

San Jose State University

From the Selected Works of Gil J. Villagran

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Napalm Response

Gil J. Villagran



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Hi Bob,

You definitely see things clearly as they are, and very well stated. It is startling, but should not be to realize that Santa Clara, our happy home, was right in the thick of the military-industrial complex with a Monsanto plant on Lafayette Blvd., just over the RR track by our homes, only they know what chemical soup they cooked there, but some days, the smell was of pure chemicals, next door was the Owens-Corning plant, making asbestos infused cookware, and of course Memorex and the future high tech start-ups replacing all the pear orchards (my dads first jobs as a non-English-speaking immigrant).

When you talk about money talking or calling the shots, it is as if Al Ornellas is speaking, as your dad would say now and then in between working in your garage or garden. I loved learning how to use tools from him!!! And after, we would go in your house where Angie had a linguisa sandwich waiting for us! I miss those sweet days!

Soon after our 1966 graduation, our naive comfortable world began to crumble into the harsh reality of draft, war, police abuse, corporate and political corruption, and the funerals for some of our classmates. Each funeral, TV news report, newspaper report, demonstration and March further turned me into an angry young man. I changed my college major from physics to philosophy, but even then arguing with classmates, and/or the professor about the war. Getting high more and more, before class, between classes, behind buildings, behind trees, in cars, reality began to suck without a joint.

My family saw the change. My mom called me "a rebel without a cause" as the James Dean film, but I would respond, "Yes mom, I am a rebel, but with a cause, & the cause is that illegal war!"

By my third or fourth year, I wrote the same term paper, a diatribe against the war, our government, religion, social convention—no matter the assignment, and exclaim to my friends, who I felt were becoming alienated from me, except, perhaps Jeff. You went to Vietnam. God how I missed you! But when you returned, and after our two great weeklong hitchhike to the Grand Canyon and backpack (to the bottom of the Canyon, and LSD trip at the majestic Colorado River, which was so healing for me). After our hitchhike back home, you went to work and I returned to school. For the next years, you seemed to retreat to Campbell and then to Gilroy, later to Hollister, and we lost touch for as many as 20-30+ years. I felt a great loss of our prior 20-year friendship, but respected your decision to not see each other except an occasional motorcycle fire trail ride, tripping at Panther beach, and at Stevie Johnson's memorial spreading his ashes at a Santa Cruz beach...the first of our group to die so young.

I took classes, got expelled from san José state for protesting recruiters for the military, DOW chemical, FBI, CIA, etc. I lost my student deferment, but by this time, “I didn’t...” (As Country Joe sang: “give a fuck, next stop is Vietnam”

This is the era that I went to Alan Watts, Baba Ram Das, Timothy Leary and Ken Kesey lectures instead of classes. Then, while expelled, I worked for Joaquin Esteves (remember him? Son of who your mom called, “The richest Portuge in Santa Clara County) He was renting a duplex with his family, from my sister and Gale Kipp, at his father’s Sousa’s Linguisa factory on N. 26th St.

Expecting to get drafted, I went to India, Nepal, and Afghanistan, got quite sick, and finally went to work to raise my baby daughter Julie.

Now I have three daughters and three grand daughters, as I wrote earlier, and retired from county social work, teaching social work for likely my last class, since all young students want to be high tech engineers or managers or just already very wealthy without questioning authority too much—which is what true social work is—seeking to right wrongs...

Anyway, Bobby, now I am a raving (but mostly peacefully) rebellious old man, I hope, still with a cause.

--Gil

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