

The PUBLIC

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

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.

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When you shop at an IGA, request a charitable enrollment form from a cashier or manager, and designate the UC-IMC (#055187) as your preferred charity. A percentage of your purchase will then go to the UC-IMC.

Martin Luther King Jr. 2008 Commemoration Events

FRIDAY, JANUARY 18, Seventh Annual Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. Countywide Day of Celebration "Transforming Our Communities Through Peace & Justice."

Keynote: Joyce Tucker, VP Global Diversity and Employee Rights for the Boeing Corporation. Featured entertainment will be the University of Illinois Black Chorus, Dr. Ollie Watts Davis, Conductor. Reception immediately following the program.

4:00 pm @ Hilton Garden Inn, 1501 S. Neil St., Champaign FREE AND OPEN TO THE PUBLIC.

SUNDAY, JANUARY 20, Dr. Martin Luther King Jr., Community Celebration

Keynote: Fr. Joseph Brown, S.J., Director of the Black American Studies Program, SIU Carbondale.

5:00 pm @ The Great Hall, Krannert Center for the Performing Arts. FREE AND OPEN TO THE PUBLIC.

MONDAY, JANUARY 21, Martin Luther King, Jr. Unity Breakfast.

8:30 am @ The Vineyard Church; 1500 N Lincoln Ave. Urbana. FREE AND OPEN TO THE PUBLIC.

MONDAY, JANUARY 21, Urbana Rotary and Urbana High School Interact-Youth Festival Featuring presentations by:

Urbana and Mahomet School combined choirs, Reading of Dr. King's "I have a Dream" speech by Nicholas Lyles, Urbana High School students, Interactive workshop on Diversity, conducted by Sam Smith. For further information contact: Grace Mitchell, Urbana Senior High School 384-3505.

10:00 am @ Illinois Street Residence Hall multipurpose room, Urbana. FREE AND OPEN TO THE PUBLIC.

THURSDAY, JANUARY 24, *Voteless People are a Hopeless People*, University of Illinois Martin Luther King, Jr. Symposium.

7:00 pm @ 112 Greg Hall, 810 S. Wright Street, Urbana.
Sponsored by: Alpha Phi Alpha Fraternity, Inc., Cultural & Minority Affairs Committee of Illinois Student Senate, College Democrats and College Republicans. FREE AND OPEN TO THE PUBLIC.

SATURDAY, JANUARY 26, *Lending a Voice, Sharing a Vision*, A University of Illinois Family Friendly Community Event.

Mo Better Blues School Program Jazz Group, Cultural Stories, Essay Contest Presentations, Classic Events Reception, Omnimov Dancers, Djibril Camara and the Maragiri Drum and Dance Group.

2:00 pm @ Krannert Center for the Performing Arts Lobby. FREE AND OPEN TO THE PUBLIC.

SUSTAINING CONTRIBUTORS

The *Public i* wishes to express its deep appreciation to the following sustaining contributors for their financial and material support:

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The PUBLIC

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A Paper of the People
January 2008
V8, #1



'As in Iraq... So it is at home!...' [Carlos Latuff is a Brazilian political cartoonist who's hard-hitting commentary is often controversial, but always timely. More of his work may be found at <http://latuff2.deviantart.com>]



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Against Toxicity and Secrecy: Digging Up the Legacy of the 5th and Hill Site

By: The C-U Political Action Project

The C-U Political Action Project is Andrew Bloeser, Chuck Allen, Rosemary Thariath, Mariyah Chaudhry, Katie Hapeman, Sunanna Chand, Allison Adams, D'ion Harris, and Sylvia Oglivie. The Project aims to merge political scholarship and community action. Its current work is a partnership with North End residents to address environmental and health-related concerns.

TO SEE THE VACANT LOT AT 5TH AND HILL streets today, you would never know that a coal-to-natural gas plant once stood on the site. You would never know that this plant once dumped thousands of gallons of coal tar—a toxic byproduct of the coal-to-gas process—directly into the ground. And you would never know that even today, coal tar and a related substance known as BTEX still remains under the ground, moving into people's backyards, and contaminating the groundwater.

To look at the vacant lot at 5th and Hill today, you might think it to be an ideal spot for residential or commercial development. The toxic legacy of the site is invisible. It is effectively buried from sight, both under the ground and in a morass of information that Ameren, the site's owner, has largely failed to provide to neighborhood residents. To see this toxic legacy for what it is, you have to do some digging.

AGAINST TOXICITY

The toxic legacy of the 5th and Hill site is not news to Ameren, who bought the property from Illinois Power in 1994. Documents possessed by Ameren make this legacy



A photo of the 5th and Hill site from 1953

plain. Once upon a time, railroad cars brought coal to the plant on 5th and Hill. At the plant, the coal underwent chemical treatments using benzene, toluene, ethylbenzene, and, xylene, the components of BTEX. The final product was a clean-burning natural gas, used to heat people's homes.

However, not all the coal treated at the plant became natural gas. Substances left over from the process—the BTEX-laden coal tar—remained on site. Today, prolonged exposure to the chemical components of BTEX has been associated with a number of health problems, including cancer. But such concerns did not exist when the plant was in operation. Plant operators dumped this toxic byproduct directly into the ground. This process was a matter of day-to-day

business from 1897 until 1953, when the plant closed.

In the years since 1953, the physical structure of the plant has disappeared. Dismantling of the plant left behind an empty lot, with the exception of a booster house, which stands to this day. Yet, while the plant above ground disappeared, the toxic legacy of the plant below ground remained.

More than 20 years after the plant closed, Illinois Power sold the contaminated site to the Black American Legion in 1979. The Legion planned to develop the site for its members' benefit, but those plans never materialized. Illinois Power quickly bought the site back after the Legion began doing some digging on the property. Digging, apparently, was not without some risk. Yet, if this incident had uncovered a problem, that problem was effectively reburied—at least for many years. After the Illinois Power buy-back, the contaminants remained underground and untouched.

The toxic legacy does not end there. A study requested by Illinois Power in 1990 revealed that, over a period of more than 40 years, coal tar and BTEX had spread off the 5th and Hill site. BTEX, in particular, had moved under people's backyards, and in one case, under the home of residents living on 5th Street.

Following its 1994 buyout of Illinois Power, Ameren began to address some of the toxic contamination at 5th and Hill, removing the sources of onsite contamination in 1997. Still, not all contamination was removed from the site, and the contamination that has spread off-site remains untouched.

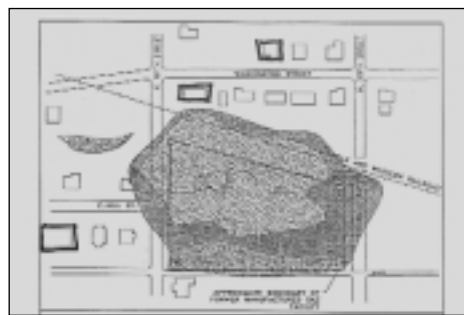
As Ameren recognizes, the clean-up in 1997 was not a complete one. The company has proposed an additional clean-up effort to begin in 2009, at an estimated cost of \$3.5 to \$15 million. The company will seek approval for its plan from the Illinois Environmental Protection Agency (IEPA) in 2008.

The effort will address contamination on the 5th and Hill site, and may also address contamination that has spread into the neighborhood. Addressing all contaminated areas has been a demand of neighbors in the months since they learned of the situation.

AGAINST SECRECY

What remains under the ground at 5th and Hill is only one part of the site's toxic legacy. An equally consequential part of this legacy is the community relations plan that Ameren, and its predecessor, Illinois Power, have practiced to date. At the onset of its mid-1990s clean-up effort, Ameren promised to send informational materials to the Douglass Branch Public Library, which is centrally located in the North End community. Librarians have no memory of the materials arriving, and the materials have never been found. Ameren representatives claim the librarians misplaced the materials or threw them away. Librarians at the Douglass Branch say that just would not have happened.

According to employees at the Douglass Branch, librarians take special care with materials intended for public information, carefully archiving them and recording their location at the library. Moreover, until November 2007, Ameren had made no effort to verify if the materials had



Off-site migration of the "toxic blob"

ever reached the library as promised. As of December 8, 2007 the materials had yet to arrive. Ameren also claims to have sent an informational letter to its neighbors in 2004. According to the 12 neighbors contacted for this story, that letter never arrived. Meanwhile, Ameren has released no further information about the spread of toxic contamination off-site to the public.

Ameren does have plans to distribute a fact sheet about the site to nearby residents sometime in January

2008. This effort comes behind the release of a fact-and-action sheet by a local community action group. The group, Champaign-Urbana Citizens for Peace and Justice (CUCPJ), has partnered with nearby residents to gather stories about the site and has also been providing available information to concerned neighbors.

Meanwhile, as Ameren seeks approval from the IEPA, many questions exist in the minds of neighborhood residents. Will \$3.5 to \$15 million be enough to clean-up their neighborhood? Will Ameren clean up contaminated areas beyond its own property lines? Has the health of the people in the neighborhood been put at risk? Just as importantly, why did Illinois Power, and later Ameren, not do more to make sure that their neighbors knew about this situation?

FOR POWER IN THE COMMUNITY

People living near the 5th and Hill site have not been waiting around for information from Ameren. They have begun doing their own digging for information. They have begun sharing their knowledge of environmental and health problems in the area with one another, and with working groups from CUCPJ and Champaign County Health Care Consumers (CCHCC). People living near the site have not only taken a stand against toxicity and secrecy. They have also staked out a position for something—power in the community. They have stood up to demand inclusion in the clean-up process.

Many have formed a coalition with CUCPJ and CCHCC to make this happen. The coalition wants to receive information about the current extent of contamination in their neighborhood, especially the amount of contamination off-site. They want more information about the possible links of this contamination to the health problems their friends and family members have experienced over the years. They also want to be informed about what will happen, step-by-step, as Ameren attempts to clean-up the area. More than anything, they want an opportunity to be included in plans related to the clean-up, and plans related to the future of the site after it is cleaned up. They want respect.

For the people living near the 5th and Hill site, the digging has only just begun.

5th and Hill Neighborhood Rights Campaign Kick-Off

A community meeting about the 5th and Hill site will be held Saturday, January 19, 12–2 p.m. at the Douglass Branch Library, 504 E. Grove St., Champaign.

Patrick Thompson Returns to Court Again

By Seth Jackson

NEARLY 3 AND A HALF YEARS after felony criminal charges were filed against Patrick Thompson, the founder of Visionaries Educating Youth and Adults (VEYA), the case is again scheduled for a third jury trial in late January or early February. Thompson, 38, of Champaign, has remained accused of home invasion and criminal sexual abuse since the creation of VEYA's controversial video documentary, *Citizen Watch*, in August of 2004.

The documentary became a community-wide issue when then-State's Attorney John Piland and then-Assistant State's Attorney, Elizabeth Dobson, attempted to charge Thompson and co-VEYA member, Martel Miller, 43, also of Champaign, with felony eavesdropping for audio recording police officers in the public right of way during routine pedestrian and traffic stops.

Miller was the first of the two videographers to be criminally charged by Elizabeth Dobson on August 23, 2004. Also on that day, Urbana police seized a copy of the documentary from a public access television station as evidence against the pair.

One day after Miller was indicted for eavesdropping, Thompson was arrested at his home after Urbana police alleged that Thompson (who is black) entered his next-door neighbor's apartment in the early morning of August 24, 2004, and attempted to rape a 32 year-old white woman whom he did not know.

Thompson was placed into custody at the Champaign County Jail on a \$250,000 bond and charged with 5 felony counts, carrying a possible prison sentence of 120 years. Later that week, prosecutor Dobson added eavesdropping charges against Thompson for his participation in the videotaping of police during the summer of 2004. Due to public pressure, State's Attorney John Piland dismissed the eavesdropping charges against Martel Miller in September of 2004. Piland, however, refused to drop the eavesdropping charges against Thompson.

In the November 2004 election, Piland, the 10-year incumbent was defeated by current-State's Attorney Julia Reitz, who credited her victory partially to the uproar over the eavesdropping prosecution by Piland. Upon election, Reitz asked for Dobson's resignation. In one of her first acts as State's Attorney, Reitz dismissed the remaining eavesdropping charges against Thompson. However, Reitz claimed she had represented Thompson in a prior matter, and due to this apparent conflict of interest, Reitz claimed she could not dismiss the home invasion case against Thompson.

In a December 1, 2004 pre-trial hearing, newly-hired assistant state's attorney Steve Ziegler did not object to Thompson's bond being lowered from the original \$250,000 to \$5000 and Thompson's release on his own recognizance.

In June of 2005, Thompson and Miller filed a *pro se* federal civil lawsuit against the Champaign Police Chief, 2 Champaign Police Chief Deputies, 4 patrol officers of the

Champaign Police Department, the assistant Urbana Chief of Police, the Champaign City Attorney, the Champaign City Manager, and attorneys John Piland and Elizabeth Dobson for various constitutional violations during the unlawful seizure of their video camera and documentary; and for the malicious prosecution of felony eavesdropping.

Champaign Police Chief R.T. Finney admitted to the *News-Gazette* that the eavesdropping charges were only filed to "leverage" Miller and Thompson "to the table" for discussions about videotaping the police. Included in Thompson's complaint is a racial profiling traffic stop against Thompson.

In the summer of 2004, assistant state's attorney Dobson engaged in "ride-alongs" with Champaign Police officer David Griffet, and videotaped Thompson videotaping her. On August 7, 2004, Dobson authorized Officer Griffet to seize VEYA's video camcorder and film for evidence in the eavesdropping case. Dobson was also the prosecuting attorney who presented evidence before the Grand Jury on Sept. 2, 2004 in the home invasion case against Thompson.

The federal lawsuit filed by Thompson and Miller remains pending. Due to the overwhelming caseload at the federal courthouse, Federal Judge Harold Baker has scheduled that trial for March of 2009. An out-of-court settlement conference between plaintiffs and defendants has been scheduled for January 11, 2008.

In July of 2005, Thompson represented himself *pro se* during the first trial of the home invasion case. During that trial, the state admitted that it had no physical evidence of an attempted rape occurring that morning of August 24, 2004. In a departure from police department procedure, Hediger testified that he conducted no investigation at the scene of the alleged crime. The State said the home invasion case came down to whether they believed the victim or not.

Thompson attempted to subpoena defense witnesses who would have testified that Thompson's accuser had falsely accused them of sexual misconduct at the accuser's workplace in the past. This testimony was not allowed to be heard at the first trial because presiding Judge Tom Difanis, who had hired Elizabeth Dobson to be an assistant state's attorney in 1984, ruled that the accuser's past record of false sexual allegations could not be allowed into evidence in the Thompson trial. Trial judge Clem abided by the Difanis ruling and Clem later stated, for the record, that barring Thompson's defense witnesses at the first trial was in error.

The he-said/she-said case ended in a mistrial as the jury was deadlocked at 6-6. Prosecutor Vujovich chose to retry the case, and 4 days before the second trial was to commence, the accuser's criminal charges were dismissed by the state's attorney's office.

Thompson elected to hire local defense attorney, Harvey Welch to represent him at the second trial, and the case was

postponed further to allow Welch time to prepare. Court records show Welch filed a supplemental motion for discovery, indicating Welch planned to call the defense witnesses Thompson had subpoenaed in the first trial.

It was revealed at trial, however, Welch failed to subpoena anyone other than a last-minute subpoena of the one defense witness Thompson had put on the stand in the first trial, a neighbor who lived below the accuser. Prosecutor Vujovich impeached the neighbor's testimony, reminding the jury that the witness had a past conviction for an unrelated obstruction of justice charge from Dec. 2003. The witness had pled guilty to giving a false name during a traffic stop. The jury returned a verdict of guilty on 1 count of home invasion and 1 count of criminal sexual abuse on Friday, July 7, 2006.

With the help of community activists, Thompson fired Welch and retained the services of Bob Kirchner to file a post-trial motion for re-trial. Thompson remained free on bond until April of 2007, when Judge Clem ruled that Thompson should be granted a new trial due to ineffective assistance of counsel; and that the improper hearsay evidence Welch failed to object to is prejudicial to the defendant.

The Kirchner Law Office has filed numerous pre-trial motions barring the state from using hearsay testimony again, limiting the prosecutor's opening and closing arguments to only the evidence, and barring the state from using Thompson's past criminal record to impeach Thompson should he choose to take the stand. In the state's effort to prove a crime had actually occurred on August 24, 2004, Clem ruled that criminal records over 10 years old would be prejudicial to the defendant.

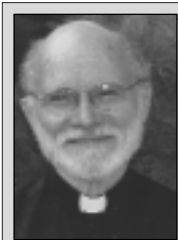
Defense attorneys for Thompson have also filed a motion for sanctions and/or case dismissed over the state's failure to secure and protect the 911 audio recording made when the accuser called METCAD on the morning of Aug. 24.

Thompson's criminal trial is set to begin Monday, April 14 at 1:30 PM. Thompson has been free on bond and is currently enrolled at Eastern Illinois University, majoring in the Career and Organization Studies program. Thompson received his associate degree in criminal justice from Parkland College in 2007. VEYA continues to mentor at-risk youth and has approximately 20 students engaged in VEYA's various self-improvement programs. Thompson, who is married with 4 children, has also produced a new video documentary about the October 8, 2006 protest-demonstration in front of the *News-Gazette*. It was shown numerous times on UPTV last winter.

Thompson has filed a small claims in civil court against defense attorney Welch. The suit asks for the return of all monies paid to Welch in the second trial. That hearing is scheduled for February 22. The schedule for Thompson's criminal trial can be found at www.cccircuitclerk.com or check the UCIMC website at www.ucimc.org

The Demonstration at the School of the Americas

By Tom Royer



Tom Royer has been the pastor of St. Mary Church since 1973. In the 1980s St. Mary joined with four other local churches to form the Sanctuary Program, which offered hospitality to refugees fleeing the violence in Central America. Since 1989, the parish has had a sister relationship with five small mountain villages in eastern El Salvador. Each year since 1992 a parish delegation has visited these settlements.

I WAS ONE OF OVER 25,000 WHO participated recently in the demonstration at the gates of Fort Benning, in Columbus, Georgia, where the School of the Americas (SOA) is located. The annual demonstrations, this year on Saturday-Sunday, November 17-18, are called vigils. They are non-violent protests that involve speeches and great music from a large stage in front of the gates, as well as the drama of large "puppetistas," and other demonstrations related to SOA activities.

The most significant part of the weekend is the "funeral procession" on Sunday, beginning about noon. It takes about two hours. The participants slowly walk in procession on the street leading up to the gates while the names of hundreds of the victims of official violence in Central and Latin America are being chanted. In response to each name, the crowd chants "Presente," recognizing that their memory and spirit are still with us. During this activity, military helicopters were loudly buzzing overhead while soldiers from the Fort watched behind a ten-foot-high chain link fence. It was a powerful experience.

SOME HISTORY

On March 16, 1989, six Jesuit priest-professors at the University of Central America and their cook and her 15-year-old daughter were assassinated by a death squad. The death squad activity had claimed thousands of other victims in El Salvador during the 1980s, but this event stirred a great public outcry throughout the world and in the United States.

During the 1980s, the U.S. had been deeply involved in the dirty war that raged in that country. The U.S. support-



Performers on stage in front of the gates of the SOA

ed the Salvadoran military government with over \$5 billion in aid and many U.S. military advisers. The official U.S. response to the Jesuit murders was swift. U.S. Secretary of Defense Richard Cheney stated emphatically,



February 5th Primary for State's Attorney

ALFRED D. IVY, III, DEMOCRAT

1. What are your qualifications and why did you decide to run for the office?

Greetings Champaign County, My name is Alfred D. Ivy, III and I am running for State's Attorney of Champaign County in the upcoming February 5th Democratic Primary election, and I would like your support. To aid in your decision-making, I would like to take a few moments to introduce myself to you by answering three questions posed by reporters at the *Public i* newspaper. I trust by the end of my letter you will: 1. Understand my qualifications for State's Attorney and why I am running for public office; 2. Share my vision for building better relationships between our community and law enforcement; and 3. Agree that changes need to be made to our local criminal justice system. I also trust that on February 5, 2008, I can count on your vote for positive change.

Presently, I reside and practice law in Champaign County, working primarily in the areas of criminal defense, family law, personal injury and discrimination. As an attorney, I handle legal matters in courts all over the state, up I-57 to Chicago, across I-74 from Peoria to Danville, and down I-72 into Decatur and Springfield. I have worked with youth and supported scholarship as an elementary school teacher, college instructor and academic outreach professional. When asked what I do, I respond, "I help people." I'm running because I care to make a difference.

2. What is your vision for law enforcement in Champaign County?

Every person I speak with about my campaign makes me promise to do something about the rampant unfairness in the justice system. They say, "Mr. Ivy, we're not asking you to be soft on crime, but at least be fair." It is unfair that individuals who reside in certain areas of Champaign County are treated more harshly in charging and sentencing than those from other neighborhoods. It is unfair that plea offers made by one assistant state's attorney differ drastically from offers made another attorney in the same office because there is very little oversight or diversity. My vision for law enforcement in Champaign County is that we can work together and create a model for justice that other counties might copy.

The State's Attorney of Champaign County is the highest law enforcement official in this county. As such, the duty to protect our citizens is of paramount importance. Simply arresting everyone and imprisoning our problems is not working, and honestly, it never has. The collective "we" can no longer sit idly by secure in "our" belief that what occurs to other persons does not impact "us." The truth is that each of "us" will have some contact with law enforcement and every one of "us" wants a fair process, whether that fairness is for ourselves or a loved one. My vision for law enforcement in Champaign County is one of relationship-building and crime prevention, as opposed to pure criminal prosecution.

3. What changes do you see need to be made in local law enforcement?

Too often, I receive phone calls from citizens complaining of civil rights violations and negative interactions with police or other law enforcement personnel. As a result, many people mistrust law enforcement, whether those contacts be with police, corrections officers or the State's Attorney's Office. Therefore, when matters of importance arise, the connections and trust needed to solve or prevent crimes, our citizens refuse to come forward. If elected, I would be visible and active, working to repair the relationship between law enforcement and the community to encourage early reporting of potential criminal matters and provide greater support to victims of crime.

If elected State's Attorney of Champaign County, I would change the screening process for charges and pursue a dual-level review for accuracy and fairness before arraignment. We should continue to encourage the use of station-adjustments by the police departments for petty and non-violent juvenile offenses. I would encourage the use of continuances under supervision and work more closely with the Department of Children and Family Services to keep families intact whenever possible. I would review our sentencing options and encourage assistant state's attorneys to make fair plea offers, regardless of socio-economic status. I would raise community awareness of common offenses and ways to avoid future legal problems, such as driving under suspension.

Yet, every change and improvement requires your support. Vote before February 5, 2008.

Thank you,
Alfred D. Ivy, III

JULIA RIETZ, DEMOCRAT

1. What are your qualifications and why did you decide to run for the office?

After graduating from the University of Illinois College of Law in 1993, I began my legal career as an Assistant State's Attorney in the Champaign County State's Attorney's Office, serving for seven years, prosecuting cases ranging from traffic to homicides, and focusing on child abuse and neglect. In 1999, I moved to the western Chicago suburbs. My family soon realized that we preferred living in Champaign County. I returned and joined Beckett & Webber, becoming a partner, focusing on family law, defending young people in juvenile delinquency cases, and representing women in DCFS proceedings.

As an Assistant State's Attorney, I learned to respect the prosecutor's power to affect the lives of both victims and those accused of committing crimes, through prosecutorial discretion in charging decisions and law enforcement. My understanding of that grew in private practice, where I represented people caught in the legal system. I believe in the words of Supreme Court Justice Robert Jackson, "the citizen's safety lies in the prosecutor who tempers zeal with human kindness, who seeks truth and not victims, who serves the law and not factional purposes, and who approaches his task with humility." In 2002, I ran for State's Attorney because I was disappointed with the direction the office was taking at that time. I was elected in

November, 2004, winning 63% of the vote, the first female State's Attorney in Champaign County (one of only 6 in the state) and the first Democrat in the office in over 28 years.

As State's Attorney, I work to ensure that we live up to Justice Jackson's standards. I am proud to have brought respect and integrity back to the State's Attorney's Office, and look forward to continuing to serve Champaign County.

2. What is your vision for law enforcement in Champaign County?

As State's Attorney, I am responsible for one aspect of law enforcement, criminal prosecution. I believe in the ethical obligation of Illinois Supreme Court Rule 3.8, "the first duty of a public prosecutor is to do justice, not merely to convict." Prosecutors have the unique power to affect an individual's liberty, property and life, and the unique obligation to ensure individual and public safety. To fulfill our ethical duty to do justice, we must balance these powers and obligations by making decisions based on evidence and law, not on politics and emotion.

I also believe in the principles of Balanced and Restorative Justice. Crime hurts victims, communities, and offenders. The justice system has a duty to make things right for all affected by repairing the harm done to victims and the community, by holding offenders accountable, and by rehabilitating those offenders who accept responsibility for their behavior and make positive changes in their lives. To that end, I support rehabilitative programs such as Drug Court, Adult Diversion, and station adjustments for juvenile delinquents. I also recognize the need to protect our community from those who, despite our efforts, refuse to follow the law. By their actions and choices, they cause immeasurable harm to our community. They must be held accountable for their crimes, to send the message that such behavior will not be tolerated and to protect the community from future criminal acts.

3. What changes do you see need to be made in local law enforcement?

We have made significant changes in the justice system over the past three years. The creation of uniform charging policies has resulted in increased use of court diversion, decreased felony charging, increased overall convictions, and appropriate use of resources. Better communication and oversight of pre-trial bond procedures has led to a significant decrease in the jail population. Policies and practices within the criminal justice system are only one piece of the puzzle, however. The best way to affect change in our system and community is through local, grassroots based work, particularly with regard to delinquency prevention. I am encouraged by the growth of organizations such as Mission 180, Operation Snowball, the Boys and Girls Club Jump program, and Edison Middle School's Society of Gentlemen. By working with and supporting these programs we will best be able to affect change by helping our young people become productive members of the community and stay out of the criminal justice system.

Republican Miller-Jones' responses will be in the next *Public i*.

IBEW Local 601 Absolved of Discrimination

By Belden Fields

IN ITS JUNE/JULY 2007 ISSUE, the *Public i* published an article on a lawsuit that Henry Bell III brought against the International Brotherhood of Electrical Workers Union Local 601, the headquarters of which are in Champaign. Bell, an African American journeyman electrician, accused the union of two things: discriminating by not sending him out on a job when a contractor had asked for a minority worker, and retaliating against him in subsequent assignments after he had filed charges. Bell charged that both of these violated Title VII of the U.S. Civil Rights Act of 1964.

Initially, Bell was required to bring such charges to the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission. This he did. While the

Commission did not find in his favor, it did give him a right-to-sue letter that permitted him to bring the complaints before the Federal District Court in Urbana.

Bell filed two suits against the IBEW and two suits against two different electrical contractors. The cases have now been decided. In one case against the union, the court granted a summary judgment against Bell's accusation in October. Then, in December, Bell withdrew the other case and promised not to bring it again. Regarding the cases against the contractors, Bell lost one on a summary judgment, and agreed to a dismissal of the other.

The union's major defense was that it fol-

lowed its clearly articulated procedures for referring people and that they were not racially discriminatory. It presented these

procedures to the court as an exhibit. The judge did not agree with Bell's argument that affirmative action procedures legally had to override these in instances such as had occurred. While the case was pending, Local 601 officers, under the advice of their attorney, would not speak publicly about it. Their views were thus not represented in the original *Public i* story. It is

thus only fair that we are reporting the absolution of the union in the court cases.

A Community-Wide Panel on Health Care & the Local Movement for Reform

Wednesday, January 23 at 7.30 pm, at the Channing Murray 1209 W. Oregon in Urbana. Free & Open to the Public. Refreshments will be served

Sponsored by Uni High Activism Club & the Channing Murray Foundation.



Environmental Justice an Overview

By Marti Wilkinson



TOXIC TOURS IN THE CHAMPAIGN community have placed a local focus on the site of the former coal to gas plant on the corner of 5th and Hill. Under this quiet grassy surface and beneath the white building with peeling paint lies a Pandora's Box. This box reveals hazardous poisons in the form of coal tar. The strategic location of this plant is an example of how waste and pollution intersects with race and socioeconomic status. A map of the site from 1892 shows how some of the neighboring households are labeled as "Negro" to identify the presence of African American households.

The journey through the historical landmarks of the environmental justice movement reveals an assortment of curves, forks, and bumps in the road. In 1967, an African American girl drowned in a pile of garbage and this sparked a protest by Texas Southern University students who questioned the location of the landfill in a predominantly black neighborhood. Sociologist Robert Bullard, director of the Environmental Justice Resource Center, noted this as an early example of how waste and pollution intersects with race and socioeconomic status. According to Bullard people of color represent 56 percent of the population that lives within two miles of polluting industries.

The environmental justice movement is a progressive hybrid developed from the merging of ideals from both the civil rights movement and environmental activism.

Environmental justice activists share these three common goals:

1. To acknowledge and stop the burdens imposed on poor and minority people by the presence of harmful environmental conditions.
2. To include affected individuals into the larger dialogue within public agencies and the mainstream environmental movement
3. To create a vision of a community that is healthy and sustainable

The right to breathe clean air, the right to be healthy, and the right to live in surroundings that aren't contaminated by smog and pollution is a concern of environmental justice activists. In the early history of environmental justice, activists found that established 'mainstream' organizations were not inclined to embrace the cause. This could be attributed to the roots of environmentalism being entrenched in the conservation and preservation of wildernesses and wildlife. When activists started to approach organizations like the Sierra Club they were told that their issues were a matter of public health and not 'environmental.' Since then both the Sierra Club and the EPA have developed an approach to understanding and addressing environmental justice.

In 1982 protesters gathered in Warren County, North Carolina to block trucks carrying PCB's (polychlorinated biphenyls—a known carcinogen) to a hazardous waste



Prof. Ken Salo at the 5th and Hill site during a 'toxic tour' of Champaign.

site. The protests in North Carolina and other locations eventually led to the development of a report by The United Church of Christ Commission for Racial Justice. When this report was released in 1987 it showed how corporations establish their bases in areas occupied primarily by African Americans and other minority groups. This could be attributed to the historical relationship between

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Eco-Resolutions for a Healthy Planet

- **Eat locally grown foods:** Just as we have an individual carbon footprint, our food does too. Consider how many miles your food has traveled, how many chemicals were used, and how much pollution and waste was generated in its production. Instead, eat less meat and support local agriculture by shopping for produce at the farmers market. The goods will be fresh and you will meet the folks who grow your food. This one can also help with kicking the processed food habit—another ecologically expensive habit.
- **Walk, bike, or use public transportation:** According to the American Public Transportation Association, public transportation saves 1.4 billion gallons of gasoline each year and can reduce household expenses by \$6,200. If you don't live near public transportation, try organizing a carpool with coworkers or fellow students. You'll save on fuel and reduce greenhouse gas emissions by removing cars from the road. When possible, ride a bike or walk! It does wonders for our hearts.
- **Turn off electronics:** Connect all electronic equipment to power strips that can be switched off when not in use. This includes disconnecting computer cords, cell phone chargers, and DVD players. Switching off reduces the "phantom load," the energy that's consumed by electronics when they are not in use. While you're at it, trade inefficient light bulbs for compact fluorescent lamps. They'll save you money and reduce energy use
- **Kick the bottled water habit:** Last year alone, we consumed enough water to fill 50 billion plastic bottles. Meanwhile plastic bottles and containers are grossly contaminating the environment and our health, in the name of pure water. Unfortunately, "pure" bottled water is mostly hype. Several bottled water brands actually use water with the same or worse water quality than regular tap water. If you must carry water around, then think of buying an eco-friendly bottle and refilling it for free. If you're still concerned about the water, consider buying a water filter.
- **Use canvas bags:** Purchase several canvas bags and take them with you to the grocery store. Plastic bags are made from petroleum and only about 1 percent of the estimated 500 billion to 1 trillion plastic bags consumed worldwide are recycled each year. Most end up in landfills, where they take perhaps 1,000 years to decompose, or end up in the sea.
- **Buy recycled paper products:** By purchasing recycled paper products we prevent trees from being chopped down, and paper waste from ending up in landfills. In addition, less energy and water are required to produce a recycled paper product.
- **Use biodegradable cleaning products:** Many traditional cleaning agents are very caustic and toxic when inhaled or in contact with skin, earth, and water supply. Instead switch to eco-friendly cleaning products that work as well or better, without endangering children, your body, or the planet. Visit <http://www.care2.com/greenliving/clean-house-top-10-eco-friendly-ways.html> for the top 10 eco-friendly ways to clean house.
- **Consume water wisely:** Taking 5-minute showers helps to conserve thousands of gallons of water per year. Use the soap water from washing dishes (with green soap, of course!) to water plants or the garden. Become more mindful of this precious resource, whenever you see water running. Don't let faucets run. Never water your lawn at midday. Place a brick in old toilet tanks. If you must, run the dishwasher only when it is full. Let grass grow longer. Plant native or drought-tolerant garden plants.
- **Stop junk mail:** Switch to on-line banking which can save paper, money, and time. Along with this, get your name off junk mail and catalogue lists. Again this will save time, money and paper. Go to newdream.org/junkmail and follow the instructions.
- **Program the thermostat:** By programming the thermostat in your home or office, the energy use can be reduced, by reducing the temperature when there is nobody around. Keeping the thermostat, when in use, at 68 degrees in the winter and 78 degrees in the summer is another way to conserve energy and money. Wearing a sweater in the winter and short sleeves in the summer also saves energy and reduces pollution.
- **Recycle, Reuse, Renew:** Recycling newspapers, magazines, cardboard, metal, glass, and lots of other items for reuse in renewable ways has been found to be the most efficient method to dispose of household waste. This practice is beneficial in two important ways: it reduces the costs of energy and raw materials and also the amount of waste produced for disposal. So take advantage of recycling opportunities available through city and community recycling plants. Visit <http://earth911.org/recycling/> for more information on recycling.
- **Shop consciously:** Think twice about the utility of the things that you're bored with and think you need to replace. The landfills are overflowing with televisions, computer monitors, and other discarded items and will remain there for years. Incidentally, organizing closets, shelves, and the garage can help to reduce wasteful shopping and needless accumulation!



From the Abolition of the Slave Trade to the Exploitation of Black Women

Amira M. Davis

ON JANUARY 18, 1808, A FEDERAL LAW ended the trans-Atlantic importation of slaves into the United States. So, as a woman descended from a motherline of Black women, I am compelled to bear witness to this bicentennial of the abolition of the U.S. international slave trade. This act, which resulted from the deals made among white men in constitutional settings, was thought by some to be the prelude to the end of this nation's "peculiar institution."

It is worth noting here that the British, who ended their international trade in bonded Africans in 1807, held in 2007 a year long commemoration to the abolition of the transatlantic trade. As early as mid-year 2006, I began to receive emails from U.K. associates that documented Black British community demands for inclusion in the development, planning and production of events and programs designed to celebrate this moment in human history.

Today, as I prepared to write this article, I received yet another email about a last discussion within the British Black community in December about the "so-called abolition and its significance to Afrikan struggles for social justice." But to date, I've seen nothing from Blacks in the U.S. (or any other groups) calling for recognition of the event, with the exception of a December 30, 2007 op-ed in the *New York Times*, written by historian Eric Foner, calling the bicentennial a "Forgotten Step Toward Freedom."

Foner's perspective, however, as a privileged, white male obscures his ability to see the truly forgotten side of this historic moment. For example, although the U.S. ended their legal transatlantic trade effective January 1, 1808, enslaved Blacks were not "emancipated" until the ratification of the 13th Amendment in 1865. So despite the legal end of the trade, the enslaved population grew from approximately one million in 1810 to four million by the end of the Civil War, not to mention a growing free population of African descendents.

Foner and kindred historians consider this phenomenon to be the result of "natural" increase, stating that women reproduced and infants survived "because most of the South lies outside the tropical environment where diseases like yellow fever and malaria exacted a huge toll on whites and Blacks alike." So according to Foner, married and unmarried Black women procreated with Black and white men and carried to term babies who survived infancy, because slavery in the upper South States created conditions conducive to such. This "view" of slavery disputes the many stories harvested from the period. Moreover, it challenges the historical revisionism of contemporary scholars of the era.

If the growth of the enslaved population was "natural," then I need to question Foner's definition of the word "natural." Abolitionist Theodore Weld, in an effort to gain support for the movement, gathered testimony from noted

personages in his 1839 book, *American Slavery As it Is: Testimony of a Thousand Witnesses*. These testimonies supported the contention that upper South states, like Maryland and Virginia, were slave-breeding states.

In fact, the Honorable Thomas Mann Randolph, former governor of Virginia from 1819–1822 and son-in-law of Thomas Jefferson, further confirmed this in a speech before the legislature in 1832. The former governor openly acknowledged that the state-to-state exportation of enslaved bodies had averaged 8,500 for the previous twenty years and this traffic was a substantial source of wealth for the state, after the soil had been depleted by tobacco and cotton crops.

Hence, the growth rate witnessed from 1810–1860 can only be explained in one way: the forced breeding of enslaved Black women. Following the abolition of the international slave trade in 1808, Black women's bodies

became the site of increased reproductive labor and remained so for the 57 years until the ratification of the 13th amendment abolishing slavery in the U.S.

As a Black woman, descendent of Black women, I am saddened by the lack of attention paid to this history, by Blacks and whites alike. Foner truly missed an opportunity to acknowledge the peculiar pain and suffering experienced by Black women. Women whose reproduction was commodified in the name of free trade; whose flesh, blood and bone children were taken to the block and sold along with produce and cattle. All done without regard to the mother-child bond or the humanity of the African brought to America.

As much as we might like to forget this bit of history or charge as mythology the breeding of Black women, the truth remains in the words of the dead, who still wait for their story to be told.

Can the dead speak?

Who are the children
to light the candles
to set the pictures upon the altar
to blow the smoke,
pour the rum,
and give black coffee,
on occasion?

Who will prepare dishes
of yams & collard greens,
black-eyed peas with okra
hot water cornbread
with salvation on the side?

Who will give water to their thirst?

Who will unleash
the collective pain
of braided leather
gnawing into flesh
that flees the bone
in escape?

Who will witness
longings for mother, family and kin
and then cry again?

Who will re-member them?

Who will sing their songs
fight the battles of Jericho
slay the enemies of Ham
refashion white gods
in their images?

Who will prepare the stick
tie the arm of a tree,
with nine bright,
bell-tipped ribbons
consecrate it with blood
wash it with herbs
rub its sides with palm oil
to ease the passage
between worlds?

Who will stamp it on the ground
delight them with
its sight and sounds
utter the words
that allow their bones to dance?

Who will call spirit into being?

Who will brace their back
and let them mount?

Who will lend their mouths
so the dead can speak?

Environmental Justice an Overview

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industry and government taking advantage of racist practices in housing and development.

One way in which activists have started to communicate the seriousness of environmental justice issues is through conducting Toxic Tours. These are tours where participants are guided through neighborhoods that are surrounded by pollution. Phaedra Pezzullo wrote about her experiences as a participant/observer in a toxic tour of Louisiana. The stretch of land that expands from New Orleans to Baton Rouge hosts over 125 petrochemical industries. Areas such as this have been referred to

by Bullard as "Human Sacrifice Zones." Pezzullo referred to Toxic Tours as "A provocative response to a disturbing situation."

This overview of environmental justice strives to generate a consciousness in readers on what is happening in the Champaign area. There are other parts of the country, and even the world, where people are suffering from the effects of racist and classist practices of government and industry. Being aware and getting involved are two ways in which this issue can be addressed.

Do You Know Your Carbon Footprint?

This Ecological Footprint Quiz estimates how much productive land and water you need to support what you use and what you discard. After answering 15 easy questions you'll be able to compare your Ecological Footprint to what other people use and to what is available on this planet. On the average, the ecological footprint in the U.S. is 24 acres per person, go to <http://www.earthday.net/footprint/info.asp> to find out how your carbon footprint compares. It might surprise you and get you thinking seriously about the environment and the future of our planet.



Water and Environmental Justice in Palestine

By Stephen Gasteyer



Stephen Gasteyer is a faculty member in the Department of Human and Community Development at UIUC. He was in the West Bank this past summer investigating the factors that impact community capacity to manage water resources.

JERUSALEM, BORDERS, SECURITY, VIOLENCE and the fate of Palestinian refugees: these are the issues most often mentioned when the mainstream media discusses the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. Indeed, President Bush has specifically mentioned these issues as he tries to restart talks aimed at a peace deal “by the time I leave office.” All of these issues are real and important, but miss the critical reality of the conflict: Israelis control a disproportionate amount of the resources in a land shared by two peoples. Nowhere is clearer than in the case of water.

Cases of environmental justice generally document the disproportionate placement of toxics and pollutants on the basis of race or socio-economic status. The case for environmental justice can be made as well on the basis of systematic denial of access to natural resources. This is the case for Palestinians and water, a classic example.

That there is unequal access to water between Palestinians and Israelis is almost beyond dispute. In addition to a host of Palestinian advocacy groups both in the US and in the West Bank and Gaza, organizations ranging from the World Bank to the Israeli human rights organization B'Tse-

lem have documented systematic and long standing disparities in access. As a B'Tselem report states:

“Israel’s citizens, like those of developed countries worldwide, benefit year-round from unlimited running water to meet their household needs. On the other hand, hundreds of thousands of Palestinians suffer from a severe water shortage throughout the summer. The shortage drastically affects the residents’ health and economic well-being. [...] This harm results from Israeli policy, in effect since 1967, based on an unfair division of resources shared by Israel and the Palestinians.” (<http://www.btselem.org/English/Water/Index.asp>)

As an example of the systemic nature of this problem, B'Tselem reports on the Israeli role in denying Palestinian water rights date to 1998, and have been issued periodically in 1999, 2000, 2001, and most recently in 2006, with the report: “Act of Vengeance: Israel’s Bombing of the Gaza Power Plant and its Effects.” Among the most critical effects was disabling water treatment capability in Gaza. I add here my own experience of living and working in Ramallah, Bethlehem, and Hebron from 1993–1998. Especially in Bethlehem and Hebron, I witnessed in each of those summers weeks of water shortage where piped water was not delivered to Palestinian families and businesses. Those with resources were forced to pay tankers who would supply water of undetermined quality. Those without, would make due best they could. All buildings had rooftop tanks to store water when it arrived.

It is important to note that there have been efforts to counter these reports by Zionist groups in the US, such as the

media watch-dog group the Committee on Accuracy in Middle East Reporting and Analysis (CAMERA). They argue two things: a) That the occasional news stories by US media outlets such as National Public Radio and the *New York Times* (hardly radical pro-Palestinian news outlets) that document the disparities in water access ignore the swimming pools and lawns that exist in Palestinian communities; and, b) Even if there are disparities in access to water between Palestinians and Israelis, these are largely due to corruption and inefficiency on the part of the Palestinians. In other words, Palestinians are surely misrepresenting the level of disparity, and even if there are shortages in Palestinian communities, these shortages are the result of Palestinian mismanagement and corruption.

The existing statistics on water in Palestine supports the counter argument. According to various sources, including the United Nations and the World Bank, Palestinians consume far less than Israelis. Three million West Bank Palestinians use only 250 million cubic meters per year (83 cubic meters per Palestinian per year). The more than 1 million Palestinians in Gaza are estimated to have a per capita consumption of just 70 liters per day. Six million Israelis enjoy the use of 1,954 million cubic meters (333 cubic meters per Israeli per year). This means that each Israeli consumes as much water as four Palestinians. Israeli settlers are allocated 1,450 cubic meters of water per person per year.

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The Demonstration at the School of the Americas

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“There’s no indication at all that the government of El Salvador had any involvement.”

The U.S. Congressional Task Force concluded in its April 1990 report that the men responsible for the massacre were trained at the School of the Americas at Fort Benning. They were part of the elite U.S.-trained Atlacatl Battalion.

For decades the SOA functioned at the heart of U.S. foreign policy in Latin America, yet few U.S. citizens knew about the school or paid attention to its mission. The SOA was associated with human rights atrocities, death squads and dictatorships throughout Latin America. The fact that this was well known south of our border, while remaining largely unknown to citizens in this country until the 1990s was the result of official secrecy and lies (like Cheney’s), the people’s ignorance and the power of this nation’s myth as being a benevolent superpower.

CIA documents show that the Reagan White House was fully aware of who ran, funded and protected the El Salvador death squads in the 1980s and planned the assassination of Archbishop Oscar Romero.

To keep alive the memory of the Salvadoran victims and to raise the consciousness of U.S. citizens, Maryknoll Father Roy Bourgeois organized a demonstration at the gates of Ft. Benning on the first anniversary of the massacre of the Jesuits and the two women co-workers. It was on November 16, 1990. There were ten persons in that demonstration.

It was a beginning. Father Roy and his friends called their effort SOA Watch. Each year the numbers demonstrating at the gates of Ft. Benning have increased. This year there were over 25,000.

The SOA has been an instrument of U.S. foreign policy in Latin America, training over 70,000 soldiers from Latin America in commando operations, psychological warfare, and counter-insurgency techniques. Its graduates return to their countries with the skills necessary to implement U.S. foreign policy—by whatever means necessary.

There has never been any official U.S. response to the accusation of U.S. complicity with the death squads and military coups throughout Latin America. A commander at the SOA has said that the few graduates who engaged in these kinds of activities are a case of “a few bad apples.” The fact is that the SOA has been implicated in every major human rights atrocity in our hemisphere in the past fifty years. The SOA graduates linked to human rights abuses have not betrayed their training. They have been faithful to their mission.

AT THE GATES OF THE SOA

2007’s demonstration at Ft. Benning offered a special memorial to Rufina Amaya who died last March. She had been the only survivor of the massacre at El Mozote in December 1981 that killed over 1,000 people. It was carried out by the infamous Atlacatl Battalion, a special elite force trained at SOA. Forensic teams have determined that most of the victims of El Mozote were children.

Though it was very painful, Rufina became a witness to the massacre, retelling the tragic story over and over again. She felt that God had spared her so that she could tell the story to others. She was a good friend to our annual delegations that have visited our five sister mountain communities close to El Mozote. She met with many of our delegations to accompany us to the small village where this worst massacre of the Salvadoran war took place. Through her tears, Rufina would tell us about hiding under a bush while the killing was taking place. The massacre took the lives of six of her children and her husband.

In a city park in San Salvador there is a memorial wall for the 75,000 victims of the tragic war that took place in that country for fifteen years, beginning in 1977. The wall is

modeled after the Vietnam Memorial Wall in Washington DC. It is very sobering to see thousands of names inscribed on a long black marble wall.

It should make us angry that the U.S. has never acknowledged its role in that war. During the vice-presidential debate leading up to the 2004 election, Dick Cheney said “We’ve brought democracy to El Salvador.” What our government brought to El Salvador was bloodshed and tragic suffering across the country. The U.S. still dominates the Salvadoran military-political-economic picture. El Salvador is the only Latin American ally that still has its troops in Iraq.

The SOA is not the only military center for Latin American soldiers to receive training in counter insurgency tactics. The U.S. has trained a large number in over 100 other facilities in the United States, and even more in schools outside this country.

In comparison the SOA Watch seems insignificant. It is, however, an important effort to unveil the secrets of a military machine that has been an instrument of enforcing U.S. foreign policy “by whatever means necessary.” This policy has promoted economic and strategic interests in a hemisphere marked by massive injustice. Today, economic leverage rather than brute military force has become the key instrument for the U.S. to pursue its foreign policy goals. The military machine, however, is ready when needed.



¡Presenté! The procession to the gates of the SOA.

The annual vigils at the gates of Fort Benning provide an opportunity to join in solidarity with the victims of official violence. The vigils also provide kinship with others who are committed to justice. It has grown from the ten who stood at the gates in 1990. But it’s still only a beginning. It will take a mighty effort to successfully challenge the myth of the U.S. as a benevolent superpower. It is an inconvenient truth.



Update From Kenya IMC

Kenya IMC formed in 2007 around the World Social Forum. UC-IMC is a fiscal sponsor for Kenya IMC and donations made from individuals locally have helped to start this indymedia outlet, now especially important during recent election tampering. The following report was sent to us by a member of Kenya IMC.

FIVE DAYS AGO, ON THE 27th OF DECEMBER, I stood in a queue for six hours—from 5.30 AM to 11.30 AM, waiting for my turn to cast a vote in my country Kenya's presidential, parliamentary and civic elections. When the votes were counted later that night, Raila Odinga, the opposition leader, began taking a near-unassailable lead. At one point, he led by almost one million votes. But somehow, Mwai Kibaki, the incumbent president, squeezed through a disputed victory. I can live with that. What I can't live with, is that in the last three days, more than 200 Kenyans have lost their lives because of this disputed election results.

When the tension escalated, I had to move to my brother's house, because I live in a neighborhood dominated by the Kikuyu, the biggest tribe in Kenya and also the one that President Mwai Kibaki comes from. Tragically, Kikuyus around the country are bearing the brunt of an angry people and they are also beginning to retaliate. Just a kilometer from where I am now staying, a crowd of Kikuyus gathered at the police station asking for trucks that they can use to ferry their fellow Kikuyus from different parts of the country. In the meantime, they are beginning to demand that all non-Kikuyus in this region should start vacating.

I recently talked with a close Kikuyu friend from Eldoret town and she was so scared. She is from the Kikuyu community while most of her neighbors are from the Kalenjin community. Due to no fault of hers, the president happens to be from her community. Due to his own fault, the president has greatly angered the Kalenjin community together with thirty-eight other communities. Even the supposedly official results show that he only led in two provinces out of eight. Consequently, members of all other communities generally feel that the president has robbed them. Unfortunately, they are taking it out on innocent members of the three communities that voted overwhelmingly for the president—Kikuyu, Embu and Meru. It is becoming a ping-pong game of violence as members of these three communities are also starting to hit out.

I blame the people who commissioned and condoned the rigging of these elections. While I realize that most losers blame vote rigging for their losses, these particular rigging claims are not mere speculation. Samuel Kivuitu, the chairman of the Electoral Commission of Kenya has already admitted that he announced the presidential results under pressure from the President's Party of National Unity. He also conceded that there were widespread irregularities which resulted in extended delays in announcing results from some forty-eight constituencies. Both local and international observers have explicitly reported that while the actual voting process was beyond fault, the tallying of the votes was riddled with faults. Raila Odinga has refused to accept these results. Millions of Kenyans have refused to accept these results. Business has

been paralyzed across the country, and it is not 'business as usual.' Lives have been lost and life cannot go on like this.

Kenya is now in a state of panic. Just yesterday, when the rest of the world was celebrating the New Year, thirty women and children were burnt alive in a church where they had sought refuge. They have died because someone found it fit to rig an electoral process and someone else found it fit to either facilitate or condone that rigging. They have died because there has been no concerted high level effort to quell a fire that is now consuming highways, byways and villages of this great nation. They have died because a subjective mass intolerance has been borne from massive political deception.

I hold all the aforementioned persons responsible for these deaths and any other deaths that may result from this tragic situation. The blood of these fellow Kenyans is primarily on the hands of the politicians whose legs have trampled on the fundamental voting rights of Kenyans. This innocent blood is also on the guilty hands of those whose acts of violence inflicted irreversible death blows. No injustice, however heinous, warrants murder of innocents. As we learnt from the Rwanda genocide, this blood will also be on the hands of all those who will turn a blind eye on this simmering conflict. Which is why we cannot and must not turn a blind eye to this violence, and other violent situations around the world.

But what can you and I do to stop this violent, raging fire that is razing down innocent Kenyan lives?

- 1. Share this information far and wide:** Send this piece to your local newsrooms and radio stations. When more and more people are informed, more possibilities avail themselves.
- 2. Volunteer as a web designer for the Kenya Independent Media (Indymedia) website:** The Kenya Indymedia website can and should act as a platform for accurate and widespread expression. We need to publish dozens of first hand stories that may not make it to the mainstream media. We also need to publish photos, audio and video. We therefore need volunteer web designers and programmers to work on it consistently for a period of 2–3 months as the Kenya Indymedia team builds its web designing and programming capability. As Kenya Indymedia, we now need to communicate to the world what is really happening and a vibrant website will be one way of doing this. We are liaising with a national movement known as Million Youth Action to call and text people from across the country, moreso the worst hit areas of western Kenya and Rift Valley, so that we can in turn share their stories. This way, statistics will cease to be cold figures and they will take on a personal, human angle.
- 3. Host the Kenya Independent media website:** In order to enable a download of videos, images and audio of this conflict, the website needs to have sufficient space. We would like to use this site to keep track of all the Kenyans who are needlessly losing their lives, getting injured, robbed and displaced in this post-electoral violence. We would also like to use it to keep track of who is instigating, undertaking and condoning this violence. Even more

important, we would like to know the victims of this violence so that we can reach out to them one way or another, in our own small way.

- 4. Mobile phone communication:** The only way that most endangered people can be communicated with is through mobile phones. We would like to distribute mobile phone air time to as many people as possible so that we can enable them to communicate about what happened, is happening or may be about to happen. As already mentioned, we will file all this communication on the website and pass it on to relevant authorities. One dollar will provide four minutes air time. These four minutes may make a difference between life and death.
- 5. Help relocate someone from a danger zone:** This violence has taken on ethnic dimensions, which means that people from certain communities are now no longer safe in certain places in which they are the minorities. Property belonging to such individuals is being looted and destroyed. Even worse, their lives are in grave danger. Many of them are, however, not able to flee since many public means of transport have suspended their services due to rampant insecurity on the roads. We intend to relocate such people through any means possible. This includes tipping food delivery trucks, cargo trains, newspaper vans and any other vehicles that are moving from one point to another for whatever reason.
- 6. Help feed a relocated person:** We have identified and are continuing to identify families in Nairobi and other parts of the country that can temporarily host relocated persons. As this is a grassroots movement with an emphasis on grassroots solutions, we intend to temporarily host displaced persons in host families. These families will greatly appreciate whatever food supplements we can give them.
- 7. Diplomatic missions:** Contact your respective embassies in Kenya and seek to know what they are doing about the deteriorating situation in Kenya. Give them our contacts and forward this paper to them. Embassies can do more than issue blanket statements for people to 'keep the peace,' as if don't already know that!
- 8. Tend to a child:** More than 75,000 Kenyans are now internally displaced. Most of them are women and children. What a tragedy when young children are caught up in such a mess. There is no perfect formula for reaching out to such innocent ones. We intend to take them toys, clothes, chocolate, drinks, books and more gifts that can cheer them up. We will particularly target children who have been displaced or those whose parents have died in this conflict.
- 9. Pray:** For those of you, who like me, believe in God, do whisper a prayer that peace will eventually prevail in Kenya.
- 10. Share your ideas:** It will greatly help if you share any concrete ideas that you may be having. Most politicians are just telling Kenyans to keep the peace and not really taking any concrete action to address this situation. People power and solutions can make a BIG difference.

Water and Environmental Justice in Palestine

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Consumption per capita might be written off as a problem of inefficiency, lack of maintenance of infrastructure, or other operations and maintenance problems on the part of Palestinians—and indeed groups like CAMERA have used these arguments. If that were the case, we would find that while Palestinians consume far less water per capita, they have equal access to the available sources of water. Analysis shows this not to be the case.

Let's start with shared surface fresh water resources. Roughly one quarter of the water in Israel's National Water Carrier (the Mekorot) comes from the Jordan River. Even though 93% of the river sepa-

rates the West Bank from Jordan (making Palestinians full riparians) they do not have direct access to its waters.

Israel also consumes a disproportionate amount of the groundwater resources. The Coastal Aquifer Basin is largely overtapped and the Gaza Aquifer, under the Gaza Strip, is overdrawn both by the large Palestinian population and by ongoing Israeli mining of groundwater. Of the water available from West Bank aquifers, Israel uses 73%, West Bank Palestinians use 17%, and Jewish settlers use 10%. This is enforced through restrictions on well drilling in the West Bank, which is rarely granted and all wells of greater than 100 meters have been prohibited since 1967.

Groups like CAMERA argue that this disproportionate access is more than offset by the supply of water to the West Bank. Roughly 53% of water supply to the Palestinians comes through the Mekorot. The problem, in addition to the water cutoffs during the summer mentioned above, is that Palestinians pay \$1.2 per cubic meter compared to Israelis, who pay \$0.4 per cubic meter for domestic use and \$0.16 for irrigation.

The situation of access to water has been exacerbated by the Israeli separation wall (often referred to in the mainstream media as Israel's "security fence,") implemented in 2004. According to the Water and Sanitation Hygiene Monitoring Project, the con-

struction and implementation of the wall has either destroyed or rendered inaccessible some 50 Palestinian wells and 200 cisterns "used for domestic and agricultural needs by over 122,000 people." Additionally, the construction of the wall destroyed 35,000 meters of water pipes.

These statistics indicate the reality: Palestinians suffer unequal access to shared water resources as part of the ongoing occupation. Water is crucial to public health and economic development. Rectifying this inequity through sincere steps toward joint management of shared water resources will be critical to moving toward real peace and justice in Israel and Palestine.