



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.

The opinions are those of the authors and do not reflect the views of the IMC as a whole.

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The Public i

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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.

Reader Feedback

Comments on *Public i* articles may be emailed to print (at) ucimc.org. Send the email with the word "comment" in the subject line.



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THANK YOU! Urbana-Champaign Sustainers and Readers

From the Editors and Facilitators of the Public i

This is the 10th anniversary issue of the *Public i* and we want to thank all of those who have made this paper possible. These include the founders and sustainers of the Independent Media Center and the paper itself, all of the people who have worked on the production and distribution of the paper, all our authors, our readers, and the businesses and other organizations that have made space to distribute our papers in their establishments.

The IMC and the *Public i* were founded after a number of Champaign-Urbana community members attended the 1999 protests against the World Trade Organization's meetings in Seattle. These folks came home convinced that the commercial media's presentations were extremely biased. Police attacks against protesters and journalists at the G8 meetings in Genoa, Italy in July of 2001 further solidified their conviction that what was needed in the US and abroad was media with international, national, and local foci that was independent of the dominant economic and political power structures.

What grew out of this conviction was powerful. To see the very first of our efforts, readers can visit the *Public i*

website, where they will find four dispatches from the events in Genoa. These stories appeared only on the web. The first actual print issue of the *Public i* came out the following month, August 2001 with fourteen local writers making contributions. From that date to the issue that you are now reading, we have published over 900 articles; almost all of these written by current or former members of the Urbana-Champaign community with additions from IMC organizations around the country. We've had authors ranging in age from the middle school years to retirees (and in between), and our oldest contributor to date was in his eighties!

The topics we cover are wide-ranging and have included: national and international politics, human rights, education, labor and economics, health care, the environment, the arts, food, sports, and issues of concern to people of color, women, youth, and the LGBT community. As one might imagine in a university community, there has been considerable turnover in the editor/facilitator group, but several of the original people have hung in with us.

We want to offer special thanks to our longstanding

financial sustainers:

World Harvest International and Gourmet Foods
Champaign County AFL-CIO
Progressive Asset Management, Financial West Group
The Jerusalem Cafe
That's Rentertainment
The Campus Faculty Association
The Natural Gourmet
Socialist Forum
Milo's Restaurant
The Graduate Students' Association (GEO)

And, to our newest sustainers, Strawberry Fields, and The Common Ground Food Co-op

We are very grateful to these sustainers and hope that the quality of our work has met their, and the community's, standards. We invite any other interested organizations and businesses to become sustainers as we enter our second decade of publication. And we invite everyone in the community to join us in our work of writing, producing, and distributing the paper.

AGAIN, THANK YOU ALL SO VERY MUCH!!

Soon To Be Displaced Residents Protest Outside of Housing Authority

By Brian Dolinar



As Ed Bland arrived at work on Wednesday morning, July 27, 2011, he was greeted by a group of protesters. Residents at two public housing units, Dunbar Court and Joann Dorsey Homes, stood outside of the offices of the Champaign County Housing Authority calling on Bland, the executive director, to answer their questions. They chanted, "Mr. Bland, What's Your Plan?" The coming demolition of Dunbar and Dorsey signals the end of traditional public housing in Champaign-Urbana.

As early as September, more than 20 families at Dunbar Court will have to leave their homes. The city of Champaign is making space for the new Booker T. Washington elementary school, which has doubled in size as a result of the demands of the "consent decree" to bring racial equity to Champaign's Unit 4 schools. The Dunbar community is located just to the east of BTW elementary in the Douglass Park neighborhood. The public housing units at Dunbar will be replaced by mixed-income homes built by a private contractor and which residents can pay for with Section 8 vouchers. In October, 60 residents at Dorsey, located on the northwest corner of Bradley and McKinley, are expected to be out of their homes, these will also be bulldozed and replaced by a private contractor.

For several months, members of Champaign-Urbana Citizens for Peace and Justice and the Planners Network at UIUC

have been collecting information and talking with residents at Dunbar and Dorsey. At Dunbar, Ruby Taylor is a longtime local activist who has been organizing residents. At Dorsey, Margaret Neil runs a community center and is a member of the housing authority board. They have teamed up to mobilize neighbors at the two residencies.

Because Dunbar and Dorsey homes were designated as public housing, residents have had their rent, water and electricity fully paid. When first offered Section 8 vouchers, many were initially satisfied, however, this has changed. Section 8 vouchers will only cover roughly two-thirds of the rent and no utilities. In this program, a monthly check from the housing authority is sent directly to the private landlords. For those without work, Section 8 will cover 95% of the rent. For many, the additional expenses cannot be met. It can be expected that some families will be left homeless. When this became clear, residents began to ask questions.

Margaret Neil said that residents received vouchers a month ago, but less than 10 people had found housing. Residents claim they have been discriminated against by landlords who did not want to take their Section 8 vouchers.

Neil and Taylor delivered a letter to the front desk at the housing authority that read:

"To the Housing Authority Board of Commissioners,

Since receiving housing vouchers in June 2011, we have experienced numerous rejections from Champaign-Urbana landlords



Residents protest outside Champaign County Housing Authority

supposedly on the Section 8 property list. In some cases, we have found viable housing only to have the HACC Section 8 department deny approval. With the clock ticking before demolition of our residences, we are confused, angry, and frustrated!

According to Mr. Bland, there are thousands of Section 8 units available in Champaign County; however, few of us have had success securing them for our families. We believe HACC's Section 8 list to be inaccurate and outdated. We believe our current voucher amounts and the utility requirement enforced by HACC make for a payment standard that is too low in this economy and rental market. We further believe we are being discriminated against for prior renters' histories and the image of public housing residents, and that the moving possibilities that this displacement process affords have been highly misrepresented.

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Channel Surfing “UK Riot Porn”

By @ltazor



@ltazor is a “trouble-maker” and agitator exiled in the C-U area, and a practitioner of “thought-crime” and “Poetic Terrorism” (PT) through an occasional publication called Autönomē.

While perusing the BBC coverage of the “Riots in the UK,” I was horrified not by the destruction and burning, but by the attempts by the media and the state to portray what was happening as simply just “hooliganism,” a “race riot,” and “wanton criminality.” Not only are such media generated categories an attempt to control the impressions and emotions of the spectacle, but they are a clumsy attempt to garner public support and legitimize “the forces of ‘Law and Order’” without acknowledging the context in which these event unfolded.

Imagine, if one can, if the media reports had described the events in England as: “the expression of under-class rage in a time of austerity,” or an “angry revolt of the dispossessed,” or “a revolt by those who see no future in the submission to the authority of the rapacious global market?” Essentially, a rebellion of ‘The Invisibles.’ Now that would be



news! Of course such an acknowledgement of *reality* would probably result in an unprecedented social panic and a very real crisis of political and economic legitimacy.

Only once did I catch a glimpse of reality, when the BBC interviewed two teenage ‘Riot Girls’ drinking their looted spoils on a street corner, and one interrupted the reporter’s paternalistic analysis and admonition with: “We are finally showing the police and the rich that we can do what we want.” This is no small statement from a 15 year-old girl who faces a life with no future.

Embedded in her statement is a signifier of a nascent class consciousness. In few words, she identifies not only her oppressors—the police who protect the privileges of the rich—but also her comrades. The “we” signified here is other disenfranchised and ‘excluded’ rioters with no future, who have been living under neo-liberal recession and ‘austerity’ all their lives.

Of course, when one looks even more closely at the spectacle of the UK Riots, and the media’s and state’s attempts to manage the image of the crisis, the ‘official narrative’ begins to fall apart, and there is more evidence of the basic ‘cognitive dissonance’ that exists between their analysis and the everyday life of the “rioters.”

Moreover, the images coming out of the UK dispels the aura that the rupture is a “race riot.” The rioters are of every ethnic group that composes the face of poverty itself. They are not just Africans and Caribbean, there are a significant number of poor whites in the crowds. A sign of ‘class solidarity’ that here transcends racialized divisions. Folks are cooperatively organized, often strategically targeting specific locations—the affluent neighborhoods and shopping districts of the rich—taking what they previously lacked and burning the rest while eluding the police. And they are also targeting police on the streets, in response.

That is why I contend that the depiction of the UK riots as “chaos” is little more than ‘image control’ and public distraction. So, although it may not be considered a political revolt, it must be understood as a broader “socio-economic rebellion” by those with nothing left to lose!

There will be many analyses and critiques of the events in the UK, and how they fit into the current global crisis in the neo-liberal economy, some of which will be valid, most of which will only be intended to organize public consensus in support of the hegemony of the powers that be, in an effort to legitimize capital’s authority over our lives.

Meanwhile, there will be references made to the Watts Riots of 1965 and the Rodney King Riots, where much could be understood if we question all the ‘official narratives.’ And although there are undoubtedly some fundamental parallels, there are many important differences that suggest an entirely new composition and collective consciousness at work in these events.

FROM, THE DECLINE AND FALL OF THE SPECTACLE-COMMODITY ECONOMY

By the Situationist International, *Internationale Situationniste* #10, March 1966

[...] The Los Angeles rebellion was a rebellion against the commodity, against the world of the commodity in which worker-consumers are *hierarchically* subordinated to commodity standards. Like the young delinquents of all the advanced countries, but more radically because they are part of a class without a future, a sector of the proletariat unable to believe in any significant chance of integration or promotion, the Los Angeles blacks take modern capitalist propaganda, its publicity of abundance, *literally*. They want to possess now all the objects shown and abstractly accessible, because they want to use them. In this way they are challenging their exchange-value, the *commodity reality* which molds them and marshals them to its own ends, and which has *preselected everything*. Through theft and gift they rediscover a use that immediately refutes the oppressive rationality of the commodity, revealing its relations and even its production to be arbitrary and unnecessary. The looting of the Watts district was the most direct realization of the distorted principle: “To each according to their *false* needs”—needs determined and produced by the economic system which the very act of looting rejects. But once the vaunted abundance is taken at face value and directly seized, instead of being eternally pursued in the rat-race of alienated labor and increasing unmet social needs, real desires begin to be expressed in festive celebration, in playful self-assertion, in the *potlatch* of destruction. People who destroy commodities show their human superiority over commodities. They stop submitting to the arbitrary forms that distortedly reflect their real needs. The flames of Watts *consummated* the system of consumption. The theft of large refrigerators by people with no electricity, or with their electricity cut off, is the best image of the lie of affluence transformed into a truth *in play*. Once it is no longer bought, the commodity lies open to criticism and alteration, whatever particular form it may take. Only when it is paid for with money is it respected as an admirable fetish, as a symbol of status within the world of survival. [...]”

With this in mind, much insight can be gained from the Situationist International’s analysis of the Watts Riots, and applied to the revolt in the UK. A moment, which is both “an image from the past, and future at the same time.”

Residents Protest Outside of Housing Authority

Continued from page 1

Because of these issues and other outlying questions, we demand the following:

- 1) Respect and equal treatment
- 2) One central meeting for Joann Dorsey and Dunbar Court residents TOGETHER to be held at the HACC office or other reasonable location
- 3) An updated, accurate Section 8 list
- 4) More transparency in the voucher and rental approval process
- 5) An increase in our Section 8 voucher standards and a freeze on new Section 8 vouchers until Dorsey and Dunbar residents are housed

We want to see these demands discussed before the Board and taken seriously.”

In addition to these concerns, Ruby Taylor noted that, residents at Dunbar received a letter saying that they must register their cars with the Unit 4 school district. It is feared that this move to protect

the new BTW school will bring increased surveillance of their community. If the cars of friends or family members are not registered, it is suspected they will be towed.

Outside of the housing authority, Neil spoke to the media. Asked what the residents are going to do in October when they are forced to move out, she said, “We’re going to stay put.”

Neil put the housing issue in the context of a failing economy. “Residents are willing to work, but there are no jobs. Or they are service jobs. You can work at McDonald’s, but maybe you are only given ten hours a week.”

Contrary to common assumptions about public housing residents is the story of Tanya Richardson who showed up for the protest. She spent her lunch break to come down and stand with her neighbors. She works in a kitchen at a retirement cen-

ter in Urbana. Living at Dorsey since 2006, she is the mother of five children and is uncertain what she is going to do in the future. “It’s stressful,” she said.

Local African American landlord, Antwuan Neely, who rents to several Section 8 recipients, also showed up at the protest and talked to reporters. He noted that a decision by the housing authority board in June 2010 placed the payment standard to \$200-300 under the market rate. If landlords were turning away Section 8 recipients, he said, it was due to the lack of cooperation from the housing authority. “Their customer service is terrible,” he said.

Amidst growing concerns, the housing authority has canceled its last four board meetings. The housing authority is “failing to have good communication,” Neil said. “They promised us they would help us, not just give us a list.”

In the days that followed, Bland visited Neil at her home and told her that the payment standard would be increased. The residents of Dunbar and Dorsey found out that public pressure works!

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Urbana Adopts a Soliciting Ordinance

By Belden Fields



After several meetings with active public participation, on August 1, the Urbana City Council adopted an ordinance banning "aggressive solicitation of money or other thing of value, including a request to purchase an item or service of little or no monetary value in circumstances where a reasonable person would understand that the purchase is in substance a donation."

Aggressive solicitation was defined as "soliciting in a group of two or more persons or soliciting accompanied by any of the following actions: (1) Touching another person without that person's consent; (2) Blocking the path of the person solicited or blocking the entrance to any building or vehicle; (3) Continuing to solicit or to request a donation from a person after that person has refused an earlier request; (4) Following or remaining alongside a person who walks away from the solicitor after being solicited; (5) Making any statement, gesture, or other communication that would cause a reasonable person to feel threatened into making a donation; or (6) Using profane or abusive language during the solicitation or following a refusal to make a donation." Further, soliciting is prohibited within 20 feet of an ATM or entrance to a bank, other financial institution, or check cashing business. It is also prohibited on private property if the owner, tenant, or occupant has asked a person not to solicit or has posted a sign prohibiting solicitation. Mayor Prussing and council members assured the public that the police would issue only warnings for first infractions. Second infractions would carry a fine of \$50 and subsequent offenses, \$165.

At every meeting, a large majority of the attending public spoke against the ordinance. One area resident presented a petition against it with over 300 signatures. While this was not enough to stop the ordinance, *Public* input and pressure did result in significant revisions. In one instance, the original document used the word "panhandling" rather than "soliciting." Many felt that the term "panhandling" was stigmatizing of those in desperate need. This concern was also raised regarding fines. Public input resulted in the council adding a provision that "remunerated community or public service will be made available by the city as an alternative to these fines and to court expenses."

Public input also had an impact on the range and scope of the ordinance. Unlike the final version, the original draft applied only to the heavily minority area around the Philo Road Business District. It prohibited soliciting for money within 10 feet of a taxi stand or MTD stop, at any vehicle parked or stopped on a public street or alley, in any transportation vehicle, in a line waiting to be admitted to a business or government office, on public property in the Philo Road District, and on private property unless the "panhandler" obtained prior permission from the owner or occupant.

Public involvement also led to the inclusion of a provision for review and evaluation of the ordinance in 18 months. Despite these modifications, serious problems remain. The ordinance includes language that is vague and leaves considerable ambiguity regarding enforcement. As

was mentioned earlier, one definition included in the ordinance for aggressive solicitation is: "Making any statement, gesture, or other communication that would cause a reasonable person to feel threatened into making a donation." As Heather Stephenson, the only council member to vote against the ordinance, asked, "who is such a reasonable person?" This provision is directed at how a person reacts to the behavior of another. Survivors of violent incidents may be afraid when approached, not to mention spoken to, by someone they do not know. Some whites are fearful when approached by blacks and, if spoken to in a manner they deem to be rude or impolite, may interpret that as threatening behavior. Though there may be reasons behind these fears, are they "reasonable?" Some of this type of confusion was manifested at the meetings by the very people who came to support the ordinance.

Councilperson Diane Marlin, who represents the southeast ward and was a strong supporter of the ordinance, said that she was particularly concerned about the fears and safety of older women in that area of town and the possibility that they might stop shopping there. I don't want to trivialize that concern. But it is always better to proscribe specific aggressive actions rather than relying on how people interpret actions that may or may not be meant to be aggressive or threatening. Interpretations are too often determined by cultural and experiential conditioning.

Police enforcement is problematic as well. If the police do not actually see a given interaction, they will have to rely on the account of someone who made a complaint after the fact. How will the police determine if the behavior was meant to be threatening? If the case goes to court, it goes to a "city court" where the accused has no right to a public defender. Can the accused compel the accuser to testify or would the word of the accused be weighed simply against that of a police officer who may or may not have seen the incident? In either case, the adage holds "only a fool defends him/herself in court." In my observations of Champaign's city court, the poor, and overwhelmingly blacks, are forced into the role of "fools" by this system.

Looking beyond the language of the ordinance reveals further areas of concern. Examining the official government processes and response in this case raises questions as to underlying motivations and the impact of political clout and power in the operation of our local government. Proponents of this new ordinance argued that the police did not have the necessary tools to deal with aggressive solicitation. However, research presented to the council by members of the Champaign-Urbana Citizens for Racial Justice revealed that almost all of the behaviors mentioned are covered by existing ordinances. This leaves one with the impression that a kind of symbolic politics was going on, an attempt to provide a more dramatic signal to specific political and economic constituencies that the city is really serious about protecting public safety in the Philo Road Business District.

Power was very much at play here. Shortly before the ordinance issue came before the council, Urbana citizen Durl Kruse presented them with data analysis showing

BROTHER CAN YOU SPARE A DIME

Lyrics by Yip Harburg, written during the Great Depression

They used to tell me I was building a dream
And so I followed the mob
When there was earth to plow or guns to bear
I was always there right on the job
They used to tell me I was building a dream
With peace and glory ahead
Why should I be standing in line
Just waiting for bread?
Once I built a railroad, I made it run
Made it race against time
Once I built a railroad, now it's done
Brother, can you spare a dime?

Once I built a tower up to the sun
Brick and rivet and lime
Once I built a tower, now it's done
Brother, can you spare a dime?

Once in khaki suits, gee we looked swell
Full of that Yankee-Doodly-dum
Half a million boots went sloggin' through Hell
And I was the kid with the drum
Say, don't you remember, they called me "Al"
It was "Al" all the time
Why don't you remember, I'm your pal
Say buddy, can you spare a dime?

Once in khaki suits, ah gee we looked swell
Full of that Yankee-Doodly-dum
Half a million boots went sloggin' through Hell
And I was the kid with the drum
Oh, say, don't you remember, they called me "Al"
It was "Al" all the time
Say, don't you remember, I'm your pal
Buddy, can you spare a dime?

that the pervasive differentials between police stops of blacks and whites had reached historic heights. Mayor Prussing was completely dismissive of these data and resistant to any suggestion that there really could be a problem of injustice here. In this case of a citizen raising questions about city issues, little action was taken. However, when a tiny group of white citizens came to the council—with no data showing that aggressive soliciting had increased over time, but laden with stories of how they disliked and feared even non-aggressive forms of solicitation and conflated it with violent crime, the response was swift.

While it is important that people be free from violence while on public or private property, we must also be wary of violating the right to free speech and criminalizing poverty. Thus, a sharp public eye needs to be cast on the enforcement of this ordinance.

Third Annual IMC Film Festival Sept. 15-17

The Urbana-Champaign Independent Media Center is proud to announce its third annual IMC Film Festival, September 15, 16, and 17, 2011. This celebration of the art of cinematography will once again highlight local and regional independent artists, giving them an opportunity to share their work and connect with other artists, community members, and organizations.

Send us your work! Interested filmmakers are invited to submit their films by emailing a request for information to [imcfilmfest\(at\)gmail.com](mailto:imcfilmfest(at)gmail.com). Filmmakers will be sent a submission form and further details.

All films must be received at the IMC office by Thursday, August 25, 2011 before 5 p.m. to be considered for the 2011 program. Any questions about the 2011 IMC Film Festival may be directed to imcfilmfest@gmail.com.

For a full schedule of films for the three days, stay tuned at ucimc.org.

Screening of "This is My Journey" Documentary

Community Premiere: "This is My Journey" by director Kate Brickman Tues, Sept 6 at 5:30 pm; Doors open 5 p; documentary 5:30-6:30 pm Q&A with Kate Brickman and documentary subject 6:30-7:30 pm Art Theatre in downtown Champaign A documentary that explores



the transitioning process for three transgender people in Central Illinois The stories of Dana, Cris, and Shayla, as they struggle to maintain relationships with spouses, children, family and friends while staying true to themselves Religion, conservative values, and cornfields—amidst this backdrop, three transgender people forge ahead in their transition from one gender to another Sponsored by University of Illinois LGBT Resource Center & UP Center of Champaign County It's also airing on WILL-TV Friday, Oct. 7 at 8 pm



Understanding the Phony Debt Crisis: Intergenerational Myths and Economic Realities

By David Green



David Green (davidgreen50@gmail.com) lives in Urbana. He regularly contributes to News from Neptune, both on UPTV and WEFT-FM.

Before discussing the inter-generational mythology that pertains to the phony debt crisis, three sets of preliminary comments are helpful, all gleaned from standard liberal-left economic discourse.

First, as nations develop technologically and become more productive and richer on a per capita basis, governments (if provoked by popular movements) can afford to assume more social welfare functions. That's one way that common people benefit from living in rich countries. That also means that governments in developed countries spend increasingly larger shares of GDP on things like infrastructure, education, health care, and pensions. Insofar as this is the case, Western European citizens in countries that spend a larger percentage of their GDP on government are publicly reaping the personal rewards of living in highly productive and rich countries. Insofar as the U.S. lags in this area, we remain a relatively backward-albeit also productive and rich-country. Given that other developed nations spend more on government but also less per capita on (efficient, socialized) health care and the (wasteful, destructive) military, the U.S. becomes even more backwards in relation to much of Europe.

Second, governments can go into debt for generally good or bad reasons. Good reasons are to create jobs during cyclical economic downturns, and to invest in infrastructure and thus increased productivity. Bad reasons are to fight wars and bail out financial speculators. Clearly, given current wars and bailouts, and the lack of a New Deal-type stimulus in the face of intractable unemployment, we are now experiencing the worst sort of deficit spending.

Third, even in light of "bad" annual deficits, the debt crisis is phony and politically manufactured. The measure of the overall size of the debt is the percentage of GDP that is spent on servicing that debt. According to economist Mark Weisbrot, the government is paying net interest of just 1.4 percent of GDP on its public debt—"this is not much by any historical or international comparison."

To summarize these preliminary points, it is clear that the federal government should use "good debt" to stimulate the economy with all kinds of social spending to a much greater extent than the first (2009-11) stimulus

package. If it does so, both annual deficits and overall debt will gradually decrease as a percentage GDP, and interest payments will reflect that.

GENERATIONAL MYTHOLOGY

In the midst of the current phony debt crisis, a conventional theme of the mainstream media has been that of inter-generational conflict. First, the current generation of senior citizens, as recipients of Social Security and Medicare, is charged with consuming resources that should be spent on the young. Second, baby boomers are charged with squandering the ample resources bequeathed to them by their parents, and passing our national debt to their children and grandchildren.

But from a perspective that emphasizes the ever-increasing wealth of this country and its dispensation over time, these claims prove to be clearly baseless. Given this enormous wealth, fundamental problems including the national debt can be understood in terms of the distribution of that wealth and income, and the shortfall of taxes that are currently being paid, especially by corporations and the wealthy. The grain of truth that remains from debunking generational critiques reflects an expensive profit-driven health care system, not Medicare spending per se.

THE UNITED STATES GETS RICHER, BUT AMERICANS DON'T

The federal Bureau of Economic Analysis currently uses 2005 "chained" dollars to generate apples-to-apples comparisons of our national and individual wealth over time. In these equivalent terms, our per capita gross domestic product (GDP) has increased from less than \$16,000 in 1960 to over \$25,000 in 1980 to over \$43,000 in 2010. These are steady and real increases in goods and services produced per every resident by all American workers. One can think of each individual's \$43,000+ as divided into portions that represent collective expenditures, from personal consumption to all types and levels of public spending. During the past half-century, the percentage of GDP spent on all forms of public education (including college) at all levels of government increased from 3.9% in 1960 to 6.7% in 2010, according to the website usgovernmentspending.com. During that same period, according to the Congressional Budget Office, combined spending on Social Security and Medicare increased from 2.1% to 8.3% of GDP. Thus total public expenditures on the old and the young in these significant areas increased from 6% to 15% of GDP over 50 years.

In light of increased real per capita GDP, it's clear that these increases on fundamental services have been well affordable.

In 1960, \$934 of per capita GDP (in 2005 dollars) was spent on public education and Social Security (Medicare did not yet exist). After this expense, \$14,710 per capita was left for everything else. In 1980, \$2940 was spent on education, Social Security, and Medicare, with \$22,690 remaining. Last year, the analogous figures were \$6,369 and \$36,148.

Thus while over the past 50 years the percentage of GDP publicly spent on "dependents" in these major ways has nearly tripled, to 15%, the amount of gains in real wealth left over per individual increased by over \$21,000, or 150%. That is primarily due, of course, to technological innovation and steady increases in the productivity of the labor force. The problem is that for four decades, this increase has accrued disproportionately to the top 20% of earners, and even more disproportionately to the top 10%, 1%, and .1%, many who respond by poor mouthing the country as a whole while demanding lower taxes.

This unjust appropriation of wealth contributes to the perception of a debt crisis, and to the exploitation of that phony crisis in order to further defund vital social spending while maintaining low tax rates on the wealthy and a large military. Meanwhile, "good debt" is not on the table, and sustained economic recovery is not in the immediate future.

ECONOMIC REALITIES

Thus three well-documented economic realities contribute to the current deficit, providing the opportunity for a phony "debt crisis." First, long-term stagnant incomes for the vast majority of the population have decreased their contribution to federal income. Second, lowered and evaded taxes on the (increasingly) wealthy and corporations have decreased tax progressivity and halved the corporate contribution to federal income. Finally, the recession resulting from the housing bubble delivered an acute blow to both GDP growth and tax collection at all levels.

None of this has anything to do with inter-generational expenditure issues, the health problems of the elderly, or the profligate character of the baby boomers. If government spending raises issues other than costs driven by a private healthcare system, then these issues relate to our trillion-dollar military and wars, and to the myriad social costs of the increased and desperate poverty that is generated by this unequal distribution of wealth.

A more equitable, fairly-taxed, and compassionate society can well afford the public costs of fundamental generational needs. Again, the very existence of these needs is characteristic of economic and technological progress; to fail to address them is both inhumane and pragmatically foolish.

UC2B aka Urbana-Champaign Big Broadband

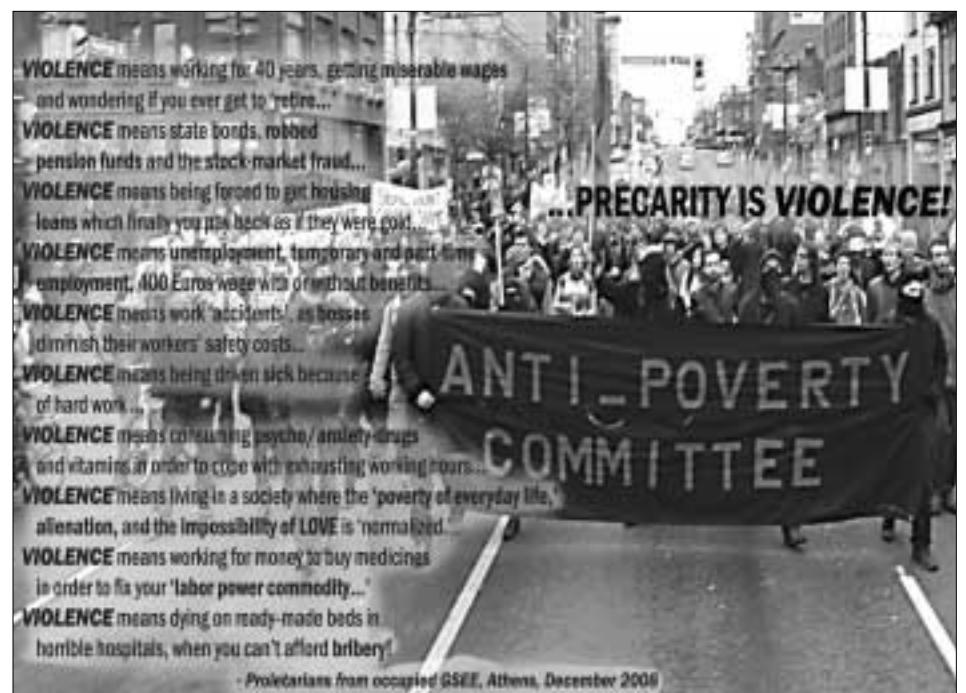
Public Showcase of new equipment. Free and open to the public, Music, food and prizes

See UC2B.net for more info on this community organized fiber optic network, with preferential treatment for underserved districts. See maps for details. The first 2500 applicants will get free installation

Thurs. Sept. 15 6:00PM, at Siebel Center, 201 N. Goodwin, Urbana, Room 1404, or Sat. Sept. 17 10:00AM, at Digital Computer Lab, 1304 W. Springfield, U., Room 1320

Join us for a hands-on demonstration of the fiber-optic network that will power fast connectivity for schools, community organizations, homes and businesses in Champaign-Urbana. The UC2B fiber-optic broadband network has received a 10 times speed boost since its inception two years ago. The new gigabit electronics equipment that is coming to Champaign-Urbana will be unveiled during a live demo.

Find out whether your school, workplace or home is eligible. Learn how fast broadband is changing our community. Join the movement.





The Sound Before the Fury: The California Prison Hunger Strike

By Gregory Koger

Greg Koger is a social justice activist who, as a youth, spent over six years in solitary confinement in an Illinois prisons.

Beginning on July 1, 2011, hundreds of prisoners of all races in California's Pelican Bay SHU ("Security Housing Unit") began a historic hunger strike to demand an end to the cruel and inhumane treatment that they suffer—including long-term solitary confinement, which constitutes torture under international law. The hunger strike rapidly spread to over 6,500 prisoners in over one-third of California's prisons, making their heroic stand the most significant act of prisoner-led resistance in the U.S. in decades.

THE PRISONERS' FIVE CORE DEMANDS :

1. End Group Punishment and Administrative Abuse—This is in response to prison officials punishment of all prisoners of a particular race as "group punishment" in response to a particular prisoner's supposed rule violations, and the prison administrations abusive, pretextual use of "safety and concern" to justify unnecessary punitive acts to justify indefinite SHU status and increasing restrictions on the programs and privileges available to the prisoners.
2. Abolish the Debriefing Policy, and Modify Active/Inactive Gang Status Criteria—Alleged gang membership is one of the leading reasons put forth by prison officials to justify placement in solitary confinement. "Debriefing"—requiring prisoners to provide (oftentimes false) information about fellow prisoners—is one of the only ways to be released from the SHU. The "validation" procedure used by California prison officials includes such tenuous criteria as tattoos, reading materials, and association with other prisoners as "evidence" of gang membership.
3. Comply with the US Commission on Safety and Abuse in America's Prisons 2006 Recommendations Regarding an End to Long-Term Solitary Confinement—Calling on California prison officials to implement the findings and recommendations of the the Commission, including: ending conditions of isolation, making segregation a last resort, ending long-term solitary confinement and providing SHU prisoners with meaningful access to adequate natural sunlight and quality health care and treatment.
4. Provide Adequate and Nutritious Food—Cease the

practice of denying adequate, nutritious meals and demanding an end to using food as a tool to punish SHU prisoners.

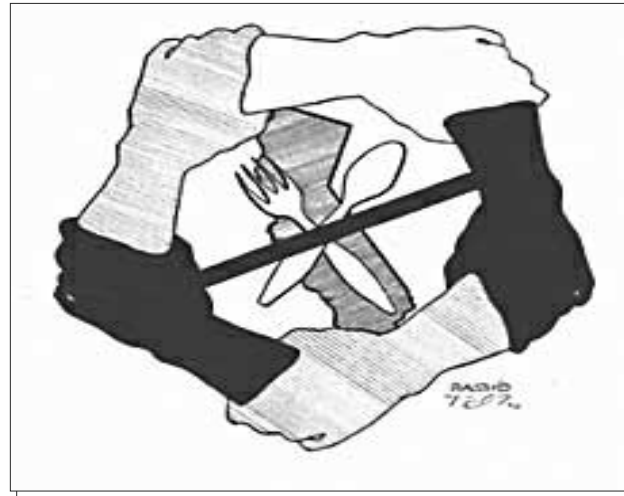
5. Expand and Provide Constructive Programming and Privileges for Indefinite SHU Status Inmates—Including expanding visiting time and adding one day per week, allowing one photograph per year, allowing a weekly phone call, allowing two packages a year, expanding canteen and package items allowed, more tv channels and tv/radio combinations, allowing craft and art items such as colored pencils, allowing sweat suits and caps, allowing walls calendars, installing pull-up/dip bars in SHU "yards," and allowing correspondence educational courses that require proctored exams.

After going without food for 20 days, the prisoners at Pelican Bay ended their hunger strike, with a call to people on the outside to continue the struggle against torture in U.S. prisons, to ensure their demands are met and that they are not retaliated against for their peaceful political protest. As a statement from the Short Corridor Collective (one group of leaders of the hunger strike at Pelican Bay SHU) explained:

"Many inmates across the state heard about our protest and rose to the occasion in a solid show of support and solidarity, as did thousands of people around the world! Many inmates put their health and lives on the line; many came close to death and experienced medical emergencies. All acted for the collective cause and recognized the great potential for forcing change on the use of SHU units across the country.."

We're counting on all of our outside supporters to continue to collectively support us and to carry on with shining light on our resistance in here. This is the right time for change in these prisons and the movement is growing

across the land! Without the peoples' support outside, we cannot be successful! All support, no matter the size, or content, comes together as a powerful force. We've already brought more mainstream exposure about these CDCR-SHU's than ever before and our time for real change to this system is now!"



Two historic anniversaries of prison resistance in the U.S. are nearly upon us: Comrade George Jackson, the foremost prison-educated revolutionary intellectual and theorist of the Black Panther Party, who inspired many on both sides of the prison walls with his transformation from an 18-year-old accused of a \$70 gas station robbery and sentenced to one-year-to-life in California prison into a class-conscious communist revolutionary, was assassinated by prison guards on August 21, 1971.

And the righteous rebellion of prisoners at Attica Prison in New York three weeks later on September 9, 1971, who for four liberating days peacefully held the prison yard and demanded improvements in prison conditions, until the prison was stormed by New York State Police Troopers who indiscriminately opened fired, killing 29 prisoners and 10 prison guards, wounding 89 prisoners with gunfire, and injuring hundreds more prisoners in retaliation in the aftermath.

As L.D. Barkley, 21-year-old spokesperson for the Attica prisoners eloquently stated, "The entire incident that has erupted here at Attica is . . . [the result] of the unmitigated oppression wrought by the racist administration of this prison. We are men. We are not beasts, and we do not intend to be beaten and driven as such... What has happened here is but the sound before the fury of those who are oppressed..."

Forty years later, after an unprecedented explosion in racist mass incarceration and an unparalleled regime of pervasive solitary confinement in U.S. prisons, the hunger strikers in California have once again placed the heroic example of prisoners at the forefront of the struggle against oppression.

Photos From Indymedia Summer Arts Camp

From August 1-12th we had two very amazing weeks of creativity, discovery and hard work!

The children would start most mornings "Community Gardening" at Randolph St and Beardsly Ave. They spent time pruning, tilling the soil, and planting various varieties of vegetables. They even learned how to respect and appreciate of nature's garden caretakers, the Garter snake.

They learned to record and layer in musical tracks, and sample melodies. Some of the children mixed in some lyrical free style rapping with sound effects. They have

even begun creating their Public Service Announcements (PSAs) to be aired on upcoming radio broadcasts on WRFU-LP.

The children brought art to life as they learned to draw outlines of Ideograms - cultural symbols - and various layering color techniques that denote character. They also created hand painted post cards!

Creativity flowed when the children stepping into music composition where they were challenged to make musical pieces using body percussion, vocal sounds, and common house-hold items, such as cheese graters, to produce poetic

mini-plays with help from the School For Designing a Society. They also experimented with instruments and designed their own with Odd Music. Several of the students learned how to correctly play a djembe and two West African rhythms.

The laughs were contagious as the children designed and hand-drew characters from strange and made-up lands. They learned to create scene boxes, various word bubbles and storyline flow as they created their own comic strips.

Finally, technology was at their fingertips in MakerSpace Urbana. They build

battery-operated LEDs and integrated basic switch operations as they constructed and programmed small, computerized robots.

We closed out the week with an Art Fair open to the community, family and friends, where the children showcased their art and robots.





Ten Years of Independent Media: An Oral History of the *Public i*

The *Public i* commemorates ten years of publication by interviewing some of those who have worked on the newspaper along the way.

DARRIN DRDA

Darrin Drda is a former Champaign-Urbana resident who now lives in San Rafael, California with his wife, Annabelle. He is the author of the forthcoming book *The Four Global Truths: Awakening to the Peril and Promise of Our Times* (www.thefourglobaltruths.com).



As far as I can recall, I first became involved with the *Public i* in the summer of 2001. I had been approached several months before that by Sascha Meinrath, who, along with Sarah Kanouse, Danielle Chynoweth, Paul Riismandel, Mike Lehman, Zach Miller, and a handful of other key figures, was busy securing and readying a space for the newly-formed IMC. It was important, Sascha told me, that in addition to having a space, the UC-IMC needed a face—something to tell the community that Indymedia had come to town and intended to stay. A monthly newspaper was the obvious choice, and I the apparent man to help lead the charge. Having worked as Art Director for C-U's first independent newsweekly, The Octopus (later the CU Cityview, which somehow became The Buzz), I was at least qualified to work a computer and make it churn out legible pieces of paper. On top of that, I was down with the revolution. I can't say that I was eager to work long hours for no pay, but eventually I surrendered to the Greater Good.

I vaguely recall a brainstorming meeting at the then-new IMC location (next to Siam Terrace on Main Street) during which I proposed a couple names and flag designs for the for the as-yet-unmanifest IMC publication. The clear winner among them was the *Public i*, although my favorite at the time was actually IMPact. Shortly thereafter, I set about designing the Quark template for our new radical rag, and weekly meetings of the new working group began. The early crew was always relatively small, surprisingly harmonious, and incredibly tenacious. Despite ongoing doubts that we could possibly scrape together enough material and money to produce the next issue, we consistently managed to pull it off, sometimes with aplomb, and always with a certain pride mixed with disbelief. Although I did spend many a sleepless night cursing the IMC's frequently-freezing iMac and battling the Kinko's printers, my memories of the *Public i*, even if hazy, are fond ones.

I retain especially high regard for those committed souls who have stuck with the paper since its inception a decade ago. Chief among them is Belden Fields, without whose fundraising talents the paper would have tanked long ago (this is to say nothing about his considerable writing skills). Another stalwart is Paul Mueth, performer of many thankless tasks including regular voyages to the printer, sometimes in the harshest weather. In the months before my departure in January 2007, Paul even tried his hand at layout, until being valiantly rescued by Davep. Other long-time torchbearers include Brian Dolinar and Bob Illyes, while shorter (yet still quite significant) stints were served by Lisa Chason, Megan Krausch, Laura Stengrim, Marcia Zumbahlen, Sandra Ahten, and John Wasson.

There were, of course, many others who gave freely of their time and talent, including regular contributors like Ricky Baldwin, Al Kagan, and David Green. (Surely I'm forgetting a few people, even after peeking at past issues to retrieve a few of these names from the memory hole. I hope that what's-his-name will forgive me.)

In terms of content, it would be hard to forget the third issue that was hastily assembled in the weeks after 9-11. I also recall with unusual clarity meeting Amy Goodman at the UC-IMC, just before its exciting and surreal relocation to a former federal building. Among articles, I can't recall any clear favorites, but this is due less to my faulty wiring than to the fact that articles for the *Public i* have always been top notch (and I'm not just saying that because some of them were mine). Indeed, the consistently high quality of writing-by unpaid, untrained, citizen journalists no

less-is exactly what has helped the paper survive and thrive all these years (of course, compelling images and occasional cartoons certainly haven't hurt).

Although I am now separated from the *Public i* by distance as well as time, it inspires me to know that it lives on, providing a desperately needed counterpoint to the corporate sound bite and the official government line. I trust that for many residents of the greater Champaign area, it also provides a monthly confirmation that the entire world hasn't gone completely insane. I like to think that Indymedia has even succeeded in keeping mainstream media more accountable, and perhaps even helped inspire the inclusion of left-leaning voices like those of John Stewart, Stephen Colbert, and Keith Olbermann into the otherwise conservative mix. In fact, the popularity of these pundits and of news outlets like Democracy Now! and Al Jazeera, as well as recent political developments in North Africa and the near East, provide some basis for hope that the world might actually be moving towards greater sanity, however slowly or falteringly. My sense is that Indymedia will play an increasingly important role in the years to come, and I celebrate its growth and flowering. Viva la revolucion!

SANDRA AHTEN



Sandra Ahten is an artist, activist, writer, diet and wellness coach, friend and most recently... a grandma. She has lived in Urbana since 1995.

Why did you get involved with the *Public i*?

I loved reading alternative newspapers and when I moved here I attended one of the first meetings of the alternative that was to become the Octopus. I went to the meeting, not to become a writer but to just start to get my feet wet in the community. I offhandedly suggested some story ideas and the editor/manager Paul Young just said, "Great. Write them." That's what I started doing. Three things I loved about it: 1. I found that some stories could actually effect change in people's lives. 2. It was such a great way to be in the pulse of what was going on in the community. 3. My name was recognized. I loved that level of people knowing who I was, not in a way that was about "fame" but just a basic way that allowed me to feel valued.

I worked hard at many jobs, helping to keep the Octopus afloat, and when the IMC was born I moved my energies there. I was most involved with the *Public i* and with IMC radio news.

Had you ever written for a newspaper before?

I wrote a letter to the editor of my hometown newspaper in about 1986. That was it until I started writing for the Octopus in 1995 or so. I transitioned right to the *Public i* from there.

Who else do you remember working with?

Dorothy Martirano, Shelley Masar, Dave Madden and I put together an amazing story that was a document of where all the "conspiracy theories" surrounding 9-11 were actually reported first as facts in mainstream media. We worked on it in my basement for at least 15 hours a week for a month. Darin Drda pulled it together visually. It was an amazing story.

I credit Darrin, with really being the backbone of the paper. The hours he put in, the graphic design skills, the editor's eye that he brought to the table were so consistent week after week. So although we had a fluid process, it arrived on time and in a format that people could get used to, which is something that really helped it flourish.

What were some of the big stories covered or what were your favorite articles?

The "article" that I got the most comments on was my recipe for Vegan Sloppy Joes.

What did you learn at the *Public i* that you have since

used?

The process of consensus was really hammered out at the early stages of the *Public i*. We first used a model of "editor" and "departments." There was going to be one person soliciting articles for "environment," another for "women's issues," and other for "community happenings," etc. The consensus was in that we decided who these people would be and who the editor would be.

But then we took it one step further and moved away from "departments" and "an editor" to a paper that was really pulled together equally by the people who were actually at that month's meetings and sustaining the commitment to it. It was a not a pretty process, but one that I learned a lot from and that has really been most helpful to me in my life.

And then in working at that level of true consensus, with the shared respect that it demanded helped me grow as a human being. I also really learned how not to put up with bullshit and how not to be patronized. That's come in pretty handy too.

LAURA STENGRIM



Laura Stengrim currently lives in Phoenix, Arizona, where she works in the legal field for her day job, is an adjunct writing instructor in the community college system, does some freelance editing, tries to avoid Arizona politics, and enjoys hiking, yoga, swimming and spending as much

time outdoors as possible.

Why did you get involved with the *Public i*?

I had seen the newspaper around town and was studying media consolidation in a graduate course at U of I, sometime in 2001 or 2002. At first I went to a few *Public i* meetings just out of curiosity and I started writing a few articles myself. Then I became totally attached to an amazing group of people who produced a very important and wonderful little newspaper.

Had you ever written for a newspaper before?

My first letter to the editor was published in the Rocky Mountain News when I was like 12. I was angry at my social studies teacher for not allowing us to watch Bill Clinton's presidential inauguration, and I wanted to make a point about the pitiable state of public education in America. I still write occasional letters to the editor when outraged by some ridiculous injustice or another, but no, I hadn't consistently written articles for a newspaper prior to being involved with the *Public i*.

What is "independent" media?

Local journalism, freedom to pursue narratives that are not predetermined by a corporate agenda, a process of true collaboration and consensus in making editorial decisions, a response to a world increasingly governed by Fox News and its ilk. My understanding is that the Indymedia movement was spawned around the time of the 1999 protests against meetings of the WTO and IMF by activists whom the mainstream media termed "anti-globalization." The idea of Indymedia was to create a network of web sites and Indymedia centers around the country and around the world, with vibrant local media that included newspapers, radio, community and artistic space, as an antidote to the corporatization of a national media that was shutting down dissent. Indymedia wasn't anti-globalization; it was attempting to do globalization in a way that would be more democratic, more transparent, and less exploitative. The UC-IMC took off around that time, embodying those ideals, and as the events of the past dozen or so years have unfolded-globally, nationally, and locally-it has become a really important staple of the community.

Who else do you remember working with?

Belden Fields is one of my favorite people in the whole wide world and I adore him. We had an amazing and

Continued on next page





functional group of people when I was involved with the *Public i*. Darrin Drda was the graphic artist who had a hand in masterminding the paper from the beginning. There was a very solid group of writers and editors that included Linda Evans, Megan Krausch, Sandra Ahten, Ricky Baldwin, Lisa Chason, and Bob Illyes. Brian Dolinar became a key facilitator and contributor. davep started doing the layout after Darrin left. And of course the *Public i*, nay, Urbana, would not be what it is without Paul Mueth.

What were some of the big stories that the paper covered?

I moved to Urbana a few weeks before 9/11 and left in 2007. We all know what happened during that time period: Bush, Afghanistan, Enron, Iraq, WMDs, swift-boating, genocide in Sudan, Bush's re-election in 2004, health care crisis, Hurricane Katrina, Iraq, Iraq, Iraq, etc. The *Public i* would have articles about these major issues written from a local perspective, and it also had articles about all kinds of topics, local and not. We liked doing a big middle article and trying to have others work around a theme for the month, but not be constrained by it. Urbana-Champaign has a great wealth of resources and very smart people who can be tapped for occasional articles without being deeply involved in the facilitation or production of the paper.

What were some of your favorite articles?

I enjoyed facilitating (and reading, and sometimes writing) the themed articles that drew on a number of authors and their various perspectives. I think we did one around the 2004 election on different candidates, one about the Free Trade Area of the Americas, one called "Meet the Coalition!" about Bush's Coalition of the Willing (the countries that were supporting and sending troops in the Iraq effort), and there was a health care issue around 2005-06 that comes to mind as particularly well done. I also loved reading articles by people who had special expertise or had traveled to places like Sudan or Israel and Palestine and then "report back" in the *Public i* for a general audience in a way that sheds unique light and understanding on a situation or struggle. Belden's recounting of a trip to Vietnam in 2005, some 35 years after the war, fits this bill as well. By providing an outlet for everyday people to discuss, deliberate, and ponder issues of current and historical importance, the *Public i* makes a unique contribution to the sort of democratic society that we all envision but is seemingly impossible to attain.

MEGHAN KRAUSCH



Meghan Krausch left C-U in 2005 for NYC, and eventually landed in the PhD program in sociology at the University of Minnesota. Currently in Buenos Aires researching utopian social movements, she is also the drummer for the *Angry Feminists*.

Why did you get involved with the *Public i*?

I originally got involved with the *Public i* after I returned from a Witness for Peace trip to Nicaragua. The trips are designed sort of like real-world seminars, and a big part of the trip is finding ways to share the information with your local community when you get back to the US. I had been looking for something to get involved with in C-U since I was still relatively new to town, so this provided the push I needed to finally check out the *Public i*. I originally showed up just to pitch my article ("The Neoliberal Noose Hanging Nicaragua"), but was immediately drawn to the editorial collective, the UC-IMC as a whole, and an entirely new (to me) way of thinking about activism and politics.

Had you ever written for a newspaper before?

Yes, I had written for papers in both high school and college (and came to the *Public i* shortly after I graduated from college).

What is "independent" media to you?

Independent media is certainly non-corporate, but more than that I think it is constantly working to be more responsive to its community. It ditches the traditional idea that you need an expert in charge to ensure quality control in favor of the idea that lots of minds are stronger than one. Instead of relying on one editor to pick and choose who should write what story, indymedia hash out their ideas in a group and have faith that all that input will make the media stronger. Instead of seeking folks who already know the ropes, indymedia looks to open up the opportunity for more and more people to write their own history. I guess that's a bit romantic, but in the best cases, I think it's exactly what indymedia can be.

Who else do you remember working with?

My time at the *Public i* was 2003-2005. I remember Belden Fields, Laura Stengrim, Brian Dolinar, Bijan Warner, Lisa Chason, Linda Evans, Sarah Boyer, Bob Illyes, Darrin Drda, Paul Mueth, and Sandra Ahten. There are probably some people I'm forgetting in there, but that's who comes to mind as the more or less steady editorial crew.

What were some of the big stories covered or what were your favorite articles?

While I was at the *Public i* the biggest story I covered was the protest against the Free Trade Area of the Americas in Miami. I drove down to Miami with several other UC-IMC reporters who were working with the radio and video groups, but I was the one who got to do the written story. I especially remember that one because I also wrote an editorial piece leading up to the protest that was the basis of a lengthy discussion about inflammatory wording, the UC-IMC's liability, and my own potential risk of being charged with incitement to riot.

The other major stories I remember bleed the lines (as the best indymedia should) between newspaper coverage and major topics of interest and concern for activists and folks in C-U: the 2004 presidential election, the UC-IMC space shutdown, and the arrest of community activists Martel Miller and Patrick Thompson.

What did you learn at the *Public i* that you have since used?

The *Public i*, and the UC-IMC in general, was my first real introduction to non-hierarchical organizing and consensus decision-making, and thus to a new way of thinking about politics and organizing (ideas which now form the basis of my dissertation). I was radicalized, or at least more radicalized, if you can say that. The editorial group at the *Public i* taught me how to actively participate in a meeting that needs to arrive at consensus, which is a great organizing skill and just a useful life skill, and how to maintain those principles even when deadlines loom. I learned to carefully reflect on what it means for indymedia to be a tool for those left out of the mainstream media—does that mean just presenting alternative narratives and information, or does that mean working to include voices of color, of poverty, or of folks otherwise marginalized in both mainstream and alternative media? Finally I would say that I gained the confidence that anybody really can make their own media. We were just a ragtag group of volunteers producing a monthly paper, and somehow it was good.

MAGGIE QUIRK



Maggie Quirk graduated from the U of I with a bachelors in Business Administration in December, 2011. She lives in Vancouver, British Columbia, Canada, where she works as a specialist in corporate financial reporting and regulatory compliance. She is building an e-business in her free time.

I joined the *Public i*'s team as a writer and collaborator during my junior year of high school, in 2003. I was delighted to discover the opportunity through my involvement with the IMC. While my mind was being shaped by my teachers, the paper gave me an outlet to further develop my interests. I wrote articles and joined the weekly meeting in which those in attendance facilitated articles and organized the paper. I had the opportunity to develop some very important life skills at an early age. My experience was valuable for engaging with the local community and learning directly from people participating in the community's affairs.

I practiced three of the most important skills for success as an adult: writing, teamwork, and dealing with people. I have found these to be invaluable in and after college. The only way to improve is through practice. Joining the *Public i* sets the foundation for the most valuable skills you can have in life.

Written communication is still as important as ever, and can be used to improve your position in life. Many people will have to write e-mails and reports. You may be able to pair it with marketing, or use it in other ways. Writing and journalism have always fascinated me. I even hope to support myself someday with the e-business I've started providing information and advice for people interested in a vegan diet.

Working on the *Public i* gave me so many opportunities to grow. I learned how reporting makes the world go round. It is the main way people hear new ideas and are exposed to things outside their direct experience. As we

sat around the couch at the old IMC building, I was immersed in adult conversation. It was a welcome change to be treated not like a child, but like a valuable contributor. I learned about current events from new perspectives. I was exposed to new thoughts and ideas. The experience was like traveling to a foreign country.

Possibly the greatest benefit from working with the *Public i* was all of the people I met. The *Public i* is a meeting ground for free thinkers who walk their talk. Some of the most intellectual and active people in Champaign-Urbana contribute and collaborate. You have the opportunity to make lifelong friends. This is valuable not only for socializing, but it helps build a network of people you can leverage in job searches, college applications, and future projects.

The people who made my time at the *Public i* so memorable have my sincerest thanks. The gift of their attention and guidance nurtured my abilities. It was a notable part of my life, which I remember fondly. I recommend that anyone, especially high school students, consider joining to give back to the community and develop valuable life skills.

SHARA ESBENSHADE



Shara Esbenshade wrote for the *Public i* as a high school student from 2007-2008. She is currently studying history at Stanford University and working on public history education projects at the Martin Luther King, Jr. Research & Education Institute.

It was through my activism that I first learned about and started writing for the *Public i*. Independent media is crucial to movements for social justice. It provides information and news that corporate media often ignores and a platform in which movements can form. It is open to all as a space for expression about locally relevant news, reflections,



and stories. Independent media itself is a process that nurtures democracy and non-hierarchical community-building.

I started writing and editing for the *Public i* when I was 17. The year before that I had begun to work with local antiwar organizations: AWARE, the Anti War Anti Racism Effort, the Campus Anti-war Network, and the newly formed activism club at my high school, Uni High, which addressed various issues in addition to the war from labor rights to health care. I co-wrote my first submission to the *Public i* with Cody Bralts, a fellow high-school student and activist, about a campaign we were working on to educate high school students about military recruitment, as misinformation about the rewards of serving in the army persuaded many to risk their lives.

A major aspect of the campaign was to distribute information about the dangers of war that recruiters don't mention and about the importance of getting recruiter's promises in writing in order to help our peers make informed decisions when it came to the question of joining the military. We handed out fliers in front of the National Guard's recruitment station at the annual high school state football championships—a major attraction at these events. The recruiters had the police called, who required us to move away from their booth, despite the fact that the university rules protect the right to flier where we were and in all public areas. Given that this incident was one in a long line of

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Ten Years of Independent Media

Continued from previous page

recent police abuses, coverage of it was important. Covering it in the *Public i* also helped in pushing the officers on the matter, and we had meetings with police officers and university officials alike that resulted, a few months later, in an official letter on behalf of the University affirming the right to flier and the spirit of free speech. We flied without issue at the football championships the following year.

I continued to write and edit for the *Public i* until I left Urbana for college in 2008. I was working with Belden Fields, Antonia Darder, Brian Dolinar, Paul Mueth, Bob Illyes, and others, and what I learned has benefitted me a lot in my work since with student-labor organizing and public education about the history of liberation movements. I learned what it takes to collectively put together an issue of a newspaper every month—soliciting articles, gathering photos and information about upcoming events, and arranging and editing the final pieces. I learned about the many local movements that my co-editors worked on and wrote about. Writing for the *Public i* was my introduction to these issues, and to understanding the ways in which economic justice, labor rights, anti-racism, ending militarism, and the many other causes people were organizing for in our community, are interconnected. The opportunity to write for a publicly read newspaper as a young person challenged me to articulate my thoughts just as I was at the beginnings of my political education.

Three years after moving to California for school, I am utilizing the skills of research, writing, editing, outreach and collaborative, democratic organizing in working on a global history of liberation movements with the Martin Luther King, Jr. Research & Education Institute at Stanford University. We seek to do the same thing that independent media accomplish: demonstrate the power in collective action and the agency we all have, through sharing the stories of how people have always resisted oppressive situations and moved toward freedom. Telling the history of collective social movements in creative, accessible ways helps us to move toward a recognition of our co-creation of what is, and inherent to that, our ability to change the way we live as a society. I see this work as an extension, in many ways, of our work as the *Public i* in providing space for contemporary social movements to tell their stories.

MARCIA ZUMBAHLEN



Marcia received a Ph.D. in Developmental Psychology from the University of Illinois in 1997. She had been a Savoy resident for 20 years when she volunteered for the IMC. She now lives in Evanston, IL and provides developmental psychotherapy at a pediatric therapy clinic in Skokie. She loves running by the lake and working with children but misses the slower-paced cultural enclave of her Alma Mater.

Why did you get involved with the *Public i*?

I was ending one career path and taking time off before I started another. I wanted to use my “down time” constructively. The *Public i* seemed like a great way to make a difference and stimulate my mind at the same time.

Had you ever written for a newspaper before?

I’ll admit that after high school I had a gig where I submitted a weekly column to my hometown newspaper. My father was a pork producer and I was asked to promote the business. So I submitted recipes and fun facts about pork, including one about how Wall Street got its name.

What were some of the big stories covered or what were your favorite articles?

I most enjoyed doing the story on dental care. I still can’t believe that a pic I took with my dinky cell phone then made it to the front page.

What did you learn at the *Public i* that you have since used?

Let the people tell the story. It’s much more effective that way. And less is more (though I still have a hard time doing that).

What impact do you believe the *Public i* had on community awareness during your participation?

I remember health care, educational reform, and racial profiling being constant themes. The most direct impact probably had to do with the racial inequality in criminal prosecution.

What do you consider to be the strengths of the *Public i* as a project during that time? What were its limitations?

The high caliber intellectual discussions that took place behind the scenes made the paper what it was. There was passion in those conversations. I suppose some might say the consensus mode was a limitation in that some things couldn’t move forward just cuz one person would shoot it down. But, I saw its value. And, the fact that we were a 501c3 limited our ability to take a more partisan stance in our stories.

Why did you leave your work with the *Public i*?

I found my new career path 2 1/2 hrs north of Urbana.

ANTONIA DARDER



Antonia Darder is a Professor Emerita at the University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign. She is longtime Puerto Rican activist-scholar involved in issues related to education, language, immigrant, workers, and women’s rights.

I offer the excerpt from *A Dissident Voice* as part of a reflection of my history with the *Public i* and the vision that I believe the paper attempts to nurture in the world. For over eight years, I lived in the Champaign/Urbana community alone and feeling alienated and quite the outsider. One of the few places where I found connection and where my voice and my ideas were welcomed was at the *Public i*, which over the years has worked consistently to publish a variety of voices on the margins and bring them to the center of the political discourse of this community.

This does not mean, of course, that in this process of collective knowledge production there were not moments of deep internal struggle or conflicts; for to be a political publication that embraces dissident voices means that there will always be struggle and differences, which must be engaged with courage and persistence. As would be expected, conflicts surfaced about many of the same issues we find in any context—racism, class privilege, gendered relations of power, homophobia, and even the sort of political elitism that can still rear its head among progressive people.

Yet, what I found rather extraordinary with the different folks associated with the *Public i* over the years, and especially during the time that I was a member of the editorial committee, was that most understood that conflict and political differences are essential to any democratic process, including the rethinking of political issues and community struggles. And although at such moments there were some who simply chose to walk away, those who remained came to learn much about what Audre Lorde called “that dark and true depth which understanding serves...this depth within each of us that nurtures vision.”

Moreover, if our voices of dissent were to challenge the powers that be, then we had to also accept that dissent had to be a welcomed dimension of our editorial dialogues and our efforts to bring a different vision of political life to the community. As such, over the years, the political analysis, sensibilities, and contributions of a variety of community members were documented in the pages of the *Public i*, leaving an indelible historical footprint of important and powerfully dissenting voices within Champaign Urbana—voices united loosely by a collective vision of social justice, human rights, and economic democracy.

Despite many monetary and organizational limitations, the paper’s uncompromising commitment to this vision served over the years as a sort of public pedagogy of struggle. As such, the *Public i* consistently challenged social inequalities and material injustices, while also working to strengthen the collective political consciousness within the larger community. However, this was not done solely through the publication of the newspaper, but rather through the willingness of its members to be physically present; marching against war, greed, and inequities and standing with the disenfranchised when things were at their worst.

So, when black youth were shot or incarcerated over the years, the *Public i* was there. When court cases required the presence of community voices, the *Public i* was there. When new programs to assist folks of modest means were initiated, the *Public i* was one of the first venues to give organizers a voice. When the struggle to eliminate the fabricated “Chief” mascot was raging at the U of I, the *Public i* was there. When the university sought to “quietly” install The Academy on Capitalism on the campus, the *Public i* was there. When hip-hop women artists from Cuba were in town, the *Public i* was

there. When university workers rallied for a decent wage, the *Public i* was there. When a vigil in support of immigrant rights was held on campus, the *Public i* was there. When the community challenged environmental injustices in the neighborhood, the *Public i* was there. When a visiting theatrical production downplayed the N-word, the *Public i* was there.

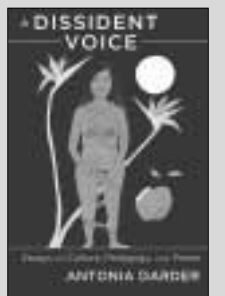
In each of these instances, the paper used its pages to create public dialogue about issues that mattered. In a community climate where marginalization, systematic silencing, and brutal assaults to dissenting voices are not unusual, the *Public i* has been a haven where community activists, academics, and community members alike could labor, over the years, to create a legitimate political space and journalistic venue for both honest public engagement and on-going political struggle. But it has also been a venue where those who participated from different communities and various walks of life could grow and develop as writers and independent community journalists.

During my time with the *Public i*, I gained greater confidence in my ability to translate my ideas beyond academic journals and connect them with the folks to whom my work was most relevant. I also learned to struggle through our contradictions, in-vivo, with comrades who were committed to social change and the making of a more just world. I also learned to accept being challenged (and pushing back) as an important process for maturing our political capacity to speak across our many differences.

So, it is precisely for all these reasons that I cannot think of the *Public i* as simply a community newspaper. Instead, it will always exemplify for me a formidable vision and practice of struggle and dissent. A small revolutionary act of love that every Thursday nurtured our vision of a better world—a world where human dignity, freedom, and social justice are commonplace.

Nurturing Dreams of a Just World

Dissident voices emerge from historical conditions of political crisis, social disruption, and economic betrayal. As social agents of revolutionary ideas, dissidents embrace a commitment to historical struggle as a life vocation. Those who emerge from the anguish of poverty and dispossession know only too well the need



to be ever vigilant and conscious of how political power in society is exercised. Such scholars exist in direct opposition to myths of modernity that would have us believe that our world can only be genuinely known through dispassionate inquiries and transcendent postures of scientific neutrality, as defined by western philosophical assumptions of knowledge.

Instead, dissident scholars refuse to be extricated from the flesh and, thus, immerse us fully into the blood and guts of what it means to be alive, awake, and in love with the world. Instead of the boredom, isolation, and banality of contemporary mainstream life, dissident scholars seek places of imagination, possibilities, creativity, and Eros from which to live, love and dream anew.

However, the journey can be arduous and contemptuous. Dissidents must be constantly self-vigilant and fearfully prepared to contend with a variety of obnoxious contentions and veiled obstructions that, consciously or not, serve as effective roadblocks to the wider dissemination of radical ideas and revolutionary visions. This is to say, that unless one is born into or is in alliance with the ruling class, the journey to voice for dissident scholars is an extremely precarious one. Many come dangerously close to losing heart, mind, body, and soul—all serious losses that can effectively disable dissident passion, make uncertain our faith, shed doubt on our intentions, and thus, immobilize the transgressive power of dissenting voices—voices absolutely essential to democratic life.

—*A Dissident Voice* (Darder, 2011)



US Suppresses Minimum Wage in Haiti, and More

By Chip Bruce

Chip Bruce is a Emeritus of Library and Information Science at U of I. He writes about Haiti and other issues at chipbruce.net

The release of 1,918 Haiti-related diplomatic cables by WikiLeaks this summer reveals details of US involvement in Haiti from 2003 to present. Unfortunately, the cables support the historical pattern, just adding in disturbing details. If there is any good news here, it's of a rare example of responsible journalism. *The Nation* is collaborating with the Haitian weekly newspaper *Haiti Liberté* on a series of groundbreaking articles about US and UN policy toward Haiti, which are based on those cables.

The pattern goes back at least to the earliest days of the 19th century, when President George Washington, a slave owner, had Secretary of State Thomas Jefferson grant the first significant foreign aid of the United States to the slave owners in Haiti in a failed effort to suppress the slave revolution there. Following the success of that revolution, the US enforced a diplomatic and trade embargo against Haiti until 1862. From 1915 to 1934 the U.S. imposed a military occupation ostensibly to stabilize the country and keep out Europeans, but also to shape Haiti into a profitable neo-colony.

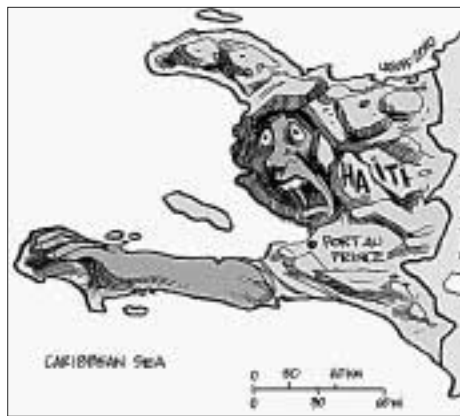
As popular resistance to occupation grew, the U.S. withdrew and shifted its support from 1957 through 1986 to the fascist Duvaliers, father and son, and their Tonton Macoutes paramilitaries. After suffering from years of bloody military coups and massacres of protesters, Haiti elected Jean-Bertrand Aristide by a landslide in 1990. Aristide called the mass movement that put him into power Lavalas ("torrent" in *Kreyòl*). His election succeeded despite the millions that the US gave to his opponent, Marc Bazin, a former World Bank Official. In 1991 a US-

backed military coup deposed Aristide as president. René Prével replaced Aristide in 1996, but Aristide was re-elected later, replacing Prével in 2001.

The newly released cables pick up the details from 2003 on. Because Aristide had disbanded the army in 1995, it was difficult for the U.S. and its allies to organize a coup. On Feb. 29, 2004, U.S. Special Forces kidnapped Aristide and his spouse, Mildred Trouillot Aristide, taking them to the Central African Republic.

The cables also show how the US, the European Union, and the United Nations supported Haiti's recent presidential and parliamentary elections, despite the exclusion of Lavalas, Haiti's largest political party. They agonized a bit about sponsoring an election that would exclude the majority party from participating, about "emasculating" the country, but decided to push through the sham election because so much was invested already in the neocolonial relationship with Haiti.

The US embassy noted that Haiti would save \$100 million a year under the terms of the Caribbean oil alliance with Venezuela, called PetroCaribe. The savings would be earmarked for development in schools, health care, and infrastructure. US Ambassador Janet Sanderson immediately set out to sabotage the deal. She noted that the embassy started to "pressure" Haitian leader Prével from joining PetroCaribe, saying that it would "cause problems with [the US.]" As major oil companies, such as Exxon-Mobil and Chevron, threatened to cut off ties with Haiti, Sanderson met to assure them that she would pressure Haiti at the "highest levels of government."



Meanwhile, contractors for Fruit of the Loom, Hanes and Levi's worked closely with the US Embassy to block a minimum wage increase for Haitian garment workers. In a June 10, 2009 cable to Washington, Ambassador Sanderson argued, "A more visible and active engagement by Prével may be critical to resolving the issue of the minimum wage and its protest 'spin-off' or risk the political environment spiraling out of control." After Prével negotiated a deal to create a two-tiered minimum

wage—one for the textile workers at \$3/day and one other industrial workers at about \$5/day, the US Embassy was displeased. David E. Lindwall, deputy chief of mission, said the \$5/day minimum "did not take economic reality into account." It was just a populist measure aimed at appealing to "the unemployed and underpaid masses."

Think about this when you buy underwear or jeans. The artificially low price you pay, which killed the North American textile industry, goes to pay for shipping, marketing, high executive salaries, and industry profits, with practically nothing for the people who slave to make the clothes. But if you live in the EU or especially in the US, you can know that your government continues to work to maintain those low prices, and resists appealing to the "unemployed and underpaid masses."

Think about the manipulations of the democratic process in Haiti when people ask why the rest of the world fails to see the wisdom and the glory of Western democracy.

Think also about how much of this has been covered in your local newspaper, or on television and radio news.

From Athens to New York, a Flotilla is a Demonstration with Press Coverage

By Robert Naiman



Robert Naiman is the Policy Director for Just Foreign Policy www.justforeignpolicy.org naiman@justforeignpolicy.org

Often in the last few months, I had the opportunity to answer the question: why are you attempting to sail with the Gaza Freedom Flotilla?

I always answered by talking about the blockade. 1.5 million human beings are living under restrictions that the International Committee of the Red Cross has described as illegal collective punishment against a civilian population, in direct violation of the Geneva Convention concerning the treatment of civilians under occupation. The "permanent opening," created by the interim Egyptian government, of the Rafah crossing between Gaza and Egypt has turned out to be largely a "nothing burger," with an average of 400 people crossing a day; an average of 300 people a day crossed before this. 800 people crossed a day before the closure of Gaza in the first place. Construction materials are still largely prohibited. Palestinians from Gaza still have great difficulty obtaining permission to travel to East Jerusalem and the West Bank for work, study, or medical care. Palestinian fishermen are restricted to operating within three nautical miles of Gaza's coast. They were promised twenty miles under the Oslo

accord. Israel, with the collaboration of the U.S. and Egypt, largely prevents Gaza from exporting goods to Europe and to the West Bank. What preventing the export of strawberries to Europe has to do with Israeli "security" has yet to be explained to a skeptical world public.

There is another aspect to the question besides "what are you protesting: why this approach? You could write to the newspaper, call Congress, hold a demonstration...." You hold a demonstration on a busy street because a key objective is to communicate with the general public and you can't communicate with the general *Public* if they can't see or hear you.

When we were in Athens, pressing for permission from the Greek authorities to leave by boat—and also preparing to sail without their permission—we noted that the Canadian boat had a much better chance of getting out than we did, because they were in Crete. If they could slip past the Greek Coast Guard, they might make it to international waters. But there was little chance of that for us, docked in Athens—a lot of water separated us from freedom. It's as if you and your confederate were going to make a run for the border, but he was in El Paso and you were in Peoria. Ultimately, when we sailed, we were quickly intercepted by the Greek Coast Guard commandos and forced to dock at a military port..

From the point of view of press coverage, it was better to be in Athens than Crete. Athens is a convenient place for international media; Crete, not so much. While we were in

Greece, Athens was erupting in protest against the austerity plan imposed as a condition of the European/IMF bailout of European banks that made bad loans to Greece. There were two days of general strike while we were in Athens; many protests, lots of tear gas, even a few buildings set on fire. As we awaited permission to leave—or a decision to execute our plan to leave without permission—we worried we would lose our media contingent. On our boat, we had 36 passengers, four crew, and 10 journalists. Some of these were TV journalists from the major networks and others were print journalists from major publications. They weren't going to stay indefinitely while we held press conferences. They needed action. Fortunately, Syntagma Square—the "Tahrir Square" of the Greek protests, across the street from the parliament building—was a short distance from the hotels where the American passengers on our boat were staying. "Go cover the anti-IMF protests," we said. "We'll let you know before we leave." When we did leave, all the journalists were on board.

With our flotilla, we put the issue of Gaza back on the international stage, raising the political price of the blockade and of the Israeli occupation of the West Bank, Gaza, and East Jerusalem. We showed that a few hundred peace activists, largely from North America and Western Europe, mostly middle-aged and many of them Jews, could force the Israeli and U.S. governments to publicly answer for their blockade of 1.5 million people.

This protest was not an isolated event, but part of a series of actions to bring the question of Palestine back to the international table. A few days after most of the Americans returned home, hundreds of activists from Western Europe and North America flew to Israel to participate in the "Welcome to Palestine 'flytilla,'" attempting to join protests in the West Bank. The Israeli government's reaction was to block these activists from flying to or entering Israel, because they intended to commit the "crime" of visiting Palestinians in the West Bank. This dramatized the fact that the West Bank is also under a form of closure, with the Israeli government deciding who may enter and leave.

The next "flotilla," takes a different form. This action will take place in September, when Palestinians present their application to become a member state in the United Nations. It's a flotilla in the sense that it's the many countries of the United Nations uniting against the opposition of a strong few, and it's also a flotilla in the sense that it's a protest with press coverage. Indeed, plans are underway to engage an actual flotilla to sail to the UN. Even if that doesn't take place, there will be demonstrations around the United States and around the world on September 15 in support of Palestine's application for membership. The demonstration in Champaign-Urbana will be at 5pm on at the Champaign County Veterans Memorial, Broadway and Main, Urbana. The national website is www.september15.org.



The New Operation Wetback? Immigration and Mass Incarceration in the Obama Era

By James Kilgore, This article first appeared in Counterpunch Online August 4, 2011

James Kilgore is a Research Scholar at the Center for African Studies at the University of Illinois. He is the author of three novels, *We Are All Zimbabweans Now*, *Freedom Never Rests* and *Prudence Couldn't Swim*, all written during his six and a half years of incarceration. He can be reached at wazn1@gmail.com

Last week Representative Luis Gutierrez (D-IL) joined a demonstration in Washington D.C. to protest the refusal of President Obama to use his executive powers to halt the deportations of the undocumented. Gutierrez's arrest came only two days after Obama had addressed a conference of the National Council of La Raza. Conveniently forgetting the history of the civil right struggles that made his presidency a possibility, Obama reminded those attending that he was bound to "uphold the laws on the books." With over 392,000 deportations in 2010, more than in any of the Bush years, many activists fear we are in the midst of a repeat of notorious episodes of the past such as the "Repatriation" campaign of the 1930s and the infamous Operation Wetback of 1954, both of which resulted in the deportation of hundreds of thousands of Latinos.

But several things are different this time around. A crucial distinction is that we are in the era of mass incarceration. Not only are the undocumented being deported, many are going to prison for years before being delivered across the border. While the writings of Michelle Alexander and others have highlighted the widespread targeting of young African-American males by the criminal justice system, few have noted that in the last decade the complexion of new faces behind bars has been dramatically changing. Since the turn of the century, the number of blacks in prisons has declined slightly, while the ranks of Latinos incarcerated has increased by nearly 50%, reaching just over 300,000 in 2009.

A second distinguishing feature of the current state of affairs is the presence of the private prison corporations. For the likes of the industry's leading powers, Corrections Corporation of America (CCA) and the GEO Group, detaining immigrants has been the life blood for reviving their financial fortunes.

Just over a decade ago their bottom lines were flagging. Freshly built prisons sat with empty beds while share values plummeted. For financial year 1999 CCA reported losses of \$53.4 million and laid off 40% of its workforce. Then came the windfall—9/11.

In 2001 Steven Logan, then CEO of Cornell Industries, a private prison firm which has since merged with GEO, spelled out exactly what this meant for his sector:

"I think it's clear that with the events of Sept. 11, there's a heightened focus on detention, both on the borders and within the U.S. [and] more people are gonna get caught...So that's a positive for our business. The federal business is the best business for us. It's the most consistent business for us, and the events of Sept. 11 are increasing that level of business."

Logan was right. The Patriot Act and other legislation led to a new wave of immigration detentions. By linking immigrants to terrorism, aggressive roundups supplied Latinos and other undocumented people to fill those empty private prison cells. Tougher immigration laws mandated felony convictions and prison time for cases which previously merited only deportation. Suddenly, the business of detaining immigrants was booming. PBS Commentator Maria Hinojosa went so far as to call this the new "Gold Rush" for private prisons.

The figures support Hinojosa's assertion. While private prisons own or operate only 8% of general prison beds, they control 49% of the immigration detention market. CCA alone operates 14 facilities via contracts with ICE, providing 14,556 beds. They have laid the ground work for more business through the creation of a vast lobbying and advocacy network. From 1999-2009 the corporation spent more than \$18 million on lobbying, mostly focusing on harsher sentencing, prison privatization and immigration.

One significant result of their lobbying efforts was the passage of SB 1070 in Arizona, a law which nearly provides police with a license to profile Latinos for stops and searches. The roots of SB 1070 lie in the halls of the American Legislative Exchange Council (ALEC), a far right grouping that specializes in supplying template legislation to elected state officials. CCA and other private prison firms are key participants in ALEC and played a major role in the development of the template that ended up as SB 1070.

For its part, GEO Group has also been carving out its immigration market niche. In 2011 alone they have broken

ground on a 600 bed immigration detention center in Karnes County, Texas and finalized arrangements for a 1,300 person facility in Adelanto, California. Not wanting to concentrate their risks totally in detention, earlier this year GEO also bought a controlling interest in BI Corporation, the largest provider of electronic monitoring systems in the U.S. The primary motivation for this takeover was the five year, \$372 million contract BI signed with ICE in 2009 to step up the Bush initiated Intense Supervision Appearance Program. ISAP 11. Under this arrangement the Feds hired BI to provide ankle bracelets and a host of other surveillance for some 27,000 people awaiting deportation or asylum hearings.

Sadly, the Obama presidency has consistently provided encouragement for the likes of CCA and GEO to grow the market for detainees. While failing to pass immigration reform or the Dream Act, the current administration has kept the core of the previous administration's immigration policy measures intact. These include the Operation Endgame, a 2003 measure that promised to purge the nation of all "illegals" by 2012 and the more vibrant Secure Communities (S-Comm). Under S-Comm the Federal government authorizes local authorities to share fingerprints with



ICE of all those they arrest. Though supposedly intended to capture only people with serious criminal backgrounds, in reality S-Comm has led to the detention and deportation of thousands of people with no previous convictions.

At the National Council of La Raza's Conference Obama tried to console the audience by saying that he knows "very well the pain and heartbreak deportation has caused." His words failed to resonate. Instead, Rep. Gutierrez and others took to the streets, demonstrating that "I feel your pain" statements and appeals to the audacity of hope carry little credibility these days. It is time for a serious change of direction on immigration issues or pretty soon, just as Michelle Alexander has referred to the mass incarceration of African-Americans as the New Jim Crow, we may hear people start to call the ongoing repression of Latinos a "New Operation Wetback."

NFL Labor Lessons

By Neil Parthun

The NFL lockout is over!

At the outset, things did not look good for the players. There were worries about DeMaurice Smith, the new executive director of the NFL Players Association (NFLPA), having to learn the ropes during first labor standoff since 1987. Another question mark was the potential for solidarity. During the 1987 strike, it was star players like Mark Gastineau and Joe Montana that crossed the picket to continue play. There were real beliefs that since players have short and precarious careers, some may split away and demand a quick end to the lockout. Add in the perceived public animosity against complaints of labor—especially 'millionaire players' and a television deal that would guarantee money to owners even if no games were played, it appeared that the union had little chance of success.

However, the players surprised everyone. The players won in court by proving

that the television deal was indeed a lockout fund and thus prevented the owners from touching the money during the lockout. The public also rallied around the players once people saw the realities of the game. An average career for an NFL player is 3.4 seasons. Studies have shown that NFL players are dying approximately 20 years earlier and we're seeing more research about the detrimental effects of hits to the head and concussions in long term brain injuries, dementia and chronic traumatic encephalopathy—a degenerative brain disease. But the most shocking aspect of this, the longest NFL labor dispute in history, was the intense solidarity amongst the players. They rallied around support of their interests in one voice.

The tentative collective bargaining agreement that ended the lockout was a huge success for the players. While owners got a rookie wage scale that limits rookie compensation, the players have almost

guaranteed increased pay for veterans by establishing not only a salary cap, but a minimum spending requirement for owners across the league. The players prevented the regular season from being expanded from 16 games to 18 games got other significant gains in safety. Offseason activities were cut by five weeks, contact levels are limited at practices and players have received more days off to recover. Most importantly, players can now remain in the medical plan for life rather than the previous limit of five years.

Now that we have football back for this fall, let's not forget that amongst the breath-taking bombs, screens, sacks and touch-down rushes, that the NFL players not only show what ability and focus can do on the field but off the field as well when they showed a shining example of labor solidarity and what can happen when united workers fight back.

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Common Ground Food Coop Raises Funds for Expansion!

By Jacqueline Hannah



Jacqueline Hannah is the General Manager of Common Ground Food Coop.

On Monday, August 1st, at exactly 1:51pm, an e-mail went out to over 3,000 members of the Champaign-Urbana community that started off with the following in big, bold letters: "You did it! As of this minute we have owner loan pledges totaling \$665,000!"

The Common Ground Food Co-op (the CG) sent this message of celebration out to its over 3,000 owners that day at the conclusion of its owner loan drive for its upcoming expansion at Lincoln Square Mall. In just 59 short days during the sleepy C-U summer when many are out of town, Common Ground had raised over half a million dollars in loan commitments to help fund the planned build out project that will grow the current store to 2.5 times its current size.

The CG was founded in the 900 square feet of basement space of the Illinois Disciples Foundation building at Springfield and Wright on campus. For 35 years this little store was open only to those who chose to purchase an equity share and become an owner. In 2007-2008, the CG

raised \$270,000 in owner loans and made the leap to Lincoln Square storefront location. We also opened our doors to the general public. CG completed the build out of the old Bergner's space that had been vacant for seven years. At three years in this site, it's been a runaway success.

At the time of the co-op's move to Lincoln Square both the board and the management were aware it was very likely the co-op's success would soon outgrow the new store space and secured an option on additional space next door to its current location. With sales now increased almost 300% since then.

To plan the expanded store, CG did an in depth survey with its owners in January of this year to find out what services and products they felt would make the co-op a greater resource to the community. From those results, CG's sales trends, and industry data from other food co-ops around the nation, a plan for the expanded store was created. New offerings planned for the store are an expanded deli with hot, made-to-order foods, handmade pizza by the slice, and an espresso bar; a beer and wine selection with local, regional, and organic offerings; fresh, in-house bakery breads made from organic ingredients; and an expanded local meats freezer section as well as a new fresh meat case.

All current departments the co-op offers, from our bountiful produce department featuring organic and local produce to our bulk and grocery departments will be

greatly increased as well, most to double their current size. Build out will start late this fall and is expected to be completed by late spring 2012. The construction will be done in phases while the current store stays open. Customers will be able to watch the changes as they are unveiled department by department.

As a cooperative business, Common Ground is driven not by sheer profit but by a desire to meet the goals set forth by its owners for the organization. To vastly expand our ability to further two of our goals--to be the center of a vibrant and inclusive community, and to serve as an educational resource on food issues. CG's expanded store will feature an on-site classroom with room for two dozen students at a time and a full demonstration kitchen for cooking classes. When not in use as a classroom, the room will be open for customers to use as a place to enjoy their deli food and converse with their fellow owners.

Common Ground is a success because of the amazing community that created it and continues to provide support. Our owners have once again shown their deep faith and belief in the mission by providing the funds to make this expansion possible. Through growth, we can continue to grow our local food shed, support a stronger local economy, create good jobs, and make the change we want to see in our community. Thank you to everyone who invested in Common Ground, both in 2008 and this year, and to all who continue to support it!

Progressive Voice Needs Clearer Expression Prior to the 2012 Elections

By Gary Storm

Gary Storm is an Emeritus Professor at UI Springfield.

Progressives need make a much simpler and more direct case for their positions going into the Fall 2012 elections. Tea Party advocates have managed to capture the rhetoric being used in most mass media today. The headlines would have us believe that the deficit is caused solely by government spending and can be cured only by "smaller government" and "program cuts." In fact, such cuts, coming in the midst of both consumer and business reluctance to spend, often increase unemployment and exacerbate the economy's decline.

The media make little effort to identify types of government expenditure that, if supported by reasonable taxes to fund them, would stimulate the economy, increase jobs and/or improve the quality of public and private life in numerous ways. Investments in physical infrastructure, education, and scientific, technological and medical research, for example, would not just create jobs immediately, they would stimulate future growth.

We seem to have lost sight of the fact that the purpose of government is to promote the general welfare. This is especially true when the private sector is unwilling or unable to do so. When its actions actually harm the public by polluting the environment; consuming non-renewable resources; and, denying workers living wages, benefits, safe working conditions, and the right to protect themselves. In the latter case, we depend on government to eliminate these "harms" by establishing and enforcing meaningful health, environmental and labor

standards. Progressives need to emphasize the need for more, not less, governmental regulation of corporate abuses.

In recent years, those in control of the private sector (and their watchdogs and protectors in Washington) have increased and consolidated their wealth and power to the detriment of working and middle class citizens. If they were taxed at the rates in place during the Clinton years, the deficit would be declining. Fair, reasonable taxes to provide needed public goods and services would put people back to work without increasing the national deficit and might even reduce it.

Progressives need to make the case that in today's global and highly competitive economy, government needs to use its taxing power to create markets ("demand") for a wide range public goods and services that the private sector can then pursue. Such a policy would create "public-private partnerships" that benefit employers and workers alike. Further, they need to encourage average citizens to evaluate what kinds of expenditures improve their lives the most: expenditures for their own private use or expenditures from which both they and others benefit, that is, "public expenditures."

Let me close by listing some of the public expenditures that we are putting in jeopardy if we continue to insist on cutting back government and government programs. In reviewing the list, think not just about the impacts on your own life of cuts in these areas, but of all the people who will lose their jobs in the process and thus have their basic livelihoods placed in jeopardy.

Threatened Public Expenditures--Public Infrastructure: walks, roads, highways, subways, train lines, airports, bridges, tunnels, street and traffic lights and signage, public water/gas/electricity companies, pipe and

transmission lines, storm water and sewer lines and much, much more; Parks and Recreation: municipal, county, state and national parks, preserves and conservation areas; dams and reservoirs; Public Education: public child care and early childhood education, elementary and secondary education, adult and continuing education, community colleges and public universities; Arts and Cultural Programs: grants to schools, museums, and performing arts centers; grants to establish civic and cultural memorials; and grants to outstanding artists for public works; Public Safety: police and fire protection, homeland security, and disaster relief; Public Health Care: public health and mental health clinics, services for the aging and disabled, veterans clinics and hospitals, Medicaid, Medicare, and investments in pharmacological and medical research; Health/Environmental Protection: standards ensuring clean air, water and soils; reduced carbon emissions; and safe foods; Housing: FHA guaranteed mortgages, construction of affordable housing, rent subsidies, energy saving/environmental tax credits, and home heating and air conditioning subsidies; Income Security: unemployment compensation, earned income tax credits, public financial assistance ("welfare"), Social Security ("SSI" benefits, retirement benefits), and county public relief; Food Programs: federal agricultural subsidies and trade protections, food stamp programs, free and reduced breakfast and lunch programs, women/infant/children (WIC) programs, and food pantries; National Defense: support for armed services personnel, military equipment/hardware, and military research and development.

The list could go on and on, but the point is that Americans have lost sight of the

extent to which our personal and collective welfare and happiness depend on "good government" at all levels and on "good public expenditures," those paid for out of taxes we choose to allocate to them. As individuals we can spend money we earn in two broad ways: (1) on our own private consumer needs/wants or (2) on public needs/wants that we either share with our fellow citizens or that meet the special needs of those most disadvantaged among us. Let's start insisting that candidates, parties and ultimately legislatures prepare clear budget proposals that we can all understand ("Here's where we want to spend tax money and why") and then be willing to pay taxes on public expenditures we need/want instead of borrowing money to pay for them. This will stimulate the economy and, if we allocate some taxes to paying down the debt, eliminate the debt over time. We will get only what we pay for!

S.P.E.A.K. Café is Back!

SPEAK Café Race, Roots, and Resistance: Revisiting the Black Power Movement! (OPEN MIC POETRY/SPOKEN WORD SET)

Thursday Sept 1, Doors open at 6:30pm, set from 7-9pm

Krannert ART Museum located at 500 E. Peabody on campus. take 4th St. south to Peabody, hang a left and half way down the block on the left hand side is the Art Museum

Theme: "SEIZE THE TIME" (The title of a book by Black Panther Bobby Seale)