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## Doo Dah-Lujah!

Let Rev. Billy and Sister Savitri D save you from conspicuous consumption

By Ellen Snortland



atan in your credit card? Starbucks, Wal-Mart and Disney have evil ways? Change-a-lujah, brothers and sisters, CHANGE your shopping and buying habits, the citizen artist Rev. Billy exhorts his "children." That is the clarion call of the serious and comic street theater mission of the 31st occasional Doo Dah Parade co-grand marshals, Rev. Billy, his director Sister Savitri D and their gospel choir of the Church of Stop Shopping (CSS). Doo Dah-Lujah! What a perfect fit for Pasadena's Doo Dah Parade. The irreverent Rev. Billy is comin' to River, er, Rose City!

It must have been mid-November when my fiancé Ken

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Gruberman and I saw a preview of the new documentary "What Would Jesus Buy?" Eager to see the anti-shopping documentary right before the holidays, it was gone in a flash. Hell and damnation, we missed it. Billed in their posters as the "The movie Santa doesn't want you to see," it's produced by Morgan "Super Size Me" Spurlock and directed by Rob VanAlkemade. "WWJB?" is a docu-comedy that trails the "fire and brimstone" style CSS characters as they cross the country proselytizing, preaching and singing to help Americans create a new Christmas without our addiction to shopping and products. Good news though, the DVD will resurrect and give rise to new viewers a few weeks after Easter of this year. Hallelujah!

Upon the announcement of their Doo Dah co-grand marshal status, I visited Bill Talen, the non-character name of Rev. Billy, and his wife in real life, Savitri Durkee, in their newly moved-in duplex in Brooklyn, NY.

"We were first acquainted with the Doo Dah Parade because of my Aunt Dabney Zorthian and wanted to be involved, but now that she's passed away, we're there in her honor. And the tone of the Doo Dah Parade suits our message," Savitri said. Both of the late Zorthians loved the Doo Dah Parade and were famous for their creative Dionysian festivities at their ranch in Altadena.

The fiery evangelical style of Rev. Billy is in the pantheon of American characters, but so is the steadfast, strength-behind-the-man preacher's wife, a role that Savitri plays beautifully on and off stage. They are a true team. Both charismatic, they are also easy on the eyes. And it's a good thing Savitri is as much a missionary of their anti-consumerism creed as Rev. Billy because his theatrics get him arrested and thrown in jail.

"I've been arrested 50 times or so," Rev. Billy said, "The scariest time was when I got arrested at a Starbucks in California, charged with obstruction of commerce, put on trial and a jury convicted me. When I was serving my three days, it was a tense time at the Twin Towers jail downtown LA. All of a sudden I felt really vulnerable, really blond, really suburban. And sure enough, after a few hours, a very big, extremely tattooed man came up to me and asked me what I was "in" for. He's got these major tattoos of Mayan art; pyramids. I'm thinking, OK, this is it. This is that terrible scene that everyone fears about gangs in prisons. A couple of his companions come up next to him. I start to tell him why I'm in jail."

Rev. Billy began to preach, explaining to the gang that he had been invited to California State University Northridge and he'd gone to a Starbucks to "exorcise" the cash register and preach to the Starbucks customers. Do they KNOW that Starbucks is a union-busting, corporate behemoth, with a pretend "bohemian" ambience? Do they KNOW that the farmers and their families in Guatemala are starving because Starbucks is NOT a fair trade coffee buyer? Do they KNOW that in the highland area of Guatemala where the coffee growers live and labor that there's a physician-to-people ratio of one per 85,000?


Then it dawned on the good reverend that indeed his jailhouse parishioners did INDEED know about the dire straits of the Guatemalan indigenous peoples. Hallelujah! The man had Mayan symbols for tattoos. Rev. Billy was preaching to the choir; he was fighting Starbucks for these men's relatives back home. For the rest of his three days in jail, the Guatemalan men had his back. His preaching had saved him. Hallelujah, brothers and sisters!

When I was with Talen and Durkee, I experienced being in the presence of kindness and greatness. They put their bodies and souls into their social activism. With hearts as big as Rev. Billy's

**Breaking Bad**  
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**Series Premiere**  
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'Cloverfield' brings classic summer-movie thrills to a normally dead season

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### A breath of fresh food

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pompadour, they kid, but they are not kidding around. Not religious per se, they are on a sacred, passionate path together: Stop Shopping!

Witness Rev. Billy and the CSS yourselves! Visit their Web site [www.revilly.com](http://www.revilly.com). Better yet, come down to Colorado Boulevard to see the Doo Dah at 11:30 a.m. Sunday. On Monday, the CSS folks will be at Pasadena's All Saints Episcopal Church, 132 N. Euclid Ave. A reception is at 6 p.m. and a "revival" starts at 7 p.m.

Be healed from excessive shopping! Hallelujah!

***P.S. My fiancé and I are having our wedding show, the Mama of All Wedding Showers, during the Doo Dah Parade. Come help us make a Guinness Book of World Records for the world's largest public wedding shower. In lieu of shower gifts, you can "shower" a nonprofit documentary instead by visiting [www.beautybitesbeast.org](http://www.beautybitesbeast.org) and donating the cost of a spatula, blender or even a new car! Whatever's comfortable for you. ●***

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