From Oregon to Texas to Utah; my Gratitude List

May 29, 2008 By Paul Dalton

I just returned from my first non-work related trip in so long I can?t remember. I drove up to Portland, OR to visit my daughter and hang out with punk rockers. The highlight of the trip was a dramatic thunderstorm on Saturday night. I grew up in Rochester, NY and we had thunderstorms pretty regularly. Here in the Bay Area, they are rare and unimpressive. Apparently, they are rare in Portland (surprising given the amount of rain they get), and this one was impressive.

I was happy to see that my post about Willie Campbell struck a chord with folks. At last count there were 60 comments. It is times like there when I miss the 80s. While I was living it the 80s were characterized by despair and apathy. In retrospect, they were a time of both regression (Reagan, AIDS, the S&L scandal, Hair Metal?) but also tremendous action (ACT UP, the anti-Apartheid movement, Punk). Right now we are at war in 2 countries, the economy is tanking, the planet is sick (if not dying)- and by and large we aren?t in the streets. Why?

Long time radical activist, folk singer and all around cool dude U Utah Phillips recently died. Phillips was one of those great life long gadflies- the folks that never stop sticking it to the man. He spent decades organizing unions and singing folk songs. He never went quietly in to that good night. He is a kind of secular saint to me- an example of a life spent in struggle for a better, more humane and just world.

So today I am grateful for Thunderstorms, AIDS activist, and secular saints.

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