

PEPPER-SPRAY COP

ONCE UPON A TIME . . .



THERE WAS A SUPERHERO . . .



ARMED ONLY WITH A CAN . . .



OF MILITARY-GRADE PEPPER SPRAY . . .

THE LT. JOHN PIKE SAGA

Story by: the students, faculty,
administration, & police force of the
University of California-Davis

KRIKOKOMIX #1 - DEC. 2011

Text by:
A. D. Coleman
Artwork by:
Da Meme Team

PRELUDE: IN WHICH WE MEET LT. JOHN PIKE



ONE MINUTE JOHN PIKE WAS A BUSH-LEAGUE CAMPUS COP OF WHOM NO ONE HAD EVER HEARD ...

(THOUGH HE DID COST LC DAVIS \$240K FOR A SETTLEMENT RESULTING FROM HOMOPHOBIC COMMENTS MADE TO AND ABOUT A FELLOW OFFICER) ...

THEN HE MADE A QUICK, FATEFUL DECISION ...



INVOLVING SOME PEPPER SPRAY ...

DID I DO THAAAAT?!?!



AND WITHIN AN HOUR HE'D GONE VIRAL AS AN INTERNET SENSATION!

IT HAPPENED ON THE AFTERNOON OF NOVEMBER 18, 2011...



KEEP YOUR EYES ON THIS CAN!

HI THERE. I'M LT. JOHN PIKE OF THE UC DAVIS POLICE FORCE.

IN THE SLEEPY COLLEGE TOWN OF DAVIS, CALIFORNIA.



AND NOW I'M SHOOTING PEPPER SPRAY INTO THE FACES OF A BUNCH OF PEOPLE.



A MEME WAS BORN!

INTERLUDE: WHAT'S A MEME, EXACTLY? (A)

A **MEME** (PRONOUNCED MEEM) IS ANY CULTURAL ARTIFACT THAT CATCHES THE POPULAR IMAGINATION TO SUCH AN EXTENT THAT IT BECOMES SELF-PERPETUATING.



I'M AN EVOLUTIONARY BIOLOGIST. I INTRODUCED THE CONCEPT OF THE **MEME** IN MY 1976 BOOK, **THE SELFISH GENE**.



A. D. COLEMAN



RICHARD DAWKINS

(MORE)

INTERLUDE: WHAT'S A MEME, EXACTLY? (B)

WITHIN HOURS OF THE PEPPER-SPRAYING EVENT, PIKE'S LIKENESS, EXTRACTED FROM STILLS AND VIDEOS MADE BY ONLOOKERS AND THEN COLLAGED INTO OTHER IMAGES (VIA PHOTOSHOP AND OTHER IMAGE-MANIPULATION PROGRAMS), BEGAN TO APPEAR AND MULTIPLY RAPIDLY ON THE INTERNET.

TO MAKE A LONG STORY SHORT, THE IMAGE OF LT. JOHN PIKE CASUALLY SPRAYING UNRESISTING PROTESTERS STRUCK A CHORD.



A. D. COLEMAN

WITHIN DAYS, THERE WERE MORE THAN 1000 SUCH IMAGES ONLINE. PIKE HAD BECOME A MEME.

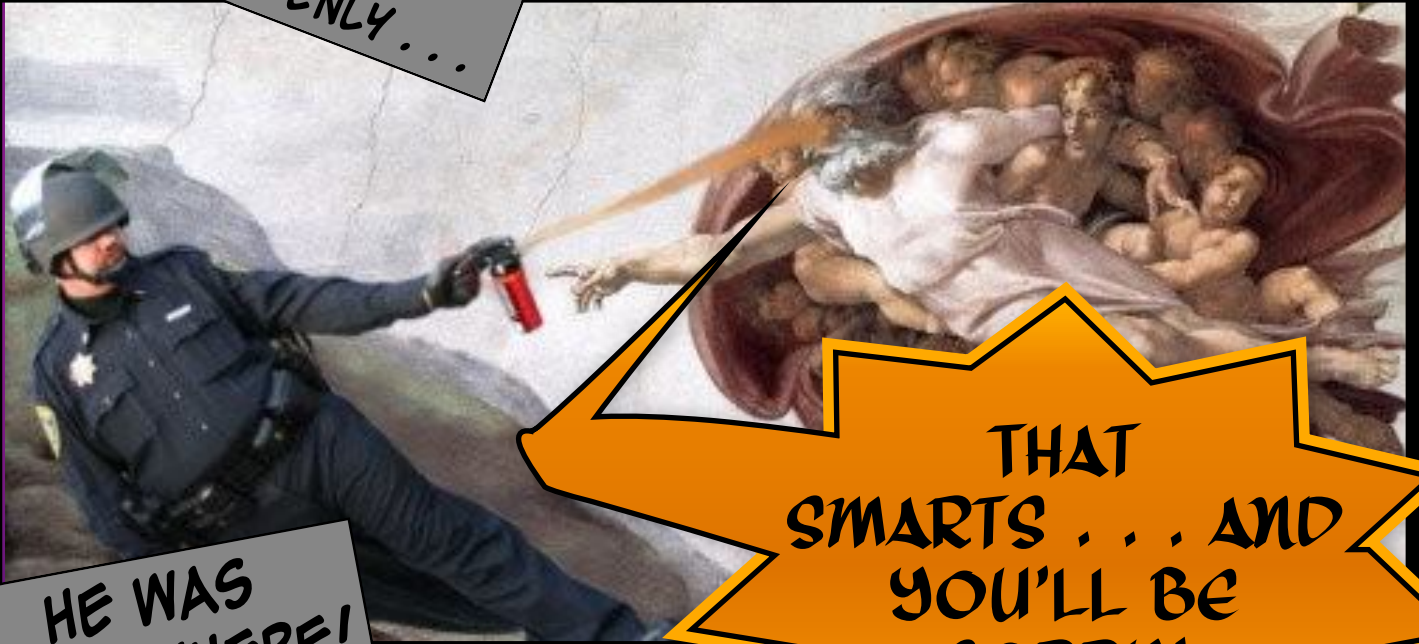


NOW BACK TO OUR STORY!

THAT'S HOW IT HAPPENED. NO ONE HAD EVER NOTICED JOHN PIKE BEFORE . . .



AND THEN
SUDDENLY . . .



HE WAS
EVERYWHERE!

THAT
SMARTS . . . AND
YOU'LL BE
SORRY!



ROAR!!

AS THE LEGEND SAID . . .

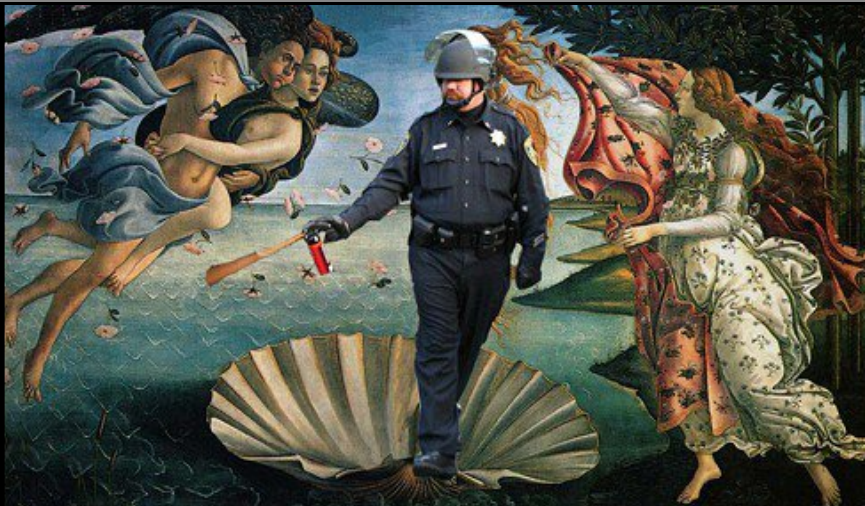


I
WAS ONLY
WAITING FOR
THIS MOMENT
TO ARRIVE.



HE'D ALWAYS BEEN THERE . . .

A PRODUCT OF OUR COLLECTIVE UNCONSCIOUS . . .



THAT SMARTS . . .

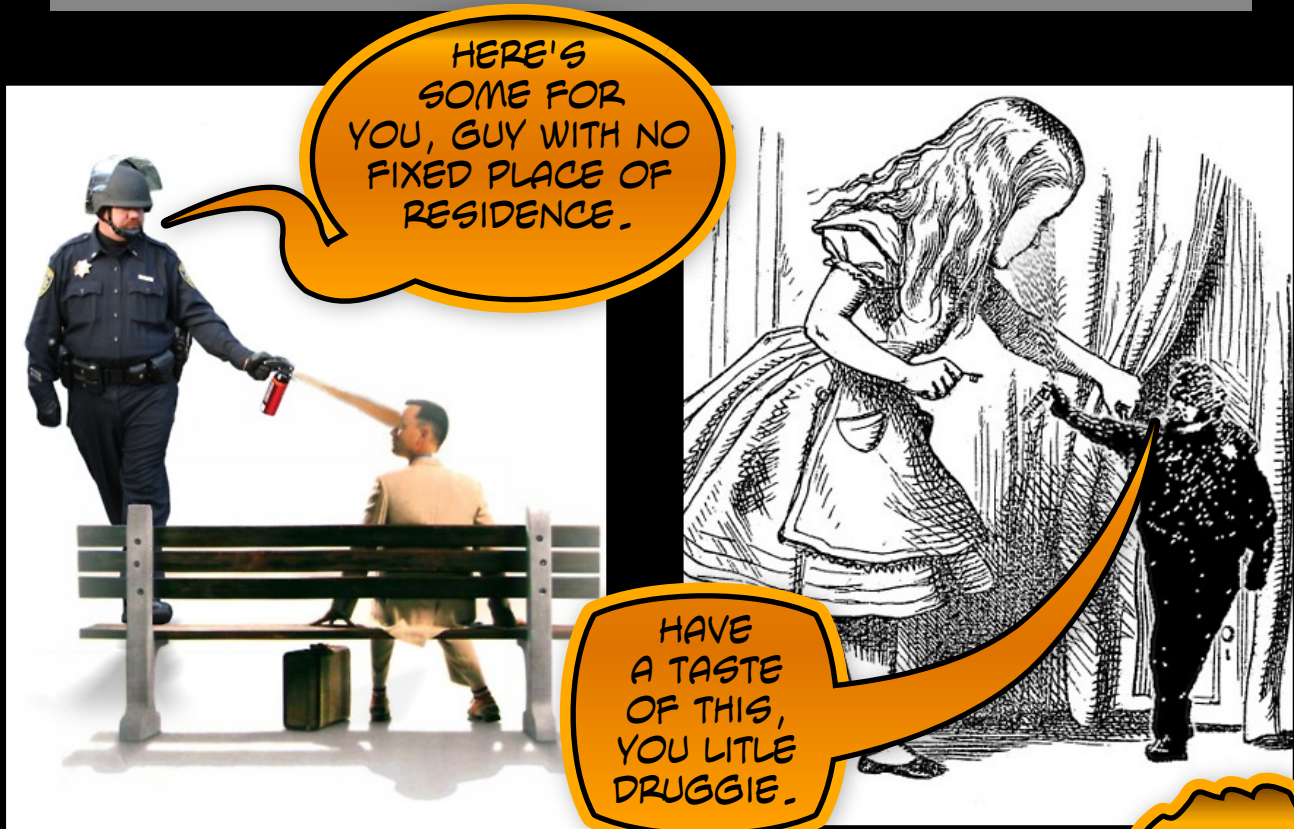


THAT SMARTS . . .



LURKING JUST BELOW THE THRESHOLD OF OUR AWARENESS:

THE ARCHETYPAL HARD COP.



INTERLUDE: MEME TYPOLOGY (A)

JUST DO IT.



BROADLY SPEAKING, ANY ARTIFACT OR IDEA THAT SPREADS VIRALLY THROUGH A CULTURE FALLS INTO THE CATEGORY OF *MEME*. MOST MEMES REPRODUCE SIMPLY BY REPETITION OR CLONING OF THEIR ORIGINAL VERSIONS — AS WHEN SOMEONE EMBEDS A STILL PHOTOGRAPH FROM FLICKR OR A VIDEO POSTED AT YOUTUBE IN HIS OR HER OWN BLOG, OR A CORPORATION PUTS ITS LOGO OR SLOGAN ON A PRODUCT LINE THAT BECOMES POPULAR.



(MORE)

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INTERLUDE: MEME TYPOLOGY (B)

HOWEVER,
SOME MEMES
PROVE ADAPTABLE.
THEY LEND THEMSELVES
TO A VARIETY OF USES,
NOT NECESSARILY
ANTICIPATED BY THOSE WHO
INTRODUCE THEM INTO THE
CULTURE. FOR EXAMPLE,
THINK OF THE "DANCING
BABY" ANIMATION
OF 1996.



OR CONSIDER THE
ADVENTURES OF
THE SQUIRREL
PICTURED BELOW.



A. D. COLEMAN

(MORE)

INTERLUDE: MEME TYPOLOGY (C)

THIS IS MY ANDY WARHOL 15 MINUTES!



THEN PEOPLE STARTED EXTRACTING THE SQUIRREL'S IMAGE AND INSERTING IT INTO OTHER IMAGES, WHERE HE WAS EVEN MORE INCONGRUOUS AND UNEXPECTED. THIS SQUIRREL'S IMAGE BECAME AN **EXTRAPOLATORY MEME**.

HE POPPED INTO THE FRAME OF A SELF-PORTRAIT MADE BY A VACATIONING COUPLE AT LAKE MINNEWANKA IN BANFF NATIONAL PARK, CANADA, IN 2009. THEY POSTED IT AT THE NATIONAL GEOGRAPHIC WEBSITE, AND IT BEGAN TO CIRCULATE ON THE WEB, AS A CLONED MEME.



A. D. COLEMAN



(MORE)

INTERLUDE: MEME TYPOLOGY (D)



THERE'S NO PEPPER-SPRAY COP APP (YET). BUT, LIKE THAT SQUIRREL, LT. JOHN PIKE HAS BECOME AN EXTRAPOLATORY MEME.

EVENTUALLY, SOMEONE CREATED AN ONLINE APP — THE SQUIRRELIZER — ENABLING US TO UPLOAD ANY IMAGE AND INSERT THE SQUIRREL INTO IT.

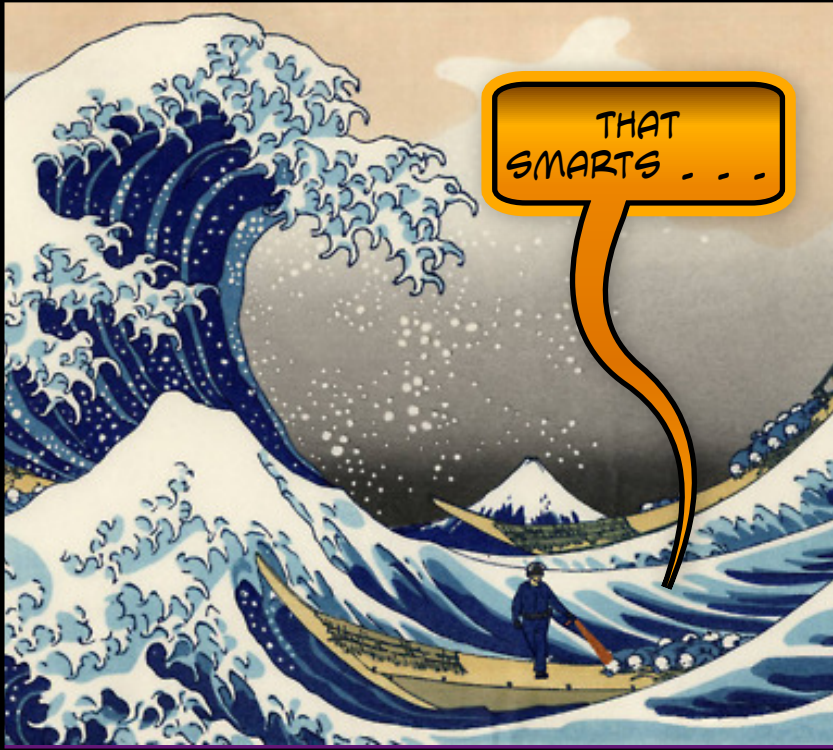


A. D. COLEMAN



NOW BACK TO OUR STORY!

WITH EYES CLEANSED BY HIS PEPPER SPRAY . . .



WE FOUND HIM IN OUR ART . . .



THAT SMARTS . . .



FROM THE OLD MASTERS TO THE AVANT-GARDE . . .



THAT
SMARTS . . .



IN OUR CLASSIC PHOTOGRAPHS . . .



THAT SMARTS . . .



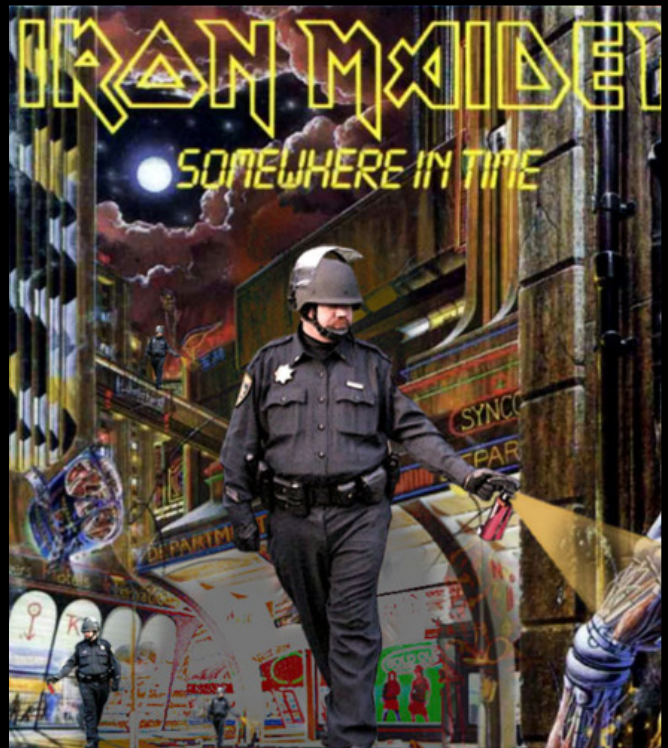
IN OUR POPULAR MUSIC . . .



PIKE FLOYD



DARK SIDE OF THE LAW



IN OUR FILMS AND TV SHOWS, THOSE FOR ADULTS . . .



THAT
SMARTS . . .



THAT IS ONE
UGLY
PRIMATE!



AND THE ONES FOR KIDS.



THAT SMARTS . . .



A WHIFF FOR YOU TOO, PRINCESS.



HOW HAD WE FAILED TO NOTICE HIM BEFORE?



I HEREBY
DECLARE YOU A
MEMBER OF
FLUXUS.



INTERLUDE: WHY DID THIS MEME SUCCEED? (A)

NEW CULTURAL ARTIFACTS — SONGS, IMAGES, SLOGANS, ETC. — GET CREATED AND INTRODUCED INTO THE DISTRIBUTION SYSTEM EVERY DAY. MOST OF THEM ASPIRE TO MEME STATUS. YET MANY ARE CALLED, BUT FEW ARE CHOSEN.



THERE'S NO FORMULA. THE PROCESS IS UNPREDICTABLE AT BEST. MUCH DEPENDS ON LUCK — GOOD OR BAD LUCK, DEPENDING ON WHETHER YOU'RE THE CREATOR OF THE MEME OR THE SUBJECT, WILLING OR (LIKE PIKE) UNWILLING.

A. D. COLEMAN

(MORE)

INTERLUDE: WHY DID THIS MEME SUCCEED? (B)



CERTAINLY IN RECENT YEARS WE'VE HAD MANY, MANY IMAGES OF POLICE AND MILITARY FIGURES AROUND THE WORLD USING WHAT APPEARS AS EXCESSIVE FORCE. BUT NONE OF THOSE INDIVIDUAL PERPETRATORS OF VIOLENCE HAS BECOME MEMETIC IN A WAY COMPARABLE TO JOHN PIKE.



(MORE)

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INTERLUDE: WHY DID THIS MEME SUCCEED? (C)



PART OF THE ANSWER LIES IN THE FACT THAT UNMANIPULATED STILL IMAGES AND VIDEOS OF THE PEPPER-SPRAYING EVENT WENT VIRAL VERY QUICKLY, PROVIDING A CLUSTER OF REFERENCE POINTS FOR THE SATIRICAL PHOTOCOLLAGES OF PIKE IN ACTION.



A. D. COLEMAN

(MORE)

INTERLUDE: WHY DID THIS MEME SUCCEED? (D)



THE COLLAGES DERIVE THEIR POWER (AND THEIR SARDONIC HUMOR) FROM THE VIEWER'S AWARENESS THAT THE BEADY-EYED POLICE OFFICER INDISCRIMINATELY PEPPER-SPRAYING BAMBI, GOD, JFK, AND STEPHEN HAWKING DID IN FACT SPRAY SEVERAL DOZEN SEATED PROTESTERS THAT DAY IN DAVIS.

THERE'S ALSO SOMETHING AT ONCE MALIGNANT AND COMICAL IN THE SPECTACLE OF THIS OVERWEIGHT LAWMAN IN RIOT GEAR CALMLY DOUSING UNPROTECTED CITIZENS WITH A DANGEROUS AND POTENTIALLY LETHAL CHEMICAL AT POINT-BLANK RANGE.

IT SEEMS LIKE JUST A SHORT, LOGICAL STEP FROM WITNESSING THAT ACT TO ENVISIONING PIKE APPLYING THE SAME TACTICS TO FAMILIAR CULTURAL FIGURES (MEMES THEMSELVES) WHO WE THINK OF AS EQUALLY NON-THREATENING.



A. D. COLEMAN

NOW BACK TO OUR STORY!

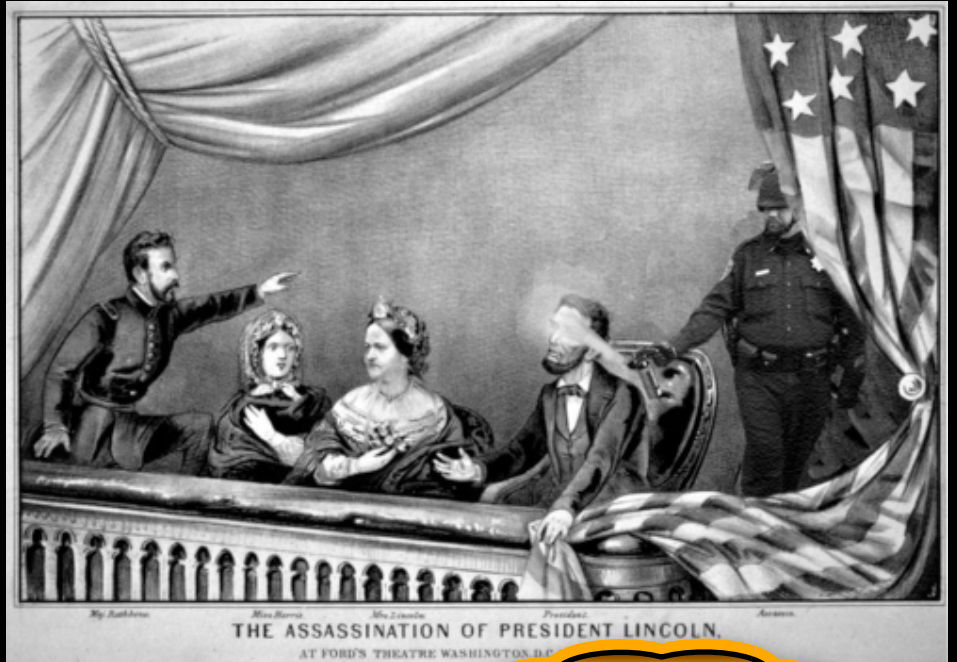
ONCE WE STARTED TO LOOK, PIKE WAS OMNIPRESENT.



THAT TASTES
EVEN WORSE
THAN
HUMILIATING
DEFEAT AT
THE POLLS!



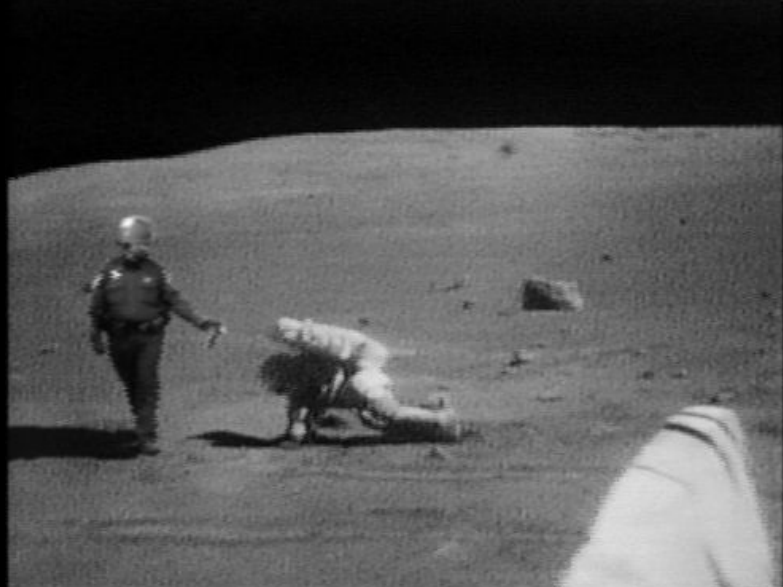
THROUGHOUT HISTORY, FROM TIME IMMEMORIAL . . .



THAT
SMARTS . . .



RIGHT UP TO THE PRESENT MOMENT . . .



THAT'S SMART . . .



HE'S APPEARED IN OUR SPORTING EVENTS . . .



THAT'S IT!
I'M QUITTING
TENNIS SO I
CAN SELL
ART
INSTEAD!



IN OUR POLITICAL SPHERE . . .



I MAY BE DUMB, BUT THAT SMARTS!



IN DIVERSE RELIGIOUS CONTEXTS . . .



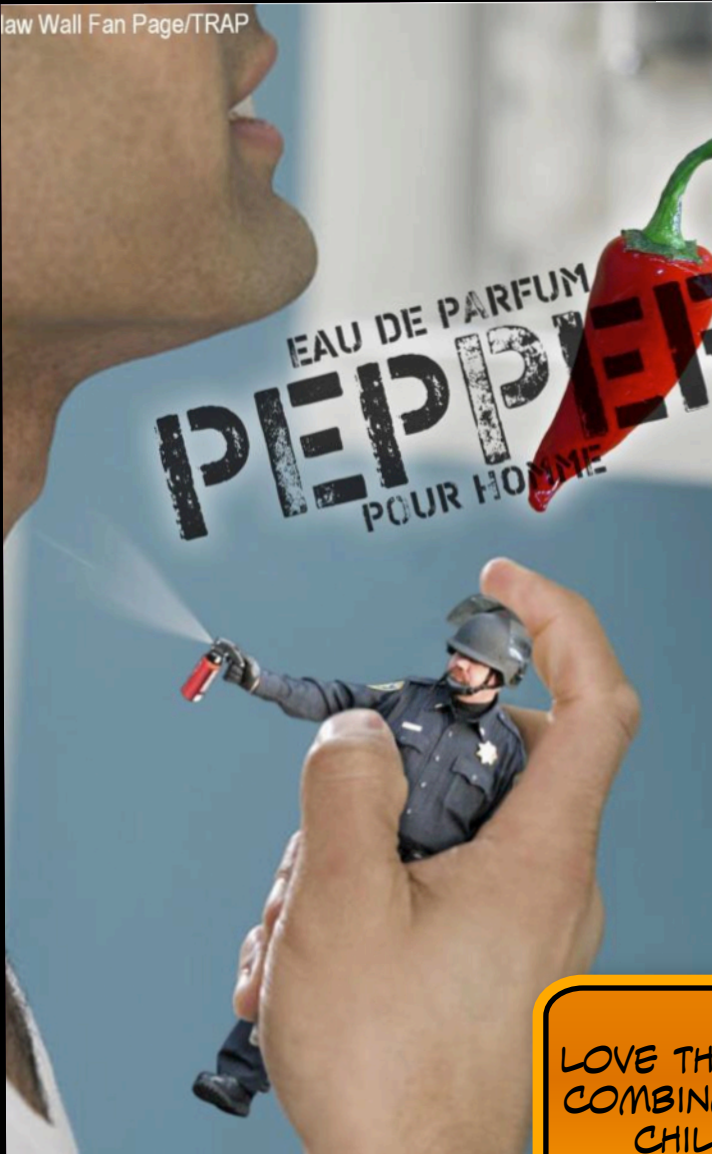
GOD, THAT SMARTS . . .

FOREWARNED IS EIGHT-ARMED!

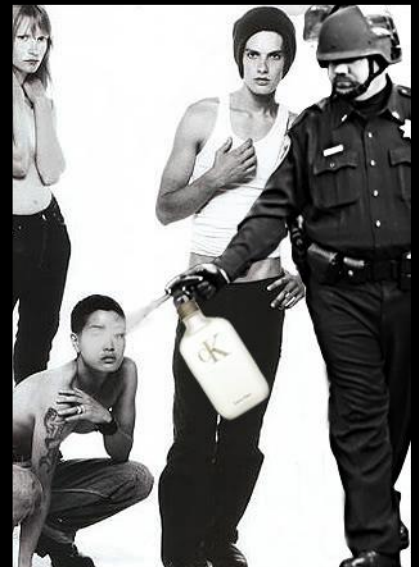


IN OUR CONSUMER GOODS . . .

Law Wall Fan Page/TRAP



LOVE THAT WEIRD COMBINATION OF CHILI AND CHOCOLATE . . .



AND EVEN IN OUR EROTIC LIVES.

JOHN PIKE



look. look again.

COMING SOON ON FOX...
PIKE'S PALATE



WITH LT. PIKE'S SPECIAL GUEST MEGYN

i cry during sex



its the pepper spray

THAT IS SO
HOT!

NOT QUITE THE PRESENT SHE
WANTED...



11/23/2011
EPHS TO ISSUING



NO DOUBT ABOUT IT, HE'D BECOME A MEME.



NOW I'M A VICTIM OF THE MEME
DECADE.



INTERLUDE: STARTING OR SPREADING A MEME (A)

1. FIND OR CREATE A VERSION OF YOUR CORE MEME IMAGE.

INITIATING OR ADDING TO A MEME CAN BE A SIMPLE PROCESS.



SOME KIND SOUL POSTED THIS TEMPLATE OF PIKE ONLINE FOR THE REST OF US TO USE. IF YOU CAN'T FIND ONE, MAKE YOUR OWN.

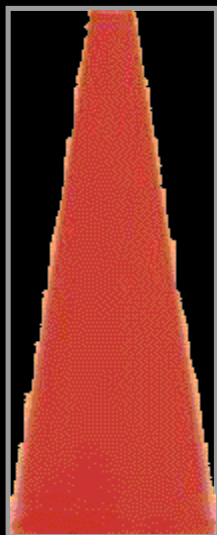
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(MORE)

INTERLUDE: STARTING OR SPREADING A MEME (B)



2. ASSEMBLE THE
COLLAGE
COMPONENTS.



(MORE)

INTERLUDE: STARTING OR SPREADING A MEME (C)

3. PUT THEM TOGETHER IN PHOTOSHOP OR ANOTHER IMAGE-MANIPULATION PROGRAM AND . . .



VOILA! MEME
MEETS MEME.

NOW BACK TO
OUR STORY!

FINALE: WHITHER LT. JOHN PIKE?



MARK YUDOF, UC
PRESIDENT



LT. JOHN PIKE



ANNETTE SPICUZZA,
UC DAVIS POLICE
CHIEF



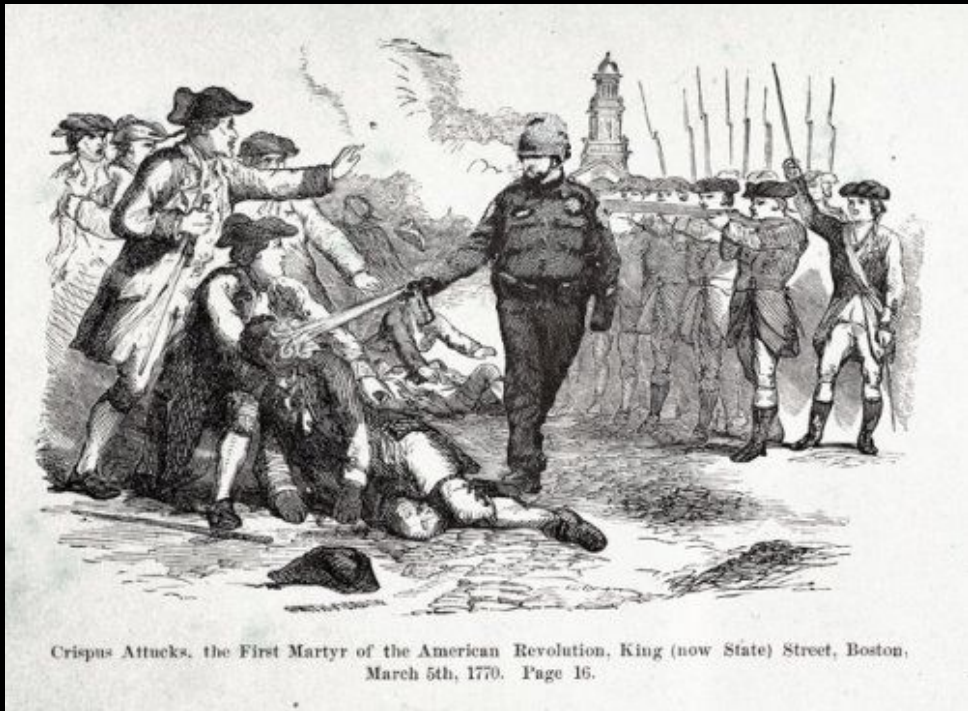
LINDA KATEHI, UC
DAVIS CHANCELLOR

AS OF EARLY DECEMBER 2011, JOHN PIKE'S POST-PEPPER SPRAY FUTURE IN THE REAL WORLD REMAINS UNDECIDED.

HIS FATE LIES IN THE HANDS OF VARIOUS FIGURES IN THE UC DAVIS ADMINISTRATION AND OTHERS, INCLUDING THOSE HE DOUSED WITH THE SPRAY.

WE CAN ONLY BE SURE THAT, IN THE VIRTUAL WORLD . . .

FINALE: NOW LT. JOHN PIKE IS ONLINE FOREVER . . .



Crispus Attacks, the First Martyr of the American Revolution, King (now State) Street, Boston, March 5th, 1770. Page 16.



blessyoumadly.com



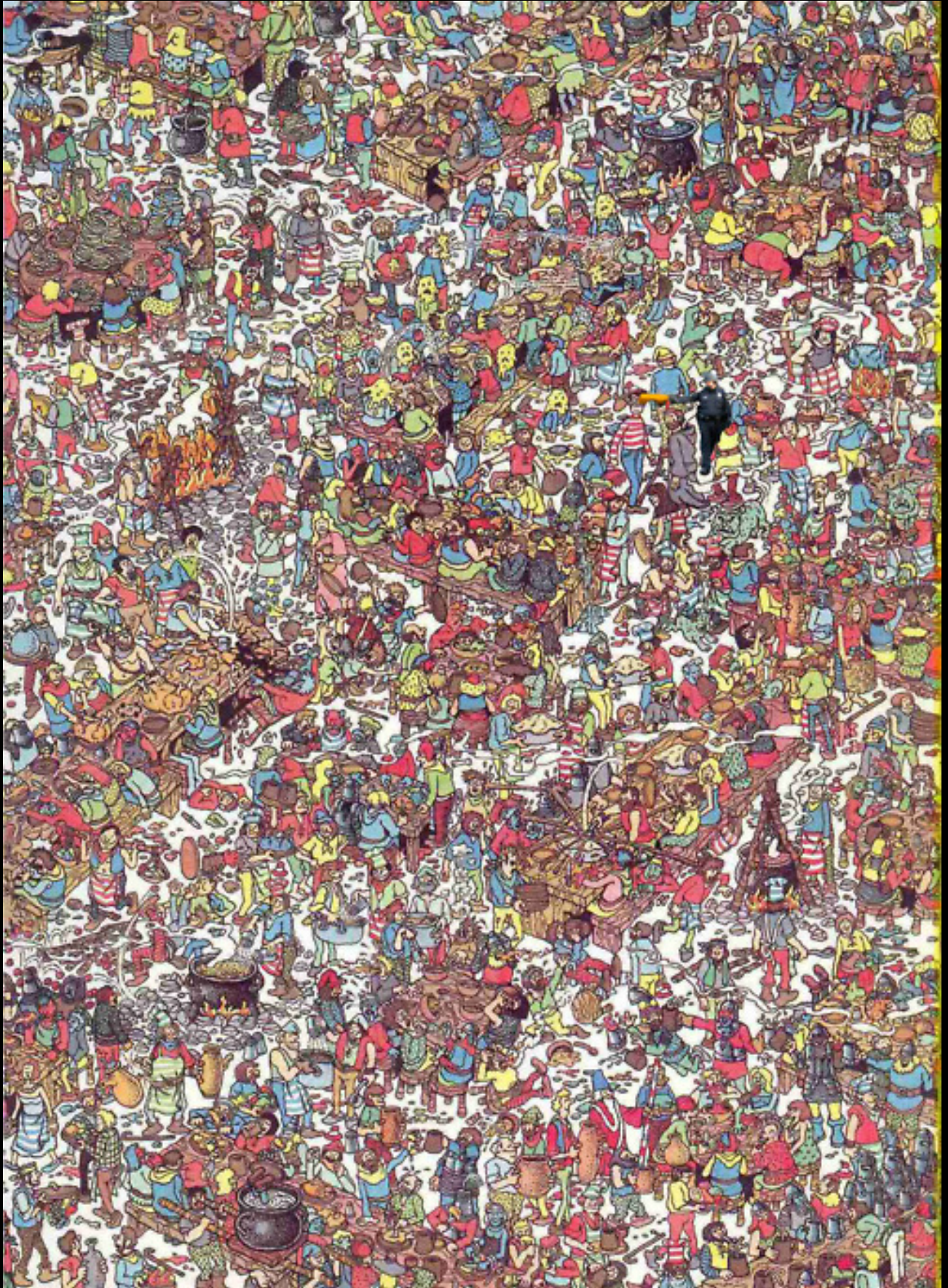
M. Cochon de Andalou



THAT SMARTS . . .

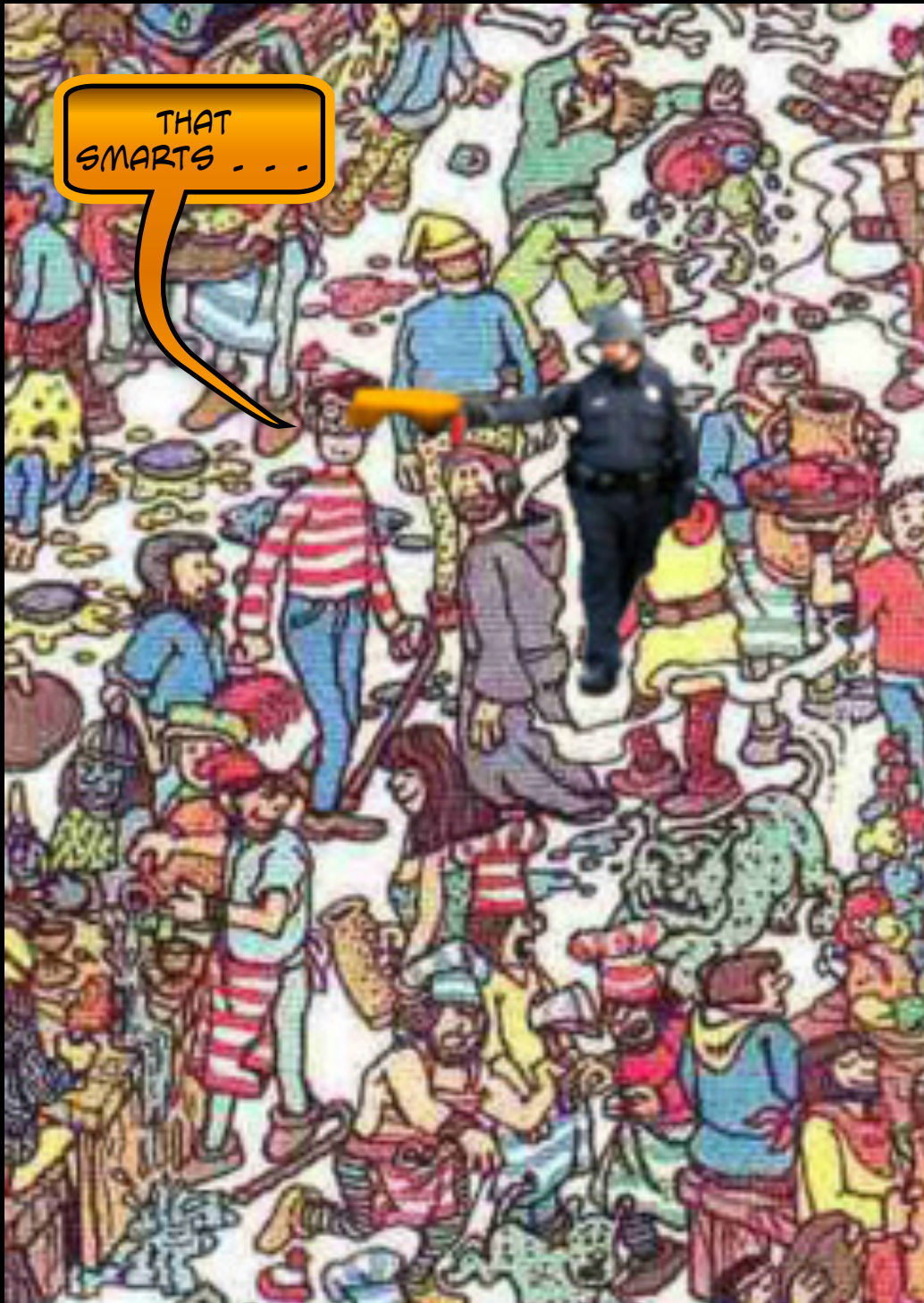
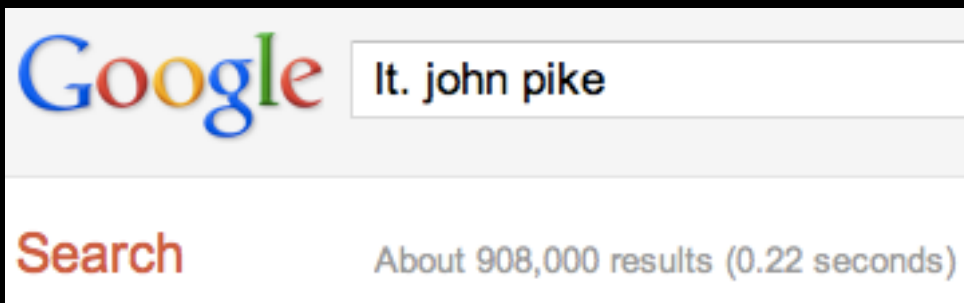
AND WE'RE THERE WITH HIM.

YEARS FROM NOW, THEY'LL ASK, PERIODICALLY:



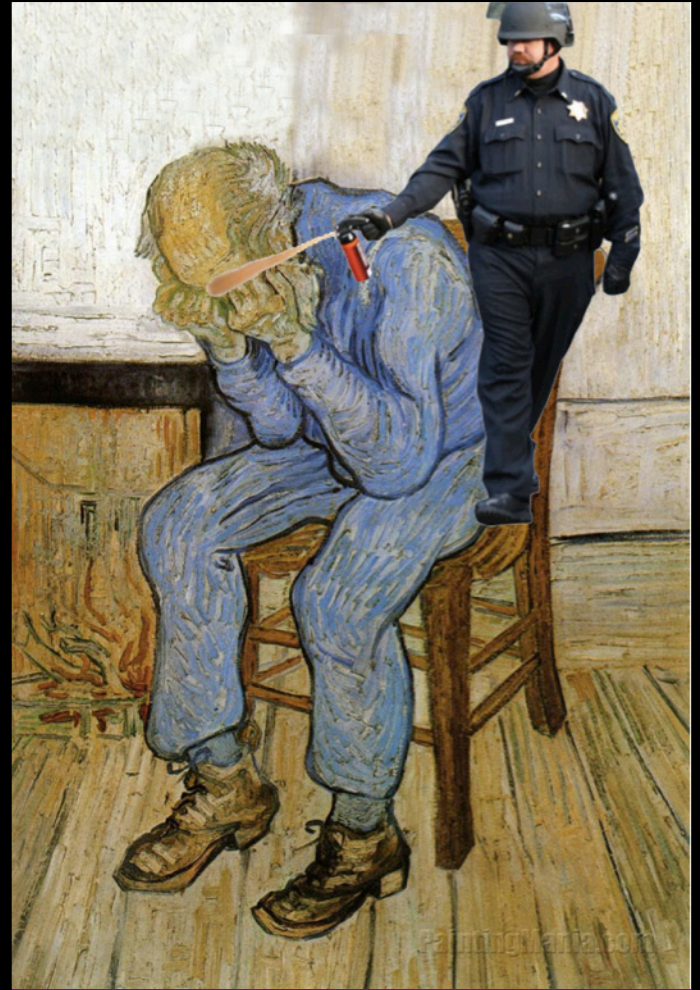
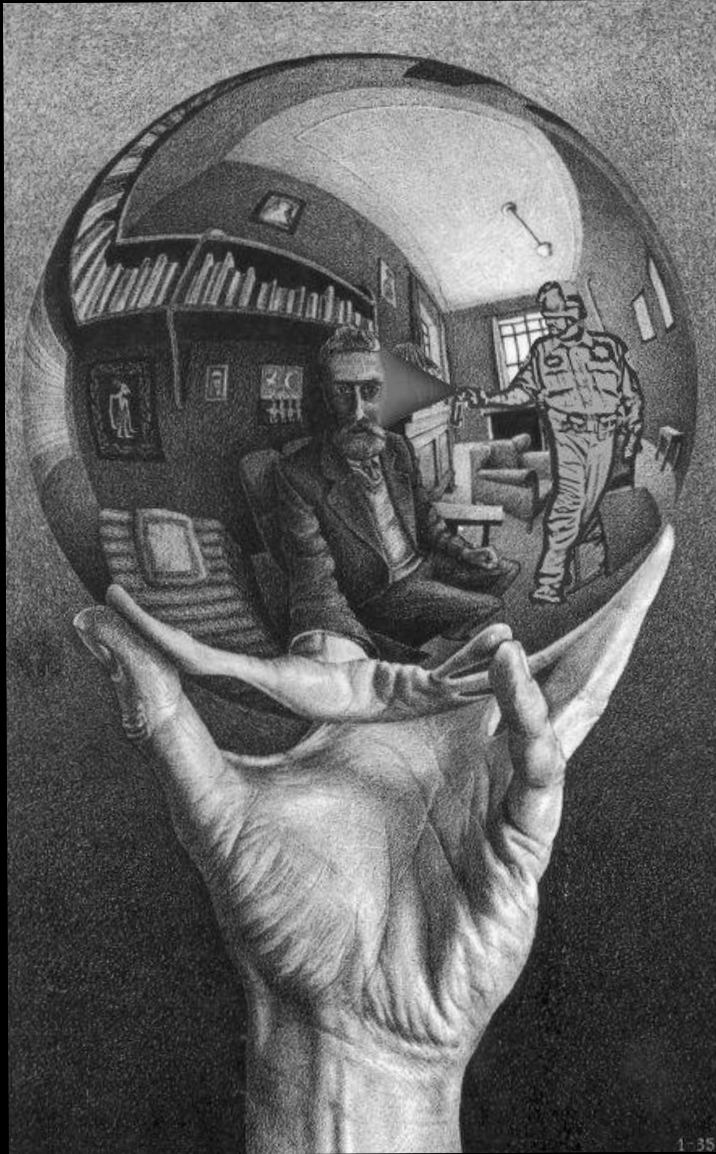
WHATEVER BECAME OF JOHN PIKE?

AND WE'LL ANSWER: LET'S SEARCH THE WEB . . .



AND FIND OUT.

PEPPER-SPRAY COP



THE LT. JOHN PIKE SAGA

Story by: the students, faculty,
administration, & police force of the
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Contact: adc@photocritic.com*