular friends. We're told we're diseased and sick and need to be medicated for our entire lives or else horrible things will happen. There is no place for us except in institutions or out on the street. We're outcasts. And we gravitate towards other outcasts like us.

A lot of us never get past the point of being traumatized and damaged from our mutant childhoods. A lot of us become drug addicts and alcoholics because it's the only way we know how to deal with the pain and power inside us. Instead of hanging out and harnessing our power together we hang out and get wasted and try to forget.

People like us need community more than the normal ones. If we don't ever find strong community we'll spend our lives feeling out of place with a knowing sensation that something is missing. If we're lucky we find others like us and exist on the fringes of the mainstream in our little enclaves. But even in our rebel communities most of us don't know how to take care of each other. No one ever taught us how to get along with one another. We don't have guides or mentors, there is so much hidden knowledge that would make life so much easier for us: we have so much to offer the world with our brilliance and freakiness, but society is structured in such a way that the ones like us get pushed to the edges.

But that's where our dangerous gifts come in. One of the important lessons I learn over and over again in my life is that the people who can really understand and help me when I'm struggling with my madness are the ones who've had my same kind of problems and learned somehow to make it through. Being damaged and traumatized can be a dangerous gift if you figure out how to use it right and help other folks like you.

I'm one of those kids that got locked up in a psych hospital when I was a teenager because I didn't understand that I was different than most of the kids around me, that I had to take extra special care of myself to cultivate my powers and stay out of trouble. I really wish someone had been there to lead me through it when I needed it so bad, someone who had been through it before and understood what I was going through.

Our cultures version of being 'led through it' is getting stuck on a bunch of anti-psychotic meds and being put in the hospital and diagnosed as mentally ill. There are so many kids all over the country being locked up and given drugs because they aren't fitting in to the narrow roles that the system lays out for us. *And there's only so much time this can go on before the whole way our culture thinks about 'madness' explodes and melts down into something new. What's it going to look like when it happens?*

I like to read the stories from indigenous cultures and imagine a different way: the way that shamans stay shamans is that they have to *shamanize* – they have to heal people with their powers, they have to pass on the knowledge, *that's what keeps them healthy*. And in the end that's why I do the work that I do with the Icarus Project, because it keeps *me* healthy. It's very motivated by self-interest. If I want to survive in this world then I don't really have another choice: I have to figure out how to help other people who've been though what I've been through. I have to help weave the safety net to catch other people who fly too high, because it's going to be the same net that's going to catch me when I fall.

I weave my safety net with words and ideas. And that, pretty much, is what this zine is about.

## How I Started Believing in Ghosts

Posted: 24 Dec 2004 10:49 pm

Sometimes I wander around my hometown all lonely and lovesick and surrounded by ghosts, stuck with this awful longing in my gut and a broken heart beating out of its chest. There are ghosts everywhere on these streets, I think they're always there but I see them clearly when I don't get enough sleep and I'm walking the bleed in time between late night and early morning – the edge time when everything's creeping under my skin and my eyes are all glassy and fragile but the most incredible things make themselves painfully clear. I see ghosts everywhere then: ghosts in the buildings, ghosts in the flickering subway station lights, ghosts in the cracks in the sidewalk, ghosts in the names of streets, ghosts in the clouds in the sky, ghosts in the faces of the other people walking by me. Layers of ghosts like crystal onions or the cracked and peeling paint walls of abandoned apartment buildings telling stories in their colored lead rubble dust.

I first started believing in ghosts from watching myself and the way I haunt places from my past, from watching how I'm drawn to places long after I have any reason to still be there. Something just brings me back to the old places that might not even exist anymore, something deep inside that has its own map of the city carved into its glassy eyes. I get stone-faced cold, body frozen stiff, mind catapulted through time to another place. When I get into those spaces in my head I swear I coexist in a different reality than the other people walking around me -- I'm made from something else. It's like no one sees me standing there, I'm transparent – I'm just passing through on my way to some other place. I'm from a different time and I'm just haunting my old territory but I can't touch it because it's not actually there anymore. Except in my head. Sometimes I wonder about how many others there are that are just like me, wandering around in a world constructed and insulated and sometimes set aflame by their old memories.

I don't really know what happens when we die, if there's an afterlife or if our individual consciousness lives on in another form, in another body. I don't know if there's a collective consciousness that we somehow become a part of, that we return to. I don't know if we take any of this with us when we go – all these stories and memories and love and friendship. I don't know what happens to all my dead friends – do I get to be reunited with them up in the sky or at another place and time? Have we been meeting each other like this throughout history -- amidst wars and revolutions -- working in the fields and riding on the freight trains and surviving in the middle of the cities and reconnecting with each other once again in late night forums on the internet? Who knows? I don't really know.

I don't really know what happens when we die, but I know people leave their marks, whether etched in stone or the written page or silver screen or in the faces of their children, and that energy sticks around and affects our lives. There is a continuum. We carry the dead with us in our language and the way we speak it. We carry pieces of the people we love in our hearts and our eyes and our tongues, even in our slight limps as we walk down the street or the knots in our backs when we come home from work. We carry the dead in the stories we tell and the way we tell them and even in the choices of who we decide to tell them to. If there are powerful people who played important roles in our lives, they burn impressions into us with their words and actions and visions, literally leaving IMPRESSIONS on us that we take with us no matter what situations we find ourselves in and wherever we find ourselves walking down this winding road of life. This is how so many people live on long after they actually die.

By the last days of his life my father was like a dying sun. He was a striking looking man: he had a bright red beard and piercing blue eyes and a loud commanding voice until almost the end. Even from his deathbed he burned red hot with an intensity that was too much for a lot of the people around him. I was so young when he died that most of my memories of him are washed out and spotty, I remember them like faded 70's Technicolor, like the TV shows I watched when I was a little kid. Its been so long that all the memories end up bleeding together and I don't really know how to make sense of it.

The last few years of my dad's life were spent hooked up to a machine to help him breathe, mostly in bed, back and forth from home to the hospital, surrounded by piles of newspapers and books and yellow legal pads full of blue felt tip scrawl. My dad was born with the genetic disease Cystic Fibrosis, an autosomal recessive condition that causes the secretion of abnormal mucus in the lungs and problems with pancreas function and food absorption. He violently coughed a lot and was in pain most of the time and it colored his relations with the world around him. It gave him the perspective of the perpetual underdog. His face would get purple with rage when he was angry. He had a bad temper that regularly erupted on the people around him. But my dad was a brilliant man. He channeled his rage into newspaper articles and books about corruption in city politics. And there was never any question that he loved me a lot.

A couple weeks before he died they cut a hole in my dad's throat so they could stick a tube down into his stomach. He couldn't talk anymore, his voice was gone. I watched his beard go white in a matter of weeks and the fire leave his eyes. The last time I ever saw him was the night of my 13th birthday. He was scared and depressed and silent, trying his best not to show how much pain he was in. He died two days later, a week before Christmas, and suddenly there was a big empty void in my life where a dad used to be.

That was 17 years ago. I still see his ghost all over this city. And I fucking hate Christmas.

My dad's best friend Jack Newfield suddenly died three days ago. They went to Hunter College together back in the 60's and wrote a book about corruption in New York City politics in the late 70's. It's part of the complicated and intense legacy I was raised with that I've been trying to make sense of for years. My dad was from a dying era, he wrote with a manual typewriter years before the Internet existed. I wonder sometimes what he would think of the work my friends and I do and this terrifying political climate we're living under. I'd love to have conversations with him about the consolidation of corporate power and the global economy and 21<sup>st</sup> century visions of socialism and anarchism. I'd love to have conversations about love and adventure and punk rock and community organizing and all the things that make my life so meaningful that clearly were inspired in part by his role in my life. I wish so badly I could talk to him sometimes. For the past two years since I moved back to New York I've been going over to Jack and Janie's house and talking about politics and history and music and my dad. I just discovered all these old writings of his at my step-mother's house a couple weeks ago that I was so excited to talk to Jack about. But now Jack's dead. Just like that. Dead right before Christmas. I was supposed to be back in sunny California by now, back from the crazy Icarus Art Show opening at ABC No Rio, back from the chilly grey streets of my hometown. But I stayed for Jack's funeral and now New York City's got me through the weekend.

The last time I spent Christmas in New York I was a lonely miserable wreck and shortly thereafter ended up being checked into the psych ward for catatonic suicidal depression. The old ghosts caught up with me and I wasn't ready for them. That was six years ago already. I have a lot more coping strategies now. I take really good care of myself. I make sure I sleep and eat well and exercise. I take my medication. I don't let myself spend too much time alone, I force myself to be around friends. I have this incredible website community I'm a part of that I can reach out to. But all these years later I still have that familiar painful longing in my gut, my heart is still broken like it has been since I was 13 years old, I still see ghosts of my dead friends everywhere when I don't sleep enough, and in the end I think that's just how it is and how it's always going to be sometimes.

## Lucid Dreams and Vivid Hallway Breathing Exercises

Posted: 04 Jan 2005 05:07 am

So I spent the new year on my friend's land up in the mountains two hours north of the Bay Area – it was raining intensely the whole time and incredibly beautiful and foggy and there were nine of us in a little house, all really awesome people who train martial arts and live happy and healthy. It was four couples and me so I got a lot of good writing done, a lot of much needed thinking and preparing for this coming year. My journal got a lot of attention nestled next to my pillow.

The first night I slept there in the mountains I had a lucid dream. It was very simple. I'm walking through a corridor, an old alley, and everything is painted dark green and white, but the paint is really old and is chipping off all over the place. I suddenly realize I'm dreaming and run my hand along the wall and break off a bunch of little paint chips which crack and fall to the ground. I look at my hand and keep walking. I'm very excited about the fact that I'm lucid dreaming and I'm trying to figure out how to make it continue. There's a voice speaking above me, I think it's my voice but older, and I'm telling myself to breath slowly and consciously through my nose and relax. I'm coaching myself, I'm being coached by myself, and it feels really good. I wake up on New Year's Day feeling incredibly peaceful for the first time in a while. It feels like life is full of potential.

Let me just interject here that I'm fascinated by dreams – and the power of our subconscious minds. I've been writing my dreams down on and off since I was 11 years old, some periods a lot more intensely than others. When I was in my early 20's I edited this big zine called *The Collective Unconscious: A Collection of Dreams From the Underground* and it had about 50 of my friend's dreams in it all illustrated and bizarre and revealing and beautiful. Maybe you've seen it in your bathroom? I discovered that dream writing and sharing was this amazing way for folks who didn't think of themselves as particularly creative to talk about the intense stuff going on inside their heads. I lived in this punk house at the time and none of us had real jobs so we'd wake up late and sit around the living room talking about our dreams and we all started dreaming about each other after awhile. It was really interesting. All this was before the internet really existed but ever since Ashley and I started the Icarus Project I've had this fantasy about creating a really beautiful forum for people to talk about their dreams and try and make some sense of them. This forum is a start but I've got big fantasies so watch out! I've been reading this really interesting book lately called *Dream Work: Techniques for Discovering the Creative Power in Dreams* written in 1983 by a guy named Jeremy Taylor. The guy is really cool and the book has a whole section on doing group dream work which is the best stuff

I've ever read on the topic and at some point I want to test some of this stuff out, in person and online. I think it's so important for the world we're trying to create. It's an odd thing that something as amazing and potentially liberating as dreaming isn't talked about more in our culture. Where are our priorities? I think most people in our society are just content to watch other people's dreams in the form of television and Hollywood movies. I like my dreams better because they don't have any corporate sponsorship or weird sneaky agendas. Why do you think they call it Programming?

Anyway, I've personally been wanting to learn how to lucid dream in a serious way for a long time. I've been doing it for years, but never very consciously, and I always slip out of it soon after I realize that I'm dreaming. Shortly after I realize I'm dreaming I usually just slip into another dream and then only remember once I've woken up and am writing it down. The "crazy" thing is that I've actually spent multiple days, maybe even weeks of my life, when I was in a state that felt very much like lucid dreaming – slipping in and out of incredibly altered states of consciousness and honestly I'm just fucking fascinated by it. If you've read any of my stories about getting locked up in the psych ward I talk about walking on the subway tracks in New York and thinking the world is ending and running down the streets of Los Angeles smashing out windows with my bare fists and all that madness. Well when that stuff was happening I was convinced I was living in my own dream world and that I could do whatever I wanted – and I hadn't slept in a really long time. A really common theme whenever this happens is that I'm convinced that we're all one, everything in the universe, and that, just like in dreams, everyone I see is just a reflection of myself. I know this happens to a lot of other people in different ways, and I know that it's not just delusion. Different books I've been reading lately refer to that type of psychosis as walking through the gates of Heaven with your ego still on and getting kicked back to Earth. (But this is a way longer discussion for another time.)

I've always been scared and fascinated by that part of my mind, scared of losing my ability to differentiate between awake and asleep and fascinated with the power my mind has to come up with all kinds of amazing fantasies and stories and answers to seemingly unanswerable questions. But really for the first time in my life, and definitely a result of the existence of this website, these days I'm in a really healthy place as far as my connection to the intense crazy stuff going on in my head, and I'm ready to explore things further, ready to delve deep and see what I find. It's been pretty clear to me for a long time that my dreams hold the keys to all these secrets and answers that I'm searching for, and that if I can learn to control my dreams while I'm sleeping I'm going to be able to do some seriously badass shit in the material world.

So with that in mind, I woke up on January 2nd and I'd had these two intense lucid dreams: in the first one I'm walking up the stairs of this halfway house (although it's laid out like my old collective house in Oakland the Batcave, which I suddenly realized as I'm typing this, used to be a halfway house years before the punks moved in) and I'm there to rescue someone, a young woman, I'm not sure who she is but I know I need to get her out of there. I'm walking up the stairs and that's when I become lucid (for some reason it usually happens when I'm walking down hallways or walking up/down stairs) and start running my hand against the stairwell walls consciously like the previous night. That reminds me to focus on my breathing and everything comes into focus really vividly. I get to the top of the stairs and the place is trashed, furniture and clothes everywhere, the bathroom is disgusting with shitty pieces of toilet paper all over the sink and floor and toilet. Fuck, I have to get out of here. But just as I'm getting so disgusted I have this realization that this place is actually the inside of my mind – that this place is my creation and I carry it with me wherever I go and that I can't just leave and expect it to disappear. But it's a young woman I'm looking for, a teenager, and I find her. The two of us are now sitting with a shaman from Venezuela – a dark young man with long hair and bright bright eyes. We're looking at maps together – beautifully colorful maps of Central and South America, trying to figure out where to go from here.

The second dream just comes out of the first, the transition is hazy but suddenly I'm with a group of folks who want to start a seed library project (in a former life before the Icarus Project I used to work on organic farms and travel around teaching seed saving workshops to gardeners and giving talks about creating community controlled agriculture systems and it's been on my mind a lot lately cause I got asked to teach a summer class at my friend's school and I need to write the syllabus) and I immediately begin teaching folks about botanical classification and trying to organize a pile of seed packs into plant families. The dynamic between everyone is great and I'm really pleased with how it's going but then suddenly there's this older hippie looking guy wearing a smiley face shirt but he's frowning and distracting everyone, trying to get folks to go to some anti-genetic engineering protest that's just going to take away much needed energy for the work we're doing. He's pissing me off and I'm about to tell him so when I suddenly remember again that I'm dreaming and that this guy is actually just me and I need to chill out and breathe and see what happens. It's just a dream after all and things work themselves out somehow. I woke up and wrote the dream down and then sat there for 30 minutes and wrote the whole outline and syllabus for the radical agriculture class I'm planning to teach. And it felt really good. I felt connected to myself in a way I only feel connected when I write down a bunch of intense dreams.

That was two days ago. This morning I woke up from a whole series of being

chased by cop dreams and they were really vivid but I never got lucid even though I spent a bunch of time writing about it before bed. I'm headed off to sleep now. The Seroquel's kicked in and my eyes are getting heavy and it's such a blessing. I'm so thankful for deep sleep. Ashley's passed out asleep next to me looking all angelic in the way only sleeping people do, we're both kind of sick and spending a bunch of time in bed, getting ready for another intense winter writing project.

So that's it, I just wanted to share my dreams with you all, and wish you all a happy New Year and some really sweet and intense dreams. Maybe we'll see each other awake or asleep sometime – here or on the other side of reality somewhere. I'd love to hear more about people's experiences with lucid dreaming and anything related, I'll post more as it comes...breathing deep with glassy sleep eyes and a heavy head

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Sascha



## **Johnny Rotten Was My Dad**

Posted: 17 Jan 2005 10:35 pm

Once upon a time I was convinced that the world was about to end and that I was some kind of cyber-Messiah that was going to help people make the transition to the next level of reality which was going to somehow be on television once the material world had blown up. Or something like that. I have to be in the right frame of mind to be able to recollect my wacked out thought progressions from when I was manic because otherwise the whole thing just seems so ludicrous I just get self conscious and feel weird about it...

John Nelson, in *Healing the Split*, talks about how people like us, the mad ones, will get "psychotic" and sometimes have access to higher levels of reality, but because we're grounded in everyday normal thought processes, we interpret our experiences with the symbolic language we've been given by society. Which doesn't exactly work to explain those kind of intense transformations of consciousness.

I grew up really involved in the punk scene in New York City, all the music I listened to is deeply embedded in my subconscious and it's been that way for a long time. When I was growing up my dad was this intensely angry red haired guy who yelled a lot and had a disease which made him constantly cough up phlegm and spit. He died when I was 13 but when I was 27 and going insane in Los Angeles I had a revelation that my father was actually Johnny Rotten, the lead singer of The Sex Pistols - *that I was born in phlegm and blood of punk rock!* All those old songs from 1977 were actually about my life. It was really obvious to me and the fact that no one else could see it was just more proof that I had been chosen to have the truths revealed to me. I was also convinced Poly Styrene, the singer of Xray-Spex (another 70's British punk band) was a prophet and time traveler. I thought Debbie Harry was talking directly to me when I listened to Blondie records, etc. Everything around me was a complex riddle filled with fascinating characters and stories that went in all directions but eventually led right back to me.

We make sense of what happens to us with what we've got. One revelation I've felt so strongly in heightened states of mania is a connection to every other living thing - an intense feeling of Oneness with everything else in the universe. Which is a higher truth, no doubt. But for me I somehow I've always kept my ego on when reaching that higher truth and in intense states of delusion somehow assumed that everything was my creation: every painting ever painted - I did that! Every song ever written - I wrote that! I am everyone and everything – the alpha and the omega - the beginning and the end. There is a sliver of truth in it, of course there is, and I think some of the long term work of the Icarus Pro-

ject might be about creating ways and spaces for people to be able to reach those higher places and come back down without ending up in the hospital. I think it's possible, I know it's possible, but we have a lot of work to do to figure it out. **One thing that's for sure is that it's going to take people like us who know what it's like to go to those places to be able to do this work.** I know for myself that getting over my shame at feeling like a delusional crazy person and really coming to understand just how incredible it is that I've had these experiences has changed my life so much. And when I meet other people who tell me equally as crazy stories, they just feel like family to me, and definitely make me feel less alone.



## Dreams About Making Secret Community

Posted: 26 Jan 2005 04:31 pm

This is the last dream I wrote before I got up this morning. Right before I went to sleep I was writing an email to my friend who's an amazing comic book artist and wants to collaborate with us on an Icarus comic so I was seeing this dream all in her cool black and white art style:

Dreaming that I'm walking along the edge of the city and the beach is all made out of used tires and garbage - crazy post-apocalyptic eco-disaster style, but amidst it all is this big old tree with these huge pre-historic birds nesting in it, or at least chillin' in it on their way to somewhere else. In the dream I'm a little girl looking up in the tree by the tire beach, a little girl who's been born in the wrong time and place, seeing this family of birds and understanding that somehow I'm like them, looking for my network of big old trees across the world. In the dream somehow I know that the birds eat the little fruits of these rare magical trees and they're the only ones who have the right type of stomach acid in their guts to be able to scarify the seeds in the fruit so that when they shit them out they leave them in exactly perfect piles of awakened seeds and phosphorous for the seeds to be able to grow into new trees. **The birds and the trees need each other**, the girl thinks, they've needed each other for a long time and they can't live without each other. They co-evolved and the world took a different turn and now they're the freaks being hunted to extinction but they carry all this old knowledge with them. *I need to find my trees*, the girl thinks. *Safe houses, community centers. Only people like me can do it, if I don't find my people I'm going to spend my life in a world that never feels like home.*



## Never Never Land and the First Big Icarus Visioning Meeting

Posted: 02 Feb 2005 08:35 pm

It felt historic to me, and I don't think it was just because I'd slept so little the night before.

The Icarus Project Visioning Meeting this past Sunday was an incredible gathering of people in a warm room on a cold winter's day in New York City. It was the kind of meeting that leaves you tired and satisfied and excited for the future, maybe slightly overwhelmed with all the possibilities suddenly opened up, and hoping that the energy created can actually carry out into the world and make the kind of changes everyone envisioned together. There were 25+ folks who showed up over the course of the day and most of us stuck around talking and brainstorming until 6 pm that evening. We all sat in a circle in one of the offices in the Silvia Rivera Law Project, an amazing radical law collective that was set up with the purpose of supporting low income transgender people of color. Like the Icarus Project, they're a young non-profit that's figuring out the tricky transition from being the vision of a couple people to becoming a larger organization that doesn't mimic the same top down corporate structure that destroys so many other projects. This is a really important time of vision and growth for everyone who actually cares about the future of the Icarus Project and I think that feeling was in the air.

I have this horrible memory from when I was 24 years old of being locked up in this behavior modification program out in the suburbs for people with severe psychiatric disabilities. I was away from all my friends and I was recovering from having a dramatic psychotic breakdown, I was totally suicidal, so depressed that all my thoughts were really foggy and all I could really focus on was that I was a horrible person and how I just wanted at all to be over. I remember sitting in this therapist's office at the program house and she was asking me to tell her about my life and I was telling her stories about sitting on Earth First! road blockades in the forest in Oregon and riding freight trains in the middle of the summer with packs of my friends and living in big collective houses and cooking Food Not Bombs in community centers and the squats on the Lower East Side. I told her about my amazing friends who were like superheroes and all the things we did together to change the world...I remember she cut me off in mid sentence and told me that it was 'time for me to grow up', that I was 'obviously delusional and dysfunctional and that I'd been living in some kind of Never Never Land. Who did I think I was, Peter Pan?' She told me I needed to get my life together and stop living in a dream world that obviously didn't really exist except in my fantasies.

I remember sitting there in her little office, squinting under the fluorescent

lights feeling skinny and weak and vulnerable, trying to figure out if I was just crazy and delusional. Did I just make up all those stories in my mind? Was I really just insane? Was it really all a dream? My whole history felt so far away at that moment and I felt so horribly alone.

Going over the email list from Sunday's meeting now, looking at all these names – thinking about the people I was in a room with just a few days ago talking about the future, my heart swells up with joy and pride and this really powerful sense of belonging. I feel so lucky to have made it this far in my life, to a place where I will never doubt myself like that again. Looking over this list and seeing all the faces – the mix of people from Fountain House, the Freedom Center, and the Icarus Project support group. The students from NYU and the New School and Sarah Lawrence and Hampshire College. All the characters that are in my community: the radical librarian 'zine makers with self-diagnosed PTSD and magical smiles, the community organizer schizoaffective shamans who walk between the straight and freaky worlds, the visionary punk rock cel-lists with fire coming out of their eyes, the phenomenal Fountain House Youth Group dancer/dreamers trying to make their way in this world that doesn't seem to be made for them, the quiet Food Not Bombs orchestrators who play loud music and study neuroscience, the comic book artists with mad superpowers sketching quietly in the corner, the community gardener yoga instructor labyrinth builders, the Visual Resistance/ABC No Rio artist crews, the bespeckled mischievous guerilla theater culture jamming propagandists, the Floridian radical cheerleader originator who didn't say a word the whole meeting but I swear I saw her there smiling in the corner, the mad manifesto reading dreadlocked teenage instigators, the Brooklyn Autonomous Space proclamors, the artists and art therapists who came from far away and who's superpowers are empathy and understanding, the freight train riding ex/reemerging activist Hellerwork practitioners, all of these amazing amazing amazing people. We are so lucky to have each other. This community of ours is large and vibrant and growing everyday. The Beehive Collective from Maine sent an email to be read at the meeting about how they want to join forces with the Icarus Project and that they might be buying a four story building that used to be a nursing home so they can turn it into an artists' co-op and activist retreat center! The future is exciting and wide fucking open.

I have all kinds of notes with very practical things on them about plans we sketched and different ways that that Fountain House and the Icarus Project and the Freedom Center can work together in the near future. It looks like the NYU kids and the Icarus Support Group are going to join forces and start meeting on the NYU campus for now. I'll write a bunch more about that all soon. Ashley and I spent all of yesterday talking about our non-profit status and how we're

going to transition the Icarus Project into something that's run by two people into something that is collectively created and carried by a network of committees and collections of crazy creatures. A little chaos and disaster has to be factored into all of our plans, but I have no doubt that in this next year we're going to take the world by storm and I'll tell you something with joy and pride and a sparkle in my eyes:

That old cracker therapist lady back at the behavior modification program who told me I was living in Never Never Land can kiss my bipolar ass! Watch out!

# Freedom Center

**Freedom Center** is run by and for users and survivors of psychiatry. We work for a transformation of the mental health system: true informed consent, an end to force and coercion, abolition of degrading labels, funding for peer-run holistic alternatives, and protection of human rights. We are a part of **Mindfreedom**, a global network of groups working for human rights worldwide, and **M-POWER**, the state-wide advocacy group of people receiving mental health services in Massachusetts.



Weekly Support Group \* Free Monday Yoga Class \* Writing Group  
Human Rights Advocacy \* Resource Referrals \* Internet Chat  
Public Education \* Peer-Led Recovery \* Activism  
Speak-Outs \* Holistic Alternatives to Toxic Psych Drugs

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We meet Thursday nights; new members, allies, and volunteers are welcome.

(413) 582-9948 [info@freedom-center.org](mailto:info@freedom-center.org) [www.freedom-center.org](http://www.freedom-center.org)

## **Wintertime Daydream Magic Spells 1/30/05**

Posted: 04 Feb 2005 06:54 pm

So below are some notes from the Historic Icarus Project/Fountain House/Freedom Center Meeting last Sunday that I kind of expanded on with some further ideas and conversations that have happened outside the meeting and along the way. There are a lot of unresolved questions waiting to be answered and unfinished ideas waiting to be finished and run with...

### **Brainstorm Meeting Notes and Wintertime Daydream Magic Spells 1/30/05**

(Please keep in mind that all of these ideas are being put out for discussion purposes and should not be taken as final anything! Work in constant progress/evolvement --please add your input!)

#### **Strategy for New Icarus Project Groups**

-Here's the basic plan/organizing strategy for starting new Icarus Project Support Groups: there will be an event organized at a school by a student group where a small crew of us Icarus folks will go and talk about the work we're doing and pose a bunch of questions and throw out ideas with the purpose of starting a discussion (just like what Ashley and Sascha have been doing around the country for the last couple years). We'll have a set list of questions and ideas but we can improvise all we want depending on the situation. The difference now is that there will actually be a clear organizing plan of what to do after the meeting and interested folks who came to the event can return the following week and continue the discussion to get involved further. Depending on how much guidance new groups want/need there will be a set of intro exercises, discussion topics, and the like to keep things flowing. Beginning in April there will be a phone line based out of Fountain House if new organizers need help/encouragement/ access to resources/ideas for strategies. The Icarus office based at Fountain House will be a place where they can come for all that stuff and we can have periodic organizer meetings.

#### **Experimental Communication Groups**

-This is a proposal to continue the regular Icarus Project Support Group Sunday meetings but create additional experimental groups of Icarus folks who will meet separately to mess around with other strategies of communication: theater exercises and role playing games and the like. A bunch of different exercises are going to be taken from theater of the oppressed/re-evaluation counseling methods and more and we can adapt them to our needs as we desire. Beginning in April we can start meeting on a weekly basis at Fountain House and then incorporate games and exercises into our regular groups.

-The Icarus Support group started off as a group of primarily bipolar folks. As the group expands to encompass folks struggling with other issues (PTSD, OCD, schizophrenia, etc. general life insanity!) it would be great to let that cross-pollination and communication continue to flourish while maybe a strictly bipolar support group can form once again and talk about stuff specific to us bipolar folks. Last Sunday, Will from the Freedom Center suggested to Helen from the Fountain House Youth Group that she start an Icarus group comprised of folks struggling with schizoaffective/schizophrenia. Are there thoughts on this?

### Guerilla Mental Health Actions

-We should go about putting together teams of guerilla media/theater people to target high schools and colleges around the city with flyers and other kinds of creative outreach.

We already have the pretty Icarus 'Navigating the Space Between Brilliance and Madness' postcards but by the springtime we should have brochures as well. Anyone up for making new art?

We need to put together lists of high schools/colleges/universities to do outreach to and find students who are interested in getting involved in radical mental health support and cultivating dangerous gifts/learning to use their super-powers kinds of projects!

Ketchup suggested getting in touch with guidance councilors in high schools. How can we make that happen?

### The Icarus Health Provider Agreement

The revised (final?) version Icarus Project Provider Agreement just got finished a couple minutes ago (I watched it happen right here next to me as I typed this!) so as soon as people feel like it we can start working on putting together the local NYC Icarus Project Health Provider Network and then spread the word and idea out to groups around the country and world. We could begin having separate categories for Therapists, Psychiatrists, Herbalists, Acupuncturists, Bodyworkers... If anyone knows cool health care providers already that would be a good place to start cause inevitably if we find a couple good ones they should know others we can talk to. I can think of some off the top of my head in NYC who would be great to talk to - someone ask me for names and I'll give you a list.

### Icarus Project Reading Group/Movie Night Group

Come April it would be great to start an Icarus Project Reading Group that can meet weekly. *Healing the Split* by John Nelson's still my favorite pick. Any other ideas out there? It would be awesome to have a weekly movie night and watch really good movies - let's start putting together a list.

Practical Strategies that can start early next week (like at the Students for Social Equality Meeting on Monday for example (Jordan!):

For the new NYU Icarus student group

An outreach flyer campaign around campus with really striking images about:  
Preventing suicide by building community

Preventing suicide by learning how to talk to each other about the scary stuff  
Preventing suicide by not being afraid to speak out

The folks from Visual Resistance could put together a series of flyers using text that says things like:

"Sometimes wanting to kill yourself just means you don't want to live the life you are living and you can change your life with that power - cause what the hell - you were about to Lose your whole life - so why not instead Lose your school/job/pretenses/fears/adherence to societies standards/shame. I have found some of my suicidal episodes to be strangely liberating in that way. I wouldn't take back any of what made me who I am today.'

Come visit the Icarus Project at <http://theIcarusproject.net> or come to the TIP support group meeting Thurs 6 pm...."

Or

"Feeling Crazy?

You Are Not Alone

Come visit the Icarus Project at <http://theIcarusproject.net> or come to the TIP support group meeting Thurs 6 pm..."

The new TIP group could organize an event for students to get together and talk about radical ways of thinking about suicide and suicide prevention. Not a big event, but a well facilitated discussion, kind of like last time but maybe with more focus. Ideas?

There are a couple faculty at NYU who have expressed interest in helping the Icarus Project. One of them is Brad Lewis PhD who had us come and speak in his class last semester. He's actually a radical psychiatrist who wrote one of the letters of recommendation that helped us get the big grant.

FUTURE ICARUS PROJECT COLLABORATIONS WITH FOUNTAIN HOUSE

There was talk about the importance of having a supportive community in the middle of the hectic ass city. What does supportive community look like? Sas-

cha and others fantasized about groups of people doing healthy stuff together everyday: cooking meals, yoga/tai-chi/chi gong classes/meditation, making art

Unresolved questions that need to get answered soon:

When can we start having our Sunday Icarus meetings at Fountain House?

What needs to happen to make that happen?

How is TIP going to interact with the clubhouse membership/work ordered day system? (To be a member of Fountain House you have to be diagnosed with a 'severe mental illness' such as bipolar, schizophrenia, major depression. What about those of us that don't identify that way/don't want to get 'official crazy status' from a doctor? How are Icarus Project activities going to fit into the 'work ordered day'? Should we come up with a set of activities that are considered 'work' that people coming to participate in TIP can plug into?)

Things we would like to see happen really soon if possible:

Making space at Fountain House for a radical mental health library/resource center (collection of books/zines/info)

Fountain House is going to give us office space with a desk and phone line/voicemail line. How can we use this to the best advantage possible? Who can 'staff' the desk? What does this mean?

Steady stream of Art Supplies to make things beautiful.

Kevin still has a bunch of art left over from the ABC No Rio art show - how can we get it on the walls of the newly renovated space? Where should the art live until then cause he's leaving for Minneapolis on Tuesday?

How can we have access to the kitchen to cook meals sometimes? (FH has a dope kitchen set-up!)

How can TIP help support/inspire/collaborate with the Fountain House Youth Group?

What kind of things does the FH Youth Group do now? How many 'youth' are involved in it?

We would like to help set up a:

Writing Group

Dream Group

Martial Arts Group

Meditation Group

The Beehive Design Collective has expressed their desire to get involved in working with the Icarus Project. Maybe we can figure out some way to involve the youth group in some kind of outlandish art project with them from far away.

David Murphy is really interested in helping to set up a 'Somatic Experiencing in Groups' project that would focus on body work and movement education and

dialogue/trauma first aid/exciting things like that. How can we get him into to Fountain House for a regular class? Is there money from Fountain House to pay him to do this work?

Ketchup and the Teenage Lobotomy crew are interested in working with the Fountain House Youth Group and though this is a little vague at the moment it obviously needs to happen.

Fly has expressed interest in teaching/facilitating some kind of art project with the Youth Group at Fountain House. This is also a little vague but obviously needs to happen

Ariane builds these really amazing labyrinth structures and wants to collaborate on some kind of Icarus labyrinth creation in the springtime which would involve her leading a group of people into creating a collaborative vision. This should also definitely happen Ariane also does a bunch of Permaculture/community gardening work and would be a great resource in that regard.

How can TIP interact/collaborate with the Horticulture Department at Fountain House? Are there ways we can build bridges between folks doing sustainable agriculture/Permaculture/community garden organizing in New York City or the Hudson Valley? Is there space to grow seedlings? Space to grow gardens? Can interested Fountain House members participate in community garden/Permaculture projects we know about around the city? What are the current projects of the Fountain House Horticulture Department? We know Fountain House has land up in the Hudson Valley somewhere - how is it being used? Can we help make things happen there?

How can TIP interact/collaborate with the Audio/Visual department at Fountain House?



## **Lucid Dream: Messing With the Psychic Architecture**

Posted: 07 Feb 2005 12:58 pm

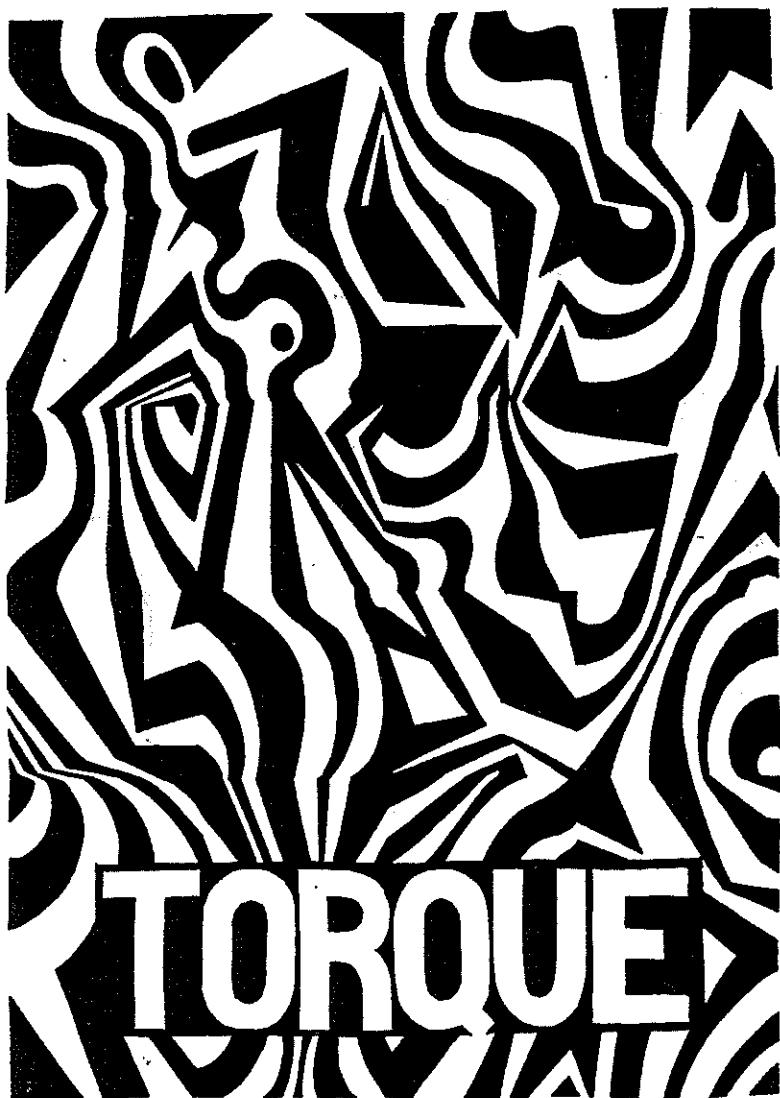
I'm wandering through the desert and on the horizon I see all these figures approaching. I'm scared, I'm in the middle of the desert by myself and I have no idea what's about to happen. The figures get closer and I see they're cats and dogs! The first ones arrive by my side and are checking me out, dogs licking my feet, cats doing that cat thing of rubbing up against my leg to claim territory. But there are tons of them - like a herd of buffalo! - and leading the procession is this winged horse that sees me but marches right by me with a snort - pays me no mind. The horse is huge and golden colored and I'm awed by its presence - all these cats and dogs are following the winged horse in the middle of the desert I'm just staring there trying to make sense of it all.

Lately in my dreams I've been getting to this point where I realize I'm dreaming and as soon as I do that everything shifts - I can't actually control the action but as soon as I'm conscious the landscape and people and everything else takes on this lucid quality - and I can usually only hold it for like half a minute or not even.

This morning in my dream, instead of realizing I was dreaming (when the parade of cats and dogs marched by lead by a winged horse in the middle of the desert!) I understood it as just being in a "different reality" that was existing simultaneously with my waking reality. When Ashley and I were hanging out on Friday night writing the introduction to the new book together I had this similar vision of a "different reality" or "alternate universe" - seeing the psychic architecture of the world all around me. Kind of like when Ashley and I log on to the Icarus site as administrators and we can see all this stuff everyone else can't - we have the power to change things around without it being consciously visible to everyone else. That's what it feels like when we're writing sometimes - like we're creating a universe made of metaphors for other people to exist in, that we're doing our part to bend and shift consensus reality.

So in my dream this morning I suddenly found myself in that place built by psychic architecture - it was the middle of the desert but instead of seeing it as a dream I saw it as somewhere else that wasn't just happening inside my head - it was like a frequency I was tuning into or something and there were already all these other people there. and I was really bummed, because all of a sudden I noticed that the Scientologists and the Jehovah's Witnesses were already there and had built these huge ugly buildings - it was like getting to some cool neighborhood and realizing you'd missed your chance to live there cause it had already been gentrified by a bunch of yuppies and corporate chain stores. What the hell are the JoHo's doing here? I think to myself. Oh, of course, they've been colonizing the psychic space around us for a long time. Ashley and I joke that

maybe we should have little old ladies stand at the entrance to the subway hanging out Icarus Project magazines. Whatever, I think to myself, I just need to change channels, and I flip the switch.



## You Are Not Alone – A Punk Rock Love Story

Posted: 10 Feb 2005 01:09

When I was 14 years old, my best friend Danny Vives went to Bleeker Bob's Music Store in the West Village and got a cassette tape of *The Day The Country Died* by the Subhumans. We listened to it incessantly. It felt like the first real music I'd ever heard in my whole life.

The Subhumans were a British punk band from the early '80's and I could relate to the lyrics more than anything I'd ever be exposed to. I was already really into the Sex Pistols, who were the big commercial British punk rock band from 1977 and inspired a million bands after them, but after hearing *The Day the Country Died* they just seemed like a bunch of poseurs and I immediately denied ever having liked them. They were way too mainstream.

Me and Danny would take the subway home from our high school in the Bronx and I remember this one day really clearly we were standing on the subway platform at 181st street and Danny had his little boom box in his hand, shaved head, boots and braces (he was an aspiring skinhead) and much to the chagrin of the other people in the station was playing this one song at top volume and singing along:

No I don't believe in Jesus Christ  
My mother died of cancer when I was 5  
No I don't believe in religion  
I was forced to go to church, I wasn't told why  
No I don't believe in the police  
Cause police brutality isn't a dream  
No I don't believe in the system  
Cause nothing it does makes sense to me

Don't worry you'll get over it  
You'll grow up, you'll calm down  
Another youth, another fashion  
You'll get over it, you'll calm down  
You don't really mean what you say  
You've had too much to drink  
Don't be so full of hatred  
It's not as bad as you think

No I don't believe in what you say!  
You're just part of what I despise  
Yes you're part of the fucking system  
I ain't blind, I can see your lies  
Cos the system thrives on ignorance  
What the public don't know, they can't reject  
In the face of you all I stand defiant  
The rest of the people, they wanna forget

It might not seem like much of a revelation now, but at the time it felt like so important – hearing someone else from another time and place who clearly un-

derstood us and was telling us we weren't alone in all our feelings of teenage alienation. Not long after that Danny started hanging out with the 'real' skinheads and going around beating people up and being a general dickhead. I started hanging out with the 'real' punks and anarchists and going to shows in the squats and hanging out on the Lower East Side. We'd run into each other sometimes with our respective gangs of friends walking through Tompkins Park and eye each other warily. It was like a scene out of that movie *Quanrophenia* or something. That's really a whole other story for another time.

When I was 15 I got a Culture Shock tape. Culture Shock was the group Dick Lucus started after the Subhumans broke up. Dick Lucus was the singer guy who wrote all the words to the Subhumans songs. On the tape it said you could write to the band for a lyrics sheet, so I sent them a letter. One day a few months later I got a letter in the mail from England and it was written from Dick Lucus! He actually wrote me a letter in that funny handwriting that was on all the lyric sheets! I was so happy!

It may sound silly but I really feel like that was this turning point in my life in some ways: that letter made me feel like I was a part of something so much greater than myself, connected into something really important and real. Here's the lyrics to a song off that Culture Shock record (it's so punk that the lyrics weren't even on the internet and I had to type them up from Ashley's housemate's record! In fact, I got the idea to write this cause he was playing this record the other day and I hadn't heard it in at least 10 years and I was getting all wistful and sappy.)

#### You Are Not Alone

....But don't forget that if you feel on your own  
that person right next to you could feel the same  
unloved or unwanted repressed nor unknown  
until they're discovered alone they remain  
they could be belligerent but then again  
they could be the person that needs you as a friend

Sometimes you despise yourself – You Are Not Alone  
Everyone needs someone else – You Are Not Alone

And someone out there is needing you  
Just to have somebody to talk to  
Just like you always want them to do  
You are not alone

Sometimes you despise yourself – You Are Not Alone  
Everyone needs someone else – You Are Not Alone

Once again, no huge revelation all these years later, but it was just so good to hear someone you respected saying things like this out loud.

What can we do for our friends in times of extreme crisis to keep them from either getting locked up or hurting themselves?

How can we set up some kind of alternative support network for all of us who feel so alienated and distrustful of the mainstream?

How do we figure out what's society's crap and what's our own crap and when the lines are too hard to draw?

And if the language we use to talk about mental illness in our culture doesn't capture what so many of us go through and leaves us feeling disempowered, how do we go about creating new language that works for us?

Chances are pretty high that if you're reading this, you or someone you care about has been grappling with these questions for years.

Come to a discussion that is starting all over the country and is being orchestrated by The Icarus Project – a growing network of people dedicated to creating practical alternatives to the conventional medical establishment. <http://theicarusproject.net>

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Anyway, when I was 19 I was playing in this punk band myself and we played a show with Dick Lucus' band Citizen Fish at ABC No Rio. It was a big fucking deal. The striking memory from that night was being at this party in Brooklyn that night, drunk, my arm around Dick Lucus' shoulders, saying: *"Man, Dick, when I was 14 years old you were my fucking hero! Your lyrics saved my life, they made me feel like I wasn't alone, thank you so much!"* And I remember Dick Lucus smiling back at me through his little glasses and stubbly face all drunk and saying: *"That's beautiful, mate! When I was 14 all I listened to was David Bowie!"*

I don't know, for some reason I just suddenly felt compelled to share that little heartwarming story. I guess I've been thinking a lot about 'community' these days cause we're working on this new Icarus manual all about creating community support, so I've been exploring where my ideas of community come from, and punk rock is just such a fundamental part of how I learned to find my place in the world. I don't know how many of the lessons from an obscure underground music scene you can translate into working with other groups of people around the world, but the some of the stuff is pretty basic and fundamental. Like **no matter who you are, it's really important to have older folks you respect that you can look up to, folks who've been through the same stuff you're going through and who can help you along your path.** These days Dick Lucus isn't much of a role model to me anymore. But I'm so thankful he was around in my life when I was trying to make sense of things, he's had such a positive effect on so many people's lives. These days I have other role models, older farmers and writers and community organizers I aspire to be like in different ways. I have a bunch of amazing relationships with folks who are older than me, relationships I totally cherish.

Maybe this is going to sound a little ironic because I know I was just talking about being drunk, but I've been thinking about the Alcoholics Anonymous model where a person coming into the group can get a 'sponsor' to help them get their shit together. Of course in helping someone get their shit together it inspires the person doing it to also keep their shit together and there's the potential for a really cool relationship to form. I see that all the time in my own life thinking about Icarus. This project kind of forces me to keep it together cause if I relapse and get locked up in the psych ward I'm going to end up letting all these other people down, not just myself. I'm not an isolated unit, I'm very much a part of a community. And there's just something powerful about being able to help someone who's going through what you've already been through, it feels like a very archetypal human growth experience or something.

So I started writing this just cause I woke up with these old ska-punk songs in

my head, but I guess I'm wondering if anyone out there has thoughts about role models and mentors and the role more experienced people can play with folks just trying to figure things out. I mean, I see it here on the site all the time unofficially - people counseling each other and telling their stories in the hopes that others can learn lessons from them. I guess the community organizer part of me is always trying to figure out how to create models that can be replicated for others to work with. I look at the way AA has their sponsorship thing going on and I wonder if at some point the Icarus Project support groups could have something similar. I don't think it has to be so official, but I do like the idea of it being acknowledged somehow. The way that we acknowledge that because we've been through the fire and made it through, we're in a place to be able to heal others. It actually has a lot in common with the cultural traditions of shamanism, ideas of the wounded healer as an integral part of the community. Any-way, just a few ideas.



## Mentors and Maps

Posted: 11 Feb 2005 03:50 pm

My friend just asked me a good question regarding the potential nature of 'sponsorship' in a project like ours. In a group like AA there are clearer lines of who can be a mentor type person because it's obvious who they are -- they aren't drinking anymore!

With the Icarus Project it's obviously a lot less clear-cut - what are we looking for exactly? It's not about whether you're still crazy or not, were all still pretty 'crazy' right? - were in the process of trying to reroute those cultural lines as we speak. It's much more complicated.

So what's the criteria for someone to be mentor in this context? Who gets to decide that? There are people on this very website who are my elders and have been learning to manage their bipolar shit for a lot longer than me, but I don't necessarily want them to be telling me what to do. It's not about age, per se.

It's hard right? Cause I think people who are looking for mentorship and guidance are usually in pretty vulnerable places in their lives and they could be really hurt by someone who may not even have bad intentions but isn't necessarily in control of themselves all the time. And bad advice at the wrong time can be really bad.

Not to mention the ways that manipulative organizations can fuck with people's minds purposely. I'm super conscious of this shit lately, looking at how different organizations and movements structure themselves. I've always been really creeped out by guru people with 'followers' and shit. I know the feeling of being really lost and wanting someone to just tell me what to do, just wanting a book with a bunch of rules in it that I could follow. But by my nature that feeling of wanting to be lead by someone with all the answers goes away pretty quick and I just get contemptuous with anyone who thinks they know what I need. I think (I like to think at least) that the Icarus Project naturally attracts other people who are like me in that regard.

I don't ever want to be in a position where people think we're telling them how they should be, what The Path is. Our whole metaphor we came up with last year was about Making Your Own Maps. Ashley and I just like to see ourselves as metaphor makers and spell casters, helping shape people's reality and building underground networks to catch our people before they fall through the cracks. We have no interest in coming up with answers from above like a lot of religions and cults and shit like that.

The whole mentor thing feels really different to me though. I guess because it's

so personal, one on one -- sharing knowledge and experience, trying to help someone along who reminds you of yourself. I think it happens best naturally, so if that's the case, maybe the question is more of how to we create environments that help facilitate that kind of interaction? Without it being freaky and weird and potentially problematic? Fuck it, I guess everything is potentially problematic, but here we are doing this thing.

So lets just say for arguments sake that we were going to come up with a set of principles for potential mentors/sponsors, kind of like the set of principles we wrote for health care providers who want to be a part of our network. What would it look like? What should they have in common, what are the important parts to keep in mind?

Just some more ideas and questions.



## Slogans and Sponsors

Posted: 27 Feb 2005 01:16 pm

I ended up going to an Al-Anon meeting with my step-mother in Los Angeles last week and it was really really interesting, especially cause I'm pretty much obsessed these days with the idea of starting a network of Icarus Project support groups -- really interesting to check out how an established grassroots support organizations run things. First off: I don't think I ever realized just how huge the AA/NA/Al-Anon network is - there are actually meetings going on all over Los Angeles all day! My step-mom had a book with addresses and schedules and we just found one that we could go to in the early afternoon at some church 10 miles from her house. That's pretty amazing in and of itself.

We arrived at the church and there were two women there to greet us at the door. It turned out that they had volunteered for that job at the last meeting, in fact at the end of every meeting there are a series of roles you can sign up for including food prep and serving and stuff like that. Not a bad idea, it was a nice touch to have someone there to welcome us in, nice to be made to feel at home like that. We walked in the door and there were people getting food, nothing super fancy but a decent salad and bread, tea and coffee.

I don't know if it's like this at all Al-Anon meetings, but the chairs were set up in a semi-circle, all facing this desk, and there were two women sitting behind the desk. There were probably close to 50 people there, but it actually felt pretty intimate, which is impressive cause as I know from going to lots of meetings, 50 people can sometimes be totally overwhelming. But they had this set structure for the intro which was that different people volunteered to read some basic passages - the 12 Steps, the 12 Traditions, some rules for the meeting like 'no crosstalk'. This struck me as a really good idea because what I saw was people reading these pieces who might otherwise be too shy to speak in front of a group, and it could help them get over that fear. It was also good to have something like that going on as people were still coming in the door, it lent some continuity to the structure of things.

The two women in front lead the meeting, checking in about local events and stuff from last meeting. One of them told a story about her life, I think she had 10 minutes to do it, and then asked other folks to speak on a theme. Her role as a leader or a facilitator was just for that meeting, they rotate responsibilities every week. The two themes she chose for people to discuss were "love" and "the Al-Anon slogans."

The whole discussion of slogans was really interesting to me because these days Ashley and I talk all the time about the power of language and how we see our roles in Icarus less as folks building an organizational structure and more as

folks helping to create and propagate metaphors and ideas for people to incorporate into their lives and run with, the 'dangerous gifts' vision for example. Al-Anon is full of these kind of metaphors or slogans, many of them quite clichéd after years of overuse like 'one day at a time.' But in some ways it can be seen as a good thing if a slogan or idea gets clichéd - it means it's made its way into the culture and it's time to come up with something new. I myself will feel pretty fucking satisfied the day I wake up and realize that a bunch of these "radical" mental health ideas that we talk about at the Icarus Project are becoming common ways of thinking. It's just a matter of time. For now, I like the idea of having a bunch of concrete ideas or thoughts that folks can check out and incorporate into their lives. I don't like the term 'slogan', but I don't like the term 'sponsor' either, though the ideas are really cool.

Anyway, the woman finished her story, and then it was time for folks to share. Because there were so many people, the 'sharing' was limited to 3 minutes a person, and it was someone's job to keep time with a little electronic alarm clock. We've never done that at Icarus meetings, the time clock thing, and the idea feels a little foreign and odd, but I really like that people all have equal time, that there doesn't have to be a skilled facilitator there to make sure that no one person is taking up everyone else's time and psychic space. And it's not like everyone was totally strict about the 3 minute rule -- people went a minute over after the alarm if they were in the middle of some intense thought and it was cool.

So all in all I was pretty impressed, I mean, the meeting had been happening in that church for almost 20 years and there were a bunch of old timers. There were new folks like us that were made to feel really welcome. There was way too much God talk for my tastes, but it wasn't really my scene to begin with, this is why we're starting something new. But there were really really good basic ideas that we could emulate with whatever project we start. They had a phone tree which they called the 'life line' and everyone new got a copy. At the end they had people sign up for next meetings responsibilities.

So that's my report back on my punk rock field trip to the Al-Anon meeting.

## The Call Out

Posted: 18 Feb 2005 06:32 pm

Hey y'all - I just sent this out to a bunch of folks...

Hey super talented friends far and wide— if you are getting this message from me then that means we've somehow been discussing the prospect of you making art or typing words for the new Icarus Project book which is rapidly approaching its deadline.

Below you will find text for a series of flyers designed to entice strangers to come out to radical mental health workshops and support group meetings. What we're hoping is that you'll get inspired to illustrate one or more of these flyers so we could include them in our 'toolkit' in the last section of the Icarus book, which is really more of a support manual for folks interested in starting new support groups. This way people all over the country will have pre-made beautiful flyers to work with when they are trying to get an Icarus Project group started in their town. The book is coming along beautifully by the way, its working title these days is:

*Underground Roots and Magic Spells: a Guide to Creating Mental Health Support Networks in Your Community*

and Ashley and I are hoping it's going to inspire all kinds of crazy amazing shit the likes of which you ain't never seen.

So our deadline to have this thing finished and at the printer is March 9th, so if you are interested in sending us art to use for layout in the manual or for one of these flyers, it would be a really good thing to get it in to us REALLY SOON so we don't turn into a bunch of stressed out freaks (because, of course, this would contradict the whole idea of making a mental health support manual!). In general, art that has the themes of either community and team work or isolation and depression would be much appreciated, but just send us whatever feels right to you to send and we'll probably find a place for it somewhere. If you have questions about whether we'd like your art or it's appropriate you should probably just fucking send it and we'll figure that out later.

### The Icarus Flyers

The flyers are going to be 8 1/2 x 11, you can hand letter the text or just use type, and you should craftily leave a little space for a group to put their specific info (time/place/contact info.) Even if you don't make it by the deadline we can still make PDF's of your flyer images later and put them online when we get the new version of the website up and running. There's also talk of a full on flyering/postering/stenciling campaign that going to happen this Spring at college and university campus' all around New York City revolving around the themes of Suicide and Community, so that's something to think about. The #2 text below is the theme we're working with re: suicide prevention, and anything addressing this theme would be greatly appreciated.

\*If you know other artists who you think might be into this project you should pass along this email and tell them to get in touch.\*

So here they are (feel free to play around with/edit down/mix and match the text to work with how you feel inspired) :

**Walking the Edge of Insanity:  
Navigating the World of Mental Health with Open Eyes and Important Questions.**

**As folks who generally feel alienated by mainstream culture and who question conventional ideas of sanity, what does it mean to be struggling with traditional labels such as “clinical depression”, “bipolar disorder”, or “schizophrenia”? How helpful is the modern medical view of mental disorders that revolves around drugs and psychiatry? What other alternatives are out there for people like us?**

**Come join a discussion that is starting all over the country and is being orchestrated by The Icarus Project – a growing network of people dedicated to creating practical alternatives to the conventional medical establishment. <http://theicarusproject.net>**

2

"Sometimes wanting to kill yourself just means that you don't want to be living the life you're living, but you can use all that energy you were spending thinking about suicide to DRASTICALLY CHANGE YOUR LIFE

cause what the hell, you were about to Lose your whole life, so why not instead Lose your school/job/pretenses/fears/adherence to society's standards/shame?

I have found some of my suicidal episodes to be strangely liberating in that way. I wouldn't take back any of what made me who I am today."

--Member of the Icarus Project

Come to a serious and inspiring discussion of suicide with people from The Icarus Project – a growing network of people who see their “mental illnesses” as dangerous gifts and are learning together how to use them to change the world.

<http://theicarusproject.net>

3

What does it mean to struggle with your mental health in a world going mad?

*We live in a crazy, overwhelming world full of apocalyptic over-consumption, sensory overload, media manipulation, uncountable forms of injustice, and an alarming disconnection from wild and sacred places. We also live in a world of astounding beauty. What does it mean to be acutely sensitive in an environment like this? What place is there for visions, voices, and despair? How is thin skin both a gift and an enormous challenge? Why do so many people who feel things hard end up carving out lives on the fringes of society where possibilities are more open and resistance feels like more of a living force? How can we understand the sometimes dangerous and destructive patterns of behavior that shape our lives? How useful are terms like “mental illness” in understanding our experience, and how much do these terms create limits and boxes? What is the place of alternative and psychiatric treatments in beginning a healing process and finding ways to live out all our crazy dreams?*

Come join a discussion that is starting all over the country and is being orchestrated by The Icarus Project – a growing network of people dedicated to creating practical alternatives to the conventional medical establishment. <http://theicarusproject.net>

Walking the Edge of Insanity: Navigating the World of Mental Health as a Radical in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century

## **My Father Was a Dying Sun pt. 2**

Posted: 21 Feb 2005 05:53 pm

Not even two months later and I'm on the other side of the country camped out in my step mom's garage in Silver Lake Los Angeles, pouring through file cabinet after file cabinet of my dad's archives, trying to make sense of who this guy was, my dead father, feeling really lonely and strange and wishing I had some friends around in this unfamiliar world.

I think my dad must have been a pretty intense guy because even though he's been dead for 17 years my mom still talks about how much she hates him and my step mom talks about how she'll never love anyone like she loved him again. She has a whole other family now, my step mom, two little kids she's raising and a husband who's always off working somewhere else. Years ago when she relocated back to California she brought all of my dad's papers and clothes with her and stored them in her garage. She couldn't let go. We stay up late, get stoned in the backyard, she cries to me about how much she still loves my dad. It makes me really sad. Every year I come here and look through a couple of boxes, but this Winter I promised her I'd finish it all and give her the garage back. It's so strange because it's not like I ever asked her to save all this stuff, she just felt like it was her responsibility. I'm thankful she did it, but right now it just feels really overwhelming.

Yellow legal note pads, newspaper clippings and articles you've written and letters from old girlfriends and photos of your family and in the end you're dead and years later your grown up kid is looking through it all, trying to make sense of what it means, trying to figure out who you were, throwing 3/4's of it in a big recycling bin and trying to figure out what to do with the rest.

To me by this point my dad seems more like Obi Wan-Kenobi from Star Wars than anything tangible – this archetypal father figure that comes to me in my dreams sometimes and tells me intense secrets I have buried deep inside of myself like telling me to use The Force.

I think there's something about my dad dying just as I was becoming a teenager that turned him into this immortal creature in my mind, we never really fought cause I wasn't old enough to rebel, he just became this symbol of something lost, something missing, something to search for. I feel like I look for my dad everywhere, from the women I kiss to the whole life I've chosen to lead, even all this time later. But what am I actually looking for? And will I ever find it?

I don't want to just be a pile of papers somewhere. I'm not ready to die.

It's pouring rain outside, it's been pouring rain for days here, beating hard

against the roof of the garage. The sun comes out every couple hours and the sky is so intensely cloudy and luminescent and even though it's LA the air smells like fresh earth. I'm so fucking happy to be alive, I just need to spend a little more time around other people who are alive and leave some of these ghosts alone for awhile.

# TIME ABO OF POWER



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PAUL A. DU BRUL is a city planner and writer. He has worked as a union official and a community organizer, and for seven years as Special Assistant to the Bronx Borough President. He lives in New York with his wife, Anita Altman, and his son, Sascha.



JACK NEWFIELD has published five books, including *Robert Kennedy: A Memoir* and *A Prophetic Minority*. He is a senior editor of the *Village Voice*, where he has published widely-praised articles exposing nursing-home abuses and incompetent judges. He lives in Greenwich Village with his wife, Janie Eisenberg, a free-lance photographer.

## Inkstains on the Sheets

Posted: 05 Mar 2005 03:41 am

I had kind of a meltdown this week and it was hard thing to go through, but the good thing about meltdowns is that sometimes when you come out of them you have the ability to see your life more clearly because a bunch of stuff has melted away.

Something very interesting I learned about myself after going through this meltdown:

*I have a repeating tape loop stuck in my head which is constantly telling me I'm a fuck up and I'm lazy and that I'm not working hard enough.*

'That's funny', I thought, 'I never really noticed THAT one before.' but of course I have, I've been like this for years, and paradoxically it's what drives me insane yet drives me to do ridiculous things like start the Icarus Project when most people are content to just...I don't know...just BE or something.

I was raised by workaholics and thought I was somehow going to escape my workaholic fate by dropping out of college and riding freight trains for years. But it appears to have caught up with me. In fact, looking back over the last ten years of my life (since I dropped out of school) it actually never went away. I've done all these amazing projects, always been so fucking DRIVEN to create things, write stories, edit 'zines, start organizations. I went to an event tonight of an organization I actually founded four years ago right before getting locked up in the psych ward. It's a seed library for local bay area gardeners, it's a really cool thing and I'm so blown away that it's still around.

So that's great, right? I should feel really good about myself, right? Except I was sitting there tonight amidst the festivities, all these people trading seeds with each other and eating food and playing music - happy Berkeley scene that it was - and I just kept flashing back to that fall when we were organizing the library and how I had so many amazing ideas about how we were going to create this powerful network of organic farmers and community gardeners and biotech activists and urban community organizers - how we were going to set up a 'master seedsaver program' and train people to save seeds on all the major farm crops and then go around the country setting up seed saving networks that were going to break the stranglehold of the biotech companies. I was getting up in front of groups of people and getting them all fired up about the work we were doing --

it was really powerful and it was bringing all these different organizations together - it was the most amazing work I'd ever done in my life.

And then I watched it crumble before my eyes after I went off the deep end and stopped sleeping for weeks and thought the ghost of Huey P. Newton was following me around and that the world was ending and all kinds of wacked out shit like that.

A really similar thing happened to me when I tried to start a food co-op when I was 18 years old. I have this drive to organize that's programmed into my soul and it inspires the people around me and makes amazing things happen and if I don't watch out it makes me totally fucking lose my mind.

Even though Ashley's known it for weeks and had already given up trying to reason with me, a couple days ago it finally dawned on me that there was no way we were going to get our new book to the printer in a week without driving ourselves into the ground. I've been pouring my heart into it for weeks at the expense of everything else in my life and when I realized I'd set this totally unrealistic expectation for myself I just started crying, partly because I was so frustrated, partly because I was relieved. But it shook me up.

A month from now I'm going to be living in Brooklyn and working at Fountain House in Manhattan. I'm 30 years old. I haven't actually lived in New York City since I was 20, since I officially moved out of my mom's house. New York City is a fucking crazy place. I love it so much and I feel so grateful and blessed that I'm going to actually be able to do this work, and do it well.

But I don't want to be like my fucking parents and turn into a workaholic. I can't do it without breaking down and losing my mind.

Anyone who knows me knows that my papers and writings and books are always scattered all over whatever living space I'm dwelling in, even if it's not my own. That's how I got the name Scatter in the first place, because I'm kind of a mess sometimes and my shit always ends up everywhere. My bed is always filled with all the stuff in my life and whoever ends up sleeping in my bed always has to deal with navigating around a bunch of papers and ink stains. I swear I'm going to be one of those absent minded professor types when I get old.

When I was in my mid 20's I remember going home to New York and visiting my mom one day and she was lying in bed with a pen in her hand, surrounded by papers! 'So that's where it comes from!' I realized.

Anyway, it's really alright, it actually feels so good to write this stuff down, it takes the power out of the fears somehow. But being at that BASIL event tonight, thinking about all my crazy dreams that get me into trouble if I don't get to have them while I'm asleep, thinking about how the dreams don't actually change that much over the years -- when I was 18 it was destabilizing the US economy by printing our own currency, now it's starting an international network of radical mental health support groups to pose an actual alternative to the mainstream medical model -- I just don't want to crash again. I don't want to go to some Icarus Project event four years from now and be thinking about all the dreams and visions I had and sitting there while people point at me and say: 'That's the guy who started this thing, but then he went crazy and got locked up.' So strange.

But more than that fear really, what I'm tripping about is that I feel so fucking alone these days. It's been this cruel irony that in order to get this book about community support done I've been totally isolating myself from my community. I have all these friends that I don't call because I'm so wrapped up in my own head I feel like I wouldn't know how to talk to them. Most of my social interaction is going on over the computer these days, most of it is with contributors to our book. And the book is going to be the coolest fucking thing I've ever had a hand in making -- it's going to change the world, I get giddy just thinking about it. It's going to be worth all the pain. But do I actually need to be going through all this pain to make stuff like this happen? Can't I figure out a more sustainable way to do things that doesn't just burn me out?

Ashley has a really nice boyfriend to sleep with these days and I'm very happy for her. Somehow, though, I've just ended up all alone, typing on the computer way too late into the night, feeling like a lazy fuck-up that doesn't work hard enough and knowing I should probably just get some fucking sleep.

Thanks for listening to me rant.



## How do a bunch of alienated freaks create community together?

### or Outsiders of the Outsiders of the Outsiders

Posted: 07 Mar 2005 02:57 am

Y'all are such sweethearts – thank you SO MUCH for holding me up with your little word nets – it's so good to hear other people's stories and takes on life, reminders about friendship and community. It's Sunday night now and I feel infinitely infinitely better then I did when I was writing that message at 3 Saturday morning all sad and lonely. Ended up in a little apartment in the Mission Saturday night with a small crew of my friends drinking wine and eating good food and just talking about life and love and politics and history, I am so blessed to have the friends I have, my mind does play tricks on me and I forget they exist sometimes, sometimes I think I'm just programmed to be a loner, I hope I grow out of it.

I woke up this morning before everyone else and I was just appreciating my friends so much, watching their innocent dreaming faces all curled up on the couches and floor. I've spent so much time in my life being the one who wakes up before everyone else. Like 10 years ago I spent a whole summer traveling around the country with a bunch of people who all drank coffee and beer pretty much daily and I didn't drink either but almost every morning I'd be the one awake, making the coffee, getting everyone going to move to on to the next town. It was this crazy dysfunctional drunk punk circus and I was one of the ringleaders of the whole thing, but really when it came down to it I wasn't like any of the other people I was traveling with. I've never been a drunk punk, but I've gone through whole parts of my life when that was the community I felt the most comfortable hanging with because I didn't have to be self conscious about being fucked up. I've had that experience in my life a lot – the experience of having a community of folks that I identified with but that I never quite fit into. The outsider of the outsiders. As I've gotten older I've managed to carve a place for myself in the world, more often then not I'm helping orchestrate the whole thing behind the scenes, trying to help create the world I want to live in – but I'm only doing that because I feel uncomfortable everywhere else. I've never felt like I was running at the same pace as anyone else (like the black sheep on the cover of the Minor Threat record or something.)

But inevitably I've ended up gravitating towards a bunch of other people who are freaks like me. How do a bunch of alienated freaks create community together? I guess just how everyone else does it – the basics. We were cooking breakfast this morning and my friend David was talking about how when he lived in Italy on Sundays, like *every Sunday*, *everyone* in the whole fucking country hangs out with their family or friends and eats a big meal together. How cool is that? It's all about the food – I swear when I started working on farms I ended up being so much healthier and learning so much about how to live the

right way. Because of course one thing that all farmers have in common is that they love to eat really good food, and lots of it cause they spend so much time working out in the fields. There's another good example of a community I've been a part of but never really fit in, I've worked on a bunch of farms but I've always been the city boy – always been louder and more high strung than the people around me. Except when I'm in New York and then I get to use all my chill California skills.

The blessed sun came out today and we wandered around Valencia Street and Dolores Park – San Francisco just felt magical today – everyone was so fucking beautiful, and it felt so good just to walk down the streets with a crew of friends. I love walking down the street with a crew of friends. I think all that hanging out in the sun in Dolores Park with my peeps cured me of my loneliness for now. I'll be really happy for springtime.

Mad love

Sascha



## Permission and Treasure Maps

Posted: 12 Mar 2005 01:51 am

Susan I can relate to your words so much.

I feel like I've died and been reincarnated many times over and that my friends have died and been reincarnated with me but we're all still hanging out and we get to see the ones coming after us and the ones that have already passed and sometimes it feels totally chaotic and formless and sometimes I swear it's like a head of Romanesco broccoli - self similar spirals - a big fractal dance of friends and strangers.

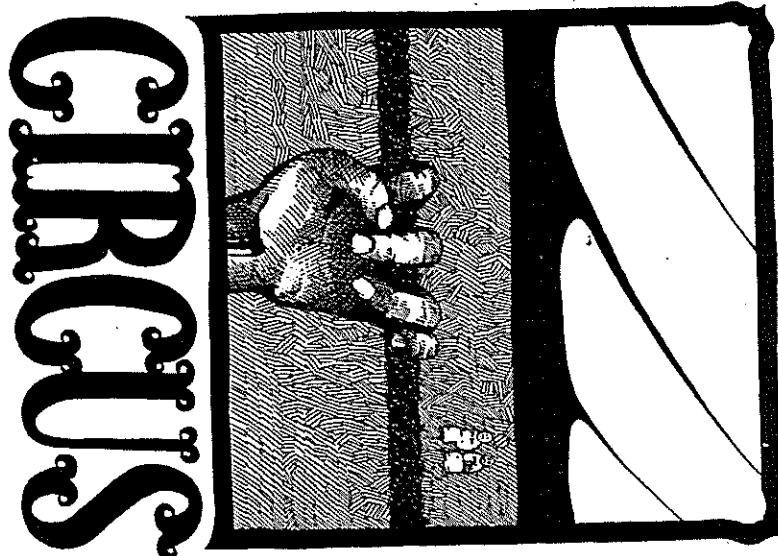
I'm at my step-mother's house in Los Angeles amidst the most stressful neurotic family drama involving people in prison and orphaned kids and violent heartbreak, but somehow this morning I woke up and Ashley and I were camped next to a waterfall by the ocean just marveling that our lives were so full of magic and adventure.

How do I hold these different worlds inside of myself?

Who am I amidst it all?

Do I have permission to be a visionary magician who dreams ideas into action and a pathetic self hating mess crumpled up on the ground all catastrophe and spit?

Just makes sure you save those scraps of paper twilly, they're like treasure maps of the inside of your mind.



## I Kicked Some Holes in the Pipes in the Walls

Posted: 12 Mar 2005

I hardly remember my childhood - it's like a bunch of faded 70's Technicolor photographs. Project apartment buildings and summer heat ripples, big hair and shirt collars, all just a blur. The Supremes on the radio - 'baby baby - where did our love go?' I'm watching *Happy Days* after school and playing with Matchbox cars along the old beat up couch, there's peeling jungle wallpaper in the bathroom - I take a bath every night and dad sits with me and tests my spelling for the quiz every Friday - m-o-u-n-t-a-i-n. Piles of newspaper surrounding my dad's bed. Mom listens to NPR every morning - morning edition with Bob Edwards - she's on some diet where she eats a lot of grapefruit and wheat toast and works in the Bronx at a hospital and we take the elevator down every morning together and she's wearing too much perfume and I sneeze. I daydream in class I daydream I can shoot lasers out of my eyes and hands I daydream about crawling out through the ceiling.

It's all just a bunch of shadows, really. Sometimes when I talk about my life I think I'm just telling a story about some other kid who I saw a movie about once or something.

Yeah, me and my friends live in Sherwood Forest in a big gang and when the rich folks ride through on their way to the castle we take their money and then give it to all the people who deserve it.

Yeah, me and my friends are so cool that we're reframing for the entire culture what 'mental illness' means and redistributing the power from the mainstream medical institutions and putting it in the hands of the people that deserve it.

Or am I just crazy and living in Never Never Land? Who's to say. Of course rocks talk.

It's all just a bunch of shadows.  
It's all what you want to make of it.

Welcome

**“Just let the waves take you.”**

Posted: 18 Mar 2005

It's been a while since I've had a full on lucid dream but I had two of them early this morning and I gotta tell you about them, they were both really short and intense! Alright, check it:

I'm standing by the ocean watching the waves crash against the shore. The waves are getting higher and higher and suddenly I'm scared they're going to drag me out to sea. Out of nowhere my old friend Stephan Smith appears right in front of me all super vivid (like I can see the details of his face up close cause he's right next to me) and he's like: "Don't worry about it, Sascha. This is just a dream you're having, just let the waves take you." I suddenly am fully conscious that I'm dreaming, Stephan disappears right back where he came from, and the waves just come right over my head and totally envelop me - but instead of being scared I'm totally relaxed and it actually feels really good as they drag me out to sea...

In the next dream I'm watching my father and step-mother from behind Plexiglas and they both look really young and healthy - my dad has a tool belt around his waist and is swinging a hammer, working on some building project (in real life my dad was pretty much an invalid the last bunch of years of his life and he died in 1987 when I was still a little kid), my step-mom is walking around looking really happy and peaceful (she's actually still in my life but is generally a neurotic mess so this is very out of character.) I step out from behind the Plexiglas right in front of them but they don't see me and I realize I must be a ghost. Then suddenly it clicks that the whole thing's a dream and I realize that my dad is actually my friend Straightarrow and that I was just projecting my dad's image onto him. Suddenly, everything is illuminated and it's like I can see the psychic architecture around me like physical space -- all these different layers of meaning and memories and it's really really vivid and complex and incredible and even though I know it's a dream I also somehow understand that I'm being allowed to glimpse something that actually exists all the time, something I'm slowly learning to navigate my way through. I'm living in the dreamtime.

So I had a bunch of other dreams after that, but those were the two super lucid ones. It seems like I'm a lot more likely to have lucid dreams if I wake up in the middle of the night, can't get back to sleep for hours lying there exhausted, and then suddenly I hit the pillow hard and I'm lucid dreaming. I'd love to figure out a way to do it that doesn't involve my sleep schedule getting all screwed up.

It was intense for me just now to go back and look at my other posts on this thread and realize that in some ways this has been a really hard winter for me.

I've been pretty much off the Seroquel for a month now and I'm mostly sleeping pretty normally. I'm so much stronger and healthier, but I've had to work really fucking hard for it and I've spent a lot more time and energy this winter taking care of my body and studying martial arts than I have hanging out with people. It's really hard to hang out with people when you're sick. We all know this. But I'm actually such a social person that thrives off the energy of other people and this wintertime hermit writer life just does not work for me right now. I really need to go out and dance somethin' serious. God I'm so happy springtime is coming. Okay, I'm off to Dreamlandia for the night. Thanks for listening to my freaky dreams!



## **Springtime Sunday Icarus Visioning Meeting in New York City**

posted: 20 Apr 2005

Come join us for the first big Icarus Project Springtime Support Group Visioning Meeting this Sunday April 24th from 5:00-6:30pm outside on the patio on the 2nd floor at Fountain House 425 West 47th Street (betwixt 9th and 10th Ave in Manhattan)

Come join a bunch of us as we revel in the Springtime and plan the next phase of the Icarus Project in New York City. TIP actual has a physical location at Fountain House now, a mental health clubhouse in Hell's Kitchen a couple blocks from Time's Square. We have an office on the 4th floor with big sunny windows and walls covered in art and there's a small and awesome crew of us that are working on and coordinating all kinds of exciting projects that we'd love for you to get involved in -- come hang out with us on Sunday and we can talk about it.

Sascha will talk briefly about the work he and Ashley did this winter in the Bay Area on their upcoming book: *Underground Roots and Magic Spells - A Guide to Creating Mental Health Support Networks in Our Communities* and give an update on the new website design and general Icarus world take-over plans.

Madigan and Alex will talk about what's been going on with the Icarus Project/Fountain House collaboration in the past several months and ways outside folks can get involved with FH as well as how FH members can get involved in exciting outside projects happening around the city.

Davida (a recent NYU grad student and longtime clubhouse member) will briefly explain the unit system at Fountain House for new folks and talk about Icarus and the FH Education Unit working together to do future strategic student outreach on college campuses.

### **Meeting Agenda**

- I. Check In (name and your story in a few sentences)
- II. Exciting Reports From Sascha/Madigan/Alex/Davida
- III. Group Discussion/Brainstorm - Watching Each Other's Backs: if we begin from the understanding that we're all folks struggling with bipolar disorder and other serious mental health issues, how can we set up the future organizational structure of the Icarus Project in creative ways that actually acknowledge our limitations and quirky instabilities but allow us to run a healthy organization that can last into the future? If we're people who have a hard time working in traditional job environments, how can we do our best to not replicate the same stupid employment structures that don't work for us while still being productive

in a group setting? How do we keep ourselves from burning out while we do this amazing work? How can we keep large responsibilities from falling on single individuals? What other models are out there and what do we have to learn from them? (This is an ongoing TIP discussion but this will be the first time that we discuss it publicly in a group setting and try to figure out practical ways to implement it, very exciting!) (25 min)

IV. Group Discussion/Brainstorm - The future of the Youth Program at Fountain House. The young adult program at Fountain House has access to an incredible amount of material resources including the use of whole sections of a beautiful building in the middle of Manhattan, a big piece of land with a farm and a private lake two hours north of the city, and generous funding sources willing to support projects that the youth come up with if they are seeming reasonable. How can we use these opportunities to our best advantage? How can the existing youth program collaborate with other projects that are happening around the city? Can we have yoga and art and dance and garden classes? Let's brainstorm what this summer could look like at Fountain House. (25 min)

V. Announcement of upcoming events/projects to get involved in

VI. Check Out (with a dream for the future)

At this meeting there will be a general facilitator as well as a public note taker (with a dry erase board) and a keeper of the clock. It's supposed to be beautiful on Sunday and we'll have cold drinks and snacks.



## The Lights From Time's Square Accentuating My General Grandiosity

Posted: 24 Apr 2005

That meeting we just had was amazing y'all - my favorite part was when Davida compared us to the Black Panthers, that was awesome. The warline latenight phone support project is really capturing my imagination as well.

I just rode my bicycle back to Brooklyn all spacey and day/night dreamy, the lights from time's square flashing all around accentuating my general grandiosity- thinking about how fucking amazing this summer is going to be with all these projects we're starting up...

Kim (Eris) from Minneapolis was in town and took what looked like decent notes and either Alex or Madigan ended up with them so hopefully they'll get inspired to post them up here in the next couple days.

I'm getting in my truck right now and driving up to the Hudson Valley to go reregister it at the DMV in Kingston. I'm also doing an interview with a reporter for *The Times Herald Record* who's going to write what I think is going to be the first big newspaper story about Icarus. And I'm off...

## Dreams Into Action

Posted: 25 Apr 2005

Dreaming about that fantasy I have a lot where my friends and I start a school for mutant teenagers to teach them how to use their superpowers - except this time it was more detailed and Pastrami was actually teaching meditation and yoga classes and Fly had everyone journaling crazy journals full of art and collage and Ketchup and Nick had a room full of painting supplies and were making big flags with Icarus figures to put on bicycles for the critical mass ride and Davida was just the grand wise mama figure who oversaw the whole thing and nodded approvingly with her mane of dreadlocks while it all went down around us. We had packs of kids going around the city putting up those amazing "you are not alone" stencils and Becky and Sophie's comic posters and doing summertime street theater in the parks about what the hell it's like being called "crazy" in a world that's obviously insane. Our ranks were swelling and people were replicating the program all over the world. I was running some kind of guerilla gardening training camp out of the horticulture unit at Fountain House and there were all these kids walking around with sunflower and marigold seeds in their pockets and garden folks in their hands, staging big public lot takeovers.

Rubbed the sleepdust out of my eyes, jotted down some notes, and realized pretty soon it's not going to be a dream anymore...

## **Subway Tunnels and Manhattan Sky**

Posted: 02 May 2005

Straight from this morning's journal entry:

May 2nd Monday 6:30 am having this long drawn out dream that I was switching back and forth between wandering dark subway tunnels to dealing with my Medicaid bureaucracy nightmare - they were cutting my benefits, they were cutting lots of people's benefits, and when Nicole (my case worker) swiped my card through some new machine my entire criminal history appeared on the screen along with all kinds of indecipherable sketchy government code. The subway tunnel part of the dream was even more fucked up because I was hiding in the tunnels from the cops and I was really scared they were going to find me and beat me to death on the tracks. I kept playing out the different fantasies in my head about how I was going to escape - I felt so trapped. Somehow I end up walking up a really really tall old metal staircase, opening a door, and suddenly EVERYTHING BECOMES TOTALLY LUCID and I'm really high above the city looking down at all the lit up buildings. Because I realize I'm dreaming I fly out of the doorway and into the night air and it lasts for longer than usual and I'm loving it. I'm above the old brick armory building I went to elementary school in on the Upper East Side and suddenly I feel so free because I know it's all a dream and I don't have to wander in the tunnels and deal with the nightmare Medicare bureaucracy anymore. I slip into the next dream and immediately I'm telling someone: "I just had the coolest dream that I was flying above Manhattan in the middle of the night and I felt so free..."

*I Can't Take it Y'all – I Can Feel the City Breathing*

**Posted: 05 May 2005**

Chest heaving against the flesh of the evening  
Mos Def speaking in my head for me

I just popped 25mgs of Seroquel cause I'm starting to spin out, just losing perspective so quickly as soon as I don't get enough sleep for a couple days the entire world just tries to crawl under my fingernails and I just want to fucking hide, close my eyes and see midtown traffic and piles of papers.

I have a 3 pm meeting in DC tomorrow with someone from one of the club-houses in the Fountain House network and the next 5 days are going to be so full of workshops and talks and I'm camped out on the couch at my mom's house so I can catch an early train from Penn Station and I just wish someone was here to hold me cause I feel so fucking lonely and overwhelmed and it's driving me crazy - up on the 12th story of this apartment building and sleep feels so far away and my body is so tired and I just want to cry. With such a big community how did I get so fucking alone? Why the hell do I sleep alone so much? Wasn't the whole point of this project that I wouldn't feel so fucking alone?

I'm really glad y'all are out there in cyberland, I just need some sleep and I'll be fine. I'm trying to do too much. I need to learn how to turn off the noise or else I'm just gonna melt these wings real quick - I just feel like throwing my cell phone out the window and wandering the streets till the sun rises. Instead I'm going to turn off this computer, lie down on the couch, and read until my brain shuts off.

A behind the scenes look at the wingnut director of the Icarus Project...

**Posted: 06 May 2005**

Wiping the shaving cream off my face and trying to remember to breathe deep, seemingly ready to take on the world. At this point in my life I don't know what the hell I'd do without those little orange pills I always keep stashed in my pocket.

Thanks Bani and Adru - really nice to see your messages.

*"At some point I started to think the radio was talking to me, and I started reading all these really deep meanings in the billboards downtown and on the highways that no one else was seeing. I was convinced there were subliminal messages everywhere... People would talk to me and I was obsessed with the idea that there was this whole other language underneath what we thought we were saying that everyone was using without even realizing it."*

The Bipolar World - SF Bay Guardian September 2002



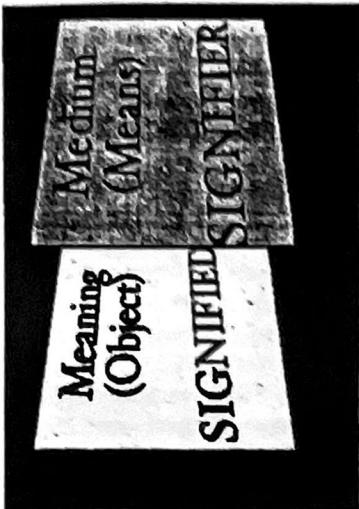
## LEARNING TO USE YOUR X-RAY SPEX

It is a common experience among people struggling with "mental disorders" to see things that the people around them don't see. While it is common for medical authorities to write off people's visions as mere delusions and recommend higher levels of medication, quite often the things we see and hear are evidence of a heightened sensitivity — of the thin skin that comes with madness. Our porous nature allows us to have an intimate relationship with parts of the world other people will only ever read about. Like all the classic superheroes, our superpowers are dangerous gifts that intensify the struggle of our lives. But they are superpowers, and we can learn to use them.

There is actually a whole academic discipline based around the idea that every cultural object has multiple meanings and can be interpreted the same way as spoken or written language. It's called semiotics—the study of symbols and signs. Semiotics is based on the idea that there are myths being created around us all the time that affect our relationship to reality. The same way that we give words meaning, we give meaning to the objects around us. Meaning occurs in multiple layers.

Language	1. Signifier	2. Signified	3. Sign
MYTH	I. SIGNIFIER	II. SIGNIFIED	III. SIGN

For example: while someone might have a car to drive around in, that car might also symbolize freedom or independence. We live in a society that is saturated by media created myths-advertising and public relations firms know how to play on our fears and desires, subconsciously manipulating the way we think. Although we're just looking at a billboard advertising a car, we're also being told how life is supposed to be lived and where we should look for happiness. We're getting all kinds of messages sent to us. Semiotics has mathematical-like formulas for breaking down and understanding things into multiple levels based on a linguistic model of communication.



For some, this work is purely academic and logical, but for those of us who by our very nature feel things strongly and internalize the cultures, having a better understanding of the linguistic model can be liberating. Around us, being able to SEE THROUGH advertisements and the content of TV shows can either be very liberating or apocalyptically nightmarish. How we experience it has a lot to do with whether or not we have others like ourselves to validate our opinions or keep us in check with our paranoid delusions. Collaborating with the visions of others is an integral part of learning to use our heightened perceptions.



**Posted: 06 May 2005**

You people are amazing, thank you for all the kind words from afar, it feels so good knowing you're all out there in your respective parts of the galaxy.

I'm in DC sitting next to Tim Madlib' at Leah Harris' house and I just popped another 25mgs of Seroquel and hopefully will crawl into my sleeping bag and get a really good night's sleep on this couch. What a fucking surreal day: the three of us went to this clubhouse called the Green Door and met with these super straight people who nonetheless seemed impressed with us (though it definitely wasn't reciprocated on our end) and then we ate some good Ethiopian food and went to this punk show at a community center and (this was by far both the height of my day and the most surreal part) I met one of my childhood heroes - Ian Mackaye, the singer from Minor Threat and Fugazi - and HE HAD ALREADY HEARD OF THE ICARUS PROJECT! Not too many articulate words came out of my mouth, it was a little overwhelming. Anyway, I just had to share that with y'all cause I know someone out there is going to appreciate it.

Mad love

#### **Rural NAMI Chapters and Oppositional Defiant Disorder**

**Posted: 09 May 2005**

Oh man, I wish I had the peace of mind to try and even attempt to describe what me and Tim's life has looked like for the last three days - it's been fucking incredible and really challenging. We woke up at 5 am this morning in Blacksburg Virginia after pulling off an amazing workshop the day before with an incredible group of people, drove straight for 5 hours to a rural high school outside of Asheville North Carolina and talked to a group of teenagers who are part of the alternative school because they have various "behavioral disorders" - then we snuck off to these hot springs and swam in this beautiful river and then came into town, met up with my old friend Cindy at Rosetta's Kitchen, then drove out to another rural community and spent two hours with these three teenage boys and their parents who were part of the local NAMI chapter - all the kids were diagnosed with bipolar disorder from a young age and all of them have been on crazy amounts of meds ever since - it was really fucking intense, like, the mom who organized the whole thing has really good intentions but she drugs the fuck out of her kids and it's so obviously so damaging on so many levels. The parents left me and Tim alone with the three boys at some point and we spent the good part of an hour communicating with them as much as we possibly could - there are so many children all over this country like these kids we were hanging out with - diagnosed with "oppositional defiant disorder" and all kinds of crazy wack bullshit - these kids need older people like us to come around and show them that there are alternatives, that they don't have to end up stuck in these

How fucking amazing is that?

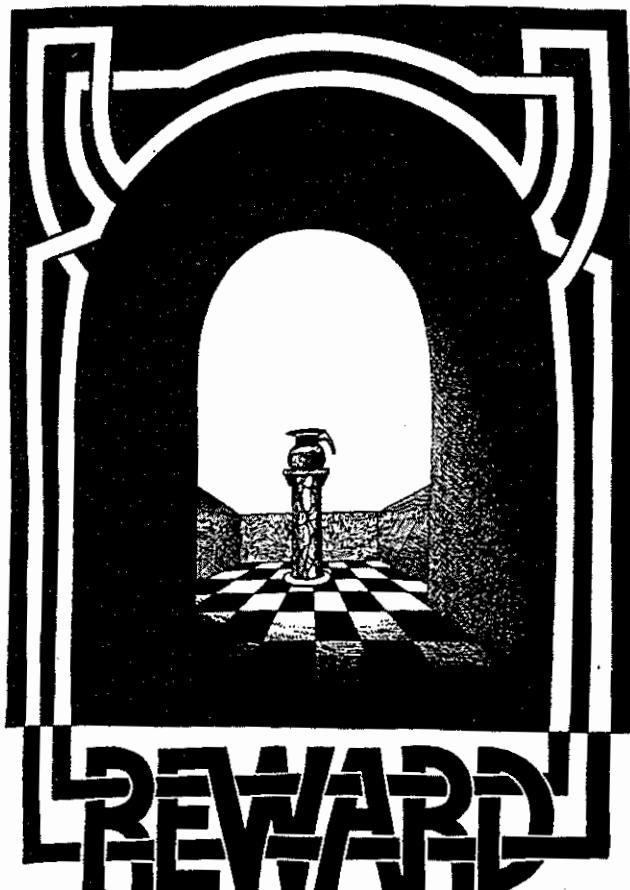
So pretty much the deal is this:

I think it makes a lot of sense to make one of the potential responsibilities for any new Icarus Project group be to coordinate with local psych institutions and NAMI chapters or whoever is around to come in and give presentations to teenagers and build mentoring relationships with younger folks.

Any thoughts on this?

There is so much more to say but that one's been churning around in my head for the last couple days something serious.

More soon...



horrible life situations. These kids need mentors.

The past 4 days of traveling and doing this work with Tim has been so amazing - the two of us are pretty bonded for life by now - I hope some of you out there have the pleasure of getting to know and work with Tim some day - he's so fucking sharp and he's got a heart of gold, we're having so much fun together.

The two of us have just been talking nonstop about the Icarus Project for days - our visions for the future and how we're step by step going to make them happen. It's so good having another person to bounce ideas off of - it sure takes away the loneliness. Getting out of New York for a couple days has been so good for my head, it's made me realize how much I've been missing having Ashley in my life to always be there as a partner in crime and partner in day-dreams.

Tim and I have been talking about how amazing it would be to train pairs of people to go out and do the work we're doing right now - how we need to start seeking out people who are willing to put themselves on the line a little bit and be able to tell their stories to strangers and then have the skills to be able to work with small groups of folks and help them tell their own stories and organize in their communities. If you're reading this and you think you're a person who might be interested in doing this kind of work - get in touch with us - WE NEED MORE PEOPLE DOING THIS WORK - it's what's going to change the world. We'll help train you, we'll give you tools to do it.

Man, the Seroquel is thankfully kicking in just in time, I can't even go back and read what I just wrote cause my eyes are refusing to focus. We have another intense day ahead of us tomorrow starting at 10 am at an inpatient psych facility talking to more teenagers! I'm going to crawl out and crash on the back porch with Tim and the fingernail moon.

Mad love

**Posted: 12 May 2005**

Alright, before it slips my mind and I plunge back into the chaos of Manhattan Island, I just have to tell you all that the day before yesterday me and Tim actually went into an inpatient psych facility for teenagers and talked to a crew of more than a dozen kids about the Icarus Project and it was so amazing that I got a call yesterday when I was driving home from one of the workers at the institution telling me that a bunch of the kids were reading our book and talking about how they want to get involved in doing stuff with Icarus when they get out!

## Slept Sound Through the Night

Posted: 13 May 2005

So I got back to New York yesterday afternoon - took the Chinatown bus from Philly and cried most of the way there - it was really intense. I didn't realize till hours later that it probably had something to do with the fact that I lost my lithium pills and hadn't taken them in over 24 hours, cause it's pretty out of character for me to be crying so much (but that's a whole other can of worms really.) But driving over the bridge Sera jumped from, that night in West Philly, all those kids me and Tim did workshops with all week, it all kind of built up...

Anyway, I got a call from an old friend/lover yesterday saying she was passing through town and needed a place to stay and we met up on the Lower East Side and walked over the Manhattan Bridge back to my house and cooked dinner and I was fucking exhausted and we crawled into bed. My old friend/lover is now in a monogamous relationship with a very nice boy (for the first time in her life) and so we had this amazing long conversation about all the great sex we used to have and then practiced our "non-sexual cuddling skills". It was very sweet.

So the dream:

Not surprisingly, I have these dreams almost every night that are filled with Icarus Project logistics and thought fragments for pieces of writing and world takeover plans. I wake up most mornings and scribble at least a sentence or two down that ends up getting used in the material realm, my life is just intense like that, it gets really overwhelming sometimes if I'm all alone. Anyway, in the middle of the night I woke up and was having this dream where I could see the outline of our new book, the lines typed on the page that I was actively working on, but layered over the text were these physical manifestations from the examples of the book. It's kind of hard to visualize or describe I guess, but my friend was holding me really tight and it felt so good. Somehow, in my dream, she was the physical manifestation of "support" for our support manual. Or something like that. I slipped back into dreamworld and slept sound through the night.

So the other night I finally sat down with my friends in Asheville and waatched the first X-MEN movie and it was SO INSPIRING AND AWESOME!

I swear more than ever I'm convinced that my life's calling is to help be a part of building a network of schools for mutant teenagers to teach them how to use their superpowers so we can fight against the forces of evil.

Anyone want to join me?

Anyone think I'm an irresponsible wingnut that read too many comic books as a child?

Opinions?

I'm really curious because though I'm kind of joking, I'm really kind of not joking.

When I take my lithium everyday, I don't take it because I think I'm sick, I take it because I think it helps me control my superpowers. I believe this does wonders for my self esteem.

Me and Tim were talking to these 14 year old boys the other day who had been on handfuls of drugs and diagnosed "mentally ill" from the time they were 9 and 10 years old. How fucked up is that? Walking around everyday doped up on a bunch of Zyprexa and ADD drugs thinking that they are diseased.

Those kids need older folks to teach them how to use their bodies - teach them how to focus their minds - teach them how to work in groups - all the stuff that they're not ever going to learn if they stay on the NAMI path.

Anyway, y'all should see that X-MEN movie - it's pretty awesome.

The movie ended with the grand climax action scene and I was sitting there in North Carolina with my friends, thinking about how I was about to go back to Fountain House and the world of riding my bicycle back and forth from Brooklyn to Midtown and all my people hanging out on the streets and everything going on with the Icarus Project all over the place and I said: "I know this might sound hard to believe guys, but I swear my life is just as exciting as that shit these days."

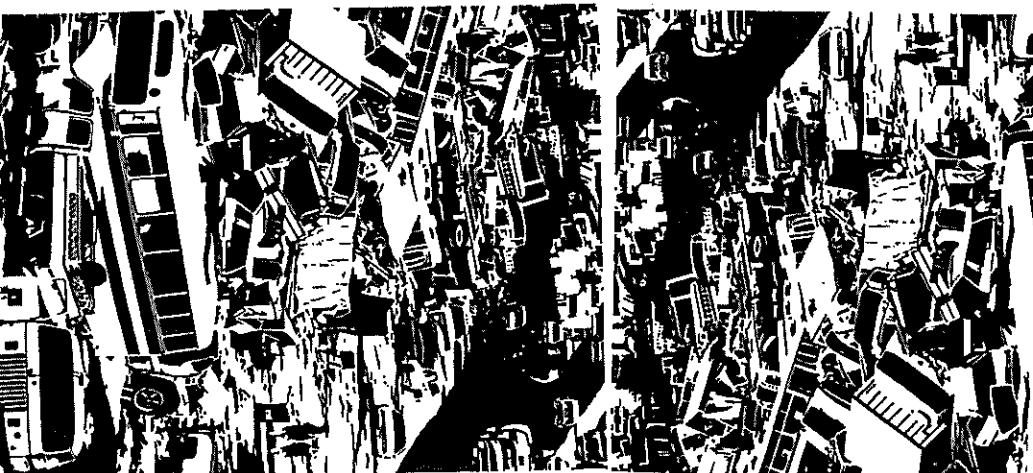
## **the only one who can see the future**

Posted: 13 May 2005

We did the first Icarus Project/Fountain House youth group event tonight and it went so well, I was getting chills watching everyone getting to know each other. I feel intense things these days that are hard to explain without sounding like I'm maybe getting manic or delusional or something - I'll be sitting in a room and I'll have this very real sense that I'm the only one who can see the future before me because I feel like I'm the only one who has an understanding of all the different forces and characters at play all over the place, I carry it all around in my head and it's amazing and it's also a burden and makes me overwhelmed and lonely at times.

I do think about this mutant superpower stuff everyday, for real, I have for awhile. I think about putting together packs of kids with different strengths and sensitivities - teaching them trust exercises, teaching them how to work in groups and take care of each other, teaching them how to use their x-ray vision to see through all of society's bullshit, teaching them how to use their bodies to do amazing things, teaching them how to lucid dream, teaching them to go out and put art all over the place, riding their bicycles in efficient groups and teams, teaching them how to go out and reach more kids and bring them into our world.

There's a crew of folks in Richmond who want to start an Icarus group, Latka. We did an awesome workshop at the New Anarchist infoshop there this past Saturday, there's a bunch of potential energy waiting to take off in that town and I'd be more than happy to put you in touch with those folks. If you really want to work on this project then you and I should start talking. I've somehow managed to figure out a way to get myself paid to do this everyday. So I'm out here for real, and there are a lot of us out here, and this isn't a movie.



## Signed Wings

Posted: 18 May 2005

Me and Alex and a few other folks at Fountain House have been having this running conversation for the past month about the responsible ways we can take advantage of our bipolar tendencies --

Like if we acknowledge that we're more efficient when we're hypomanic, how can we not only prolong our hypomania to get more work done, but more importantly how can we prevent crashing so we don't even have to "burnout" (a phrase used by activists all the time that conjures up all kinds of pretty Icarus inspired images)?

How can we learn each other's warning signs and make it an active part of Icarus culture to look out for each other?

Working with Alex has been so illuminating for me because she is strikingly brilliant and creative, is an incredibly efficient and fast worker, can take my half finished ideas and turn them into polished writing -- and she rapid cycles into suicidal agitated depression on a regular basis.

This would really freak out most people, but it doesn't freak me out. Thus we work together really well. Rather than taking advantage of or ignoring the fact that she's getting hypomanic, I do my best to make sure we're both getting enough sleep/eating well/not spending too much time in front of the computer/hanging out in the garden around the corner, etc. Rather than turning her hypersensitivity into a liability and stumbling block, we're trying to figure out how to force us to actually work at a more reasonable pace and actually enjoy ourselves as we're doing this amazing work.

I have this vision of being able to create some kind of set of "standards of co-operation" or something like that for people doing Icarus Project work so that we have a model to work with.

I'm really inspired by that company a bunch of my friends work for in San Francisco "Good Vibrations" cause they do things like make their employees do yoga every couple hours and eat really good food.

What are other things we could implement as general good working practices for future Icarus Project groups?

If we start from the understanding that By Definition the people running the Icarus Project all struggle with bipolar and related kinds of destabilizing mad-

ness - how do we set up our organizational structure so that the first priority is that we take care of each other and not burnout?

Because it's pretty obvious to me that when I see Alex's hands shaking it's not because she's "sick", it's because she's a total fucking 22 year old superhero that's figuring out how to use her superpowers and we not only want her sticking around the planet with us, we want to provide the optimal conditions for her to be able to kick the most ass that she possibly can in this crazy world.



## The Evil Empire and the Rebel Alliance

Posted: 29 May 2005

Me and Madigan and Todd went to go see the new Star Wars movie last night and it was so much fun - despite the cheesy acting and serious lack of cool female characters, I totally dug it.

Keep in mind first off that I don't go see big Hollywood movies that much so they always have a pretty strong effect on me regardless of what they are. Plus like most people my age I was totally raised on Star Wars: I remember my dad picking me up from school to go see the first Star Wars movie when I was like four years old or something - it was a really big deal. The culture barons have had the same marketing gimmicks for a long time and when I was kid all those characters from the Star Wars movies ended up everywhere from my bed sheets to my Happy Meals.

I'm constantly thinking about cultural myths and multiple meanings - always seeing six or seven layers into everything, always imagining what everyone else is thinking about when they watch the same shows/movies, read the same books/magazines that I'm watching and reading. I trip out at the supermarket checkout counters looking at media portrayal of "stars" - our culture's fascination with famous people and power - I'm always wondering what's behind the scenes, who are the ones actually pulling the strings, making the decisions. I always wonder what the fuck the deal is with all those weekly world *News/Star/Enquirer* magazines and all the outlandish stories that are on the covers every week. Does anyone actually believe any of that shit? Does it make it easier for the powers that be to get away with whatever they want when there's a steady stream of obvious lies pouring forth from the mouths of the tabloid press? Is it easier to keep control when everyone's starstruck and worried about the personal lives of the elite?

Hollywood movies and the culture that comes with them are so fucking powerful - they seep their way into our subconscious and we start acting out scenes from them without even realizing what we're doing. Are the movies imitating life or are our lives imitating the movies? Did you do it before you read about it? The times when I stop sleeping and start seeing everything really strong I start seeing these powerful archetypes EVERYWHERE - the same stories repeated over and over again - and when I get really delusional I'm convinced they're all about me and my friends. I hear love songs on the radio and they make me cry cause I actually think they're about the people in my life - I see a movie like Star Wars and I start superimposing my own life details onto the characters.

But how strange is that? I think everyone does the same thing in their own ways whether we realize it or not. That's what makes good popular art - right? - things that everyone can somehow relate to, find meaning in for themselves. The radio is full of bad love songs cause it's like the lowest common denominator that everyone can groove with somehow cause in the end we're all just painfully human and it's what bonds us together.

Anyway, I loved the new Star Wars movie cause it very skillfully tied the whole long saga together that I've known since I was a kid and touched on all these really deep human themes - betrayal - death and rebirth - ridiculously fucked up family dynamics (yeah Luke - that's how your dad became Darth Vader...) though I could relate to so much of it, the whole trip about good and evil never quite sits right with me - I can't take it too seriously (Anakin Skywalker kept reminding me of Ozzy Osbourne when he was turning over to the dark side - I kept waiting for him to bust out in song like: *"What is THIS that stands before me??!"*)

But I love the way they somehow managed to sneak those anti-Bush messages into the film - and don't try to tell me those weren't anti-Bush/anti-war messages you minority Republicans: the evil emperor with a gruesome grin is all like: "We shall kill everyone and there shall be PEACE." or when our Darth Vader man is all: "You're either with us or against us!" all anti-terrorist style or that line about the sound of liberty dying is the chapping of a thousand hands. Or something like that - I screamed out loud in the theater.

The thing is for the most part I'm not much of a pop culture person - it always seems like I'm way too busy with my friends creating our OWN culture and ignoring what's happening on TV - but I like the idea of us claiming big pop culture movies like this for our own and capturing people's imagination with them - these Star Wars movies get all over the fucking world. When I was 21 I spent a bunch of months traveling by myself in Central America and I'd end up in these little villages in Guatemala where there wasn't always clean water or enough food but there was cable television and all the kids would watch it. Imagine that: you're a little brown kid growing up in a small village in the jungle and you watch Bruce Willis and Sylvester Stallone movies and everyone on the screen is white and in big cities having crazy adventures and at night all that stuff seeps into your dreams. What would that do to your head? I grew up in the middle of Manhattan Island and that stuff seeped into my dreams. It is a very powerful spell and even though I don't necessarily believe in good and evil I have no problem calling corporate media culture the DARK SIDE. The people who run the empire don't give a fuck about me and they don't give a fuck about you - they're on their own Star Wars power trip and as far as I'm concerned my friends and I are the REBEL ALLIANCE.

I guess what I'm saying in this kind of round about convoluted way is that people like us, the sensitive crazy ones, the ones who are reading the posts on this website because we're alienated by mainstream consumer culture and we don't fit in with the masses, we have an appreciation for how powerful mass media is because we feel it so strong - I have a hunch that I'm not the only one and that a lot of us don't get hypnotized in the same ways that most of the rest of the masses do because our brains run on different frequencies. Of course sometimes we get so totally caught up in the dreams that we can't tell the difference between reality and fiction and we actually think we're living in the movies. I know I'm not the only one who's gone there. But for those of us who've explored that trip - we come out of it back into consensual reality with this understanding that everyone is living in their own stories, everyone, and that really it's the role of government and mass media to keep people believing in the same myths, the same stories - to keep everyone living in the same washed out monocult fear based hallucination - **AND IT'S REALLY IMPORTANT TO REMEMBER THAT IT'S ACTUALLY POSSIBLE TO CHANGE THE WORLD AROUND US BY CHANGING THE STORY PEOPLE BELIEVE IN.**

Last night we got to theater in Brooklyn early, a huge corporate theater on Court Street. There were at least 10 minutes of ads before the actual previews even started. There was this incredibly slick home made looking Coca-Cola ad wedged in between some other slick bullshit - it was a group of young kids driving around the country having "adventures on the road" with video cameras and going to underground parties and being out in the middle of the desert and all these images of living free -- it was fascinating to me because of course Coca-Cola is the epitome of the evil monocult empire spreading their corporate hegemony around the globe - they have enough money to hire PR firms and slick ad agencies to figure out exactly what's going to make the kids associate freedom and adventure with their fucking soda pop - they've been at it a long time. When the ad ended Madigan was like: "Thank you Coca-Cola, I'd like my culture back now please."

Meanwhile, I'm thinking about the empire, thinking about turning their own power against them, about figuring out really creative ways to unite large groups of young people without things getting watered down and redirected into the consumer culture. I'm gonna get all dramatic and Star Wars on you people and say it pretty direct cause we're all friends here, right? What we're doing with the Icarus Project is about to get a lot bigger. Pretty soon we're going to be getting a lot more attention, a lot more people are going to be looking at this website, this whole website is going to be looking really different and it's going to be a lot slicker and filled with a lot more resources and links to radical and interesting projects, and we need to be ready to deal with everything the mass

media is going to throw at us. One of those things is that they're going to try to copy us, they're going to see that we're effective at reaching young people and they're going to mimic what we're doing to sell soda and sneakers. This is INEVITABLE. It is how the market works. I think it is in our best interests to understand these forces of the market and the media and use them to our best advantage.

We're living in such scary times, the political situation can seem horribly bleak with the Death Star looming overhead and Jedi's being forced underground, but I swear when I'm hanging out with my friends it feels like the beats must have felt in the 50's during the McCarthy era - we know we're the proto-revolutionaries, we know things are going to explode soon and the popular culture is going to get blown open again. We just need to be a little slicker and a lot more good to each other this time around. I don't really believe in good and evil but if we can create a thriving subculture that truly revolves around taking care of each other and honestly and humbly nurturing each other's dangerous gifts while we're doing it - I don't have to tell you what side I'm on.

Use the force, people.

Mad love

S

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# THE ICARUS PROJECT

Navigating the Space Between Brilliance and Madness

About the Icarus Project Bipolar and Related Madness Community Support Healing and Treatment Spreading the Word Tools and Resources Dangerous Gifts

## Sharp Edge of Summer

Posted: 29 May 2005 What Are You Grateful For Today?

I'm grateful for the edge of summer I can taste on my lips as I'm riding fast through traffic on 6th Avenue singing Pogues and Damned songs at the top of my lungs.

I'm grateful for all the traveler kids showing up in town and hanging out in Tompkins with their packs and instruments and good train hopping stories.

I'm grateful for Sophie Crumb my badass friend who went to circus school in France when she was a kid and was teaching the punks how to do handstands and backflips on the grass.

I'm grateful for the scarlet runner beans that are trellising up the bars on the windows of my room in Brooklyn and just starting to bud out in the sunshine.

I'm grateful for the 10 dumplings for \$2 spot in Chinatown I've been eating at everyday when I cross over the Manhattan Bridge on my way to work.

I'm grateful for that awesome Icarus meeting we have today on the back patio at Fountain House and the amazing old guy sitting next to me who said: "I know I'm schizophrenic, but I also know I'm a prophet."

Beautiful.

I'm grateful for all you people out there reading this who are part of this crazy community - I'm so glad you could join us.

I'm grateful to have so much focus in my life due to the Icarus Project, so grateful to feel the culmination of so much different work and play I've done over the years all coming together beautifully almost like it was fated.

I'm grateful that I have so many amazing old friends doing such cool things all over the place and that we're figuring out creative ways to work together.

I'm grateful that I get to have the grandiose visions and people are finally starting to take me seriously, but more importantly I'm actually taking myself seriously without the lingering fear that it's all just in my head and that I'm going to get locked up again.

I'm grateful for generally being humble and chill and having made it through enough lessons to know my weaknesses and limitations and not let myself get out of control with the world takeover plans.

But amidst it all I'm so glad I've stuck it out this far because I'm so totally grateful to be alive because we're gonna do incredible incredible things this summer. It's gonna be great.

## Stumbling and Marching My Way

Posted: 04 Jun 2005

Man I just woke up and it's almost noon and I'm rubbing the Seroquel sleepdust out of my eyes, stretching out my stiff shoulders and lower back, checking in with the virtual Icarus world after being caught up in the physical realm for the past couple days.

I got home last night around 10:30 after biking down Myrtle in the rain from the A train, opened the door to my collective house in Fort Greene, Brooklyn - said a muted hello to the eight awesome people hanging out in my kitchen telling stories and laughing, walked into my room, took off my wet clothes, and promptly passed out in my bed.

I worked SO HARD this week, above and beyond whatever call of duty I'm following behind the hypomanic drumbeat I carry around with me all day around the city. I work really hard every week, but this week somehow the halo of swirling logistics and projects circling around my head started to feel like asteroids rather than Saturn rings, colliding into each other in front of my eyes and making me dizzy. I started feeling like I was getting over my head around Wednesday, started slipping off balance. But we pulled it off with flying colors - literally. I was on the A train last night, arms covered in black and gold silk-screen ink, coming home alone from the Friday evening event at Fountain House, blasting Charles Mingus through my headphones, huge grin on my face realizing that all the hard work is worth it sometimes when you see the connections happening between people, see the looks of recognition going off in stranger's faces, see the future getting better right in front of you. I work so hard cause I love what I do and I can see the new world we're building before my eyes and I wouldn't want to be anywhere else right now.

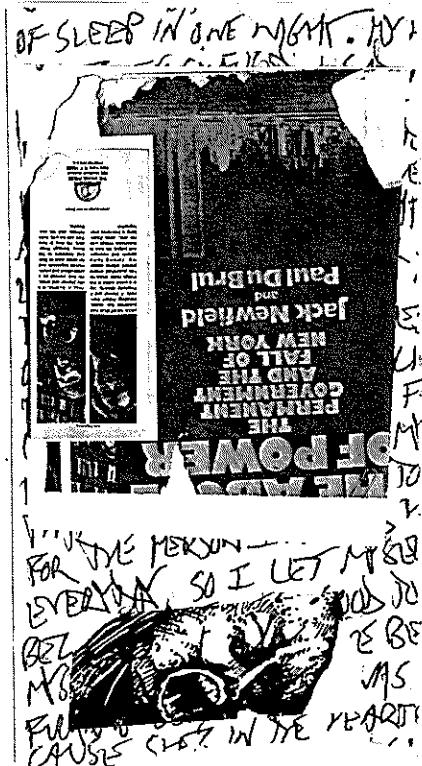
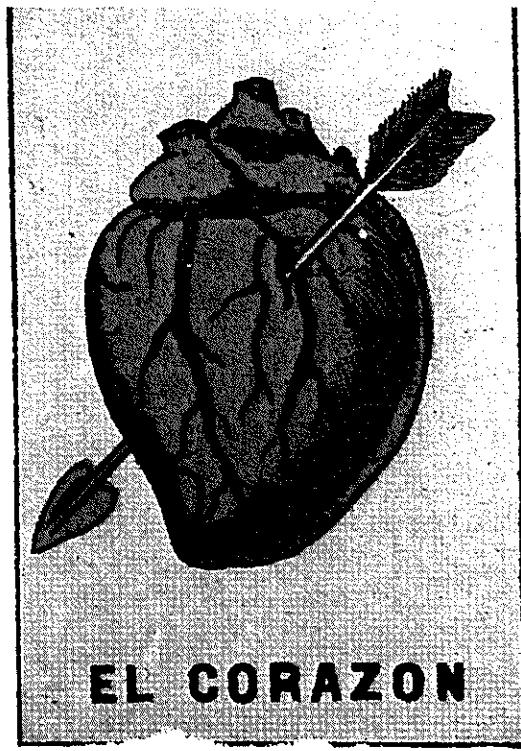
Anyway, last night I woke up probably 20 minutes later in my bed, put some dry clothes on, stumbled into the dark cozy kitchen, and hung out with my friends for awhile. It's Friday night, shouldn't I be out partying or something? Good thing there was a party at my house. This is why I don't live alone. People were eating dumpstered bagels and telling funny stories about each other's families.

We got talking for awhile about K's family cause a bunch of us have spent time with them and although they've always been friendly folks to me they have a tendency to be pretty racist and anti-Semitic and generally ignorant about a lot of the basic stuff we take for granted as a community. K's the only guy in his family I've met that's not a big meathead fratboy goon. And once I met his family I gained a lot more respect for him cause it was obvious he's had to unlearn a lot of social conditioning and I'm so proud of him cause I think he's turning out

really great and I said so. I checked my email before I logged onto the site and started writing this post and got a message from K thanking me for saying that last night cause he was feeling really uncomfortable about the way folks were talking about his family and his relationship to them. So I started thinking about it myself.

*We're all haunted by the ghosts of our families.* Whether you define yourself in relation or opposition to the people that raised you, whether you work really hard to break free from the dysfunctional patterns that were put into your head as a child - your original patterns are still defined by those people, there's no way around it, it's your path and you have to figure out a way to walk it. We all have our crazy shit to deal with.

The people that raised me had pretty cool politics but they were Obsessive Neurotic Workaholics. So lo and behold, here I am: working way too hard and not carving out enough time to just chill and enjoy life, stumbling and marching my way to my own freaky drumbeat, hoping I don't crash into myself somewhere down the line, hoping my friends will be there for me if I start losing it too bad. I'm so thankful for this place where I get to check in, read people's stories that remind me I'm not as alone as I think, and pour out the thoughts from my own head in the hopes that we can all help each other down our lonely and freaky paths together.



## **Friday Night Suicide Hotline**

Posted: 04 Jun 2005

My phone rang at 1 in the morning and it was my friend hysterically crying and screaming saying she *couldn't take it anymore and she wanted to die that she's had enough and please please don't call the doctors and get me locked up I'm SO lonely SO alone in a little apartment on the other side of town.*

And I sat there on my bed watching the rain pour down, the streetlights reflected orange in the puddles in my front yard, I sat there and I told her to just be quiet and breathe with me, just deep breaths, come on - I'll do it with you cause it'll be good for me too.

I can't she said, *my body won't stop shaking, I'm just a huge ball of tension.* Just one deep breath - come on - you can do it, it's all about the breathing and you know this already, I'm just reminding you. Just be quiet for a minute. Don't hang up on me and take a few deep breaths.

*Alright.* She sounded a little more calm but was screaming and crying again in no time - lost in the evil thought loops - *I've been like this my whole life. I've never ever been happy. I'm damaged and I'm never getting better. No one is every going to love me the way I need to be loved. I'm trapped in this body and I want to get out.*

Come on, breathe.

Your mind is playing tricks on you ol' friend. I talked to you a month ago and you told me you were happy - we talked about how sweet it is to get through this madness to the other side. Everyone loves you, don't you know that? We all think you're amazing. You're one of the craziest most awesome people I've ever met in my whole life and we have a lot of work to do here. We talked and talked for an hour but it was no use and eventually she screamed that she couldn't take it anymore and she wanted to kill herself and she was sorry and she hung up on me.

I laid there in my bed with my heart beating really fast, all alone, eyes full of tears. I stared at my phone, I looked up at the ceiling, I listened to the sound of the 2 am rain beating down on the street feeling so helpless, and I called her back and cried into her answering machine about how fucking lonely I was, how fucking all alone I was in my room and how fucked up it was of her to leave me hanging like that.

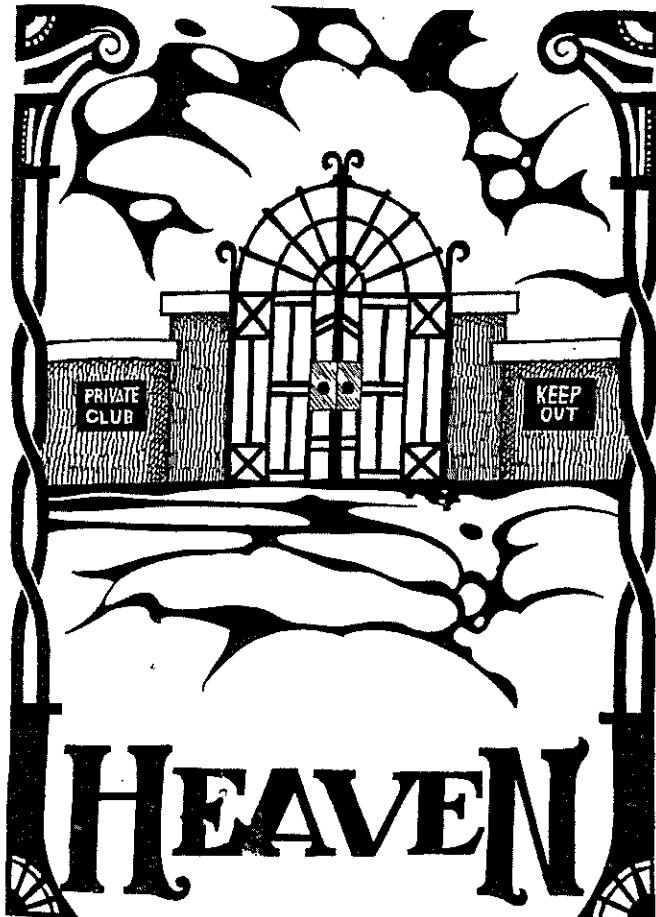
She picked up the phone and was still screaming and crying and I was scream-

ing and crying back at her, tears pouring down my face, heart beating out of my chest. *What do you mean, you're alone?* she said. *I thought you had a girlfriend.* I don't have a girlfriend, lady. What the hell are you talking about? I don't let anyone get close enough to me cause I'm just as crazy as you. I'm fucking terribly miserably horribly ALONE. ALONE. ALONE. Why the fuck do you think it's 2 am on a Saturday morning and I'm lying here talking to you?!?

Long silence. *You said the magic words,* she said.

We laughed. *I can't stand it when I think someone doesn't know what I'm going through. Somehow knowing you're lonely on the other side of town makes me feel better.* So that's the trick, huh? I said.

Come on, let's both try to get some sleep. I'll call you tomorrow to check in.



## Pouring Out of My Hands and Heart

Posted: 04 Jun 2005

I was coming home from work last night on the train, backpack in my lap, eyes closed, bicycle at my side, listening to music on my headphones, totally exhausted in that kind of blissful way that happens when I know I've worked my ass off and done a good job with it and know I can relax for a minute.

And suddenly, sitting there on the train, I had this amazing feeling of energy pouring out of my hands and heart - my eyes were closed but I pictured it like the black and gold ink we'd just been using to silkscreen back at the clubhouse - energy just pouring out blissfully from my body and I swear I wasn't imagining it - I could feel it so strong. I grinned a huge grin and started laughing out loud - totally uncaring that there was a subway car full of people around me, laughing and laughing. Swirling around my mind were all the faces of my friends and the symbols we'd been printing onto patches of canvas and the Friday night rainy streets and everything in my hectic Icarus obsessed life right now - and I was so totally uncaring if these people on the train thought I was crazy or not cause honestly, I knew I was a fucking superhero, and that's really all that mattered.



## Zyprexa and Crack

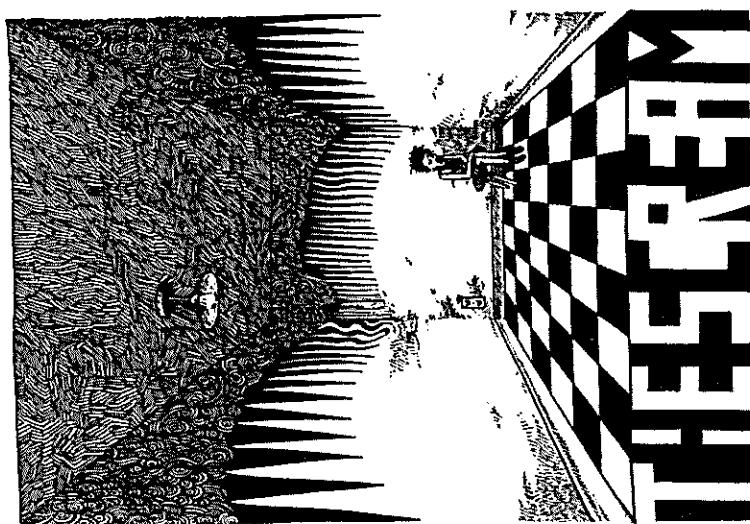
Posted: 23 Jun 2005

I had this amazing conversation last week with the head psychiatrist at Fountain House (who also sits on some Eli Lilly grant committee) and he told me that he's had a number of guys walk in his office who are crackheads and regularly use Zyprexa to tame their psychosis so they can keep up their habit without totally flipping out. Isn't that interesting?

I've never smoked crack myself, that's probably the last drug I would mess with hands down, but I'm well versed in many dialects of psychosis and I know that Zyprexa has been a lifesaver for me when my head has been spinning out of control and I haven't been able to stop it on my own.

Take yesterday, for example: after sleeping badly for more than a week, riding on hypomanic waves of inspiration, taking on way more responsibility than I should have been taking on, letting my work life completely merge with the rest of my life to the point of them being inseparable, I finally called in sick to work (even though we had a really \*important\* meeting), told all the people I needed to tell that I was checking out for the day, took 25mgs of Seroquel and when that did nothing took 2.5mgs of Zyprexa (for the first time in months), crashed in my friend Todd's music studio in Red Hook, slept for 15 hours, woke up at 4:22 am, wrote down two pages of dreams, got up and stretched and ate a bowl of cereal, checked the 13 messages on my phone, wrote a schedule out for myself for the day, and now I feel fucking amazing.

And as much as it creeps me out, I'm going to take some more Zyprexa tonight and probably the night after that cause I'm the kind of guy that doesn't need to smoke crack to turn into a crackhead.



## Carnival Lights and the Peaceful Black Sky Ocean

Posted: 26 Jun 2005 10:30

After a pretty challenging week of crashing and having to put myself back together, I had what was honestly one of the most amazing days of my entire life yesterday. It started out with waking up next to my friend Will Hall from the Freedom Center in my bed after that incredible Friday night Critical Mass and then us biking over to a 9am yoga class in Park Slope taught by my housemate Alecia; then biking to Red Hook with Todd and Will, stopping by the CSA farm project down the street from Todd's house and talking about seeds and urban farming; cooking eggs and cheese and veggies from Todd's garden and tortillas; kicking it with Madigan and the German bike messengers and then riding our bicycles out to Coney Island for the Mermaid Parade and jumping in the ocean with the Rude Mechanical Orchestra playing horns and drums with their feet in the water next to us totally outlandish -- me and Will and Todd with huge grins on our faces; Wendy Permafrost break dancing on the sand amidst the Ferris Wheel and Cyclone and the whole Coney Island housing project/ghosts of working class carnival New York before us in all its surreal mad glory; taking the F train back home and eating cold, sweet watermelon and Mexican food and drinking margaritas in my backyard in Fort Greene - all our neighbors on the streets hanging out with each other - kids playing in the fire hydrants screaming and laughing; back over to Red Hook to the drunk bike jousting fiasco on this pier where there were maybe 150-200 folks mostly in their early 20's and then people from like eight different parts of my life going all the way back to jr. high school and the LES squatters scene and then someone I kissed once in Seattle in 1997 and never saw again; me and Alecia and Todd then biked back to his house - hopped in his car, and then drove BACK to Coney Island at 11 pm - rode the Cyclone and then totally high and screaming we ran out to the beach and jumped in the ocean and swam and swam and swam - the carnival lights from the Ferris wheel on one side - the peaceful black sky ocean on the other - salty warm water just like getting a big hug from God or something. I looked over at my friends Todd and Alecia kissing each other and just felt so much love for them, just felt so grateful for this summer, the water and the heat and the people and the adventure. Days like yesterday make me strive to have a more amazing life because it makes me realize it's possible to live so full and free.

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## All Crossed Up and Jangled

Posted: 29 Jun 2005

I am so thankful for this website you people - sometimes the Icarus Project forums actually feel like a living, breathing journal of a radical community, a really intense radical community which I feel so damn lucky to be a part of and supported by. Just rereading the sweet responses to my old lonely post from the winter in Berkeley makes me feel held and understood in this way not too many things can in this world. Hiking the long hike of the giving forgiving, for only the forgiving can give, or something like that.

Man, it is so interesting for me to revisit this thread almost four months later after I've been living in New York for a little while and contemplate how things have played themselves out. So as expected, true to my lineage and upbringing, I came back to NYC and jumped right into full-on work mode. I've been really intensely productive, so "productive" that I've been coming apart at the edges a little too much and all my co-workers/co-conspirators have been having a hard time communicating with me about it. But they have been, we've all been talking plenty. It's a good thing I have such cool people to work with. But I've been struggling not to fall into the old pattern of the persecuted and misunderstood loner. I get so defensive and freaked out when I know people are talking about me behind my back and I (totally irrationally) think everyone is out to get me.

After crashing last week (not too hard cause I had the Zyprexa parachute) I've been doing my best to map this trail I've been on, see how it's similar to other trails I've walked (or ran). It's still really hard for me when I start second guessing myself about everything, it's all part of the come down process I guess. But it's so confusing: how much of my personality and what I do is me being manic and how much of it is just me being me? How do I draw these ever shifting lines for myself?

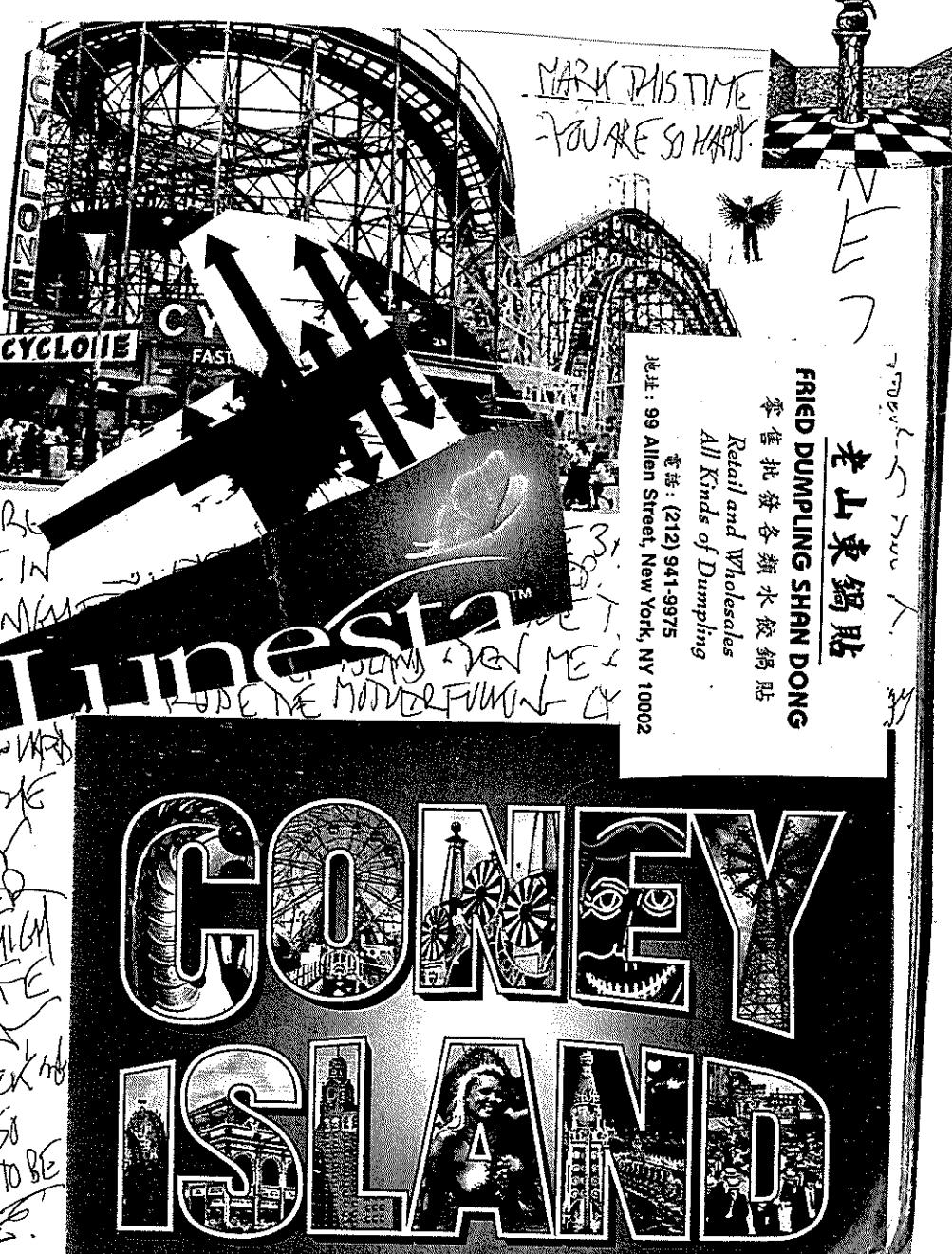
Whenever shit like this happens I immediately start flashing back to all the other times in my life when my friends have gotten together to talk about me and I didn't have control of myself and I had to drop everything I was working on. There is part of me that is so fucking scared of losing control and watching everything fall apart before my eyes. But of course the more I let that fear control me and my actions, the more I'm just turning into the Icarus version of Anakin Skywalker and I need a Yoda to come along and say something wise like:

"Attachment leads to FEAR. And fear leads to the DARK SIDE."

It's really only by letting go and taming my control-freak tendencies that I'm

actually going to be able to work side by side with the people I love and respect. I also have to figure out some better way of drawing definitive lines between work and play in my life because those lines have been all crossed up and jangled. Anyway, lots of love to all you people. Keep taking care of each other.

Sascha



## Rainy Afternoon Lithium Blues

Posted: 09 Jul 2005

Wandering around in the rain for the past hour and now I'm sitting in a pizza shop on the corner of St. Mark's Place and Second Avenue, watching all the people walk by just feeling dazed and confused, relieved and shaken simultaneously. It's so fucking confusing trying to tease out what's brain chemistry and what's true emotion - and in the end I'm not sure that there actually is a difference, which is just so weird, right? I mean, if someone can take a bunch of Ecstasy at a rave and feel overwhelming love for complete strangers, if your friend can drink some small amount of vodka and get plunged into suicidal depression, if my buddy can forget to take her Abilify for a day and start hallucinating- how do we incorporate these experiences into our collective understanding of the nature of our being? More to the point: how can we trust ourselves and our relationship to the world?

I decided more than four years ago to completely reevaluate my negative opinion of Western psych drugs and since that time have never regretted my decision to take a daily "mood stabilizer" and an "anti-depressant" with an occasional "anti-psychotic" when my sleeping pattern gets off. It's worked for me. Because of this I can do things I'd never be able to do otherwise, including working in the middle of Manhattan in a building full of crazy people and riding my bicycle through traffic everyday without my head eating itself alive or caving in from all the psychic noise. I've been really stable, so stable, in fact, that even the people closest to me in recent years comment that sometimes I seem "too level headed to really be bipolar". I've considered myself one of the lucky ones that psych drugs works for and leave it at that.

I just met with the psychiatrist at the mental health clinic I've been going to for the past two years since I've been on Medicaid. I spent the morning in bed reading, listening to the rain come down outside my window wondering if I was really going to make it out of the house and eventually I put on my rain pants and biked over the bridge. I think I've seen all five different psychiatrists since I joined the clinic on St. Marks Place because I'm terrible at keeping appointments and take whoever they give me at the last minute. But I liked and trusted this new woman doctor, she seems to respect me and to care about what I think which is a good thing because there's a lot of power that comes along with being a psychiatrist and I'm on the receiving end of things. This woman has the power to save people's lives or totally fuck them up, to help them on the road to freedom or to lock them up in psychic Haldol prison. She seems kinder than most, and like I said, I've met quite a few. I'm not the usual patient at the clinic because I take a really active role in my treatment - I'm familiar with all the medications that enter my body and I'm not intimidated in the least by the psycho-

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pharm lingo. I consider it all part of my research for the Icarus Project, the whole experience. That's really my big coping mechanism: pretending my life is really important. My friend asked me how I was the other day and I said: "I'm feeling a lot of empathy for the depressed people of the world." She replied: "You mean you're depressed?" Silence. "Yeah, I guess."

Last month at the advice of another psychiatrist I've been working with at Fountain House, I told her that I wanted to try taking Extended Release Lithium in one dose at night (because I was told it was less taxing to my kidneys in the long run which made sense to me) and so a month ago my doctor wrote me a scrip for extended release lithium tablets which I began taking that night. As she prescribed, I took the regular dose without thinking about it but as it turns out, due to a mistaken calculation on her part and my ignorance, I've actually been taking HALF the level of lithium carbonate that my body has been used to taking for the last four and a half years because of the way the extended release tablets metabolize in my body. I haven't been taking enough of the medication that my mind is used to and has come to depend on for stability.

I actually started crying in her office when we figured this out. I partly felt relieved to have an understanding of what's been going on but I felt so overwhelmed thinking about how fucking hard this last month has been for me, it's been a really hard month, and how if I hadn't caught it, if I didn't have the kind of support network that I have of my friends, if I didn't spend so much time talking to other people about coping skill and "taking care of the basics" I very well could have ended up back in the hospital all over again.

I can't fucking take the idea of going back to the hospital again. I've just come too far to let myself slip again.

But this is my pattern, this is my horrible fucking pattern, (and it's happened three times before, each one more glorious and therefore more tragic than the last): I get inspired to start some beautiful world-changing project, work feverishly and passionately at it -- driven by some mysteriously burning force inside of me that connects dots most other people don't bother connecting and stays up too late scribbling diagrams and charts in my journal, the project brings together lots of people through the strength of the vision, people look to me for some kind of leadership, and then I let everyone down when my brain fragments into agitated sleepdep psychosis and I crash and burn and get locked up in a psych hospital.

I get so scared sometimes that it's going to happen again, it's a shadow fear I carry around with me everyday, and this month I've actually come closer than I've come anytime since the last round. The usual pattern has been playing itself

out: everyone who's close to me has been telling me to relax, to not work so hard, to not take things so seriously. My coworkers have been having a hard time with me for weeks because I've been running so fast and not checking in about basic things, not listening and leaving space for other opinions. And, most painfully, I keep thinking I've been taking everyone's advice and working on my issues then I discover by the reactions of the people in my life that I actually haven't been at all and they're still mad at me. And I've been through this too many times already.

In the last week of my life I've reached lows that I haven't experienced in four fucking years. A couple days ago I started getting the suicide flashes I hoped I'd never experience again, the urges like electric shocks to jump in front of cars and out of windows. The inability to finish sentences or look people in the eyes, the feeling of harsh words cutting right through me, physically feeling them like knives in my gut, shame hot on my face and lower back. All those old thought grooves -- the self-loathing, the craving for the Final End, even though the thoughts are buried deep down, they're thick like scar tissue and they're never really going to go away. I just have to do my very best to not dip down that low, and, as I've come to learn, the only way to do that is to not let myself get too high.

I never actually realized what was going on in the past bunch of weeks partly because I'd actually lowered my lithium level on my own (in a way less dramatic way which is something I and other people I know do periodically when we're feeling sluggish.) I always go between 1200mg of lithium and 900mg of lithium, usually 1200mg. Because of the way it metabolizes in the body, a 450mg tablet of extended release lithium is equivalent to a regular 300mg lithium capsule. When the doctor switched me to extended release lithium I told her I was taking 900mg and so that's what she wrote me a script for, two 450mg tablets at night, which it turns out is actually equivalent to 600mg of regular lithium, half of what I'm used to taking on a regular basis.

So here I am, sitting in a pizza shop, watching the rain come down in sheets and all the people running by with their umbrellas getting tossed around in the wind and the spangin, black clad punk kids hanging out in a pack under an awning across the street. I'm the dazed looking guy typing on the laptop, 30 years old, invisible singed wings curled up under my dark blue raincoat, thoughts still a little hazy from last night's Zyprexa and general emotional exhaustion. And I'm wondering to myself, and to the rest of the people in my community: how much of my actions over the last month are a reflection of my personality and character, and how much of them are the result of the drugs that I didn't realize I was missing?

Thankfully I didn't cause too much chaos this time around.

Thankfully The Icarus Project has gotten so big that the internal checks and balances were there on a bunch of different fronts to keep things from going off the deep end.

Thankfully I have some really understanding co-workers who are bipolar like me.

But this could happen, and is inevitably going to happen in various exciting and horrible scenerios, again and again. By the nature of the people in our organization, by the nature of the work we've set out to do, we're destined to have even more dramatic internal chaos flare up as this vision we've created manifests itself in the lives of people all over the place and they make it their own. These days I'm not the only one in our little crew that's having medication problems, and I have to wonder if that person and I would be on better terms at the moment if our fucking brains weren't exploding on us.

But this is the Work, and I think we all knew what we were getting into when we signed up for it. My whole relationship to The Icarus Project is changing with every experience I have trying to work as part of a group, whether that's with the education unit at Fountain House, with the crew of clubhouse members at High Point Farm, or with our still unofficial NYC TIP collective. Because regardless of whatever crossed-wire drug fuck up I've been living with in my brain, it's become very clear that there's no room in the project anymore for the Manic Visionary Sascha who pushes through and makes everything happen with a flash and a bang. That's still very much a part of who I am and how I relate to the world but that guy has outlived his usefulness and just seems to be making it harder to let things actually grow into something sustainable and good for lots of people. Now I'm left trying to figure out what my role is in this whole amazing scene, hoping that I can figure out a way to use my energy in a positive way that doesn't burn holes through everything.

So as my brain starts settling back into a more chill rhythm and the lithium in my blood hopefully starts allowing me to control my internal fire a bit more and really listen to everyone else's voice around me, I would so appreciate any feedback and thoughts people might have on how I might do right by all of us.

I can't begin to describe in words how good it feels to know that people actually give a fuck about what I'm saying and I'm not just talking to myself.

Mad love,  
Sascha

## Red Moon Rising Over Brooklyn

Posted 18 July 2005

*halfway across the bridge last night my heart skipped a beat cause i swear the moon was a deep, blood red rising over the industrial landscape of Brooklyn.*  
i got off my bicycle and squinted my eyes through the chain-link fence and felt the summer heavy and thick in layers of sweat and memory and sadness.  
my friend jenn bleyer just got back from a three month bicycle trip across the country with two of her best friends in the whole world. we sat in my backyard in fort green yesterday eating falafel, the weeds growing tall like a forest all around us, and she told me how strange it is to be back here in new york, how it seems like everyone in this city is crazy and neurotic, like it's in the water or something, and she can feel herself already getting crazy again even though she's trying so hard not to.

i stumbled out of work yesterday at 7pm and walked my bicycle across 9th avenue and east on 47th street. i was waiting for the streets to cool down a little but it was still so fucking hot and sticky. time's square was packed with people last night: hustlers and tourists, thrill seekers and the down and out and the just off work. the porn theaters and the military people and the taxi cabs and and the billboards. i started feeling lost in it all and thought about ashley's advice to me the other day about focusing on the bottom's of my feet to stay grounded. "*one of my zen teachers says that most people walk with their minds, not with their feet. just walk with your feet.*"

one of the hardest things about slowing my mind down to do things like feel the bottoms of my feet walking on concrete is the realization that i spend most of my time in a constant state of anxiety and neurosis like a twisted ugly feedback loop. it's always easier to just step right back into the loop rather than look at what i'm doing to myself. but there's a relief in giving up all the internal noise of collegeoutreachprograms and *allthedishesthesink* and fearofrejection-fromthepersonihaveacrushon and badpunkrocksongloops etc. etc. to the immediacy of the NOW and PRESENT: moving, breathing, faces of the people walking by me, hot air from below blowing up in my face, etc..

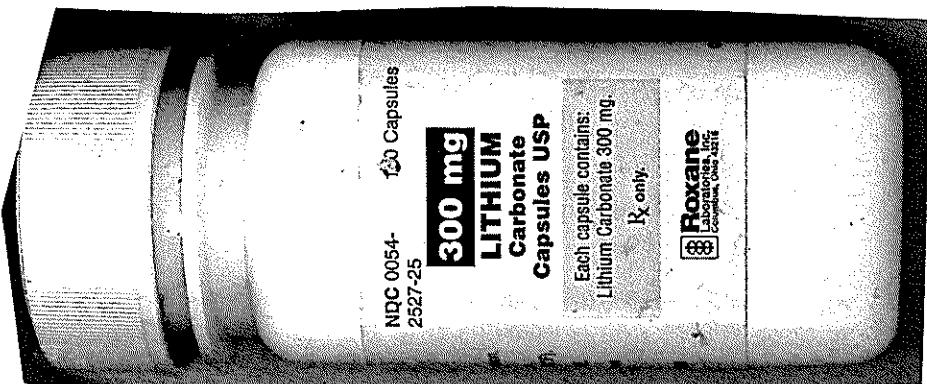
but there's so much going on underneath that surface. we were at work yesterday and just for a minute alex was rubbing my shoulders and i had to bury my head in my knees so no one around us could see that i was crying. it's all there waiting for me buried in my shoulder blades. i fit right in in this town.

last winter in san francisco i slept with this beautiful woman i'd just met and it was so magical and intensely momentarily satisfying and not really actually meant to last at all and after a couple hours of sleep i woke up in her bed at 4 in the morning totally sick and sweating and took a really long hot shower by myself and then suddenly in the middle of the shower got irrationally terrified that the water was going to get cold at any second and i started crying uncontrollably cause i was so scared for the water to get cold. when the sun rose and the

beautiful woman had to go to work i took the BART back to the east bay and squinty-eyed crawled into ashley's bed and fell asleep.

ashley's second night in new york she said in this very buddhist yet strikingly human ashley kind of way: "this town is all about DESIRE. this town makes me want things i normally don't think about in berkeley. all the beautiful people everywhere. all the huge billboards and window displays. it's all about sex and power. i'm very conscious of my body here, everyone's really conscious of their bodies here." or something like that. jenn bleyer said yesterday in my backyard: "desire drives our hearts which pump blood into the machine of this city. without so much desire the whole thing would just fall apart." we're all wanting so badly. we're like moth's to the light. we could use another blackout in these parts.

my first memory ever is from the 1977 blackout. i was two and a half years old and i remember that the clock in my room was stopped and it had never been stopped before. it's my only memory of my parents being together. i remember we sat in the living room of our apartment and lit santa claus candles (even though it was the middle of summer.) my mom said you could hear all the glass smashing on broadway from the looters, she was terrified. some urban historians trace the origins of hip-hop back to the 77 blackout because so much music equipment got stolen that suddenly there were DJ's on every block.



### Kind of like kryptonite. Kind of like a big, puffy cloud.

Posted: 11 Jul 2005

I've been so damn tired since I upped my lithium again, but it's actually kind of a relief. I'm definitely slower, but the rest I've been getting feels like such a blessing.

## Somewhere Back and Forth in Time

Posted: 23 Jul 2005

Dream: I'm walking down Lexington Avenue with Joe Strummer and I'm like: "alright Joe, I've been wondering for years: what the hell does 'I burn money at the light of the sign, the city casts a shadow of the perfect crime' actually mean?" He looks at me all conspiratorially and winks: "it's just me talking to myself and other people listening. You should know that by now..." I have a big chunk of watermelon and I'm standing alone in the center of Tompkins Square Park. Sturgeon comes up and I give him a piece, we're standing there in the sun, silently eating watermelon in the park. Then I'm biking down 9<sup>th</sup> Avenue in heavy traffic, holding onto trucks and acting all daring cause I kind of realize it's a dream. I'm trying to call Sera on my cell phone but the number isn't working and then I suddenly remember she's dead and I'm screaming I'm so fucking angry. I'm lost in Manhattan, the grid is all shifted around, I'm trying to find a bridge to Brooklyn but I keep ending up at these weird old slick polluted swimming holes, piles of concrete and rusted rebar. I keep biking.



## Adventures in Sleep Deprivation and Pharmaceuticals

Posted: 30 Jul 2005

When I stop sleeping, all kinds of shit starts to go wrong pretty quickly.

And it happens so fast: even when I'm doing really well and stable, if I happen to stay up really late for ONE night, inevitably the following night it's really hard for me to sleep.

Two nights of bad sleep and my mind is racing and ridiculous. unless I drug myself with something powerful like Seroquel or (if it's really bad) Zyprexa then pretty soon I'm that scary guy walking down the street talking to himself with the facial ticks and freaky hand gestures.

Lately my sleeping pattern has been all fucked up. I've been dreading lying down to sleep at night because I'm terrified I won't be able to control the noise in my brain. My sleep dep experience has this very particular quality of there being *a block between two worlds* - like a psychic blister waiting to pop. I crave the comfort and freedom of the dreamworld, but the more days I go in my fucked up sleep dep cycle, the harder it is to get myself to dream land in any kind of sustained way.

My doctor gave me Ambien recently and I was excited because it seemed to work the first night. But the second night I was up at 5 am and even when I doubled the dose the next night I was up at 5am again. I ended up back on Zyprexa cause it was old and reliable. But goddamn it, I'm so thankful for it when I really need it, but I fucking hate what Zyprexa does to my brain when I'm depressed. It's like I suddenly lose access to whole parts of my consciousness. I took 5mgs of Zyprexa to sleep a couple weeks ago and the next day I almost got hit by a car on my bicycle and I was a walking zombie the whole day. I lost basic motor control of my body and it felt like all those months I've spent in psych hospitals and half-way houses. I was so miserable. I took my friend's yoga class that same night and it was like I was in the body of some psych patient who was on tons of meds, but it was my body and I couldn't control it.

But the Ambien doesn't really work for me. Last week it was almost comical - I was so desperate to sleep I was taking a homeopathic sleeping remedy, melatonin, and an herbal tincture with Valerian, California poppy, etc., on top of 10mgs of Ambien. I seemed to sleep alright. Maybe. It's pretty questionable.

But I've been a stress case lately. I live in a chaotic, messy house. I live down

the street from the Brooklyn-Queens Expressway and my bed is right by the window that faces the street. My work life has been an unending circus of bipolar fueled drama. It's been so fucking hot and I eat too many cheap Chinese dumplings and I never seem to cook anymore. Instead of swimming I ride my bicycle in Midtown Manhattan traffic and I get the swimming effect because I sweat so much. And then instead of changing my lifestyle I just drug myself to sleep at night.

I was at the clinic on St. Marks Place two days ago waiting to see my doctor and I was in a room full of people like me. I mean, everyone else was either Puerto Rican, Cuban, Dominican, Polish, or Russian cause New York is great like that, but we were all a bunch of stressed out New Yorkers on Medicaid waiting to get our prescriptions filled so we could deal with the chaos that is our lives. I finally got into see my doctor and told her the Ambien wasn't working for me and she gave me a bunch of sample packets of a *new* drug called Lunesta that has a very pretty drawing of a glowing blue butterfly on the package. She told me that it might make me have a "metallic taste" in my mouth but all I had to do was brush my teeth. Whatever.

That night I stayed up late with my friends and crashed on a couch I've been sleeping on for almost a decade off and on, feeling good in the company of people I love in a quiet little squat on 9th Street. I took my 3mg "Lunesta" pill with my lithium and passed out. Woke up yesterday after 8 hours of seemingly decent rest and I swear it felt like robots had been having sex in my mouth while I was sleeping. Where did that horrible taste come from? Did my body produce that somehow in reaction to the little blue pill with the picture of the glowing butterfly on the box? Whatever.

I took the train out of the city yesterday and breathed a sign of relief when reached Harriman State Park and suddenly I was surrounded by trees and sky and there was not a building to be seen in any direction. Picked up my old truck in Middletown and drove to the cafe where I used to wash dishes in Rosendale and they fed me and gave me big hugs. Spent the evening in Kingston surrounded by amazing people that I left behind when I started working on the Icarus Project and moved down to the city. Such good people. Went to sleep last night on a friend's couch in Elizaville - no Lunesta, no Ambien, no Seroquel, no Zyprexa, no Valerian, no little homeopathic sugar pills, no melatonin — and I slept better than I've slept in months. Wrote down my intense and prophetic dreams, stretched in the sun, ate some cereal, and decided to finally post on the website I love so much...

## Heart Racing/Stomach Churning

Posted: 17 Aug 2005

Ambien doesn't even keep me asleep for more than five hours at a time, then I wake up and take some more. In between, I have these fucked up little dreams like this:

Dream:

*I find this comic drawn by the person that I'm desperately heartbroken over and it's all about her love life and I'm one of the minor characters, drawn at the edge of a couple of the panels as kind of an afterthought. Then all of a sudden I wake up and I'm on a stage and I've been hypnotized somehow and there's a whole room full of people staring at me and I have no idea what I've done, but I know that I'm going to be held responsible for whatever it is.*

Wake up it's 4:23 am and the sound of the fan and the Expressway outside and my heart's racing and my stomach's churning and I'm so fucking tired of this. Can't escape something that's just inside myself, obviously obviously obviously



## **Plan For Not Going Too Crazy (written with Ashley McNamara)**

Posted: 25 Aug 2005

### **Advanced Directives**

Or, the art of trying to write down what you want before you don't have the ability to communicate it anymore. Will from the Freedom Center introduced this idea to me and Ashley a couple months ago by turning us on to the writings of Mary Ellen Copeland who's been championing the idea of folks struggling with mental health issues filling out Advanced Directive documents to share with doctors in the event that they end up in a hospital. When Ashley was in New York last month and there were lots of ideas being thrown around, we started taking the idea further and trying to come up with reminder documents for ourselves and the people around us about our warning signs and the kind of self-care we wanted and the people we could trust to look out for our best interests.

Anyway, I just found this unfinished file on my computer and felt like sharing it in the hopes that it might inspire a couple people out there to do something similar or have ideas for other categories that might be appropriate to put in a document like this. Madigan and I talked about it for a while the other day and she pointed out that there's some really basic practical stuff that's not on here about what to do with possessions and other responsibilities if you're hospitalized. I'm sure there's more stuff too. I definitely found the act of trying to figure out who would really be there for me if I needed them to be kind of hard and painful, but all of it really rewarding. I feel like there's a lot of people that I love and who love me back, but there aren't necessarily going to be there for me if I'm having a psychotic breakdown and totally fucking up my life and scaring most of the people around me. So anyway, it's a fluid list, meaning I think the people who are closest to me change depending on what's going on with my life, but I think there's actually a stable core. Real friendship is a lot of work. Crisis either tears people apart or brings them closer. I think one of our ideas is that if we can articulate this stuff before it happens, if we can articulate who are the people we really trust, just the act of doing those things is helping to build sustainable radical mental health support networks. If you try and make a list of who your true support people are and they don't exist yet, then that's a really good place to start: figuring out how to get tight with your friends or get some new friends you can be tight with.

Anyway, here it is. I'd love some feedback on it. Ashley and I wrote ours together at Bluestocking's Bookstore on day about a month ago and they are still very much works in progress:

## Sascha's Plan For Not Going Too Crazy

I, Sascha DuBrul, do not want to get so manic or so depressed that it completely shipwrecks my life again and causes major damage to my self and my relationships. Therefore, when I become aware of the early warning signs of mania, depression, or other potentially scary states, I will use the strategies in this document to take care of myself and articulate my needs to my community.

### Early warning signs of mania:

Cutting people off and not listening well

Racing thoughts

Surges of energy

Money seems light and easy to spend

Simultaneous thoughts competing for space

Impulsive decision-making

Waking up earlier, trouble falling asleep

--Forecasting dreams and other ESP stuff (knowing who's on the phone, when things are going to happen, what someone's going to say etc.)

--Food--think about eating less often, or eat voraciously but stay skinny

--Seems less and less important to take care of practical things like cleaning room/bills/dishes

Feeling like a superhero

Over ambitiousness

Other people seem to be in slow motion

Taking on too much responsibility

Need to talk/write/communicate a lot

Obsessive planning

Abundant bursts of enthusiasm

Doing several things at once

Self-involvement

Oversensitivity

Noises sound louder than usual

Increased sexual activity/drive/sense of self as sexual being

Tingly feeling

Sense of the world "crawling under my skin" or the freeway "pumping through my blood."

Porous membranes to other people/energy

--Start scheduling almost every hour of my day full of plans

Recruit more people into my life. Promise to hang out with everybody. Much easier to make friends

Become convinced I'm falling in love with people or just develop intense, all-consuming crushes

Vision/Perception changes—everything becomes more vivid, more clear, often more beautiful and meaningful, I start seeing patterns everywhere and notice everything

Start thinking/saying that I really feel alive now, like I wasn't really alive before and this is the real thing

Much more immediate access to my memories

Start craving smoking pot

If it seems clear I'm starting to get manic these are the things I should do:

- \* Let one of my support people know
- \* Make sure I go to bed early
- \* Make sure I am doing something to spend time with myself
- \* Make sure I am eating good food
- \* Make sure I am taking my meds at the right doses
- \* Stop scheduling too many appointments
- \* Spend more time at home or somewhere calm that is not work
- \* Avoid caffeine, sugar, crappy food, alcohol
- \* Avoid making major decisions
- \* Don't hire people for the Icarus Project or plan a bunch of events at Fountain House
- \* Get out of the city
- \* Don't break up with whoever I'm dating, OR promise to marry them.
- \* Don't moderate the TIP forums
- \* Spend less time in front of the computer
- \* Don't stay up all night talking to Ashley
- \* Don't stay up all night in general

If things are still out of hand:

- \* Take anti-psychotics to sleep
- \* Check in with my support people daily. Be honest with them. Listen to them.
- \* Start going to some kinda class: yoga, tai chi, etc.

If things still get worse and I do the following things:

- \* I really can't sleep. Sleeping less than 6 hours a night consistently.
- \* Working way too much (more than 8 - 9 hours a day)
- \* Making obviously bad decisions
- \* Getting convinced that everything's part of a huge grand-master conspiracy, or that I'm the designated superhero to save the world.
- \* My brain is completely overloaded with multiple layers of music/racing thoughts/out of control observations and metaphysical connections.
- \* Start getting paranoid or super super sneaky, convinced I'm living in some kind of video game or movie and I'm part of some stealthy plot to deceive anyone and keep everyone off my trail.

If these things happen, I give the following support people  
\*\*\*\*\*

permission to:

Confer about how I'm doing and what should be said to me. Intervene and sit me down and make me look at this list. Watch me closely and check in with me very frequently. Insist that I take my meds, go see my psychiatrist, and stop going out and doing a million things. If three of my support people agree that I am out of control to the point of being dangerous, I give them permission to get me out of my current environment/work and to a farm or somewhere else that is healthy and has routine, get me on alternative healthcare and potentially get me to see a psychiatrist if it really seems like nothing else is going to do it and I am a serious danger to myself or incredibly agitated to the point that I am worrying the crap out of everyone.

### Signs of Depression

- \* Unbearably slow thoughts
- \* My intuition is off—I misjudge people's intentions and have lots of bad hunches. Assume everyone's thinking about me and noticing how awful I am.
- \* Low energy or wretched agitated energy
- \* Feel an intense need to withdraw from things
- \* Crave sugar and carbohydrates
- \* Feeling like everything is overwhelming
- \* Lack of meaning in daily activities and events
- \* Feel useless and trapped in unchangeable patterns
- \* Lack of interest in anything
- \* Start feeling really awkward and weak in my body
- \* Seems like it requires so much energy to take care of practical things like cleaning room/bills/dishes
- \* Seems unreasonably hard to get out of bed or out of the house
- \* Can't concentrate
- \* Doing anything that involves multiple tasks seems so incredibly complicated—requires way too much energy
- \* Spending too much time on internet
- \* Canceling all my appointments with people
- \* TV seems overwhelmingly awful and the newspaper is unbearably distressing. Advertisements are obviously the devil's work.
- \* Start doubting my relationships. If I'm with someone I start thinking we don't fit and should probably just break up. If I'm interested in someone I'm sure they don't like me.
- \* Everything seems flat and dull.

If I notice a lot of these signs for more than a few days, I will do the following things to help:

- \* Let one of my support people know and check in regularly with support people
- \* Make sure I go to bed at my normal time and don't sleep till noon
- \* Make sure I am doing yoga and tai chi
- \* Make sure I am eating decent food, not a ton of sugar. Specifically, get me to eat green vegetables and fish or meat. Do NOT let me binge on nut butter or nuts.
- \* Make sure I am taking my meds.
- \* Encourage me to add fish oil, 5 HTP, and B vitamins
- \* Don't over-commit to anything
- \* Spend more time getting out of the house
- \* Avoid sugar, crappy food, alcohol, pot
- \* Avoid making major decisions
- \* Get out of the city for hikes/bike rides/etc.
- \* Don't break up with whoever I'm dating, OR promise to marry them.
- \* Don't moderate the TIP forums
- \* Spend less time in front of the computer
- \* Get the fuck off the internet
- \* Call Ashley
- \* Get out of the house for structured activities like meditation, classes, collective meetings, appointments with health care providers. Don't cancel everything.
- \* RIDE MY BIKE (and exercise in general)
- \* Get sunlight

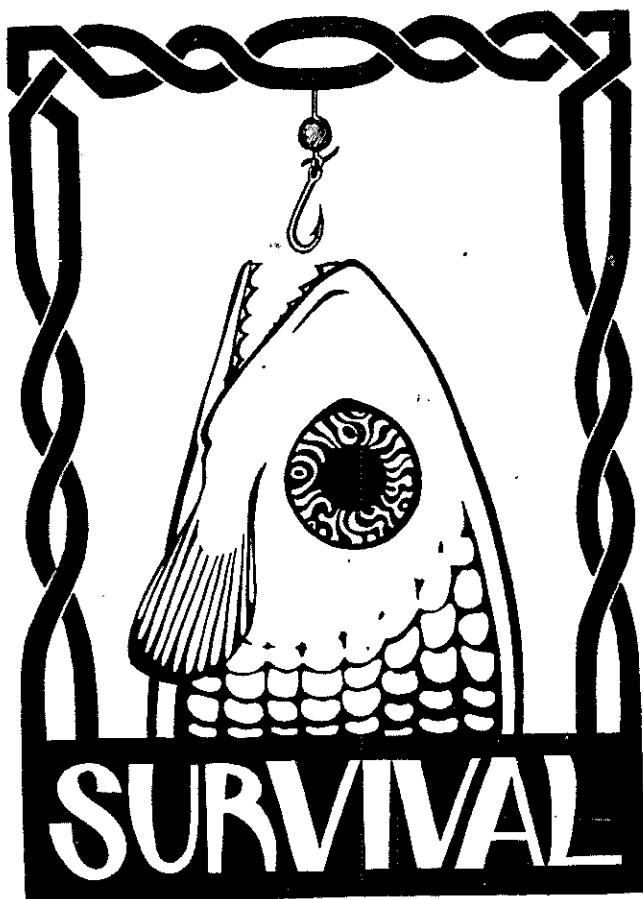
If I do these things and my depression is still really out of control and I exhibit the following signs:

- \* Suicidal thoughts and thoughts of self-harm
- \* Desperately wanting to stop existing
- \* Crazy irrational thoughts about harming others
- \* Persistent voices/thoughts in my head that don't feel like they're coming from me
- \* Consistently freaking out to the point of clinging to furniture, refusing to look at people, curling up in a ball for hours
- \* Not changing clothes, taking showers, attending to wounds or hygiene
- \* Inability to get out of bed
- \* Losing track of day of the week, getting lost in places I know

If these things happen, I give my support people

permission to:

Confer about how I'm doing and what should be said to me. Intervene and sit me down and make me look at this list. Watch me closely and check in with me very frequently. Insist that I take my meds, go see my psychiatrist, and get out of my bed and take care of myself. If three of my support people agree that I am out of control to the point of being dangerous, I give them permission to get me out of my current environment/work and to a farm or somewhere else that is healthy and has routine, get me on alternative healthcare and potentially get me to see a psychiatrist if it really seems like nothing else is going to do it and I am a serious danger to myself or incredibly agitated to the point that I am worrying the crap out of everyone.



## Time Travel and Fresh Eyes

Posted: 09 Sep 2005

The digital void shouting back hello:

So good to see you up here again Blue. I'm glad one of us got out and had a bunch of summer adventures this year. I'm also really glad that even though the forums are all straight looking and uninviting at the moment that you can use them like a journal to be able to mark your time like a map, see what you were thinking at the end of the summer '05 when chaos and time cloud the memories later on. For folks like us, having little time markers can be the difference from being lost in the void and back on the path. And you have some great posts back there to mark your path, you've had an intense summer.

So obviously you know I can relate to this whole post on so many different levels myself, in really personal ways like from learning to ride trains that same fateful summer 10 years ago to chillin' in those same Umpqua Hot Springs... but it's that Time Travel feeling that I think is particular to the mad travelers all over the world and throughout history because of our sensitive dispositions and tendencies to absorbing massive quantities of information and stimulus and holding on to it long after some others might just let it go. Even though it's been so long since I've been on the road, my life still feels like such a science fiction book sometimes. Check this out:

Last week I was in the student center on a college campus surrounded by folks who were all in their late teens and early 20's. I was just sitting there doing what I'm doing now, typing on my laptop, blending in as best as I could and catching up on some work. I'm 30 years old right now but when I'm clean shaven and wearing clothes that hide my tattoos I more or less can pull off looking like a regular college student. And generally I like being around a bunch of students, I like all the energy and excitement. But last week at Bard College I had the total Time Traveler experience: even though I seemingly blended in with everyone I had this really intense feeling of having lived infinitely more than everyone else around me – I carry thousands of people around in my head, all these different towns and cities, historic events I've ended up in the middle of, communities I play a role in, secret places I know are out there. And it can be a pretty lonely feeling to carry all that stuff around with you. People look at you like you're just another person, but you know you carry whole world inside of yourself. Of course, it's also just my own head trip, I don't take it that seriously. But I immediately know when I meet another one like myself, it's like speaking another language in 3 dimensions.

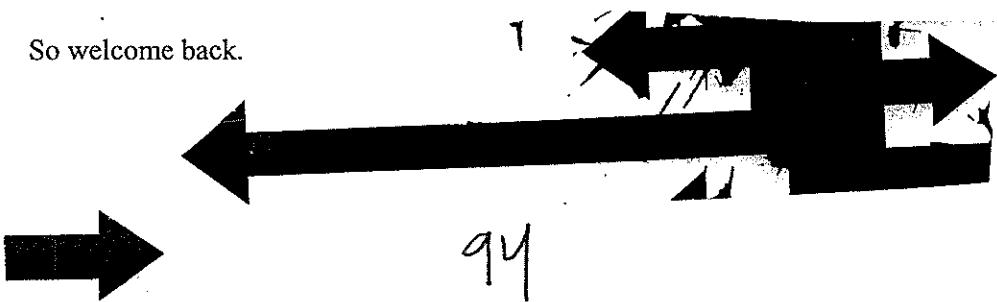
Anyway, I related to pretty much everything you said. The inevitable greener grass scenario. The dead plants that your housemates forgot to water and the

corresponding lack of interest in your summer revelations that make you want to put the pack right back on your back and keep moving. Sometimes the thing to do is move on to a new place, sometimes you have to work really hard to figure out the lessons you learned on the road and how they can apply to where you live. Sometimes one of the best things the road can offer you is larger perspective on your daily life as a stable civilian. I know that in my 20's I spent so long traveling that it felt like I was in orbit after awhile: unable to stop moving and always ending up in the same places over and over again. That gets old in the same way that staying in one place gets old.

But it's that part about the magic adventure, do you think there's some way to hold onto that feeling of adventure while in your daily life in the same place? I don't know what it's like where you live, but there are always new people to cross paths with, new places to explore. Even when I'm stable I like being around travelers because they bring the adventure energy with them. The good stories, the updates from friends in other towns, fresh eyes. Fresh Eyes are important: it's essential to have new people come around who are seeing things for the first time and offer perspective or at least not be too jaded to be happy about washing the dishes and dysfunctional collective meeting dynamics. And is part of the magic of adventure having other people be excited about your newness on the scene? I find that even when I'm in the town where I live people are way more likely to talk to me if I have a pack on my back. And I Love Talking to Strangers. I'm one of those people that asks for directions all the time even when I could easily figure it out myself. I love finding subtle reasons to talk to strangers on the train or on the street.

What about starting a local Icarus Project group in your town, Blue? We're almost done with this damn support manual thing that has all kinds of resources in it to get you started. Surely there are folks where you live who would be interested in talking about madness and reframing societies conceptions of mental illness. It is all about Community, creating and fostering community: getting together with some folks, cooking some food, trying to actively create the world that doesn't exist yet the way you want it to. That's a whole other style of adventure. It starts with just finding a space and putting up some flyers. Maybe cooking a meal, maybe showing a movie. I would love to help you figure out how to do something like that if that's something you might want to do.

So welcome back.



## My Face the Color of Plum

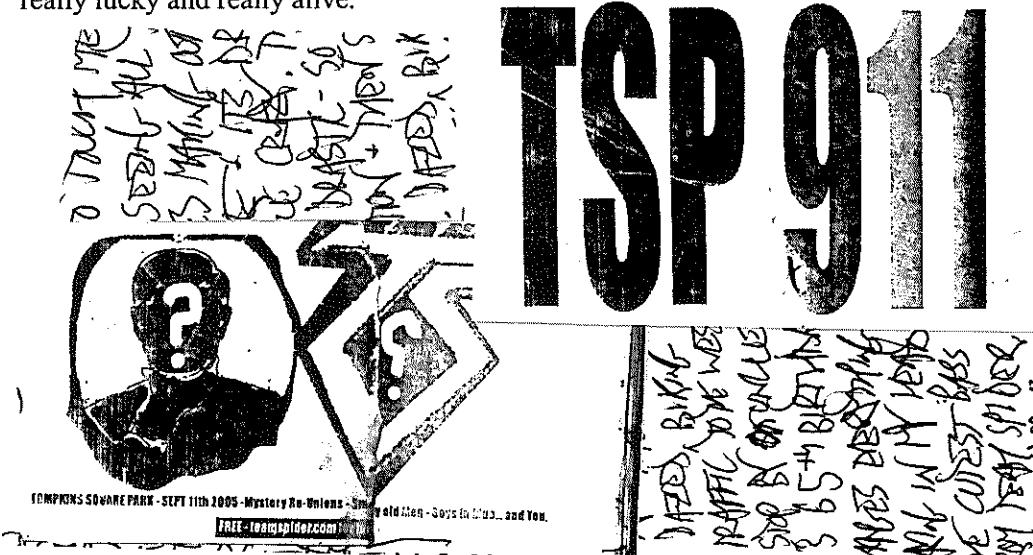
Posted: 11 Sep 2005

We carry these pieces of us, buried and broken up, waiting to rise to the surface when invoked by intense pain or intense beauty. Coming up against the world, against the face in the mirror, blurring the boundaries between the outside and the inside, the memories and the future, until it's just a pinprick of Now and we're standing there letting it all course through us.

It's the end of another East Coast summer, this time I'm sticking around to watch all the leaves fall, yearning for the contours of the land to emerge holding skeletons of maple and oak outside my winter window. I'm so ready for the world to end again. This is the first year even since I was a teenager that I'm not walking around feeling like I'm going to die forever all the time and that shifting relationship to death changes my relationship to everything. Everything.

I wander the late summer streets of a neighborhood that now only exists in me and my friend's memories and stories, ghosts of old squatted tenement buildings underneath slick prefab condos. But these old songs on my fingertips are telling the stories to anyone listening close, tapping out rhythms on steel string like Morse code for the spirit, calling up all these anthems for a whole bunch of us that I get to channel through my humble body.

My heart is beating fast cause I'm about to go play my first punk show in 12 years with my old band and I'm reveling in the looming intensity of it all. I feel really lucky and really alive.

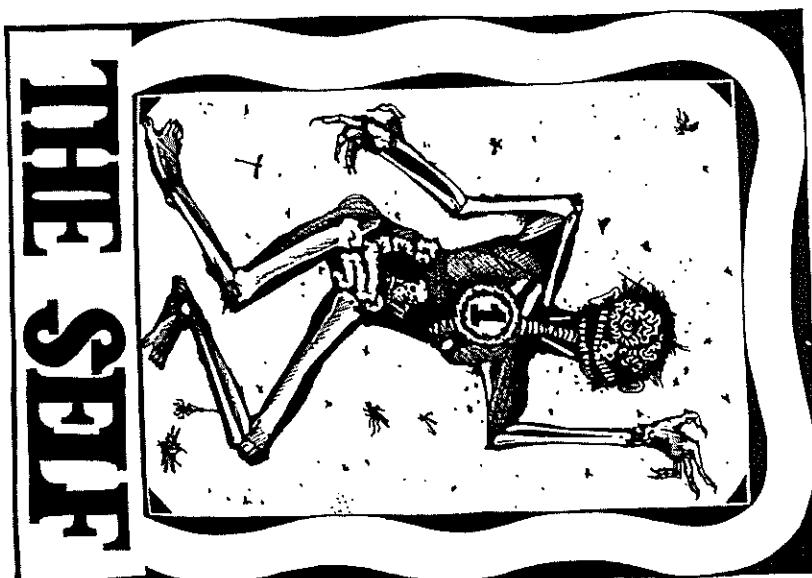


## Invisible Spotlight

Posted: 20 Sep 2005

The hardest thing I struggle with when I'm depressed is my inability to be able to connect with others, my inability to be there emotionally for the people in my life because I'm so focused on myself. It's like there's an invisible (to everyone else) spotlight directly on me and anytime anyone says anything, even if they're talking about their friend that just killed himself or how miserable they feel, my brain figures out some way to bring it right back to myself and what an asshole I am. And then, of course, there's the feedback loop of thinking of what an asshole I am for being so self centered, which just makes me more of an asshole, and the obvious solution is to kill myself, but I can't do that cause that's the ultimate self-centered asshole thing to do, so I just wander around feeling really lonely and despondent...

The good news is that it does go away, that I feel really far from that place these days, that I'm already figuring out all the hard earned lessons from the last round of depression and I wake up so thankful to be alive everyday day. So don't beat yourself up for not being able to be there for your friend. The best thing you can do right now is figure out how to take care of yourself. I'm glad you're posting on here.



## **The Summer is Slowly Being Relegated to a Bunch of Stories I Get to Tell in the Past Tense**

Posted: 27 Sep 2005

Hello y'all!

Sitting at the kitchen table in the Germantown house with a flurry of activity all around me, I'm falling in love with all of my housemates. Woke up hell of early in the middle of the woods in Pine Plains at the other land, showed up an hour before dark with all this hectic city energy and spent an hour hauling firewood with Jeff till my arms were sore and my head had slowed down enough to chill with my peeps. It poured rain last night, we ate squash soup and drank wine and this morning the sky was bright blue some small puffy white clouds chasing themselves around. We're having a big work party this weekend so everything is getting ready for all the people. It's like my favorite thing in the whole world. There are bright red patches of leaves in the trees. I'm so thankful that the summer is being relegated to a bunch of stories I get to tell in the past tense. There's a healthy patch of Brussels sprouts in the front garden and they taste sweeter now that it's cool out. Tucker just called to say he's coming over to help me build a loft for my bed tonight and I have to go to Hudson to buy plywood and 2x4's. We need to clean out and reseal the furnace, do some masonry work on the chimneys, and replace a bunch of busted copper radiator pipes. We still have a bunch of weeks to get it all done. Moose and Rene, New Orleans refugees, are showing up here any day and we're all excited. Kaya and Ashley are talking about wood sheds and metal roofing, lists are being made, I'm itchin' to close this computer and get the hell outside and back to work. There's my check-in from the Hudson Valley of New York.

Mad love

Posted: 28 Sep 2005

The sun is shining through my window, I'm getting ready to drive an old beater car down to the South Bronx and leave it with the More Gardens! Coalition folks, do the Icarus meeting shuffle of nub and Fountain House and potential funders, and drive back up with a crew of people on Thursday night for a weekend work party on the land. We're bringing up a bunch of Plexiglas to build a little greenhouse on the south side of the garage. My stomach's growling. I just had a dream that I was hanging out with Joey Ramone and my mom and there was one of those great *Matrix*-like scenes where I was going to jump from rooftop to rooftop and at the last second was just like, naaah, I'm gonna take the stairs...

Wow 60 people on our land for a weekend sounds a little intimidating at this

qf

point pugs, but I hope we get there soon. I'm imagining more like 10 or 12, putting the garden to bed, working on the biodiesel processor, getting that greenhouse up, cooking a bunch of food. There's a cat loudly and obnoxiously mewling at my door, I think he's telling me to get off the computer and feed the both of us.

**Posted: 30 Oct 2005**

I stepped outside of my house to pee this morning and the turkeys were right there standing in my way, just kind of eyeing me all quizzically. My friend Moose was in the barn playing the fucked up drum set and I ate a bowl of cereal and sat and listened, watching the fall leaves blow around. Now it's afternoon and I'm surrounded by lots of papers, making phone calls, catching up on the rest of the world. Hello all!

**Posted: 08 Nov 2005**

Hey y'all - woke up a little bit ago from this really vivid dark NYC gotham dream where I'm walking along the Hudson River and the buildings are jutting into the sky and there are these huge street protests with overturned burning cars and packs of kids with black masks and I run into my mom's rabbi and we're walking along and he's telling me some parable that has to do with the futility of sowing seeds into infertile land. I have all these new tattoos on my arms of Mayan glyphs and Dia de Los Muertos skeletons and the sky is red.

In the material realm...I'm sitting here on my bed surrounded by papers, spreadsheets and scribbled notes for the grant report we've been working on. It's so hard balancing these different worlds sometimes. I was on a 2 hour conference call meeting with Carey and Will yesterday and I literally watched the two female goats hop the garden fence and munch the last of our sweet pepper plants, fruits and plants, down to the ground. Oh well, it's the end of the season. But goddamn we need to build a better goat fence. But actually figuring out how the Icarus Project isn't going to go broke seems to be a priority. So I'm sitting here with a pile of papers on my bed...

Our buddy Justin showed up on Sunday and spent a bunch of hours with us working on the furnace and I woke up yesterday morning covered in sweat cause my radiator was on full blast! Hallelujah! I went running last night with the stars and the moon and came back and took a hot shower and it felt so good. My legs were shaking from exhaustion cause I haven't tried to run in months but it was a good kind of shaking. My living room smells like honey cause we harvested from the hives and did all the processing on the living room table. It's

starting to feel cozy in here, the heat definitely helps. The fall color has come and gone, the ground is blanketed in leaves. In the spare time I force myself to make I'm reading this agriculture book from 1909 *Elements of Agriculture* and it's full of beautiful drawings and it blows me away how much we knew about sustainable farming before the age of industrial agriculture - post WWII chemical green revolution era. There were all these land grant agricultural schools all over the country - public money going into plant breeding. All of that shit is private now. The seeds are all owned by chemical companies that make pesticides and herbicides and fertilizers and what incentive would those companies have to breed seeds that grow well without pesticides and herbicides and fertilizers? What we call organic farming is what everyone was doing in 1909. In my little fantasy this time next year we will have harvested a bunch of seed crops off this land and be building our little seed library. Even if we're doomed somehow these thoughts keep me sane cause they just make so much more sense than anything I grew up with around me. What I love is that the same Hudson River I grew up down the street from on the Upper West Side of Manhattan is just down the road here in Germantown. Except you can actually swim in it here without being too worried about getting sick.

Anyway...I hope you all have a lovely lovely day.



## **Breakfast with Jello Biafra**

Posted: 13 Nov 2005

This is awesome, I love when my brain does this:

I had a very vivid dream this morning that I was cooking breakfast with Jello Biafra in my mom's kitchen in Manhattan. (For anyone who doesn't know, Jello Biafra was the lead singer of this punk band from the 80's called the Dead Kennedys and they were a big part of many of our teenage political educations. He's a hyper-intelligent, infamously obnoxious character and definitely would not be in my mom's kitchen.)

It's a pretty small kitchen, even smaller in the dream, and we were cramped together chopping veggies and making an omelette and hash browns. He was really friendly in the dream and we were having this conversation about Tipper Gore and I was making fun of him for partnering with some project that she was involved in because in the 80's she started something called the PMRC (Parent Music Resource Council?) that was responsible for putting those little black and white 'parental advisory' warning labels on mainstream music record/cd covers. At the time they tried to sue the Dead Kennedys and some other musicians for 'explicit content' of lyrics and such and it was actually this kind of cool situation that ended up bringing a bunch of punk and hip-hop and metal bands together to fight against censorship and suddenly there were these cool cross-pollinations where you could hear Jello Biafra's voice on Ice-T records and such. Any-way...since this was a dream, Jello Biafra was in my mom's kitchen and I was making fun of him for cutting some deal with Tipper Gore and then we talked about some other random shit and cooked our food.

Okay, so sometime after I was awake and thinking about this dream I remembered that last week I had a meeting with a foundation in Manhattan (to try and raise some money from them) and the guy I was meeting with was talking about Tipper Gore and how she's spearheading some suicide prevention campaign on college campuses and how he was recommending that the Icarus Project ask their group for money. I just kind of smiled to myself at the time and forgot about it. But behind the scenes at the Icarus Project we're actually running out of money and not quite sure how we're going to get through the year and I'm really hoping that foundation I met with last week is actually going to kick down a couple grand to us. It's just funny how it's all connected in the end. Yawn.

Posted: 15 Nov 2005 11:58 am Post subject:

Hey y'all -

Our furnace broke again and it's chilly in here but I've got good company.  
There was a big ring around the moon last night and the house was full of people.

Take care of each other out there

Mad love

Sascha



## New Language (NASCO workshop notes)

Posted: 16 Nov 2005

Hey good people - I want to thank you all for attending the Icarus Project radical mental health workshop this past weekend at the NASCO conference. It was an honor and pleasure to help facilitate that awesome discussion and pass on some of the tools and ideas we've been messing around with for the past couple years in groups. As I mentioned on Saturday, the Icarus Project is a small and recently formed collective and although we have big visions for the future, we're still in the early stages of laying the groundwork for those visions.

In regards to Saturday's workshop, if anyone that was in the room has constructive feedback -- like if there was anything you think that could have been done better or if there was something that seemed particularly effective or touched you in a certain way -- we'd love to hear about it. Feedback is what keeps us going!

We're trying to create a rough workshop format that others can follow if they want help inspiring similar conversations in their communities, so any criticism or direction would be so so helpful.

One of our dreams is to help inspire a national network of radical mental health support groups on college campuses to create an alternative for folks who the mainstream has left behind. If this seems like something you might be interested in, and if you get excited about the thought of helping start a support group on your campus and/or you're interested in finding some school resources to help pay for a couple of us Icarus folks to come out and do a workshop in your town in the coming months, please get in touch and we can start planning for the springtime.

If you haven't had a chance already you should definitely check out the website  
<http://theicarusproject.net>

There's a lot of good material on there, the discussion forums have more than 2500 members registered, it's a whole interesting cast of characters.

In the meantime, to keep the ideas fresh in your memory just in case they might come in handy, these were some of the major themes and tools from this weekend's workshop. Please feel free to use them when talking to folks in your community back home about this new radical underground mental health movement that's sweeping the nation (!):

Mind/Body/Community - we're collectively redefining what "mental health support" can look like, way outside of the mainstream medical model, and we're

looking towards each other and not the drug companies as the basic foundations of support and health and well-being.

Dangerous Gifts - like Icarus' wings, people with extreme mental conditions can be seen as having extraordinary powers that can easily get us into trouble. Try and imagine if we stopped considering each other "diseased" and "disordered" and started seeing each other as wounded healers and potential shaman.

Listening Spaces - creating safe spaces for each other to share personal experiences and learn to trust each other is one of the keys to building strong community. Imagine having what we did on Saturday together be a regular part of your life. Imagine being able to send your friend who's having a rough time to a group you know would be supportive and understanding.

Making Maps – our personal and collective stories can be guides to keep us on the right paths. Personal advanced directives, lists of warning signs, 'taking care of the basics' lists- there are all tools we can use to take care of ourselves and look out for each other, and make it easier in the future and for the one who come after us.

New Language - many of the problem that we come up against have their origin in the clinical, sterile, outdated words and concepts we use that don't actually describe what we're really going through. Let's use this gaping linguistic void as a jumping off point and come up with some of our own language. Here are a couple places to start:

What are some of our own definitions of "Healthiness" and "Productivity" and how are they different from the mainstream?

(To tie your head in knots) How can we define "crazy" in a world that's obviously insane?

Weaving the Safety Nets – A conscious act of building the support networks with all of these pieces and all of each other. We weave the nets with our actions.

So there are some powerful words and concepts to take with you and do with as you wish, I hope you find them useful. I'm glad you found us. If you know of others who might find what we do empowering you should send them our way. We're easy to find...

Mad love, Sascha

# THE BOOK OF NIGHTMARES

SUDDENLY  
OUR HOUSE IS INFESTED WITH OVER-AFFECTIONATE CATS;  
GHOSTS  
The  
Gatos Project  
of London

HEY ASLEY - → 4:30 AM

HAVE YOU EVER READ A BOOK OF POETRY  
CALLED THE BOOK OF NIGHTMARES BY GALWAY KINNEE?  
I REALLY LIKED IT WHEN I WAS IN HIGH SCHOOL.  
→ THERE'S THIS REALLY BEAUTIFUL, STRIKING  
WOODCUT ON THE COVER OF THE SUN + THE MOON +  
THE STARS + THIS OLD MAN + A BUNCH OF OTHER  
STUFF. I GAVE MY COPY TO MY LESBIAN GIRLFRIEND  
MITRA GANESH + MY FRESHMAN YEAR OF COLLEGE  
SHE SENT ME THIS POEM ABOUT IT + US FROM A Poetry  
CLASS SHE TOOK AT BROWN (AND THEN I DONT SEE  
HER FOR MORE THAN A DECADE + FOUND HER IN FRIENDS)  
AWAY, I HAD TROUBLE FALLING ASLEEP CAUSE I WAS  
COLD + FEELING SICK + I WOKE UP AFTER ONLY A  
COUPLE HOURS FEELING HOT + EVEN MORE SICK +  
I'M WRITING YOU THIS NOTE FOR THE VERY  
PRACTICAL REASON OF TELLING YOU I JUST  
DRUGGED MYSELF + MIGHT SLEEP THROUGH OUR 10AM  
WORK STARTING TIME (HOPEFULLY IN THE INTEREST OF  
MY LUNGS.) BUT I JUST HAD THIS AMAZING EXPERIENCE  
I HAVE TO TELL YOU ABOUT WHICH IS THAT WHEN  
I WOKE UP TO → A FEW MINUTES AGO I SUMBLED  
OUTSIDE + AS I WAS POOING FEELING THE SWEET  
COOL AIR ON MY FACE I SUDDENLY HAD THIS IMAGE OF  
THE WORLD AROUND ME TURNING INTO THE COVER OF  
THE BOOK OF NIGHTMARES + I WAS THE OLD MAN  
WITH A LONG WHITE BEARD + THE SUN + THE MOON +  
THE WIND + THE STARS WERE IN THE SKY + TIME JUST  
KIND OF STOPPED + IT WAS SIMULTANEOUSLY PEACEFUL +  
DRAMATIC + IT WAS REALLY NICE + I'M CHILLIN BACK  
TO BED BUT FELT SUDDENLY COMPELLED TO TELL YOU  
ABOUT IT. I HOPE YOU'RE SLEEPING SOUNDLY + SASCHA

## Where Did You Get Your Name?

Posted: 06 Dec 2005

Alright, I first got the name scatter in the summer of 1995 when I was traveling around with this circus of crazy drunk punk kids called the Nomadic Festival. I was 20 years old. There were 15 people and a few dogs and a whole lot of construction and art materials and random crap crammed into two vans. We left New York City in June with the intention of doing a full loop around the country and throwing parties and performing on the street everywhere. By the time we made it to Oakland we were totally totally broke and ended up riding freight trains up the coast, sneaking into Canada, riding more freight trains, and eventually going our separate ways in Minneapolis at the end of August.

It had really only been a year since I'd gotten out of being institutionalized and my mom was totally freaked out cause I'd dropped out of college to travel and then shortly thereafter showed up at her house talking about this big freak circus we were organizing. She was convinced I was going crazy and getting delusionally grandiose again. This was a reoccurring theme for many years.

I was actually one of the two main 'organizers' of the festival but everyone kept making fun of me because I was always leaving all my shit everywhere and always always juggling a dozen projects at the same time and periodically dropping all the pins. So that's when people first started calling me 'scatter'.

That fall and winter I wrote a whole big zine about the experience and it ended up actually getting published as a book by this anarchist publishing company called Autonomedia. I first used the name 'Sascha Scatter' in that thing because it just sounded cooler than 'Sascha Altman DuBrul' (although, comically, at the last minute my mom called up the Autonomedia warehouse in Brooklyn and convinced them to put 'Sascha Altman DuBrul' on the spine of the book! Anyone who knows my mom knows that she can be a pretty pushy lady.) Anyway, after that I kept using the name Sascha Scatter when I wrote stuff and I still do depending on who I'm writing for.

Three years after the Nomadic Festival I was working on a farm in British Columbia and I got totally obsessed with seeds and seed politics and saving seeds of all our vegetables and finding other people who were saving seeds and we ended up building this seed bank/library which still exists to this day and is thriving. A couple years after that, after some more time in and out of the psych ward, I helped form this organization called BASIL (Bay Area Seed Interchange Library) and went all over the place teaching seed saving workshops and giving talks about the corporate control of agriculture and reclaiming community power from industrial agribusiness. I used the 'Sascha Scatter' name then and people didn't know about my sketchy drunk punk circus past and thought the 'scatter' had something to do with seeds.

So there you go, Thanks for letting me add my little stories to this awesome thread.

Mad love, Sascha

EPilogue + THANK YOU'S —

THE HAPPY ENDING OF THIS ZINE IS THAT ME + ASHLEY + A BUNCH OF OUR FRIENDS ARE STILL LIVING IN A BLOSSOMING COMMUNITY FARM NORTH OF NEW YORK CITY, THE ICARUS PROJECT HAS BEEN FUNCTIONING AS A COLLECTIVE FOR ALMOST A YEAR + WE'RE CONSTANTLY LEARNING + EVOLVING, AND THERE FOLKS ALL OVER THE PLACE BEING INSPIRED + TAKING OWNERSHIP OF THE LITTLE SEEDINGS WE'VE BEEN TENDING TO IN OUR WORK. I DONT ALWAYS KNOW WHAT MY ROLE IS AS A 'FOUNDER' — AND HOW TO BALANCE + SEPARATE MY 'WORK' LIFE FROM MY 'PERSONAL' LIFE, BUT I'M DEFINITELY BETTER AT IT THAN I WAS WHEN ALL THIS STUFF WAS WRITTEN.

MAD MAD THANKS TO: KYOKO PANZELLA, WILL HALL, CAREY LAMPRECHT, MADDIE SHINE, ASHLEY MONAMARA, MARYSE MITCHELL-BRODY, FOUNTAIN HOUSE, ALL MY PEERS AT THE GERMANIUM COMMUNITY FARM, SEVEN + JONAH LINDA + EVERYONE WHO'S BEEN DROPPIN' DOWN THE WEBSITE,

FRONT COVER BY FLY  
BACK IMAGE BY REBECCA COONAN



2018  
Annals Rose (P)



4-16



EXTRA SPJ  
THANK'S  
STEFAN  
JECUSCO  
FOR ALMOST A  
THE GRAPHIC  
IN THIS ZI-

AND YOU FOR TAKIN'  
THE TIME TO STEP INTO  
MY HEAD. ☺ SASCHA

*All the people I'd known in my life who'd been considered "mentally ill" and "mad" were like the mutants in the comic books, the misfits who had to carve their own paths or else be eaten by the world they came from. The mutant teenagers were me and my friends. But most of us never had mentors and guides to lead us through to the other side and teach us how to be superheros. We just had each other.*



*Those who are born mutants have it really rough: the modern world wasn't made for the likes of our kind. The mainstream's waters choke us and make us gag. Modern institutions and industrial standardization feel particularly cold and heartless to us because our spirits are so wild. We see the end of the world in flashing billboards and clear-cut forests. We feel the pain of others like it's our own. We can't hold down regular jobs or make regular friends. We're told we're diseased and sick and need to be medicated for our entire lives or else horrible things will happen. There is no place for us except in institutions or out on the street. We're outcasts. And we gravitate towards other outcasts like us.*