

# The Public

The *Public i*, a project of the Urbana-Champaign Independent Media Center, is an independent, collectively-run, community-oriented publication that provides a forum for topics underreported and voices underrepresented in the dominant media. All contributors to the paper are volunteers. Everyone is welcome and encouraged to submit articles or story ideas to the editorial collective. We prefer, but do not necessarily restrict ourselves to, articles on issues of local impact written by authors with local ties.

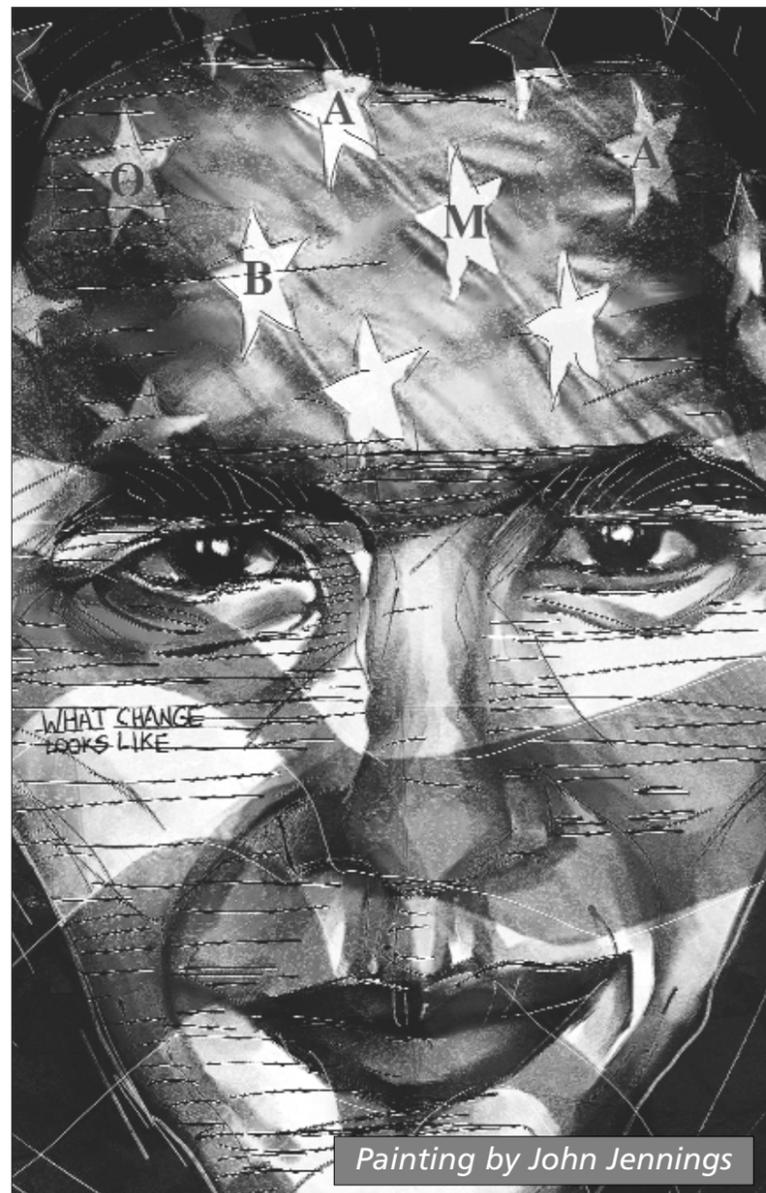
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## EDITORS/FACILITATORS:

Glynn Davis  
 Brian Dolinar  
 davep  
 Belden Fields  
 Bob Illyes  
 Paul Mueth  
 Neil Parthun  
 Niloofar Shambayati

## The Public i

Urbana-Champaign IMC  
 202 South Broadway  
 Urbana, IL, 61801  
 217-344-8820  
 www.ucimc.org



Painting by John Jennings

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# The Public

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## BLACK HISTORY MONTH 2009





2/4-8 9th Black Sacred Music Symposium  
 2/5 Eyes on the Prize c 7PM @ FAR Tre Lounge  
 NBA2K9 and Madden09 Tournament  
 7PM @ Far OG Lounge  
 Blackbuster Movie Night (NAACP) 7PM @ TBA  
 Registration (Black Chorus) 5PM @ FGH in KCPA  
 2/6 Registration (Black Chorus) 5PM @ ORR in KCPA  
 2/7 Art & Resistance w/Favianna Roriguz  
 12:30PM Latzer Hall, University YMCA  
 Snowball Fight and "IT" on the Quad 2 PM  
 Ruby Anniversary Reunion Event and Luncheon  
 12:15PM @ Alice Campbell Alumni Center  
 2/8 9th Black Sacred Music Symposium Concert  
 7:30PM @ FGH in KCPA  
 2/9 Conversations That Can Save Your Life  
 7PM @ BNACC  
 2/10 Not Soul Food, But Food For the Soul 7PM @ FAR  
 2/12 Greatest Sex : Who, What, When, Why, and How  
 8PM @ Illini Room C  
 OUR Black History 7PM @ FAR MPR  
 Evening of the Roses 8PM @ FAR  
 Eyes on the Prize 7PM @ FAR Tre Lounge  
 2/13 Purple and White Ball 8PM @ Illini Union Rm. A

2/14 Christian Valentine Gala 7PM  
 @ Pilgrim Missionary Baptist Church  
 2/17 Sambo Syndrome (Phi Rho Eta) 7PM @ FAR  
 2/18 Taste of Africa (Sigma Gamma Rho) 6PM @ FAR  
 2/19 3 Tier Workshops: Part 1, Physical 7PM @ FAR  
 Speaker Series (Phi Rho Eta) 7PM @ BNACC  
 Eyes on the Prize 7PM @ FAR Tre Lounge  
 2/20 Bring A Deck Informational 7PM @ FAR Tre Lounge  
 B.A.T.S. Fashion Show 7PM @ Lincoln Hall  
 2/21 Cotton Club (CBSU) 7PM @ Foellinger  
 First Annual Leadership Panel Lunch @ I-Hotel  
 2/23 Are You Smarter Than A fifth Grader? Black  
 History Edition (Men of Impact) TBA  
 2/24 Day Of The Drum (KCPA) Interval @ 12PM  
 in The Lobby, Traffic Jam @ 5PM in The Lobby,  
 Kodo @ 7:30PM @ Tryon Festival Theater,  
 After Glow @ 9:30PM in The Lobby  
 Blackbuster Movie Night (NAACP) 7PM @ TBA  
 2/25 Julian Bond Lecture 7PM @ Levis Center  
 2/26 3 Tier Workshops: Part 1, Mental 7PM @ FAR OG  
 The Black Exodus (NAACP) 7PM @ FAR MPR  
 2/28 Closing Ceremonies 4PM @ Illini Union



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## Excerpts From 2009 MLK Essays

### BACKGROUND TO MLK ESSAY CONTEST

This is the 7th year of the essay contest sponsored by the University's Dr. Martin Luther King Commemoration Committee. The goal is to engage students with the legacy of Dr. King and how it relates to their lives today. They are asked to look at their neighborhood, their school, their community, and write about issues of social justice. Over 2,000 students have participated over the years.

In this bicentennial year of Abraham Lincoln's birth, the contest was sponsored by the U of I's Lincoln Bicentennial Committee.

The topic is, "What is your dream for social justice in your community? Imagine that you are having a conversation with President Lincoln and Dr. King. What would you tell them about the world you live in? Is there an issue that particularly concerns you? What advice do you think they would give you? How would you like to be an activist for social justice?"

212 students submitted essays. They wrote about issues that trouble them in our community, including:

- violence and bullying
- homelessness
- the barriers to college education
- the criminal justice system
- challenges to our environment.

Writers include students in some of our alternative schools, the READY Program and the Juvenile Detention Center, and received impressive essays from them this year. These students talk about the challenges in their lives with insight and understanding.

A group of 18 readers from the College of Education and the community worked together to select 15 winning essays and 7 honorable mention.

Displays that quote many of the essays will be in the Urbana Free Library for the month of February. In March they will be on view in the main library at the University of Illinois.

### KATEY BROWN, READY PROGRAM, 10TH GRADE

A huge issue for me is discrimination against the disabled. It's an issue that often gets ignored. People with disabilities are often treated unfairly and they have an extremely hard time finding jobs. Being disabled doesn't mean that you are just blind, deaf, or mentally retarded. There are many different things people have that make them disabled. They can have mental illnesses such as schizophrenia. They can be developmentally delayed or have learning disabilities. They can be in wheelchairs due to accidents or because they are paralyzed. There are many physical and mental disabilities.

This topic specifically interests me and it is something I can relate to because my mom is legally blind and she's been disabled her whole life. She works for an agency that helps disabled people. They help them find jobs, they help them earn money and they help people who struggle living day to day. I've seen some of the people she works with and they are some of the nicest people. They are just like anyone else in the world and it doesn't matter if they have a disability or not. It makes me upset how bad they are discriminated against and how a lot of people don't realize that this is an issue. They can do most everything other people can. They are just reaching out for help because

they have a hard time. They get turned down trying to find jobs because of their disability. Some just need assistance getting around or they need to learn how to do daily things like cook or clean. I wish there were more employers that were open-minded about employing people with disabilities. I wish that they were treated like everyone else in the world.

### MIRIAM SAADAH, EDISON MIDDLE SCHOOL, 7TH GRADE

I have a dream, a dream that is almost the same as yours and a dream where we live in a world with no more discrimination against Muslims.

The world is going through tough times. Especially where a lot of nations suffer from war. Imagine every second in your life a lot of children live in fear, surrounded by bombs, gunshots, and dead bodies.

I am a Palestinian American girl. I have a dream that Palestinian children would play outside without being scared for their lives. What I wish is that every Palestinian child feels safe in their country, and their parents feel safe for them. Their parents would have big smiles on their faces all the time with their hearts widely opened to other people's lives, greeting them happily instead of crying into each other's shoulders.

I am a Palestinian American but that isn't all; I am also a Muslim. I am proud to wear one of the symbols of my religion; it is called hijab. It is a scarf worn by women that cover their hair, ears, and neck. In addition to hijab, a woman should wear loose shirts and pants. Sometimes when I am at school, the mall, the library, etc. I get the looks of disgust, hatred — the looks of people when they check a person from top to bottom. These hurtful looks try to tell me I am a bad person. I go on my way ignoring them.

Mr. President and Dr. King, you've taught us not to hold our fears inside, so I will let them out. If I think something is right then I will say it. This is what you did.

I would like to follow in your footsteps and be a social activist in my community because I want to bring peace and justice for all.

### GREGORY JONES, READY, 9TH GRADE

I think that the head of the police, which is probably the government should handout police handbooks, which tell us what they can and what they cannot do to us when they stop teenagers on the streets. I think that the police should send all of their trainees through more practice and try to get them to be the best police officer that they can be.

### THEO JACKSON, STRATTON, 4TH GRADE

In my school I am in the Gifted and Talented class (GT). I noticed that there are just a few African Americans in GT and a ton of African Americans in the regular class. Like, maybe even 90% of the regular classes are black, tan, or Asian and anything you can think of besides white. So tell me Why? Why are there 90% more African Africans in regular than GT? I just don't get it.

### CECILIA WILSON, STRATTON, 4TH GRADE

No matter what race you are, you have a right to be treated with respect. That also means treating others the way you want to be treated. But some people have problems with that. They just can't get it right. Sometimes things get so serious, hearts are broken leaving a scar in the spot forever.



Miriam Saadah, 7th grader at Edison Middle School reading at the Urbana Library

### SHAHBAZ KHAN, EDISON, 6TH GRADE

Racism is nothing but pure darkness. I think racism is a horrible thing that should have never even come into being. The police officers are the ones who do it. I mean the police officers are just going to jump to conclusions and say that someone has done something wrong, only because they have a different skin color than people who have "peach" colored skin.

### EMMA MANKIN, EDISON, 6TH GRADE

Domestic violence kills a person's courage and spirit. It leaves people with scars that may last a lifetime. If a child is getting abused at home, they may react severely at school because of all the pain it has cost them.

### TENTH GRADER, JUVENILE DETENTION CENTER

I'm here to talk about a lot of school education. I've been to a lot of schools in Champaign and there is a lot of stuff that needs to be fixed, like when you are not in classes, maybe sick or something. When you get back in class it's like Spanish. They should have an area where the kids that aren't there can catch up on their work and don't have to pass something they don't even know.

Second is the jail's education system. There are things that should be changed like the education level taught. I know if you're in jail you had to have done something to get you there but we as people make mistakes and should get the right and equal level of education. Now I know that every kid is not on their right level of education, but why do the ones who are up to par have to suffer.

*Continued on page 7*



# Racial Profiling Study Suppressed by Local Media

By Brian Dolinar



Statistics on racial profiling collected by the Illinois Department of Transportation (IDOT) were released this year with no local fanfare. Although covered for the last three years, the 2007 numbers went unreported by the *News-Gazette*, which has a virtual monopoly of the

local newspaper market. This is surely an attempt to protect police officials from public rebuke and continued calls for police accountability.

For four years now, statistics indicate that minorities are being racially profiled by police in Urbana-Champaign. Among Champaign County Sheriff's Department, the rate has grown significantly. Figures for the Champaign police have gone down but remain higher than the state average. In Urbana, which prides itself on transparency and recently finalized a police review board, the police now have the highest rate of racial profiling locally. Additionally, numbers collected indicate that although blacks are more frequently subject to having their vehicles searched, whites are more likely to be found with drugs or weapons.

Illinois police are now required to report racial profiling statistics because of legislation sponsored by former Illinois Senator Barack Obama. Police departments across the state must make a record of the race of each driver in every traffic stop and send the information to the state. The data is then compiled with help from Northwestern University and released every August. This year, August passed and there was no news in the *News-Gazette* about the 2007 fig-

ures. As a result, there was no public outcry as there has been in the years past.

The state comes up with a ratio called a "disparity index" to assess the degree to which profiling is being practiced. If the ratio is 1.50, for example, minorities are 50% more likely to be pulled over in a traffic stop. The average ratio throughout the state of Illinois is 1.10.

In Urbana, the ratio at which minorities were pulled over in 2007 during traffic stops was 1.47. In 2004, Champaign had the highest ratio locally at 1.71, but in 2007 it was 1.34. Among Sheriff Dan Walsh's deputies in Champaign County, this figure has jumped from 1.02 in 2004 to 1.27 in 2007. The ratio for the police department at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign was 1.36.

In the past, local police officials have failed to acknowledge that racial profiling exists and come up with excuses rather than confront this issue. At a city council meeting on August 14, 2006, Champaign Mayor Gerald Schweighart, himself a former police officer, explained that blacks were "more confrontational." In 2007, Urbana Police Chief Mike Bily said the numbers were "misleading."

Police say they go where the 911 calls come from. But according to METCAD between July 1 and September 29, 2007, the majority of calls came from the Green Street vicinity. While 628 calls came from Garden Hills, which has a large black working class population, 1819 calls came from Campustown nearly three times as many.

State figures show that racial profiling is not unique to Urbana-Champaign but is a rampant problem throughout

Illinois. Ratios for surrounding communities are: Bloomington, 1.35 ; Normal, 1.80; Carbondale, 1.20; Rantoul 1.83; Springfield, 2.46; Danville, 1.47; and Chicago, 1.14.

Other interesting data in 2007 relates to drivers who consent to having their car searched after a traffic stop. Most clear-cut is the case in Champaign where 9 searches were performed among African Americans and in only one case was anything illegal found. Among 10 whites who were searched there were 4 cases where drugs or weapons were found. In Urbana, 13 blacks were searched and police found something in 4 cases, while 10 whites were searched and 5 turned out to be carrying. Although whites were more often driving illegally, blacks were more often searched. Again, race determines who is subject to a search.

Police officials must recognize that racial profiling does, in fact, exist and take the necessary steps to eliminate this unfair practice. This will only occur with an independent media willing hold police accountable and a public that demands their representatives be held to a higher standard.

The full IDOT study on racial profiling can be found online:

<http://www.dot.il.gov/trafficstop/results07.html>

# Voting Suppression on Campus

by Esther Patt



Esther Patt is the current President of the Champaign County Chapter of the American Civil Liberties Union and served as a volunteer deputy county clerk from 1976 until the motor-voter law took effect in 1996.

November 4, 2008 should have been a day of celebration for Obama supporters, but for many who live in Champaign County's campus precincts, it was a day of frustration and anger over unreasonable obstacles to their voting rights.

Less than three hours after the polls opened, I heard the first complaint. Sarah, a 53-year old woman who happens to live near campus, called me to find out where to complain about voting irregularities. When she arrived at the polling place she was told that she had to present a state-issued photo identification before she would be given a ballot. She questioned the election judge and pointed out that she had been voting at the same polling place for the last 5 years. Sarah has actually been registered to vote in Champaign County for 35 years. Her signature hadn't changed, so she should have been handed a ballot. Still, she was told no I.D., no ballot. Reluctantly, she showed the judge her driver's license, cast her votes and then sought the opportunity to file an effective complaint.

Sarah told me later that when she complained to the County Clerk's office that morning, she was told that the election judge should not have asked her for identification. However, it appears her complaint to the Clerk's office did not result in any effort by that office to communicate to the judges that they should correct the problem.

State and federal laws require only certain first-time voters to provide identification when voting. Anyone who uses "motor voter" to register to vote must vote in person the first time he or she casts a ballot and at that time must provide proof of address and proof of identity. The reason is that the individual's current address and identity were not verified at the time of voter registration as they would have been if the person had registered to vote for the first time at the County Clerk's office or with a deputy registrar.

After that first time, as most people reading this article have experienced, a voter simply walks into the correct polling place, signs an application for a ballot and is handed one. No I.D. is required.

No doubt many people voting in the campus-area precincts were first time voters who used motor voter to register. But all were not. Some had voted in Champaign County in the primary and others, particularly graduate students, have been voting from the same address for several years. Yet, election judges at some polling places were treating all voters as if all were voting for the first time after a motor voter registration. In the Illini Union, where two precincts voted, a judge stood at the doorway to the polling place announcing to each person who entered the room that photo identification and proof of address were required in order to vote.

Proof of address was the biggest problem. It is very common for students to use a parent's address on a driver's license to avoid the cost of getting a new license after moving every year. The license proves identity but the first-time voter would need something else to prove current address.

The Voter Guide published by Champaign County Clerk Mark Shelden's office listed as acceptable proof of address "a current utility bill, bank statement, government check, paycheck or other government document that shows the name and address of the voter." Remarkably, the County Clerk's office instructed judges to reject as proof of address a government document showing the name and address of the voter if that document was a voter registration card issued by the County Clerk's office.

I heard, second-hand, two arguments against recognizing the voter registration card as valid proof of address. Both are silly. One is that the information on the card was provided by the voter so it could still be invalid. That makes no sense because the card is mailed to the voter by the County Clerk. If the voter does not really live at that address, the card will be returned to the Clerk's office rather than delivered to the voter.

The other argument is that the voter could have moved since the time the card was issued. The County Clerk's office prints a "date issued" on the card. If the card was

issued in October 2008, as many were, that's as valid as any address on a bank statement or utility bill. One voter still had the card on the larger sheet mailed to him by the County Clerk that showed a postmark less than 30 days before election day. The election judge at the Illini Union refused to accept that as proof of address.

All day, voters were turned away from the polls. Some were first time voters, others were not. Some went home to get more identification so they could vote and others did not return.

Since the 1971 ratification of the 26th amendment to the Constitution granting voting privileges to citizens age 18 or older, students in Champaign County have faced voting obstacles. In 1972, a federal lawsuit was necessary to compel then-county-clerk Dennis Bing to allow students to register. Because students tend to prefer Democratic party and third-party candidates and the local County Clerk has always been a Republican, the battles over voter registration continued for several elections. Once students were finally able to register without hassles, the strategy switched to preventing those who registered from actually voting.

Responding to the November 4 fiasco, State Representative Naomi Jakobsson and State Senator Mike Frerichs have said they'll introduce legislation to clarify the law regarding proof of address on election day. The new law needs to require acceptance of the voter registration card as valid proof of address. What if the County Clerk responds by suspending the practice of printing and mailing voter registration cards? The new law must also mandate that the County Clerk mail voter registration cards to every voter no fewer than 10 days before election day.

The County Clerk has the power to thwart the constitutional rights of thousands of people. We need better laws to prevent abuse of power. For future elections we need more progressive people to be trained to work as election judges, especially in the campus precincts.



# Discreet Discretions

By Local Yocal

*The News-Gazette's* December 28, 2008 editorial would have us think that the criminal justice system is a level and consistent playing field, where everyone is treated equally. The lenient sentence recently given to a Champaign Police detective's drunken driving case was a sole exception, according to *The News-Gazette*.

The case was whisked through the traffic courts in less than 18 days and Champaign Police Detective Lisa Staples received a sentence of court supervision and retained her driving privileges after she was discovered driving drunk at 2:30 a.m. in an unmarked squad car, going the wrong way into head-on traffic on I-72. Defense Attorney Ed Piraino admitted the sweetheart plea agreement was arranged so that Staples could keep her job as a police officer. Piraino stated during a court hearing: "If she can't drive, she can't be a police officer."

The easy sentence surprised the community, "shocked" *The News-Gazette*, and sparked a media barrage from an angry public, leading to Staples' eventual resignation. Were the community and *The News-Gazette* to visit the courthouse more often, they would see that such favoritism is standard fare in Champaign County.

Champaign County State's Attorney Julia Rietz has been consistent in ensuring easy sentences for the misconduct of police officers. During her reign, not one police officer has ever seen a day of jail time despite recent alleged infractions such as rape, falsified police reports, torture, stalking, and domestic battery committed by officers.

Rietz often ducks the responsibility of prosecuting an officer, citing conflicts of interest. Lucky for Rietz, the blame for who actually tilts the scales of justice gets placed on an unknown special prosecutor appointed through some unknown process. The circuit judge doing the appointing and the state's attorney bowing out know in advance, however, that requesting a certain type of special prosecutor can likely affect the outcome of the case.

For example, in the Detective Staples' case, the selection of a Ford County prosecutor to handle a DUI case, as Champaign County Circuit Judge Mike Jones revealed recently on WDWS's Penny For Your Thoughts Show, was made with the knowledge that Ford County prosecutors are more lenient towards first-time DUI's than is the norm in Champaign County.

It was a perfect recipe for helping a police officer who happened to make one little mistake: an out-of-town lawyer who can do the dirty deed of injustice while no one in the Champaign County Bar Association would have to take a hit. Except, maybe, Traffic Judge Richard Klaus who accepted the plea deal for Staples.

In the 2005 case against Urbana Police Officer Kurt Hjort, who was accused of rape, Judge Tom Difanis chose James Dedman, a former employee in Difanis' state's attorney's office and now a private defense attorney, to prosecute Officer Hjort. He dismissed the entire criminal prosecution against Hjort. Dedman didn't even charge Hjort with official misconduct for looking up the victim's address on the METCAD dispatch system and having sex

(consensual or not) while supposedly on duty.

In 2001, Brady Smith, a middle school dean, was accused of sexually abusing African-American boys over a several-year period. Former State's Attorney John Piland allowed a close friend of Brady Smith, Elizabeth Dobson, to prosecute him. After a stipulated plea agreement, Brady Smith was videotaped by television crews laughing his way out of the courthouse after receiving 4 years probation and a \$10 fine. Who the prosecutor is makes a world of difference in how justice gets distributed.

Rietz will make a public example out of Elizabeth Drewes—another drunk driver who recently killed a young bride-to-be of 24. A big media splash over Drewes will help the voters forget about the favors done for Detective Staples.

Most of us can't remember that Julia Rietz gave Kristen Roseberry, a student from Purdue, 4 years probation for driving drunk on highway I-57. Like Drewes, Roseberry collided into oncoming traffic, killing Martha Payne, a 55-year-old grandmother from Mississippi, and injuring four other family members. Most of us don't remember the pampered treatment given to U of I students, Dong Ki Yoon and Ioannis Tzicigakis, who were both driving drunk in two separate cars on campus, killing pedestrian, Nadia Chowdhury, age 20. Yoon and Tzicigakis both left the scene of the accident. Yoon served two months in the county jail in between semesters, and Tzicigakis had his case dismissed.

State's Attorney Julia Rietz often discusses "the wonderful" power she wields called "prosecutorial discretion". Discretion about whether to go forward with a police report, under what category of crime to charge, and what sentence to recommend are some of the superpowers granted to state's attorneys. The 2006 case of Sgt. William Myers, a correctional officer accused of torturing four people at the county jail with a taser, shows how this discretion can minimize the damage against a favored offender.

Rietz, who would have represented the county had the victims sued the county over Myers' behavior, initially offered Myers the light sentence of conditional discharge (conditional discharge is a form of probation that is automatically expunged from the offender's record upon completion), in exchange for Myers pleading guilty to one count of misdemeanor disorderly conduct. The outrageous deal was cancelled when news of the upcoming plea bargain was released to *The News-Gazette*. The complaints filed by the three other victims were ignored by Rietz' office.

Such cases reveal for whose benefit prosecutorial discretion is used. The outrage North End families have is not because they want to see Detective Staples or Sgt. Myers go to jail. The sense of unfairness stems from African-Americans and low-income people wishing for the same kinds of mercy granted to the people prosecutors openly favor.

Equality under the law might mean prosecutors are to abide by an equal application of the law. The problem standing in the way could be the living conditions inside our prisons. Perhaps white cops and white lawyers don't

have the heart to put their kind in the cruel dungeons we call "correctional facilities." Unless a white professional commits an infamous crime like in the case of Jon White, an elementary school teacher sexually abusing 8 white children (whose families can afford civil attorneys), the white professional class can expect they won't ever be required to do time in prison.

Last year's sensational case against Jon White was the exception. Robert Arnette, for example, was allowed a sentence of probation by Assistant State's Attorney Duke Harris after Arnette was accused of sexually molesting and assaulting four children two months prior to the disappearance of his estranged wife, Naomi.

Justifying her lenient treatment for cops and professionals, Rietz snaps that the professional white people she dares to prosecute did lose their job after all, and that's punishment enough. Rietz needn't worry that unfair, disparate prison sentences will cost her the state's attorney job, since few of us are aware that these are the current courthouse conditions.

Rietz, longing to be seen as a Democrat, attempted to reach out to local black talk-radio shows and The Ministerial Alliance last year only to be greeted with the unpleasant facts that her reign is perceived to be a continuation of the biased Piland and Difanis eras. Rietz scoffs at any suggestion her prosecutions are racially biased and often too harsh on the African-American community.

Would she be willing to 'prove it,' by opening the books and tracking significant information after verdicts? Doubtful. Like the traffic study that police were required to do, the results of an objective study at the courthouse might show that local prosecutors prefer to incarcerate African-Americans and usually incarcerate people of low-income, not represented by private attorneys.

While State's Attorney Rietz cannot comprehend what black people are so upset about, she does understand the plight of her legal colleagues trying to eek out a living. Rietz, herself, was once a private attorney. She knows that defense attorneys who can successfully get their clients good deals from the prosecutors can expect more business. In Champaign County, the ability to pay a private attorney is too often equivalent to deserving no jail time. These double standards of the Champaign county's "Just-Us" system would be kept a better secret if cops do not drink after work.

## Get Involved with the *Public i*

You don't need a degree in journalism to be a citizen journalist. We are all experts in something, and we have the ability to share our information and knowledge with others. The *Public i* is always looking for writers and story ideas. We invite you to submit ideas or proposals during our weekly meetings (Thursdays at 5:30pm at the UCIMC), or to contact one of the editors.

## THE PEOPLE'S COMMUNITY POTLUCK

**Sunday, March 1, 6–8 PM, Independent Media Center, 202 South Broadway, Urbana**

The idea behind the Peoples's Community Thanksgiving, a food-sharing communal gathering to discuss the launching of a Central Illinois Social Forum. This Forum, modeled on the World Social Forum, would be formed to harness the talents and resources of local organizations and individuals to improve the conditions of working people, unemployed people, poverty-stricken people, and those who are physically or mentally unable to care for themselves. Given the sorry state of the economy and government economic policy over the past 8 years, which has been most concerned with the well-being of the very wealthy, and given the dismal state of Illinois' government and economy, organizations and individuals at the grass-roots are going to have to use their social consciences and talents to find local ways of supporting the most vulnerable people in our communities. Additionally, we will have to pressure government at all levels to support an economy "for and by the people," rather than for and by the already extremely well-off. We cannot just rely on the new administration to turn things around. There must be pressure from the bottom up. We envision new local Social Forums as a stimulus for coordinated action and communication for a democratic, egalitarian political-economy. Movement and organizational activists are welcome to come and share their ideas and food with other socially conscious activists.

aRts

# Reflections of Black Girlhood: Necessary Truths, A Photography Exhibit/Multimedia Installation

By Ruth Nichole Brown



This month, Saving Our Lives Hear Our Truths (SOLHOT) will celebrate the opening of a their unique photography exhibit at the Krannert Art Museum (500 East Peabody Drive, Champaign). The exhibit will have a two-week run from February 16th until February 27th. SOL-

HOT is an after-school space in Champaign-Urbana dedicated to the celebration of Black girlhood in all of its complexity. Reflections of Black Girlhood: Necessary Truths will feature photography and poetry created by Black women and girls in SOLHOT, displayed within a multimedia, thematic installation.

In SOLHOT, each girl and homegirl (adult volunteers) was given a camera to capture images that represented home, love, beauty, community, and what is dope?-- in our lives. The photos were viewed collectively while we talked about the most compelling photos taken and created "meanings" for the photos using poetry, prose and song. Central to our conversations about the photographs was an honest exchange about what things in our lives we would like to see change for the better. We discussed the changes we are willing to make as students and made suggestions about how people in decision-making positions can do things differently. Both the photos and written text show what we discussed, embody our suggestions for change and what we think is important for the broader community to know and understand about what it means to be a Black girl living and going to school in Champaign-Urbana.

Prominently featured will be student-generated photography from Urbana Middle School's SOLHOT/SISTERHOOD collaboration. The exhibit will also feature the artwork created at several SOLHOT sites. Ultimately, the purpose of this exhibit is to show off and celebrate the skills of some of the most slept on artists and visionaries in this town—Black girls.

This exhibit would not have been possible without the assistance and support of Andrea Kirkland-- UMS counselor and a "for real" ally to Black girls, Dominique Hill— homegirl and doctoral student in the department of Educational Policy Studies, and Candy Taaffe—O.G. homegirl, doctoral student in Educational Policy Studies, and photography mastermind.

To celebrate both the exhibit and the recent publication of *Black Girlhood Celebration: Toward a Hip Hop Feminist Pedagogy* (Peter Lang, 2008) written by SOLHOT co-founder Dr. Ruth Nicole Brown (assistant professor in Gender & Women's Studies and Educational Policy Studies), a special event is planned for Thursday, February 19th, from 5–7 p.m. at the Krannert Art Museum. Free and open to the public, this event will provide an opportunity for anyone who is interested in experiencing SOLHOT to gather collectively to witness and talk back to the images and words we created while recognizing the sanctity of a space that is for, about, and created by Black girls.

If you have ever participated in SOLHOT please come out. We are depending on you to show up and show out! Know that!



## Negro League Black Men By Ernie Westfield

Mr. Westfield is a former pitcher with the Birmingham Black Barons. Currently residing in Urbana, he frequently appears locally reading his poetry and sharing his stories of baseball history.

They played the game of baseball  
Because they loved the game,  
Never did they think that it  
Would be harder to get into  
The Baseball Hall of Fame.

They were beautiful black men  
Who played the game with pride.  
I just wish each of you could have seen  
"Cool Papa Bell" when he ran at his full stride.  
He was so fast—  
Daylight could not keep up with his speed.  
When he was on the base pad  
all he needed was a small lead.

Josh Gibson, the best hitter of all time,  
Hit a five hundred foot home  
run out of Yankee Stadium,  
And the ball they still can't find.

Then there was Satchel Paige,  
Who's on everybody's all-star list.  
Threw a ball so hard that batters just missed.  
Satchel had a hesitation pitch that was so slow it glided.  
It would catch batters off guard as it made them over  
stride.

There were so many Negro league players  
Who never lived their dreams,  
And that was to one day play for  
An American or National league team.

So let's honor those black men  
Who played the game so well,  
By keeping their history alive  
For the younger generations to tell.  
Let's never forget their struggles  
And how hard they had to fight,  
Because that was a time when  
Only the ball was white.

## Beyond The Chief: Art Exhibit On Nevada St.



Edgar Heap of Birds (left), a Cheyenne-Arapaho, is an artist whose work ranges from conceptual public art messages to paintings, prints, and monumental sculptures.

He will deliver a presentation about his work and new installation titled *Beyond the Chief*, consisting of 12 outdoor sign plates at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign: Feb 18, 2009, 5:30 p.m. at the Asian American Cultural House, 1210 W. Nevada St.

*Beyond the Chief* provides an opportunity for those of us at the University of Illinois to consider the indigenous history of our campus and the state in which we live. The signs in this public art exhibit include the names of a dozen Indigenous peoples whose homelands are within the boundaries of the state of Illinois. Many of these peoples continue today with viable governments, cultures, and languages. All of them remain, even if some are only remnants of what they once were.

Members of these groups live, learn, and work on campus. We at Native American House and American Indian Studies hope *Beyond the Chief* helps all of us who share our campus learn more about those whose homelands we occupy.





# Disparities in Media Treatment of Black Athletes

By Neil Parthun



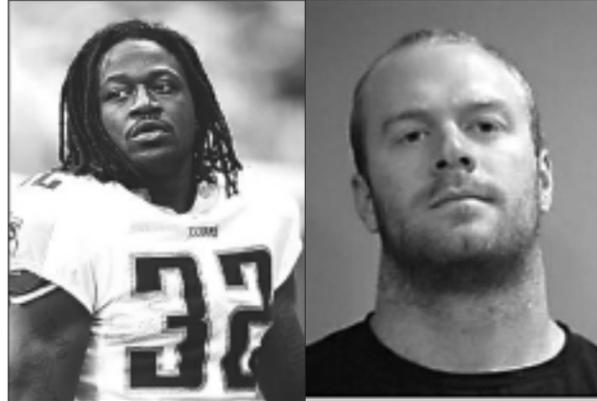
7 Most Valuable Player awards. 8 Gold Glove awards for outfield defense. He is the only player to reach the '600-600 club' – hitting 600 home run and also stealing 600 bases. Yet, Barry Bonds has received torrents of negative media attention for alleged use of steroids to become baseball's #1 home run hitter in history. Fans have screamed for pitchers to throw at his head to end his career. Death threats against his family have also occurred. Even before his alleged steroid use, he was one of the greatest baseball players. Recently, the MLB Players' Union found that owners colluded to keep the now free agent Bonds out of the league for the 2008 season. Bonds has had further legal troubles since the FBI is investigating him for perjury. Recent information has surfaced that Bonds may have been telling the truth when he stated that he did not know the steroid known as "the clear" was a steroid. "The Clear" was not banned and at the time of the grand jury testimony, it was not deemed an illegal substance by the Justice Department. At the end of January 2009, the FBI raided the home of Bonds' trainer's mother in law with 20 agents. Attorneys admitted the raid was done in order to ratchet up pressure on Bonds' trainer to testify against Bonds in federal court, as he's repeatedly refused to testify against Bonds.

Roger Clemens was known as "The Rocket" for his blazing fastball. He was an elite pitcher that amassed over 300 wins in his career. However, he was also alleged to have used steroids to improve his career. He was named in the Mitchell Report that detailed the prevalence of steroids in baseball. Clemens also allegedly lied to Congress when he denied using human growth hormone and other anabolic steroids. The FBI is still investigating possible perjury charges against Clemens. Yet there has been almost no media scrutiny of Clemens and no questioning of the authenticity of his achievements. Fans and the media were and are willing to believe that Clemens achieved these accomplishments through hard work, not anabolic assistance. Yet, many of these same people have demonized Bonds.

## NASCAR Lawsuit Settled

By Neil Parthun

Former Busch Series official Mauricia Grant has settled her lawsuit against NASCAR for \$225 million, with neither side admitting liability or wrongdoing according to reports. During her two year employment from 2005 to 2007, she alleged that she was referred to as "Nappy Headed Mo" and "Queen Sheba" by coworkers, was told she worked on "colored people time" and had a coworker talk regularly about the Ku Klux Klan. A white official named



Adam Jones was the 2005 draft pick of the Tennessee Titans. During the 2007 season, NFL Commissioner Roger Goodell suspended him for the entire season off the field legal troubles. Goodell jumped the gun before Jones received due process in court before suspending him for the season. He was later traded to the Dallas Cowboys. On October 14, Commissioner Goodell suspended Jones again for four games because Jones got into an argument with his bodyguard at a hotel. The media has frequently covered every step and misstep of Adam Jones – where one ESPN anchor said Jones' suspension was preventing the NFL from becoming the "National Thug League". Commissioner Goodell has shown through his actions that he will punish black athletes before all the facts are in – with Jones, 'Tank' Johnson and Michael Vick (before all the evidence came to light).

Police busted Jacksonville Jaguar wide receiver Matt Jones during the 2008 preseason. He was in the process of cutting up lines of about six grams of cocaine in his car. The Arkansas court have made an agreement with Jones to avoid a criminal trial and has charged Jones with simple possession instead of possession with intent to distribute, which is a gift given the amount of cocaine with which he was arrested. It was not until October 21, 2008 that Commissioner Goodell made the decision to suspend Jones and the suspension was for only a paltry three games. It was not until Dec. 9, 2008 that the NFL upheld the suspension, conveniently after the Jaguars (for which Jones is the leading receiver) were eliminated from the playoffs. Light suspensions for white athletes from Goodell seem to be par for the course as Minnesota Vikings defensive end Jared Allen has been arrested three times for DUI, including two times within five months. His four game suspension was reduced by the Commish to two games for reasons nobody is sure of because Goodell isn't talking.



Terrell Owens, more famously known as TO, has been a lightning rod for the media about controversy he brings to his teams. The media has scrutinized his fashion choices (wearing a Cowboys throwback jersey inscribed with his friend and former Cowboys player Michael Irvin's name after TO's then team the Philadelphia Eagles were beaten by the Cowboys) and has blown most of his comments into media driven "controversy". Yet, the media refuses to acknowledge his courage when he put his career on the line by playing with a significantly injured ankle which assisted the Philadelphia Eagles to make the Super Bowl. His on the field talents have also become a venue for controversy because of his unique touchdown celebrations. After reports came out that he fell asleep during a team meeting, Owens celebrated a touchdown by "taking a nap" with the football as a pillow. Recently, TO has become a target of being a "conspiracy theorist" that quarterback Tony Romo and tight end Jason Witten created secret plays to keep the ball from TO. After many media sportswriters/television anchors demonized TO, the story failed to have significant proof. TO has become a magnet for negative media coverage and has been traded from team to team because of media perception and amplification of his supposed negative effects on team morale, despite being one of the most talented receivers in the NFL.

The New York Jets quarterback is one of the best ever to play the game. However, media and fans have almost refused to talk about the disruptive roller coaster his own interest put the team on. In March 2008, Favre retired from the NFL. The Packers then began grooming their new quarterback Aaron Rodgers to take the starting job. In July, Favre stated that he wanted to return to football. After having meetings with Packer management and significantly distracting the team from preparing for the 2008 season, Favre was traded to the New York Jets in August. The hesitance of the media to discuss effects of Favre's actions on team morale is obvious when compared to their eagerness to show any sign of dissent caused by a black athlete. Information also surfaced that Favre reportedly had a 60-90 minute conversation with a team the Packers were going to place. During the conversation, Favre allegedly told the team details about the Packer offensive schemes.

incidentally named David Duke stated in a text message "I love all ya'll mofos i am that nigga. HAHAHAHolla. PIMPALICIOUS." NASCAR later fired him for issues not related to the suit. Two other NASCAR officials were later fired for allegedly exposing themselves to Mauricia Grant while at work. As the movement against racism and sexism continually expands, it is important to realize that the battles also take place in the realm of sports.

### Odyssey Project Book Drive

The Odyssey Project is holding a book drive for housing communities that have shown strong support for adult education in the humanities in Champaign-Urbana. We would like to ask for your help in contributing books to encourage literacy and humanities education in our community. Texts and learning materials for all age groups are welcome and can be brought to the Illinois Program for Research in the Humanities, 805 West Pennsylvania Avenue, Urbana through March 15, 2009.

### UFLive! Presents "Women, Rhythm & Word"

Sunday, February 15th at 2pm  
Urbana Free Library,  
Lewis Auditorium

A very special performance featuring poet, activist and percussionist Amira Davis and her multi-talented daughters Rukiya and Nailah. "Women, Rhythm and Word" is a multilayered performance which combines African percussions, chants, proverbs, spoken word and images.



## Youth Making History at Home

By Karen Simms

*"Our youth are not failing the system; the system is failing our youth. Ironically, the very youth who are being treated the worst are the young people who are going to lead us out of this nightmare."*—Rachel Jackson

The Peer Ambassadors is currently a program at the Mental Health Center of Champaign County and are funded by a grant through the Champaign County Mental Health Board. The Peer Ambassadors are the youth voice for Project ACCESS.

They are a group of African American teens, trying to make a difference in their community by helping other teens, challenging themselves, and transforming their communities. They 'represent' and help people understand that anything is possible if you just believe and work hard. Many of them are youth who were once 'written off,' who are now mobilized to change and transform themselves and their communities.

This preceding paragraph is comprised of phrases that individual Peer Ambassadors have created to describe themselves and their role within this community. For the past three years I have had the privilege of working with a remarkable group of passionate young people who, by the time the leave the program, are committed to transforming themselves and their communities. The program, staff, and the other participants work hard to create an environment that gives the participants a sense of their own power and see themselves as agents of change.

Three years ago the group was formed and the program was developed to address several challenges facing youth, especially African American youth, in our community. First, there was a perception that there were too few opportunities for youth to become involved constructively in transforming their communities. Then there was also a perception that African American youth were not viewed as a resource in this community. And finally, from my perception, too many African American youth were being marginalized and were disconnected from their communities and their possibilities.

So, in May 2006 a meeting was called and parents, social workers, and other people from the community referred 15 youth from the community who had some previous 'issues' at home, at school, and in the community but who had leadership experiences and the desire to make a difference. From that initial class of 15 the Peer Ambassadors were born. They committed themselves to improving their schools, their bodies, and themselves. They also were committed to bringing their friends and family members along. They hosted town hall meetings about what youth need, about strategies to improve police and youth relationships, and identifying ways to improve our schools. They were given permission to conduct monthly focus groups at the Juvenile Detention Center (JDC) to find out what youth want and need in our community that would have a deterrent effect. This information has been shared locally and nationally at conferences and with key decision makers like the Mental Health Board of Champaign County. They also hold monthly meetings designed to give their peers and other youth in our communities opportunities to come to a youth led space, where they can learn, self organize, and grow. Remember Kofi Annan said, "Young people should be at the forefront of global change and innovation. Empowered, they can be key agents for development and peace. If, however, they are left on society's margins, all of us will be impoverished. Let us ensure that all young people have every opportunity to participate fully in the lives of their societies." This is the vision of the Peer Ambassadors program.

Recently, in response to input received from youth in our focus groups at the JDC and our Youth Summit schools, the focus has been on schools, employment, and family. They want schools that are challenging, equitable, and that prepare them for success. They also want employment opportunities to help them stay focused, take care of their economic needs, and prepare them for their future career aspirations. And they want their families to have the resources and the skills they need. Our challenge is to find partners in the community who share their vision and who

are really open to hearing from youth to working to address the needs of youth. Unfortunately, the Peer Ambassadors have found that people outside of this community often have been much more responsive to them and more open to their voice than leaders and stakeholders in this community.

We are aware that all too often many of the adults in this community have a colored lens that impedes their ability to see the youth in the Peer Ambassadors and other youth (and their families) as experts in their own lives. Too frequently, age and cultural bias color their lens through which they see young people in the program. In an era of ever tightening budget restrictions and other challenges it's easier for funders, administrators, educators, and program developers to move back to a top down/patriarchal approach rather than open themselves to the creative genius that lies in all of our youth.

However the Peer Ambassadors never lose hope that they can harness the energies and passions of our community. They are looking for adults who can work with them here at home because we are aware 'that all politics are local;' but also they are aware that adults have power. Currently, they are launching two campaigns designed to mobilize adults to get involved in the lives of the youth in our community. The first is Save our Students (S.O.S.), an ongoing initiative designed to ensure that student voices (especially the African American student voices) are heard in designing and improving the climate and quality of their educational experiences. They want a sense of ownership of their schools. The meeting will be on Wednesday, February 11, at 5:30 at the CUPHD.

They are also launching a youth spotlight campaign that will showcase the successes of one youth in our community everyday during Black History month. If you want to get involved with the Peer Ambassadors or want to learn more about their work please feel free to contact them at [peerambassadors@gmail.com](mailto:peerambassadors@gmail.com)

## The Benefits of Cannabis

By Ashley Barys

*Ashley Barys has been involved in drug policy reform, specifically holding interest with industrial hemp issues since 2005. She's a member of the national organization Students for Sensible Drug Policy, a graduate student at University of Illinois for school social work, and actively involved with the campus SSDP chapter in Urbana-Champaign.*

Oh cannabis, how versatile a plant! Cannabis exists in three forms: Cannabis Sativa, Cannabis Indica and Cannabis Ruderalis. It is cannabis Ruderalis that is commonly referred to as industrial hemp. Although many misconceive hemp as an equivalent to marijuana, it actually has such a low amount of the psychoactive ingredient Tetrahydrocannabinol, or THC, that it does not produce the effects of either cannabis Sativa or cannabis Indica. Cannabis Ruderalis, or industrial hemp, is not a drug, but it is surely the forgotten strain in the wonders of the cannabis plant.

Industrial hemp is highly versatile; it has over 25,000 uses including building materials, fabrics, paper, textiles, rope, paint, varnishes, fuel, food & protein, oil and biomass energy. Hemp is the only known annually renewable and natural resource that is capable of providing the majority of the world's needs for transportation, industrial and home energy needs, while simultaneously reducing pollution, rebuilding the soil and cleaning the atmosphere.

Hemp can be grown in a wide variety of climates and is commonly used to rebuild the soil and prevent mudslides and erosion. Due to returning a high yield of nitrogen to the soil, hemp is commonly harvested in poor soil conditions to nurture it so food can grow on it in years to come. Speaking of food, hemp seed is the single most nutritious

food source humans need. It provides protein, fiber, minerals, antioxidants, fatty amino acids, gamma linolenic acids and stearidonic acids which are all essential to our health, specifically our immune system. Hemp seed can reduce heart problems, cholesterol, help in the treatment of osteoporosis, arthritis as well as breast, colon and prostate cancer. Talk about hemp for health.

Hemp can also be grown in a denser and at a much faster rate than cotton or trees, making it a more sustainable and renewable alternative for paper, building materials and clothing. Hemp grows so densely that it leaves no room for insects to thrive in. This also leaves out the possibility for other weeds to grow, including other strains of cannabis, a nonsensical concern most drug warriors uphold. This means there is no need for pesticides or herbicides that further harm our Earth. Hemp has a high turn around rate, taking about four months to complete a harvest; so multiple yields can be produced in one year. Hemp is also highly recyclable, lasting on average 100 years. Thus far, fifteen states, including Illinois, have hemp legislation in place; although it is still outlawed federally due to our government being unwilling to legally distinguish marijuana from hemp.

Industrial hemp can also help with our current energy crisis. It can replace up to 90 percent of all fossil fuels and is up to four times more sustainable and renewable than other forms of biomass that comes from plants. In four months just one acre of hemp can provide up to ten tons of biomass. Hemp can replace plastics and hemp oil can be used to run your vehicle as well. In fact, hemp is the only biomass source that has the potential to make the United States energy independent.

The government is quite aware of the benefits of hemp; our first hemp law was established in 1619, mandating all American farmers to grow hemp. In fact, one was allowed to pay their taxes with hemp from the early 1600's to the early 1800's. This ended when our fear of a shortage of hemp production diminished due to having over 8,000 hemp plantations in the United States by 1850. During World War II our government once again called on American farmers to grow hemp in an effort to help our country's independence during the war. Hemp helped sustain the U.S. army, navy and our own industry needs. Farmers were given a tax stamp to grow hemp and were deemed as patriotic in helping their country in times of need. After the war ended and Japan no longer had control over the international trade of hemp, so did the growth of hemp in America.

Although we are spending our money to import hemp, mainly from Canada, it would be quite the turnaround if American farmers were able to tap into the number one cash crop in the world. Money would be saved by not having to import hemp and the hemp grown in the U.S. would be highly profitable for a variety of needs. Legalizing hemp growth in the U.S. is a struggle, as oil companies, cotton growers, loggers, the FDA, herbicide and pesticide producers, paper and housing companies and Canada all benefit a great deal from hemp prohibition. Currently the U.S. is the only industrialized nation that does not allow the growth of hemp. We must take a stand against the economic and political tactics that are used to uphold hemp prohibition. We must educate those about industrial hemp and all the benefits it has for our planet and for our sustainability. There are numerous reasons cannabis remains the number one cash crop in the world, if only Americans had the opportunity to take advantage of such a gain.



## Excerpts From 2009 MLK Essays

Continued from page 1

Third is students not graduating from high school and not going to college. I think that schools, mainly public schools, are here for you to get the education needed for the upcoming life. I see that when I get back to my school I'll work hard and learn as much as I can about whatever I get taught because I might need that education later in life. Then I think about going to college. Teens after getting out of school should to start to think of their future. If you could earn your own money to put yourself through I think it's worth it. Think of college like an investment that's going to have you set for years to come.

Last but not least is scholarship grants. I think the scholarships should not just be for sports. It should be for your grades and your test scores. It's too much money for people to have to pay for the education they want. All students on honor roll should be able to attend college for free because if they got on honor roll they worked hard to get on it.

These topics are very important to the world and these topics are a part of social justice that need to be corrected.

**ETHAN YOUNG, LUCAS HAHN, DANIEL VANLIET, JEFFERSON MIDDLE SCHOOL, GRADE 8**

### MLK Rap

Social Justice is the key to the American Dream  
It is also the key to liberty  
So don't hate, appreciate  
what me and my friends are about to make  
A special idea from the heart this is a good start  
Social Justice is a very practical art  
We can make it in into a poem because we are smart  
So grab some pop-tarts and  
wait for the revolution to take place  
it's already started and we are late.

Are you tired of racism in your community?  
we sure as heck are like a shooting star.  
People shouldn't be neglected for skin color  
it's hard when you put down a brother  
it's even harder being represented by color  
it isn't funny hurting each other we are all  
born from a mother equal in fame and color  
we can't have different races disrespecting  
each other we are all one race so you racists  
out there think of this, we are the human race  
So that's not cool that's cruel  
it makes people drool just like  
when you snooze you LOSE!

Segregation is amputation  
you cut one side from another  
it's like separating a brother from their mother  
it's separating people by their color  
when they loved each other.  
it makes them wonder why life is how it is,  
It keeps people away from the things they like  
and when that happens the people start to fight  
Segregation is not alright  
it needs to stop that's why we make up these songs  
Segregation is when two people get  
separated from each other  
it's hard losing a brother  
I went through it I just had to do it  
We need to stick together through all kinds of weather  
through thick and thin

It can be fixed my friend,  
we can change social justice  
for future people to think about how we helped  
you know we didn't yelp  
we worked on this by ourselves  
rocked it to the core  
we keep on our roar right on down to the floor  
we can fix it if we twist it  
and that's all, remember about social justice  
sitting on a wall!

### Ministerial Alliance Awards Community Organizers

On December 12, 2008, the Ministerial Alliance of Champaign-Urbana and Vicinity held an awards ceremony to recognize some of the unsung heroes who work tirelessly for the betterment of our community. Held at St. Luke's C.M.E. Church in Champaign, the evening's events were emceed by Reverend Troy Burks. This was the second annual awards ceremony organized by the Ministerial Alliance under the leadership of its current president, Reverend Dr. Evelyn Underwood. Below is a list of award recipients:

#### Layperson of the Year Award "For your tireless devotion to education for all children and uplifting the community"

Aaron Ammons  
E. Martel Miller  
Christopher Evans  
Seon Williams  
Robert E. Lewis  
Dr. Brian Dolinar  
Linda A. Abernathy  
Imani Bazzelle  
Patrick Dwayne Thompson  
Tamra Gingold  
Barbara Grady  
Mary Hayward Benson  
Dr. Barbara Gillespie-Washington

#### President's Award: Outstanding Contributions by Ministerial Alliance Members to the Organization

Bishop King James Underwood  
Rev. Troy A. Burks

Elderess Vanessa Buchanan  
Eldress Hattie Paulk  
Elderess Melinda Carr

#### President's Award: Outstanding Contribution to Ministerial Alliance made by a Non-Member

Mrs. Rosalind D. Lewis  
Dr. Deloris P. Henry  
Mrs. Vera Carter Mitchell  
Deacon James Clayborn  
Mr. Durl Kruse  
Mrs. Barbara A. Scott  
Mrs. Maggie Rodriguez-Nieto  
Devin Chambers  
Stephanie McCoy  
Angela James

#### The Villager Award "It takes a village to raise a child"

Mrs. Neppie Caldwell, Macedonia Baptist Church  
Nichole Jackson, Liberty Temple COGIC  
Mother Betty Brown, New Free Will Baptist Church  
Mr. Evelyn B. Hickman, Salem Baptist Church  
Mother Carrie Carter, New Birth Baptist Church  
Mother Mary Brooks Woods, Morning Star Free Will Baptist Church  
Brother Douglas West, First Mennonite Church of Champaign-Urbana

### BRENDA GONZALEZ-SALINAS, BOOKER T. WASHINGTON, 5TH GRADE

Are you an illegal immigrant, or do you have a friend that is an illegal immigrant or a family member? Have you ever been separated from your family for a long time? Then if you have that's how most illegal immigrants feel. That's why I wish that someday illegal immigrants could go were ever they want.

### JOANNA WILSON, READY 9TH GRADE

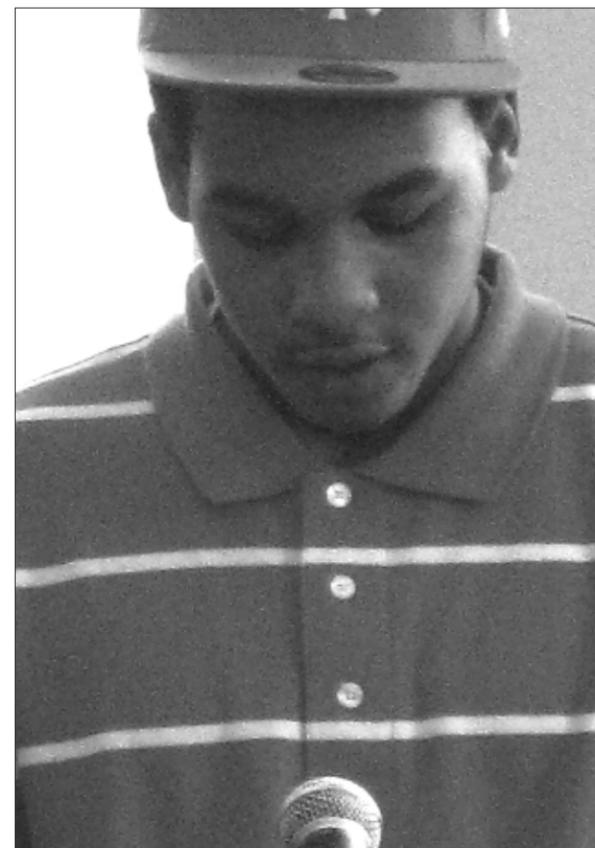
Teens are having babies too young and are expecting their parents to take care of them. This is causing parents to be poorer and not have enough money to live the way they want to live. To help stop teenagers from getting pregnant at a young age, all high school students (boys and girls) should be required to take a child development class. This might not stop kids from having babies at a young age, but it might help stop some and maybe help some teenagers be better parents if they get in that situation.

### ALEXA COBB, JEFFERSON, 8TH GRADE

Sometimes I wonder how the world got this way. Why people are scared to live life their own way. Why must people discriminate, not even know the person and still hate. I just wish acceptance came as easy as the hate. But sadly, we've made our own fate.

### JAZZMIN JADE RUSSELL MOCKABEE, JEFFERSON, 8TH GRADE

I have a dream  
To become somebody  
That nobody believes  
Can make it to the top



Richard Relliford, 10th grader at Centennial High School reading at the Urbana Library



## A MATTER OF TIME

By Amira Millicent Davis

"I come to say to you this afternoon, however difficult the moment, (Yes, sir) however frustrating the hour, it will not be long, (No sir) because "truth crushed to earth will rise again." (Yes, sir)

How long? Not long, (Yes, sir) because "no lie can live forever." (Yes, sir)

How long? Not long, (All right. How long) because "you shall reap what you sow." (Yes, sir)

How long? (How long?) Not long: (Not long)

...

How long? Not long, because the arc of the moral universe is long, but it bends toward justice. (Yes, sir)

How long? Not long,...

In another time,

I arrived here,

unfree, in exile,

in metamorphosing chains

a spirit naked, vulnerable

to the voyeurs' gaze

that constructed me

in an aesthetic of extremes

forced across seas,

beyond reason, into madness

my voice was not lost

it was taken

my beloved Iroko tree

carved into my back

branches tipped with budding,

bloody leaves; deep roots

spanning two worlds

400 years have passed & still

I have not yet learned to navigate

the hyphenated space

between African & american

but, tell me, who counts the days?

Ma Rainey sang her blues for me

like Bessie did, like Billie

sang Strange Fruit blues

and Zora talked about it  
my mothers: grand, great and just  
were blues women, too  
sensuality & soul sifted though ancestral sounds  
low moans birthed in cramped quarters,  
a battle cry to Warrior spirits named  
Oya, Hatshepsut and Nzingha  
Granny Nanny, Mother Harriet,  
Ella, Fannie Lou, Queen Mother Moore,  
Vina & Bettye Melba  
it is the song of black birds  
perched atop trees  
bearing witness  
in the timbre of their tune the begged question, "How long?"

Response: Not long.  
I channel them on stages  
in meetings, in classrooms,  
in languages of human  
resource and public policy  
in places sacred & profane  
my scream reverberates from inner,  
to outer and cyber space  
biting words rush from my mind like  
self-emancipated slaves,  
burn my lips, my fingertips  
unmasking my invisibility  
people ask,  
"Why  
are  
you  
so angry?!"

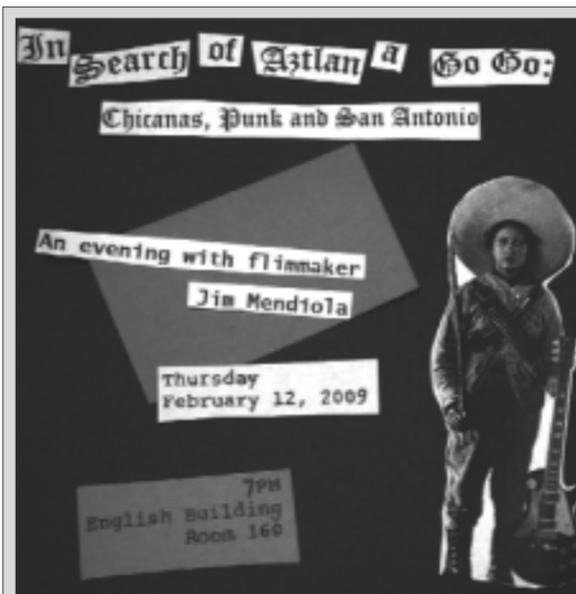
Do you not see my arms aching  
for babies lost and stolen?  
sold in marketplaces, on auction blocks,  
to private prisons and for-profit  
foster care, killed in imperial  
and urban guerilla wars  
poetic tragedies in which Kiyanna,  
Boo, Larry and Phil forever die  
on South Side streets  
denied birthrights of literacy;  
the right to be safe  
and whole  
I mourn memories, collective  
& private  
wombs: cut off/cut out  
after wet-nursing america  
to "Divine-Divaship"  
the breasts of the state now dry  
& sag around a bloated middle  
the true mark of an old vulture  
perhaps my anger reflects  
the tiredness of my pain  
Chants of democracy  
lose meaning in survival struggle  
that consumes each new thought in utero,  
necrotizes the flesh from action  
before our eyes, on 24 hour newsreels,  
voters made voteless  
families are foreclosed upon,  
unruly markets shape shift  
into tsunamis  
& Katrina is revealed  
as an undercover gov't operative

on the payrolls of Black Water & Haliburton  
superbugs named MRSA rival  
HIV/AIDS as new predators  
in controlled environments  
where roaches and rats feed  
alongside politicians & money changers  
who, after orally & anally violating  
the body of We The People  
are bailed out with its life blood through gas pump hoses;  
and street thugs known as GDs  
are foot soldiers for global gangsters called G8s & G20s  
and while the golden arches  
may sometime resemble an oasis  
in the expanse of neoliberal  
desertification,

(code names: deindustrialization  
code named: depopulation  
code named: gentrification)

I can't rescue my children with  
a "happy" meal  
The margins are filled with those  
overwhelmed with gingoism  
who are sold the goods of life  
with foreign trademarks  
our own shelf life less  
than most 3rd world countries  
we gather to commiserate,  
self medicate and cleanse ourselves  
with prayer, clinging to amulets  
bathed in holy water tears  
the brazen among us  
push tight clenched fists  
into the face of the center  
I stand here  
not alone, but with the ghosts  
of mothers/sisters/aunts/nieces/daughters  
crowding my space,  
speaking in ecumenical tongues,  
through bodies, real and incorporeal,  
this poem our offering to life  
& light/hope & healing,  
peace, love & the desire  
to draw breath  
one day again  
free

I heard in his question, "How long 'til freedom?"  
Call: How long? Response: Not long  
but tell me, who really counts the days?



THURSDAY FEBRUARY 12, 7PM  
ENGLISH BUILDING, RM 160

The event will include a screening of the award-winning short film *Pretty Vacant* and new material by filmmaker Jim Mendiola. A question and answer session with the filmmaker will follow the films.

*Pretty Vacant* tells the story of a Chicana punk rocker on the verge of rewriting rock and roll history. The film traces how youth negotiate cultural and geographical crossings in the San Antonio alternative rock scene. Jim Mendiola is a writer/director hailing from San Antonio and now based out of Los Angeles.

Sponsored by: Latina/o Studies, Gender and Women's Studies, Department of Anthropology, Unit for Criticism and Interpretive Theory, Center for Latin American and Caribbean Studies, Department of English, Illinois Program for Research in the Humanities.

## New Blog by Public i Writer

"Wage slavery got you down? Feeling like you're not 100% in command of your own destiny? For a worm's eye view of the smoke-and-mirrors economy, the world, and life under Oz, check out Ricky Baldwin's new blog [theclay eater.blogspot.com](http://theclay eater.blogspot.com). The name is a tie to his own roots. A "clay eater" is a hillbilly, a redneck, trailer trash: that is, like most of the world. And you know what they say, you can take the hillbilly out of the hills..."

## Music Around Town

Wed, Feb 11 - Steve Gorn (bansuri flutes), Yosef Ben Israel (bass) and Jason Finkelman (percussion), 8pm, Channing-Murray Foundation, 1209 W. Oregon Street, Urbana. \$5-\$10.

Thu, Feb 12 - Steve Gorn (bansuri flutes) / Fareed Haque (guitars) Duo, 7:30pm, Sudden Sound Concert Series, Krannert Art Museum, 500 E. Peabody Drive, Champaign. FREE info: [www.kam.illinois.edu](http://www.kam.illinois.edu)

Sun, Feb 15 - Sunday Improv Lab, 1-4pm, Dance Rehearsal Room, Level 2, Krannert Center.

FREE (dancers, musicians and actors are invited to explore improvisation in structured and open formats, every 1st and 3rd Sundays through April)

Saturdays, Feb 21, 28, and Mar 7 - Music In The Moment, 2-4pm, University YMCA, 1001 S. Wright St., Champaign.

Thu, Mar 5 - Lê Quan Ninh (percussion) / Michel Done-da (soprano saxophone) Duo, 7:30pm, Sudden Sound Concert Series, Krannert Art Museum, 500 E. Peabody Drive, Champaign. FREE info: [www.kam.illinois.edu](http://www.kam.illinois.edu)

# The Terrorist Assault On The People Of Gaza

By Belden Fields



Terrorism is the deliberate violent targeting of civilians for political and/or military ends. Those who use terrorism always try to make it seem legitimate. Hamas sends rockets into southern Israel because Israel has taken former Arab land and homes and Israel has been economically blockading Gaza by land and by sea. Israel attacks civilian sites such as hospitals, ambulances, schools, and universities because it claims that Hamas uses them for military purposes. All of the claims on both sides might be true, but none justifies terrorism.

There are, however, five aspects to the recent Israeli campaign in Gaza that make the terrorism there especially troubling. First is the scale of the harm. Something like half of the approximately 1300 killed were civilians, many of them children. Many more were wounded. Second is the type of weaponry used, especially white phosphorous which is one of the cruelest of weapons that burns to the bone and is internationally forbidden in crowded urban areas like Gaza. (See the 1925 Geneva Protocol in the sidebar). Third is Israel's banning of the press from Gaza in the vain hope that much of the suffering it inflicted would go unreported. Forth, is Israel's striking of the facilities of the U.N. and other international relief organizations. Fifth, all of this was done by a military supplied by the U.S. government and paid for by us U.S. taxpayers. The blood is thus on our hands too.

I regret that several of my fellow American Jews have attempted to justify the unjustifiable in letters to the *News-Gazette*. Of all people, we should be the first to decry the infliction of such suffering and insist that we never pay for it again.

## PROTOCOL FOR THE PROHIBITION OF THE USE IN WAR OF ASPHYXIATING, POISONOUS OR OTHER GASES, AND OF BACTERIOLOGICAL METHODS OF WARFARE

Signed at Geneva June 17, 1925 Entered into force February 8, 1928 Ratification advised by the U.S. Senate December 16, 1974 Ratified by U.S. President January 22, 1975 U.S. ratification deposited with the Government of France April 10, 1975 Proclaimed by U.S. President April 29, 1975

The Undersigned Plenipotentiaries, in the name of their respective Governments:

Whereas the use in war of asphyxiating, poisonous or other gases, and of all analogous liquids, materials or devices, has been justly condemned by the general opinion of the civilized world; and,

Whereas the prohibition of such use has been declared in Treaties to which the majority of Powers of the World are Parties; and,

To the end that this prohibition shall be universally accepted as a part of International Law, binding alike the conscience and the practice of nations;

### Declare:

That the High Contracting Parties, so far as they are not already Parties to Treaties prohibiting such use, accept this prohibition, agree to extend this prohibition to the use of bacteriological methods of warfare and agree to be bound as between themselves according to the terms of this declaration.

The High Contracting Parties will exert every effort to induce other States to accede to the present Protocol. Such accession will be notified to the Government of the French Republic, and by the latter to all signatory and



acceding Powers, and will take effect on the date of the notification by the Government of the French Republic.

The present Protocol, of which the French and English texts are both authentic, shall be ratified as soon as possible. It shall bear today's date.

The ratifications of the present Protocol shall be addressed to the Government of the French Republic, which will at once notify the deposit of such ratification to each of the signatory and acceding Powers.

The instruments of ratification of and accession to the present Protocol will remain deposited in the archives of the Government of the French Republic.

The present Protocol will come into force for each signatory Power as from the date of deposit of its ratification, and, from that moment, each Power will be bound as regards other powers which have already deposited their ratifications.

IN WITNESS WHEREOF the Plenipotentiaries have signed the present Protocol.

DONE at Geneva in a single copy, this seventeenth day of June, One Thousand Nine Hundred and Twenty-Five.

# ...Athens! ...Oakland!! ...Gaza!!!





## Is this "The Big One" Coming?

By John Reiman

On January 12, 2009, Paul Craig Roberts reported in "Counterpunch" that if the unemployment rate were calculated as it used to be prior to 1980, it would stand at 17.5% today, as opposed to the official figure, which is less than half that amount. This gets close to the rate of the 1930s, which was around 25%.

In recent years, consumer spending has risen to almost three quarters of the US GDP. In the 1930s, consumer debt rose to 9.6% of household income, vs. 25.1% in 2006.

The main means of ending the Depression was federal spending – on war production. But today, federal spending is constrained by the national debt.

US national Debt	as % of GDP
1930	\$16.2 bn. 18%
1940	\$43 bn. 52%
1946	120 bn. 120%
1950	257.4 bn. 94.1%
1980	930.2 bn. 33%
2008 (est.)	10,024.7 bn. 72.5% (est.)

(source: Wikipedia)

So, at the outset of the Depression, the national debt was about one third of what we are facing today. This will give the federal government a lot less room to maneuver. Not only that, but with the massive bailout bills, this national debt will balloon even more.

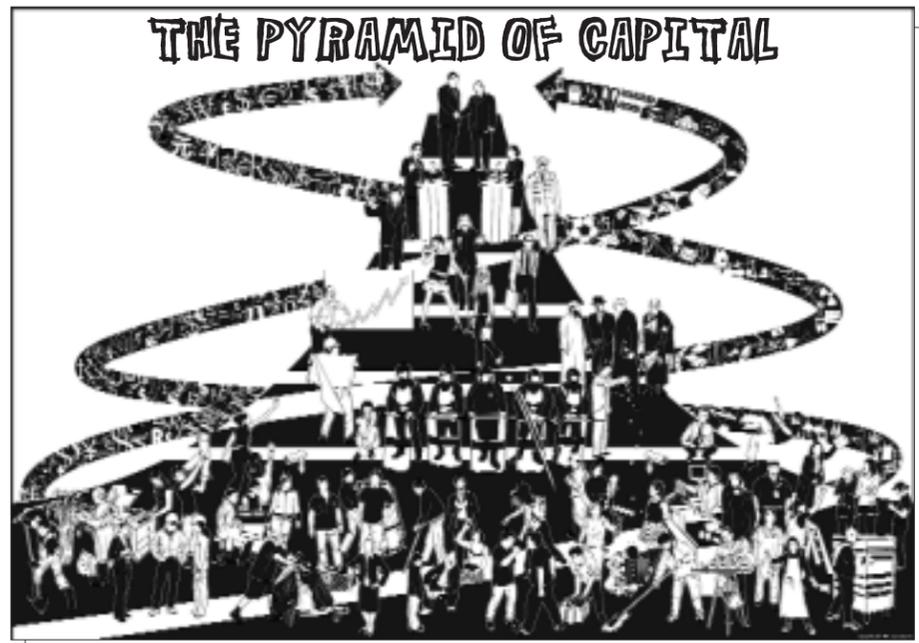
This present spending is essentially going down a rat-hole, because the heart of the problem is that production was kept afloat by increased debt of all sorts. The overwhelming bulk of the federal bail-out money is going to directly boost the bottom line of finance capital, vs. in the 1930s and '40s, when much of it went to federal projects and later to war-time industrial production.

An all-out economic crisis will not necessarily take the same form as that of the 1930s, though. Despite their destination in finance capital, the massive federal bail-outs are

serving to slow down the collapse of production. At present, these bail-outs are financed by selling federal bonds. Investors, both foreign and domestic, are willing to buy these bonds at extremely low interest rates because they have nowhere else to put their money. This cannot continue indefinitely.

At some point, the demand for US bonds and Treasury Notes will diminish. When this happens, the Treasury will have to raise the interest rate it pays. This will further decrease the credit available to private companies. In addition, the federal government will have to repay this debt some day. When that day arrives, they will have to crank up the printing presses and print dollars. The effect of this will be to cheapen the dollar; in other words, inflation.

In this way, a new economic crisis would differ in form from that of the 1930s, but the underlying contradictions that caused the crisis would be the same: Private ownership of the means of production (leading to a tendency towards overproduction and a tendency for the rate of profit to fall). For decades, these tendencies were masked by the massive increase in both public and private debt, by the expansion of capitalism into new arenas (the former Soviet Union, China, etc.), and even the reduction of real



wages (which boosted profits and encouraged investment). Added to these contradictions is the existence of the nation states in the era of world production, distribution and finance. Up until now, the global role of the US dollar has lent a certain stability to the world economy. As the dollar drops in value, as it inevitably must when they start printing them up, then this will add to the crisis.

I think it is still too early to say that we are definitely headed towards a crisis on the scale of the 1930s in the next year or so. However, the facts make it appear increasingly possible.

## Blackwater Expands Despite Recent Iraq Ban

By Hawkeye

On January 29, 2009, the Iraqi government barred Blackwater Worldwide, Inc. (BW) from providing security for U.S. diplomats in Iraq because its alleged involvement in the 2007 deaths of at least seventeen civilians in Nisour Square in Baghdad. This, however, did little to impact profitability of the BW "bottom line", because BW began diversifying its operations years earlier.

During the past twelve years, BW has morphed from a trainer of "weekend warriors" and "shoot a round for Jesus" fanatics into a one-stop shop, with twenty-nine subsidiaries that provides know-how and equipment to thousands of U.S. and foreign law enforcement agencies and supports extensive U.S. military operations around the globe. BW, a privately held U. S. company founded by Eric Prince, a right wing political contributor to both Republican and Democratic campaigns, has received billions of dollars in U.S. government contracts. Even with its banning in Iraq, BW continues expanding its worldwide operations.

Domestically, BW trains thousands of local law enforcement personnel in the U. S., offering both classroom instruction and "hands on" experience. In 2007, for example, BW purchased the Backup Training Corporation, the largest supplier of law enforcement training CD materials in the U.S. With this CD collection, BW supplies thousands of U.S. law enforcement agencies with an A-Z law enforcement curriculum, including instruction on search and seizure, drug enforcement and even Occupational Safety and Health Administration certification.

In addition, BW directly trains law enforcement officers, in sniper training and SWAT team tactics at one of three domestic locations (San Diego, CA.; Mt. Carroll, IL; and, Moyock, NC), as well as at mobile training centers. They also provide armaments for law enforcement agencies, around the country. Further, in their domestic business, BW teaches classes certified by state governments for private security forces at their domestic camps or 'on-site,' such as the delegates at the Republican and Democratic

National Conventions. During a domestic crisis, BW can access a database of thousands of sworn law enforcement officers who will work as independent contractors using accrued vacation time (recall former director Tom Dempsey's mission to Afghanistan, while still employed by the Police Training Institute at the University of Illinois) under a reciprocal agreement among state governments.

Internationally, BW is rapidly expanding its global reach, by forging strategic partnerships and accelerating diversification, like a high security Wal-Mart that offers a 365-degree wrap around service. BW and Raytheon, for example, have unveiled a prototype six-passenger Joint Light Tactical Vehicle at the U.S. Special Operations Industry Conference in Tampa, Fla., on May 21, 2008, revealing their teamed-up effort to build a survivable, mobile next-generation Humvee.

BW, also owns and operates three aviation subsidiaries: Presidential Airways, Inc., STI Aviation Inc., and Air Quest Inc. The U.S. Department of Defense utilizes BW for logistics support to US military operations in Pakistan and Afghanistan. When "lower and slower" is needed, BW Airships, established in January 2006, leases a remotely piloted airship vehicle for potential use on the Mexican and United States border and as a forward observation platform in Afghanistan.

In addition, BW owns Greystone Ltd., a private security service registered in Barbados, which employs third-country nationals for offshore security work. Greystone provides security to locations experiencing turmoil whether caused by armed conflict, epidemics, or natural or man-made disasters, according to their website. Another BW subsidiary, BW Maritime Security Service provides training for maritime security. BW's North Carolina facilities include a man-made lake with stacked containers simulating a ship for maritime assaults.

In addition, BW has established the Raven Development Group to offer general contracting, construction manage-

ment, designing and building services. Finally, Eric Prince continues to provide custom contracting at subsidiaries in Indiana and North Carolina, Mississippi and Mexico, through Prince Enterprises a company started by his father.

At the rate that they are expanding, perhaps a BW "action figure" soon may be available at a store near you. For a list of BW affiliates and subsidiaries, refer to the Small Business Administration Report at <http://reform.democrats.house.gov/documents/20080728141224.pdf>

**Juan Cole**  
Discusses  
**IRAQ**



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**Withdrawal from Iraq and the Future of American Security**

**Sunday, March 8, 2:00 pm**  
Urbana Civic Center  
108 E. Water St., Urbana

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**Iraq's Provincial Fictions and What They Mean for Relationships With the U.S.**

**Monday, March 9, 4:00pm**  
Levis Faculty Center, 2nd floor  
919 W. Illinois Street, Urbana

Juan R. L. Cole is Richard P. Mitchell Collegiate Professor of History at the University of Michigan. His most recent book is *Expanding the Muslim World*. He has been a regular guest on PBS's Lehrer News Hour, and has appeared on ABC Nightly News, Nightline, the Today Show, Charlie Rose, Anderson Cooper 360, Countdown with Keith Olbermann, and Democracy Now! He has commented extensively on the Iraq War, the politics of Pakistan and Afghanistan, and the increasing conflict with Iran.

**Free and Open To The Public**

All events are sponsored by Center for North-South and Middle Eastern Studies, Center for Global Studies, and the International Center for Middle Eastern Studies.



# The Working Class Strikes Back

By David Johnson



On Friday Dec. 5<sup>th</sup> 2008, an event occurred on the near-north side of Chicago that sent a chill up the spine of corporate America and inspired working people around the world.

A small factory of 200 workers refused to go home!

The management of the Republic Windows and Doors factory had announced on the previous Tuesday (Dec. 2nd) to the employees that the plant would close permanently at 10am Friday Dec. 5<sup>th</sup>.

It was also announced by management that the workers would NOT be paid for vacation time they had accrued nor receive any severance pay.

Under U.S. federal law, *Worker Adjustment and Retraining Notification Act* (WARN), workers must receive 60-days notice and pay, when a company intends to cease operations.

Management claimed that they were forced to close the plant and not provide owed vacation pay and severance money because their bank, Bank of America, which had received \$ 25 billion in taxpayer money from the \$ 700 billion bank bail-out bill, had cut-off the company's line of credit.

The Republic Window workers were devastated. They immediately contacted their union representatives at United Electrical Workers (UE) Local 1110. The Union immediately organized a press conference for the next day outside Bank of America's Chicago headquarters to inform the public and to protest the bank's action.

The Union press conference and rally received very little media coverage (other than the alternative media). This is not surprising since the corporate media in the United States rarely covers Labor events, and besides, from the media's perspective, this was just another of many routine stories about about workers being screwed by NAFTA (North American Free Trade Agreement) America.



Other unions show solidarity with the Republic workers

## DIRECT ACTION GETS RESULTS

Two days after the rally outside Bank of America, in the early morning hours of Friday Dec. 5<sup>th</sup>, the scheduled day the plant was to close, something happened that hasn't been seen in the United States since the 1930's. The Republic Workers refused to leave the factory!

Management was dumbfounded. Then management's confusion turned to horror when a few minutes later they looked outside and saw a crowd of people standing in front of the small factory. The Republic Worker's Union, the UE, had assembled many of their members from other job-sites. Chicago Jobs with Justice had called out people from community organizations, churches, and members from other unions.

Republic Window's management frantically asked the workers in the plant what was going on. The workers repeated their demands that they were not leaving the factory until they were paid what was owed to them.

Word spread fast thanks to Jobs with Justice and the alternative media. By the afternoon the crowd of supporters had swelled and the corporate news media began to arrive in large numbers as well. The Chicago police had also arrived but maintained a " safe " distance from the crowd. City Council Alderman Scott Waguespack of Chicago's 32nd ward ( where the plant is located ) inter-

vened that morning to prevent an overreaction by the police. The company did not call the police to have the workers removed. Apparently due to the intense public scrutiny and media coverage, the company did not want any further negative publicity.

By Friday night additional supporters arrived from the community and other unions. The Chicago Branch of the IWW (Industrial Workers of the World) organized a material support 'pipeline' to the occupying workers, bringing food, soft drinks, coffee, and sleeping bags. The IWW also organized 'flying squadrons'—a phone tree network of people to call to mobilize at the factory, in case the police tried to remove the workers from the factory.

By Saturday the media coverage was unprecedented for a labor dispute. Not only Chicago television stations, but journalist and television crews from national and international news agencies appeared. The Republic Window workers also received messages of support from unions in Europe and South America, where factory occupations are more common.

Other forms of support involved demonstrations around the U.S. in front of Bank of America branches in support of the workers, including San Francisco where 5 supporters entered the bank, began speaking out loud to patrons and employees, and were arrested for refusing to leave.

## JUMPING ON THE BAND WAGON

By Monday Dec. 8<sup>th</sup> (Day 4), politicians began to react to the increasing popularity of the factory occupation, as reported by the world media.

Fifteen Chicago City Council Aldermen voiced their support by proposing a resolution that the City of Chicago withdraw all of its monies from Bank of America if it refused to loan Republic Windows money to pay its workers.

The next day, Illinois Governor Rod Blagojevich made a similar statement at a press conference, standing next to UE Union staffers and members, saying that he would also divest all State of Illinois monies from Bank of America if it did not make a loan.

Illinois U.S. Senator Dick Durbin and U.S. President-elect Barak Obama also jumped on board in support of the Republic workers.

U.S. Illinois Congressman from Chicago, Luis Gutierrez, not only made a statement of support, but offered to help in the negotiations.

## LIES, GREED, AND DECEIT

Meanwhile, negotiations that began on Friday continued through the weekend, between the UE Union, Republic Windows Inc., and Bank of America, but still no agreement had been reached.

Finally, on Wednesday evening Dec. 10<sup>th</sup>, UE Western Regional President Carl Rosen, who led the Union negotiating team, announced to the press that Bank of America agreed to provide the money to pay the workers everything they were owed, equal to \$ 1.75 million.

A stipulation that the UE Union demanded was that Bank of America pay the money directly into a third party bank account (by passing Republic Windows Inc.) to pay the workers. This demand by the Union was a result of Republic Windows CEO Richard Gillman, who at one point during the negotiations demanded that if he could not have total control of the money lent to him he expected the bank loans to also cover the lease of his two cars—a 2007 BMW350xi, and a 2002 Mercedes S-500, as well as 8-weeks of his salary equal to \$37,500 (\$225,000 annually.)

During the occupation, UE Union staffers began a thorough investigation of Republic Windows Inc., and had discovered that the company was NOT shutting down. Instead the company was moving production to western Iowa under a new name, ECHO Windows and Doors, where they had already bought an existing window and door factory (TRACO) several months earlier under the name of the newly formed ECHO corporation.

The plant in western Iowa was to remain non-union, paying its workers \$9 per hour with no benefits, as opposed to the \$14 per hour, health insurance, pension, and vacation



Republic Workers demonstrate at Bank of America

benefits of the Unionized UE plant in Chicago.

The workers at the non-union plant in Iowa were told several months ago by the new owners (Republic Windows, *a.k.a.* ECHO Inc.) that they were going to double the number of employees and that they already had production orders lined-up.

Ron Bender, a UE Union shop steward at Republic Windows stated, "It was never the owners plan to save the plant, and Bank of America was aware of the plan. They were just running a game."

## VICTORY AND INSPIRATION

The Republic Window workers have not only shown us how a multi-racial workplace of Black, White and Latino workers can overcome divisions and fight back together successfully, but also a new economic model that all organized workers should strive for, *ie.*, worker owned cooperatives. In essence, this means firing the boss and getting rid of the capitalist middleman.

After winning all of their demands and ending the 6-day factory occupation, the UE Union announced the creation of a foundation fund dedicated to buying and re-opening the window and door factory under union/worker direct ownership. Money from other unions and organizations, nationally and internationally, as well as the UE national union, has already been deposited into the foundation fund.

According to Jerry Mead Lucero of laborexpress.org radio in Chicago, "It took a mere 6 days for the Republic Workers to defeat a recalcitrant employer and one of the nation's largest banking corporations and to win ALL of their demands... the big question is whether the occupation of Republic Windows and Doors is just the beginning of a working class fightback and a resurgence of the U.S. Labor movement?"

Let us hope that is the case.

For more about the Republic Window and Door occupation, check-out ; www.laborbeat.org, "Workers Republic" a 30-minute video from Chicago based LABOR BEAT VIDEO, posted on youtube.

And, www.radio4all.net, an audio interview with Robert Austin of the Chicago I.W.W. from the Jan. 3rd 2009 edition of the ILLINOIS WORLD LABOR HOUR ( WEFT community radio. 90.1 FM and webcast worldwide at www.weft.org every Saturday morning from 11am-12 noon central standard time ).