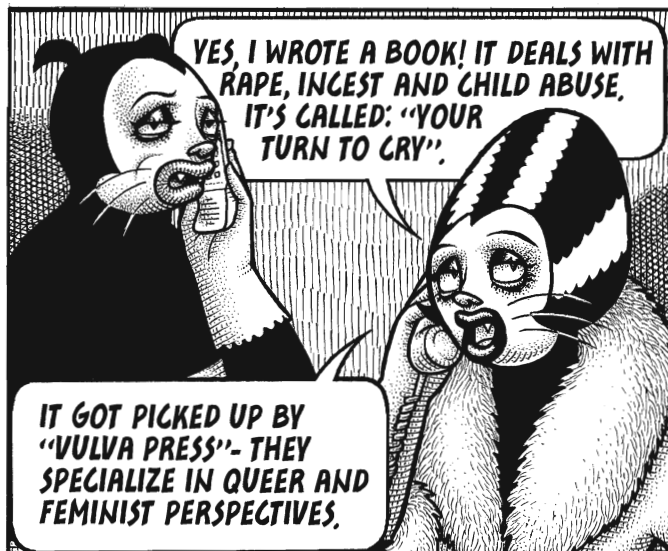
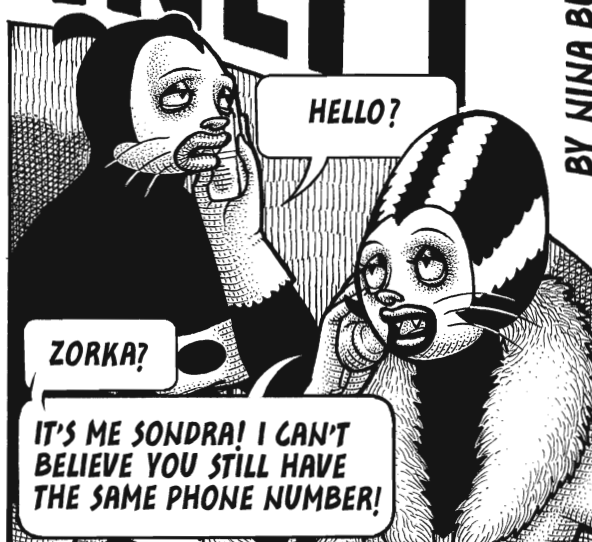
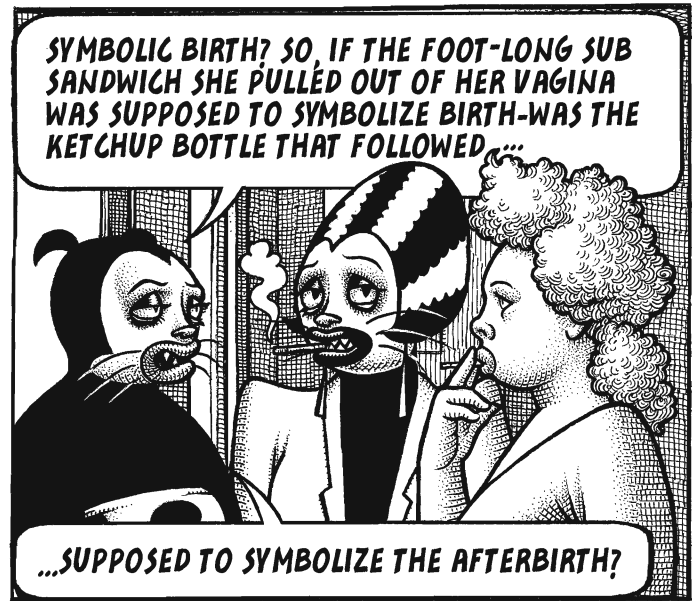
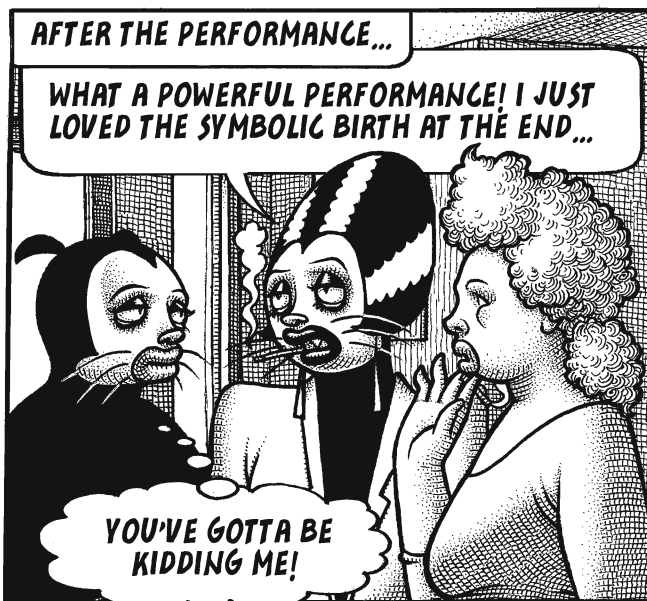
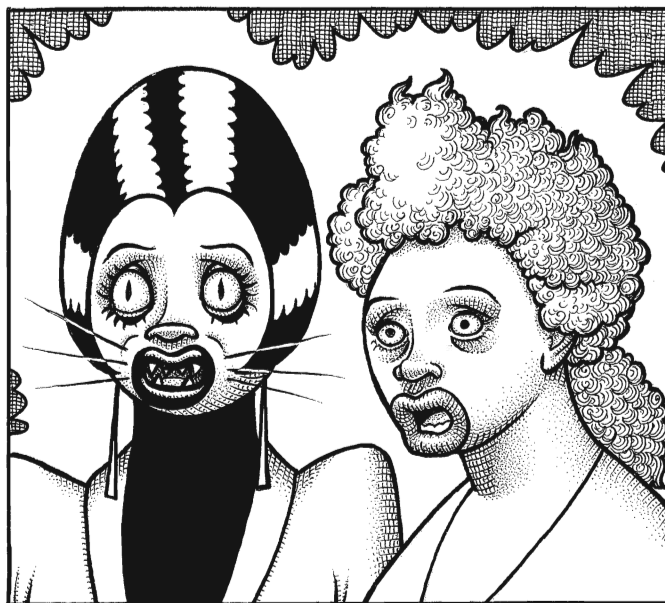
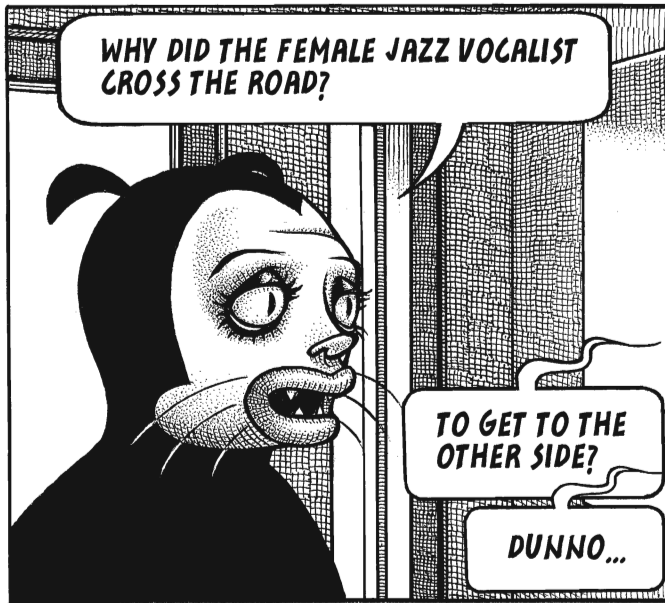


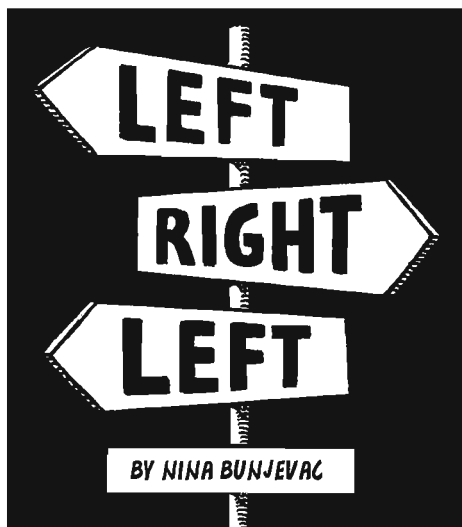
# SOCIALLY INEPT

BY NINA BUNJEVAC



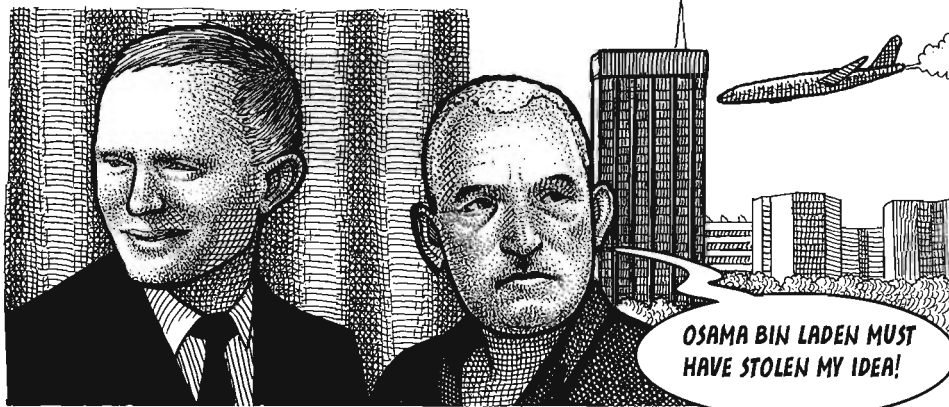




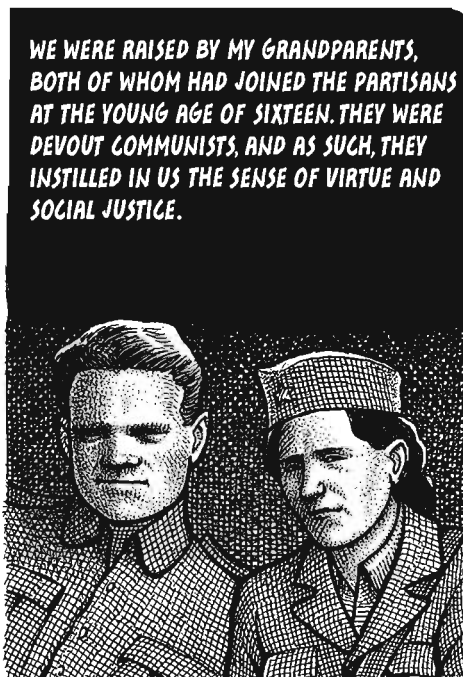


EXILED TO CANADA DUE TO HIS NATIONALIST TENDENCIES, MY FATHER JOINED 'FREEDOM FOR THE SERBIAN FATHERLAND', AN ANTICOMMUNIST AND ULTRANATIONALIST GROUP BASED OUT OF CHICAGO, ILLINOIS. HE DIED IN A MYSTERIOUS EXPLOSION WHILE PLANNING AN ATTACK ON THE YUGOSLAV CONSULATE IN TORONTO IN 1977.

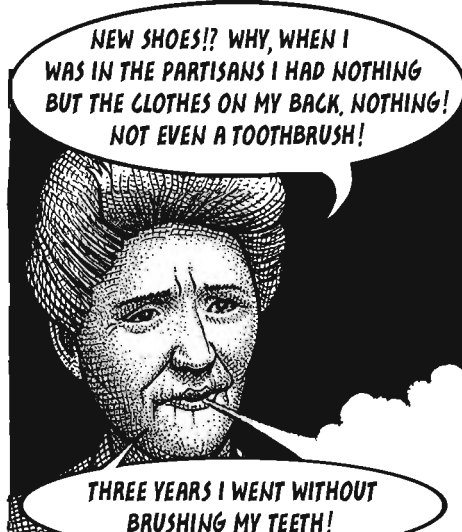
NIKOLA KAVAJA, THE LEADER OF FREEDOM FOR THE SERBIAN FATHERLAND, WAS ARRESTED A YEAR LATER WHILE ATTEMPTING TO HIGHJACK AN AMERICAN AIRLINES 727 AND FLY IT INTO THE COMMUNIST CENTRAL COMMITTEE BUILDING IN BELGRADE. AFTER THE 9-11 ATTACKS KAVAJA MADE A STATEMENT...



TWO YEARS PRIOR TO MY FATHER'S DEATH, MY MOTHER TOOK MY SISTER AND I FOR A MONTH-LONG VISIT TO OUR GRANDPARENTS IN YUGOSLAVIA. WE ENDED UP STAYING FOR FIFTEEN YEARS.



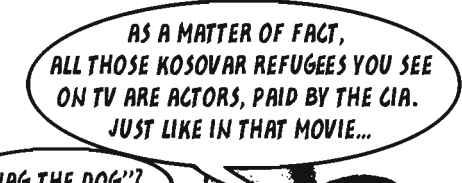
MY GRANDMOTHER WOULD EMBELLISH EVERYTHING WITH HER WARTIME ANECDOTES, FROM CASUAL REMARKS AND PRACTICAL ADVICE TO SIMPLE YES OR NO ANSWERS.



I KNEW NOTHING ABOUT MY FATHER UNTIL I MOVED BACK TO CANADA AT THE AGE OF SIXTEEN AND GOT TO MEET SOME OF HIS OLD ASSOCIATES.

MY LOVE AFFAIR WITH THE SERBIAN COMMUNITY DIED IN THE WAKE OF NATO BOMBING, SHORTLY AFTER I ATTENDED A FUNDRAISER AT THE SERBIAN CHURCH HALL IN TORONTO.

SEEING THAT MY HUSBAND WAS THE ONLY NON-SERB IN THE AUDIENCE, EVERYONE FELT COMPELLED TO SET THE RECORD STRAIGHT.



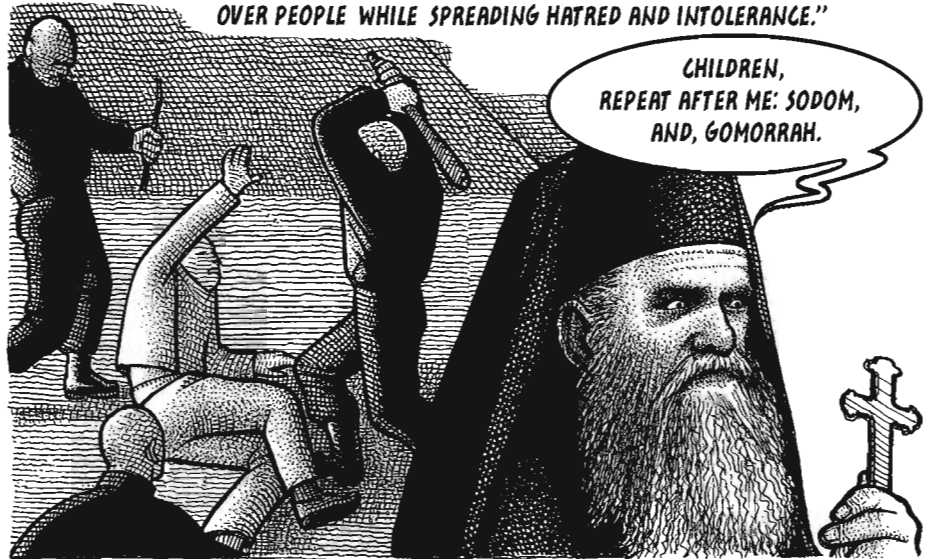


IT WASN'T UNTIL 2007 WHEN I CONNECTED WITH THE SERBIAN UNDERGROUND COMICS SCENE AND BEGAN TRAVELLING ABROAD THAT I HAD A CHANCE TO TALK WITH PEOPLE WHO HAD LIVED THROUGH IT ALL: THE MILOSEVIC YEARS, ECONOMIC SANCTIONS, NATO BOMBING...

IT WAS THE SAME HERE; PEOPLE WERE STARVING AND THE BOMBS WERE FALLING BUT ALL ONE COULD HEAR WAS KOSOVO THIS, KOSOVO THAT...



"WE ARE STILL RECOVERING FROM THE MILOSEVIC ERA, HAVING TO DEAL WITH THIS 'LOST GENERATION', THOSE WHO WERE BORN AND RAISED DURING THE NINETIES. HATE CRIMES ARE ON THE RISE, AGAINST ETHNIC MINORITIES, LGBT COMMUNITY, HUMANITARIAN ACTIVISTS, YOU NAME IT. THE SERBIAN ORTHODOX CHURCH HAS THIS HYPNOTIC INFLUENCE OVER PEOPLE WHILE SPREADING HATRED AND INTOLERANCE."



SODOM AND GOMORRAH!

"AND NOW THERE ARE ALL THESE CHRISTIAN GROUPS THAT PROMOTE 'FAMILY VALUES', MAINLY THROUGH HARASSMENT. IF THEY HAD IT THEIR WAY, GAYS AND LESBIANS WOULD ALL BE STONED TO DEATH, AND I DON'T MEAN THE FUN KIND OF STONED."

SODOM AND GOMORRAH!

THE TALK ABOUT THE BIRDS AND THE BEES GIVEN BY MY GRANDMOTHER CAME DISGUISED AS PRACTICAL ADVICE ON PROPER HYGIENE AND INCLUDED, AMONG OTHER THINGS, GAYS AND LESBIANS, MINUS THE JUDGEMENT. I DIDN'T SEE IT THEN BUT I DO SEE IT NOW. THAT WOMAN WAS LIGHT YEARS AHEAD OF HER TIME.

AND THAT IS WHY YOU SHOULD ALWAYS WASH YOUR HANDS AFTER A HANDSHAKE.

MY GRANDMOTHER SURVIVED THREE YEARS OF SLEEPING IN DITCHES AND ON FOREST FLOORS, CERVICAL CANCER, AND FOURTEEN YEARS OF DOUBLE COLOSTOMY. IT WAS SEEING THE DEMISE OF THE COUNTRY SHE FOUGHT SO PASSIONATELY FOR THAT KILLED HER IN THE END. SHE DIED IN 1994, MY GRANDFATHER DIED TWELVE YEARS LATER.

I VISITED THEIR GRAVE FOR THE FIRST TIME IN 2011. THERE WAS NO RED STAR ON THEIR TOMBSTONE, JUST A CRUCIFIX, AND A LARGE WOODEN ONE STAKED INTO THE GROUND, THE KIND YOU ARE SUPPOSED TO REMOVE WITHIN A YEAR OF THE BURIAL. I TOOK THE DAMN THING OUT, IT WAS THE LEAST I COULD DO.

