



NATHAN JOHN

**New Yorkers revel in a summer of car-free streets.**

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**COVER PHOTO:** Lindsey Lusher (front)

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## For the Next Generation

November is going to bring big change. Sure, we'll have a new president, but more important to me is the fact that my dear wife Zoe will give birth to our first child, a girl. We don't yet know her name. For now, we are jokingly (and lovingly) referring to her as "Creech"—short for creature.

We are thrilled. And like all new parents, we are busy preparing and rearranging our house so that our baby can grow up as healthy and happy as possible. The more progress we make on the home front, however, the more I wonder about the world outside our door that is a bit tougher to control. Will the wider world be conducive to our baby's health and happiness?

It won't be long before my child understands that I am not all-powerful when it comes to the world outside our apartment. But what if I were? What if I were an omnipotent father in control of that wider world? What kind of street, city, nation and world would I fashion for her?

In the present, our block only teems with kids spontaneously playing in the street one day a year, when we hold our annual block party. The other 364 days, the kids are indoors or confined to scripted "play" somewhere else. I want my daughter's block to be safe for free and creative play all year round. Kids are more important than cars. Why not reorganize the street to reflect this simple fact? On our block, Windsor Place between 8th and 7th Avenues in Brooklyn, it would be easy to create a mid-block open space conducive to active play. All it takes is some traffic calming (a few speed humps and sidewalk extensions) and a reduction and reorganization of parking (get rid of a few spaces, swap in bicycle parking, and cluster the remaining spaces near the intersections in angled rows).

My daughter would also do something that kids have not done in generations: bike to school. One of my heroes, Enrique Peñalosa, says that city streets should be "designed for a 7-year-old on a bicycle." I couldn't agree more. Thanks to a cohesive network of traffic-calmed residential streets and main streets made complete with protected bike lanes (see page 5), my child would gain the confidence that can only come from independent, free-ranging exploration.

On weekends she would bike and walk

freely with friends on car-free major streets connecting our neighborhood to parks, pools and farmers markets. When biking isn't in the cards, surface transit would fill the gap, with speedy modern buses and newly restored trolley lines that were ripped out back when my daughter's great-grandmother was still a child.

When we go visit friends and relatives in other states, we would ride our bikes to the station and bring them on board modern passenger rail cars that move along high-speed tracks. It would be faster than flying, and much more fun. We would see a cool green countryside dotted with windmills on healthy family farms. The train would make stops at vibrant towns with dense, mixed-use development within biking distance of each station.

And when she is old enough to work, my daughter's tax dollars would be spent on local energy and transit projects rather than servicing the debt from the dangerous and expensive militarized extraction of fossil fuels from countries around the globe. And throughout her bigger world, communities and transportation networks would be similarly scaled so that relationships, economies and power generation are all much more local and less energy-dependent than they are today.

If I can't make all of this happen, then maybe I can accomplish the next best thing: enough progress so that my child's generation will be emboldened to work for a neighborhood, street, city and world that are more humane and less mad with cars. That's just what T.A. is doing. With the winning campaigns that you will read about in this issue of *Reclaim*, T.A. is fashioning streets that are models for future progress. And because this is New York City, the nation and the world are noticing. Maybe the wider world will be safe and sustainable after all. For my Creech and for yours, let's make it so.

Sincerely,

Paul Steely White  
Executive Director  
Transportation Alternatives