

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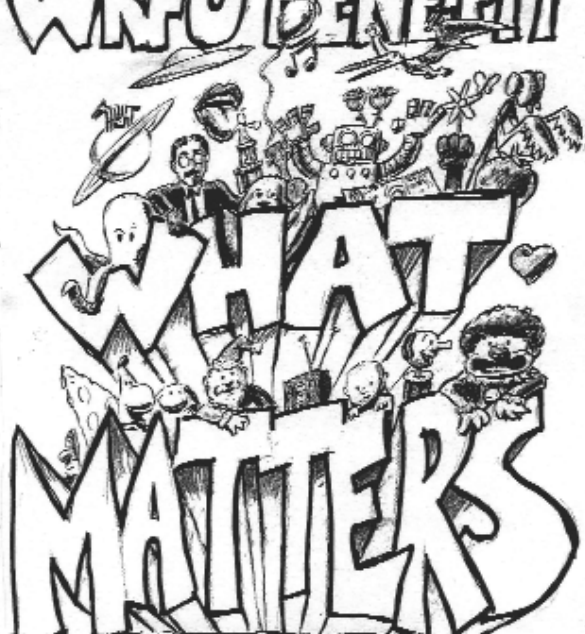
You don't need a degree in journalism to be a citizen journalist. We are all experts in something, and we have the ability to share our information and knowledge with others. The *Public i* is always looking for writers and story ideas. We invite you to submit ideas or proposals during our weekly meetings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

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WRFU BENEFIT

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WHAT MATTERS

New Ruins
K r u k i d
Golden Quality
Common Loon
Joseph Donhowe
Ferrocene 3
The Duke of Uke&his Novelty Orchestra
Dottie & the Rail
Paul Kothimer
The Turinos
Eleni Moraites
History of the Future
William Gillespie
Crystalline Scoggins
Beth Simpson
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6 pm - 2 am

This benefit is being held to raise funds towards a new permanent tower for WRFU. WRFU, 104.5fm, is a local progressive radio station collective operating out of Urbana committed to social justice, focusing on public affairs issues and the arts. WRFU airs opinions and debates in an open and diverse forum that focuses on educating and empowering the public. WRFU provides an accessible venue for an eclectic mixture of arts programming. www.radioforurbana.org
The cold weather is coming. Support a warm and active local community.

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The PUBLIC

A Paper of the People

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Photo by Allyson Illardi



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The Economic Crisis, Greed, and a *New Society*

By Gary Storm



Gary Storm is an area resident and an active member of AWARE.

The current crisis in the credit markets and its impacts on the larger economy have got me thinking about whether it is simply greed that ultimately explains current events or whether there is a need for systemic change in the way we order our social, economic and political lives.

There are at least two major ways in which the welfare of society as a whole, that is, the health and wellbeing of all individuals making up society, will improve under capitalism. The first is by having government establish health, labor and environmental standards (among others) which ensure that competition and greed are regulated, that is, pursued within certain acceptable channels or in ways that avoid certain unacceptable outcomes.

The second is by having government tax the income/wealth of the rich and redistribute it, as needed, to meet the basic economic and welfare needs of those who have not been served as well by the competition. Such redistribution will give the latter access to resources that will improve their ability to compete more effectively themselves in the future—assuming, of course, that they choose to use these resources to compete in economic or other realms as opposed to simply living more enriched leisure lives. Tax revenues would also be used to support projects/programs that protect or promote the common good of all members of society (e.g., building roads, bridges, power plants, parks, etc.)

A THIRD WAY

But there is a third way that society as whole could benefit under capitalism, but it would require a significant adjustment in our values that government action alone could not achieve. This would be to redirect the major object of greed from the acquisition of financial/material gain to the enhancement of public welfare itself. What if society shifted its basis for allocating status from achieving personal financial gain (demonstrated primarily through material accumulation and display) to making personal contributions to public welfare (demonstrated through devoting one's career to public service, paying one's taxes, making charitable donations, and/or volunteering time and effort to help others or improve the public environment)? One step to encourage such a change in values, of course, would be to implement the tax policies described above. Projects that provide goods or services to the public as a whole (public works) would have the additional benefit of providing employment to workers of widely varying backgrounds and skills.

Could we create a society which retained free markets for their value as highly effective and efficient means for allocating money, labor, and natural resources to produce and distribute goods and services for human use, but insist that their major beneficiaries (financially successful individuals and corporations) be taxed, as needed, to promote the general welfare in the ways described above? In such a society, the highest honor conveyed upon individuals would be for their contributions to the general welfare made through any of the avenues described above, but especially through paying high taxes. Individuals and corporations that contribute to the efficient production and use of consumer goods and services in the private economy would still be rewarded with wages, salaries and other benefits commensurate with

what the markets will bear, but they would pay, with pride garnering social recognition and esteem, graduated taxes needed to meet public needs and enrich public life.

Such a society would of course presuppose that government officials, elected or otherwise, refrain from corrupt/selfish behavior themselves and use the tax revenues collected to effectively/efficiently promote the general welfare. In short, government workers, too, would need to be motivated by public service and receive recognition for their contributions to the public good. Furthermore, to prevent either tax fraud by private individuals and corporations or the misuse of tax money by public employees, highly transparent accounting systems that accurately track the income, assets, and other benefits received by both public and private sector workers/organizations would need to be developed, applied, and continually monitored; the same would apply to the income, assets, and other benefits received by nonprofit and charitable workers and organizations.

Another argument for supporting social and economic changes of the sort just described relates to the environmental need to move away from values and lifestyles that are highly materialistic and that consume or destroy irreplaceable natural resources and ecological cycles that maintain all forms of life. In such an economy, there should be no positive social incentives for successful individuals to be extravagant material consumers. Instead, they should be encouraged to demonstrate life styles that are sustainable because of the way they use energy and materials—often minimally! The new aesthetic would be a minimalist aesthetic—or one that achieved aesthetic embellishment through the hand-crafted labor of human beings themselves rather than through the work of complex machine technologies that consume high levels of both energy and materials.

To the extent that a new economy/society recognizes and rewards minimizing the production and use of material goods and services in order to achieve satisfying and meaningful lives (public and private), and yet retains a reliance on free markets and jobs (earned incomes) to distribute these goods and services, there will be a critical need for government to design mechanisms that provide access to income for those who lose their jobs. Why? Because in our current system as demand for material goods and services declines, so will the jobs of those who have produced these goods and services. Without jobs and thus income, these individuals will have no way of purchasing what they need for basic survival, let alone for living satisfying and meaningful lives.

THE THEOBOLD APPROACH

Back in the 1960's, social theorist and planner Robert Theobold suggested mechanisms of the sort that might be needed. He proposed that government use new social security and/or other tax revenues to establish a "guaranteed annual income" (GAI) that would provide basic economic security to all members of society. In addition to a GAI, Theobold suggested that government provide a program called "committed spending"(CS) that would continue (or extend) the income of individuals who lost their jobs, with the amount of this income starting at the average salary/wage level earned over the past three years and

declining on a percentage basis over time (for up to four years). CS would thus allow individuals who have lost their jobs to pay most of their major financial obligations (e.g., rent/mortgage, food, health, utility, and transportation expenses) without radically reducing their lifestyles, but only for a limited period of time until they found new jobs or other private sources of income—perhaps after obtaining additional education or training. In the worst case scenario, GAI would be there to provide basic economic security after four years of unemployment.

Under both GAI and CS, recipients of income would be responsible for purchasing their own goods and services in society, including their own insurance programs, thus eliminating the need for expensive in-kind or voucher-oriented welfare programs with their extensive bureaucracies. Benefit levels could be established high enough to allow recipients to manage their own health care services or a separate mandatory government (single-payer) health care system could be implemented. If the latter were created, taxes to support it could be paid out of any of a variety of federal taxes: the same social security taxes used to pay for GAI and CS, separate Medicare-type taxes, income taxes, etc. The same applies to retirement income/services or pensions. Given the complexity and unreliability of privately arranged IRA investments, I would probably recommend administering retirement income/services through social security.

Theobold even suggested that CS in a slightly varied form (let us call it CS-V) be made available to individuals who choose to voluntarily give up their jobs in order to simply relax and refresh, reconsider the direction of their lives/careers, pursue additional education and/or training, try to establish new businesses of their own, or whatever.

Today, I would add that another attractive feature of both CS and CS-V is that, over time, recipients would learn to live their lives with a decreasing dependence on income and material goods and services. They would be given an opportunity to dis-

cover that many of the best (most rewarding) experiences of life are "free"—or at least do not cost a whole lot of money! Such discoveries would bode well for their living more ecologically responsible lives. CS-V would also result in limited jobs "turning over" more regularly and thus being more widely shared—a topic that deserves further discussion, but not here.

Let me close by suggesting the possibility of an even more radical reform to discourage successful competitors in the private economy from using their income for the accumulation and display of material wealth with all of the harm this does to the planet. This would be to place caps on the amount of income/profit that could be retained from economic activity. What if we were to tax all income above, say, \$250,000/year at a 100% tax rate, transferring all of this income into a government fund available to support projects undertaken in the public good? The budget surplus generated from such a policy could be distributed among various levels of government (global, national, state, local), and if governments were sufficiently democratic (another topic deserving future discussion), the decisions about how this money should be spent would be made by citizens collectively. If \$250,000/year were judged to be too high or too low, it could be revised through democratic decision making—but with full recognition of the environmental costs usually associated with high levels of material consumption.



Imagining the Homeless—and Their Rights

By Abby Harmon



Abby Harmon is a graduate student in Landscape Architecture, working with homeless communities in Champaign-Urbana and East St. Louis. She is a graduate assistant and instructor for the East St. Louis Action Research Project.

If you close your eyes and picture “homeless,” what would it look like? Do you see a person? What does this person look like? What is this person wearing? Is the person female or male? What is she/he doing?

Some of you may have seen that person who regularly rummages through the dumpsters at their place of employment or their favorite restaurant. Still others think of the person who asks them for a few bucks as they walk down Walnut Street. Some may see an entirely different person, perhaps a friend or a relative, an image that differs from the mainstream portrayal of “homeless.” Alas, the homeless figures that many of us see are simply artificial ideas of “homelessness.” These static views live in our minds as untested stereotypes and beliefs. In some powerful ways, this figure of “homelessness” also serves as a false excuse to turn away from the structural injustices and inequalities that shape our lives, allowing us instead to chalk up homelessness to “individual” problems—a plight of the mumbling, crazy woman or the drunk guy on the bench.

In reality, the person asking for change on the street is only a tiny part of an ambiguous group generally termed “homeless.” The National Law Center on Homelessness and Poverty estimates that there are 3.5 million people who experience homelessness in the U.S. in a given year. And as a result of current economic policies, we are seeing a rise in the number of people living in cars, on the streets, and in shelters not designed for housing. Grandmothers and grandfathers are sleeping in their cars because the money from their pensions and Social Security is not enough.

First-time homebuyers are being tossed out on the street because of sub-prime mortgages from unscrupulous lending companies.

Unfortunately, these are not new issues; we simply see more clearly now how people become homeless. In reality, people experiencing homelessness are often indistinguishable from the housed working poor in the U.S., save one factor, the lack of housing. Many of the working poor, however, are also very close to slipping into homelessness,

often with only one paycheck standing between them and eviction. Hence, living on the edge is not the result of individual decisions—it is a policy-driven economic reality perpetuated by years of pro-business policy.

U.S. labor history exposes decisions made in the late 1800s to solidify the use of wage labor, separating people from subsistence labor associated with the home. We also know that decisions were made to keep people at the mercy of employers, as laws were passed to criminalize the movement of “tramps” from place to place, securing them as a relatively immobile, yet unhoused, body of workers. These measures established an expendable workforce that we see in place today, embodied in the figures of the working poor, both housed and unhoused.

It is only when we acknowledge this history that we can begin to create effective solutions with those who are most in need. One obvious policy would be to increase availability and accessibility of affordable housing. Funding should be made available on a federal level so that cash-strapped cities and regions could provide for this need. Job security would also be improved through stricter regulation of employment practices. Homelessness and transient movement between regions should be supported or at least decriminalized, with the recognition that personal mobility is necessary to secure employment. These are but a few of the multiple avenues through which U.S. policy could support the interests of people rather than capital. These avenues represent a structural response to a structural issue.

Yet, in Champaign-Urbana, as across the country, we persist in trying to “end homelessness” through programs that promote “personal” change and transformation; interventions that seek to heal the individual, not the system. For example, service recipients are asked to improve themselves through classes, counseling, and money savings programs. This individualistic approach is a result of a persistent misconception of homeless individuals as the “undeserving poor,” a group marked by their difference from other people living in poverty and seen as responsible for their “condition.”

As a result of this misconception, shelters and transitional living centers assist individuals in molding themselves to fit back into capitalist ideals, so they can “make a living” and “get by,” without ever disrupting the economic system of injustice. But these programs are largely unable to provide individuals with a space to define their own conditions of life. Instead, they operate under sets of rules which are designed to deter behaviors seen as deviant or destructive.

But real change requires an investment in humanizing processes that allow those who have been disempowered to define their own conditions for living. This is not a novel idea; for example, in 1966, the United Nations declared a Human Right to Adequate Housing, stating that “[Housing] strategies should reflect extensive genuine consultation with and participation by all social sectors, including the homeless and the inadequately housed and their representatives and organizations.” Nowhere is this recognition of the human right to participate more needed than in the work to end homelessness.

Here in Champaign-Urbana, for example, service providers are often forced to offer services that coincide with governmental beliefs about what is considered the “best” way to address homelessness, rather than offer services that arise from the real needs of people who use the services. This detachment from needs exhibits itself on multiple levels. For example, an individual who receives a disability check that is too small to pay the rent cannot simply walk into the welfare office and ask for more money. Similarly, a cursory glance at available grants reveals which groups of people are currently privileged by the government as “deserving.” Women with children, in general, receive much of the available funding, while single men, not labeled as “veteran” or “disabled” are eligible for little to no funding. Yet, this doesn’t change the fact that there are single men who also have basic needs and should have a right to services.

What this points to, clearly, is that we need to change our methods of addressing poverty and homelessness. However, this change requires that we first transform our notions of “deserving” and “undeserving,” as we seek to humanize our understanding of poverty and homelessness. Our current methods of funding are based on this notion of deserving/undeserving, which eliminates the question of need and the question of rights, such as whether people have a right to housing.

What would policies based in human rights look like? For one, we know that the interests of capitalism are for cheap labor, which is antithetical to the interests of laborers. Thus, we must strive to regain the economic safety-nets lost as a result of the economic policies of the last two decades. Along with this, we must work to bring those who are most exploited to the decision-making table. And we must become proactive as service recipients, service providers, and community members, instead of waiting for federal and state governments to dictate who is deserving of having their basic needs met.

Project 500 Participants Ask Tribune For Apology and Call For A New Report

By Belden Fields



Forty years ago, in 1968, Project 500 brought a large number of African American students to this campus for the first time. While this was a

welcome response to demands that had been made upon the university by campus and community activists after the assassination of Dr. Martin Luther King Jr., it did not begin smoothly. Some of the students did not have living accommodations ready for them, some did not have their financial aid packages ready, and some found difficulty getting into courses.

The frustrated students initially congregated on the Illini Union patio. When it began to rain, they moved inside the Union. They demanded to see Chancellor Jack Peltason and, when the building closed and he had not appeared, they refused to leave the Union. They were ordered to leave, and when they did not the police came in with bat-sized clubs and arrested the students for “mob action.” The male students



Terry Townsend press conference, Photo by Judith Estrada

were taken to the stadium, and then to jail. The female students were loaded into a truck and told that they were going to be transported to their housing. Instead, they were taken directly to jail.

On the week-end of November 7th and 8th of this year, there was a 40th anniversary reunion of people who

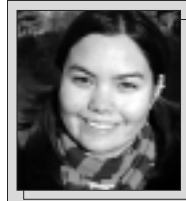
had been recruited in Project 500. One of the events was a press conference, called by local activist Terry Townsend, to demand an apology from the *Chicago Tribune* for inflaming passions against the students in its articles at the time. The paper had contended that the students were rioters who had cost the taxpayers over \$50,000 in damages by their destruction of Union property. It ran a cartoon that portrayed the students as a dog that was biting the hand of the taxpayers who were feeding them so generously. Terry Townsend reported that the actual cost of any damage to the building was \$3,812.19, and that most of that consisted of labor costs to clean up. It also was reported that at least one instance of damage was caused by a union employee who threw a chair at one of the students that missed the student but broke a window.

While many of the people who attended the reunion obviously had fond memories of their time at the University, they also carried scars from how they were initially treated. There seemed to be a consensus among those attending the press conference that there was a need for some of the former students to draft a report on what actually happened so that the *Tribune's* reporting does not stand as an unchallenged historical record of what really happened on September 9, 1968 in the Illini Union.



The Wolf in Hipster's Clothing

By Alexx Engles



Alexx Engles lives in Urbana and is a junior at Uni High.

With the newly opened Urban Outfitters on Green Street, we are not only inviting yet another huge corporation to suck money out of our community; we are also furthering our town's gradual corporatization. Urban Outfitters is a unique corporation because it manages to be one of the most successful, mainstream clothing stores in America, yet it also maintains an independent, hip persona. This persona is a simple facade, a way for consumers to buy into a seemingly alternative lifestyle, but, for several reasons, this chain is also much more deceptive than most other corporations.

The man behind the corporate conglomerate is known for shying away from the public eye and rarely gives interviews—why? A Conservative Republican, Richard Hayne has donated \$13,150 to the now ex-Senator Rick Santorum, who infamously equated homosexuality with bestiality and incest. And yet, Urban Outfitters sells several different t-shirts endorsing Democratic presidential candidate Barack Obama and it has also sold t-shirts with gay pride messages such as “I like girls that like girls.” His acts show that he is quite the antithesis to his consumer base.

By buying these products, consumers can believe that they are advertising goodwill and supporting a company that actually enacts it. Unfortunately, it appears that their money is actually flowing back to people who propagate Conservative values such as homophobia.

Not only that, Hayne has also admitted that most of Urban Outfitters clothing is manufactured in Third World non-union shops. It seems a purportedly alternative corporation would be against placing orders with such infernal factories, yet it apparently engages wholeheartedly in such ill-gotten enhancements of their bottom line.

Urban Outfitters represents not only the fantasy of street fashion and the lifestyle that goes with it; it also presents itself as a suitable place for countercultural youth to congregate. However, this is nothing more than a money-making idea from the mass conglomerate's marketing board. For example, the Urban Outfitters on Green Street has already hosted a local band, the Headlights. On the surface this may seem like an act of goodwill, a way for the company to reach out to loyal customers and become integrated into the community. In reality, hosting such events is just another attempt to polish up its image as a young, hip store in order to sell even more overpriced shirts.



Photo by Glynn Davis

Another way this mainstream corporation manages to appeal to the alternative crowd is by ripping off the designs of independent companies and selling them in

Urban Outfitters stores across America. Over the years, many independent companies have accused Urban Outfitters of stealing their designs and marketing them as their own. Some of the independents that have listed such grievances are fairly well known, including recognizable brand names such as Johnny Cupcakes, Crownfarmer, and Princess Tina. Urban Outfitters' attack on Crownfarmer was particularly sinister. First, the company purchased a Crownfarmer design and then when controversy erupted, took the design off the shelves. Unfortunately, the same design resurfaced with minor adjustments, now under the Urban Outfitters label. The makers of the design were never consulted or informed of the decision. They later blatantly copied another Crownfarmer design and sold it under the Urban Outfitters label.

With this self-serving corporation now sucking dollars out of our own community, what can we do? One answer is the typical grassroots approach of protest. In Vancouver, a group operating under the name Urban Counterfeiters launched a successful protest right outside an Urban Outfitters by passing out pamphlets encouraging people to boycott the business. The store agreed to pull from its shelves the object of the protest, a Crownfarmer Canadian Maple leaf design shirt, if the group stopped handing out pamphlets. In 2005, a group of high school students in Santa Cruz, California passed out flyers outside another Urban Outfitters, encouraging boycotts because of the company's support of ultraconservative, homophobic Rick Santorum.

Even though Champaign-Urbana is now home to its own Urban Outfitters, that doesn't mean it isn't worth fighting the conglomerate's hypocritical practices. When we fight Urban Outfitters, we also fight against the corporatization of our own town, which is always a worthy cause.

The Case of the Gap and the Oak Harbor Strike

By Niloofar Shambayati



In a recent strike, over 600 workers from Oak Harbor Freight Lines (O.H.) have taken the legal and moral principle of corporate social responsibility to a new level. They have taken their case to Oak Harbor's major clients, demanding that these companies put pressure on O.H. to stop harassing its workers and start negotiating with them in good faith. Several companies, including Recreational Equipment, Inc. (REI) and Urban Outfitters, have suspended their business with Oak Harbor until a fair contract is signed.

The Gap Inc., which also owns Banana Republic, Piperlime, and Old Navy, however, has refused to place any pressure on the company and continues to transport its merchandise through Oak Harbor. Several organizations, including, the International Textile, Garment and Leather Workers' Federa-

tion and Students & Scholars Against Corporate Misbehavior, have called on Gap to suspend its relationship with Oak Harbor. But Gap argues that it bears no responsibility in labor-management disputes of its subcontractors and that it has not been in collusion with O.H., despite the fact that the company's proposed contract included a special “GAP” rule that would deny overtime pay for weekend work on GAP business.

The Teamsters' labor contract with O.H. expired on Oct. 31, 2007 and negotiations failed to resolve disagreements over the company's proposed contract, the most significant part of it being the company's health insurance plan which, according to the union, would raise many retirees' premiums between \$400 and \$700 per month. The strike (the first in the company's 92 years of operation) started on Sept. 22, 2008. Teamsters and warehouse and office workers have been picketing at the facilities in Washington,

Oregon, Idaho, California, and Nevada.

Al Hobart, Teamster vice-president and Joint Council 28 president, however, insists that “the strike has everything to do with unfair, ‘unlawful’ labor negotiations and less to do with the contract itself... it's about the actions of the company to intimidate workers... They're being overly aggressive.” He adds that, “Believe me, this decision (to strike) wasn't made lightly.” The union alleges that the company representatives had contacted and intimidated individual workers during the negotiations and has filed charges of unfair-labor practices with the National Labor Relations Board. Company spokesman, Mike Hobby, contends that those charges are unfounded.

Yet the company immediately cut off health care benefits to its unionized workers and its retirees. It hired strike-breaking security firm, Modern Staffing and Security, and Seattle's leading union avoidance law firm Davis Grimm Payne and Marra. The pick-

eters have been assaulted with flying objects, verbally abused by company officials, and at least three individuals have been hit and injured by vehicles driven by the company's new employees and private security agents.

As during any economic downturn, many businesses have been manipulating the current financial crisis to deepen the rift among the working people and crush the unions' struggle to achieve economic security and work place democracy. We need to support the unions, and remember that their victory, after all, is ultimately all working people's victory against corporate greed. After all, it was the unrelenting struggle of workers to create trade unions that “brought us the weekend” and the eight-hour work day, which, by the way, have been quickly vanishing before our eyes.

Let's tell the Gap Inc. to demand fair labor practices from Oak Harbor. It wouldn't hurt to remind them that we can always buy our hip clothes someplace else.

THE PEOPLE'S POTLUCK THANKSGIVING

Sunday, November 30, 6–10 PM, Urbana Civic Center, 108 WATER ST.

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



How the Economic Decline Affect Us Locally

By Walter W. McMahon



Walter McMahon is a Professor Emeritus of Economics, University of Illinois.

The Champaign-Urbana economy reflects what is happening nationally. The decline in sales, jobs, and construction, and the rising mortgage foreclosure rates are less severe than surrounding communities such as Decatur and Danville because of the stabilizing influence from the University and from regional health care facilities. But they are substantial. Construction is down and has excess capacity, and the unemployment rate has climbed from 4.3% in April and is near 6%. This is very likely to go higher. The impacts of unemployment are shown by substantial research to include a decrease in happiness. But the decline affects more than 6%, and closer to three times that. The usual rule of thumb is that another 6% have stopped seeking work and dropped out of the labor force, and still a third 6% or so feel their jobs are threatened. This 18% gets out to the polls to vote, and they become a determining force in many elections.

The problem is that the economic decline nationally and in Champaign-Urbana reasonably can be expected to continue. There are thus far no national policies that have been put in place capable of turning the real economy around. Monetary policies involving the banks and the financial sector, especially that of setting interest rates by the Federal Reserve and the infusion of government money into banks, are not sufficient under conditions where people are losing their jobs, sales are off, debt is high, excess capacity exists, and the investment outlook is impaired. Fiscal policies are the heavy artillery under this situation.

There are major \$700 billion monetary policy steps being taken to stabilize the banks and financial sector, and something like this was necessary to prevent disaster. But President Bush is wrong in contending that we just need to wait for these monetary steps to work. Businesses with falling sales, excess capacity, and debt twice as high as a percent of GDP as it should be are not likely to borrow to invest in their plant or store, nor should they be if they are reasonable. Consumers with new durables, high consumer and mortgage debt, and decimated stock and mutual fund portfolios also will not borrow much more. Monetary policy and the Federal Reserve can lower interest rates further, and although this is accommodating, it is like pushing on a string.

How long will this decline last? In the 1980's 6.5 million jobs were lost from the peak in July 1981 to the trough in November 1982, a decline that lasted 16 months before the turnaround. The current decline could be even

worse, given the high debt and slowness in putting in place a well designed fiscal policy. If the decline again should last 16 months that would put the trough in the late Fall of 2009. If there are Federal expenditure cuts as some have advocated, this is an inappropriate stabilization policy that would reduce purchasing power and lower aggregate demand and in the short run make the trough deeper and delay the recovery into 2010 or later.

Based on the experience with past recessions and on a little thought about how the economy works, once a credible fiscal policy involving taxes and government expenditures is enacted, it is likely that the stock market will surge. The stock market depends in large part on expected future earnings. As the unemployed and others receive increases in their disposable incomes due to tax cuts, expenditure increases, or both, they spend it raising sales and reducing excess capacity. This, in turn, stimulates borrowing and investment by businesses with the result that if the effort is sustained the trough of the recession tends to follow in about 6 months.

In Champaign-Urbana, of the economic sectors employment in manufacturing has fallen by far the farthest, falling by 2000 persons since 2000. Financial services fell very sharply during the 2000 recession, and then leveled off, but will now very likely fall significantly as the 2008-2009 economic decline deepens.

The University's budget is likely to see continuing strain as the state's fiscal crisis is made more acute by falling sales tax and income tax revenue. Enrollments are unlikely to be affected since there is a high demand for admissions, which are capped and rationed among the colleges. 2009 graduates will face a weaker job market. But investment in human capital is very long-term, and with 45 or more years for each graduate to be in the labor force the relatively short-term losses in starting salaries and longer job search times will be quickly recouped.

Parkland College is very likely to see increased enrollments. As job markets for high school graduates weaken, their foregone earnings costs of attending college fall, and it typically becomes more advantageous for more to enroll.

But the other side of the coin is that with Parkland so heavily dependent on property tax revenues and state support, as house prices level off and fall, mortgage foreclosure rates rise, and housing vacancies occur, these forces are very likely to sharply restrict Parkland's revenues.

Health care delivery system employment is the one bright spot. It is likely to continue its long trend upward in Champaign-Urbana since 1995. Some reforms of the health care delivery system may come early in the new administration, such as coverage of children. But major changes in coverage or in the control of health care costs are a longer term structural reform that is not likely to be the first priority given the national economic crisis and Illinois' fiscal crisis.

In the short run the Christmas shopping season in Champaign-Urbana is likely to follow the national pattern. The job losses mentioned above, high consumer credit card debt, and 40% plus stock market losses by many shoppers means that there will be restricted purchasing. Credit availability due to the financial sector bailouts will not increase disposable income. That means that it should be active and lively, but many more early discounts, and not as good as last year.

So, there are good reasons that Ben Bernanke, head of the Federal Reserve, endorsed another round of fiscal stimulus and stressed expenditure increases rather than cuts in the short run. The package needs to be better designed than the last one to put the money in the hands of those who will spend it, thereby getting more bang for the buck. Investment tax credits are excellent for longer run growth, but not as part of a stimulus package because businessmen with excess capacity and lagging sales are not generally very interested in investing in new plant and equipment. Inflation is not a relevant worry at a time when there is slack demand, unemployment in the labor market, and falling housing prices. It will return only after full recovery is achieved, and only if at that time the Federal budget is not balanced. Some have estimated that a new stimulus package approaching \$450 billion will be needed. The alternative will be a much deeper recession with recovery long delayed.



GEO Rally for Quality Education

By Tarnjeet Kang

On October 29th, the Rally for Quality Education brought together various unions, students, campus workers and allies. Over 200 people showed up to display their opposition to increasing tuition, wage cuts and limitations on the freedom of speech. Also being questioned was the University's perpetual excuse of budget cuts and economic woes to justify making students and workers bear the brunt of balancing the budget. When attendees marched to the Swanlund Administration Building, administrators refused to acknowledge the rally in any way. This lack of action on the part of the administration shows that they do not consider the needs of their students and workers to be a priority. While an e-mail from Chancellor Herman expresses a commitment to maintain access to a quality education and concern for the welfare of the campus community, the actions of the administration contradict this. In the near future we are going to continue to see an increase in ideological, financial and social changes, both on campus and at the national level. It is imperative that we continue to raise our voices and make our concerns heard, even if the issues at stake



GEO demonstration photo by Tim Mayhart

do not directly impact us. "If not you, then who? If not now, then when?"

The Red Herring Vegetarian Restaurant



1209 West Oregon, Urbana,
Monday-Friday 11am-3pm

The Red Herring may close in the coming weeks due to the loss of support from a generous benefactor, in part because of the economic downturn. But you can help save it! If you must eat out for lunch, make it the Herring! Encourage at least 10 other people to frequent the Herring in the coming weeks! Invite others to this group to make them aware! If you treasure the Herring, the only way it will survive is if you put a bit of effort into its sustenance. Please do your part.



Global Crisis, Recession, and Wages: What Happened and What Now?

By Michael Brün



When Gordon Brown, the current Prime Minister of Great Britain, announced that his government's response to the financial crisis was to "recapitalize" British banks by buying shares in them, while at the same time extending deposit guarantees, it amounted to a coup d'état, or

more precisely, a *coup du monde*. Britannia literally ruled the world for a moment—at least the world of finance.

As soon as Brown announced the plan, other governments in Europe and elsewhere, and most notably here in the US, all having previously announced very different plans, fell over one another to announce that they would do the same as Brown. The reason they did so is they feared that if they didn't, customers would take their deposits out of all other banks and put them in Brown's British banks. That's economics.

The reason they now all say Brown is a very smart person is they would rather have us believe they were persuaded than bullied. That's politics.

The lesson we should draw from this is that we live in one global financial community. There is no protection in boundaries nowadays. Anyone watching the movements on the stock exchanges would come to the same conclusion. The indices of exchanges in the US, Canada, Mexico, Brazil, Britain, Germany, Russia, Japan, China, Australia and elsewhere move up and down with eerie synchronicity. If they are not in synch, it is probably because they are closed by the authorities.

The lesson is we need to think in terms of world government. I'm not saying we should create one: we already have one, ramshackle and ad hoc as it may be. Government and business leaders coordinate with each other all

the time, in and outside the framework of global institutions such as the IMF and the United Nations. There are tacit understandings as well as frightened phone calls; and of course there are formal agreements, such as the WTO. Beyond trade promotion, these contribute to the standardization of law, accounting and numerous other practices.

Maybe there should be a formally recognized and differently structured world government; maybe not. That can be debated another time. But beyond debate already now is that we need to think in terms of world government as much as we think in terms of global economy. The reason is that the consequences of policies spread the world over. The current financial crisis is global; the recession will be global; and any policies to deal with financial institutions or the recession will have to be global too. Gordon Brown just showed us why.

The global problem lurking behind both the financial crisis and the recession is low wages. Here in the US, wages stagnated during the past thirty years while output and productivity grew. But the worst is not here; it is overseas in China, India and elsewhere, where output grows faster with production techniques rapidly modernizing, but where wages are much lower and are growing only slowly. Modern products efficiently produced using workers making around \$1 per hour: that is a recipe for huge business profits.

Huge profits cause no trouble when productively invested or pleasurably consumed. However, when recipients of profits choose to save the money instead, that presents a challenge to the financial community. Of course the challenge is welcome; that is how the finance industry makes a living; it is a challenge nonetheless.

A central promise of capitalist finance is, if you earn your money, your money will earn for you. So you work, borrow, cheat, steal, or inherit: and now the financial community

has to take that money and get it to earn returns for you.

Think of brokers, bankers, financiers and all the rest as matchmakers, trying to bring together your money and a productive return-yielding project. If they get too much money, they run out of good matches. But they don't turn away business, saying "sorry!" because that is bad for reputation and earnings. Just like third world matchmakers make any match for a bride that earns the fee, even to pimps in far off lands, these financiers take your money to less reputable ventures. One day it all comes out, that billions or trillions are lost. And instead of too much investment, there is suddenly too little, because everyone is scared, suspecting there is still too much money floating around for it to be safe.

You can complain about the corruption; it doesn't help. The real problem is not the human character; it is too much money looking for investment opportunities.

Now suppose wages rise all over the world. There would be more demand for products, so more good investment opportunities. At the same time, there would be less profit, so less money looking for investment opportunities. Investment becomes straightforward, so the bloated finance industry shrinks to a proper size. Everything will get better, for quite a while. This would be good global policy.

Of course, with well-organized labor all over the world, in China, India, Viet Nam, Nigeria, South Africa, Brazil, Mexico, as well as of course in Europe, Russia, the US and Japan—all enjoying good wages with benefits and a healthy sense of entitlement—you can imagine things eventually going too far: too many investment opportunities and no profits left to invest. Stagflation and the bad old 70s return. Time to elect a new Reagan. But—Oh dear!—where is the foreign cheap labor going to come from then?

Secretary-Treasurer Rich Trumka Addresses Local AFL-CIO

By Belden Fields

On October 15, Rich Trumka, the Secretary-Treasurer of the AFL-CIO spoke to, and answered questions from local AFL-CIO delegates to the Champaign County AFL-CIO. Also present were apprentices from two of the local craft unions.

The AFL-CIO had been working very hard to turn out its members in November to vote for the Obama-Biden ticket. Trumka, himself, had stumped in a number of states with significant labor union members. His main message was always the same: racism is the greatest evil that plagues the United States; too many white workers harbor racist sentiments; and, they better get over it on election day because another Republican administration would be a disaster for working people.

While Trumka gave a strong pitch for Obama, he also said that if Obama were elected, the AFL-CIO would pay close attention to see to it that the Obama administration did not behave the way that the Clinton one did by adopting neo-liberal, free-trade policies that hurt labor both in the United States and abroad. The AFL-CIO is very concerned about some of the people who have been advising Obama, like former Clinton Secretary of the Treasury Robert Rubin. Other free-trading figures from the Clinton administration, like Lawrence Summers and Laura Tyson, are also of concern to the AFL-CIO. The organization has drawn up a list of people for several key cabinet and sub-cabinet positions who would be more favorable to working people and for whom the AFL-CIO would advocate.

The AFL-CIO worked very hard for the Obama election and poured hundreds of millions of dollars into the campaign. According to AFL-CIO President John Sweeney, in the last four days of the campaign 250,000 union volunteers made 5.5 million phone calls and visited 3.9 million union households. Labor leaders have claimed that union outreach was crucial in Florida, Indiana, Nevada, Ohio, Pennsylvania, and Wisconsin where 67% of AFL-CIO unions' members who voted, did so for Obama and only 30% for McCain, according to Peter D. Hart Research Associates.

Aside from wanting a say in the appointments to the Treasury Department, the unions are pushing for a stimulus program to create jobs, extension of unemployment benefits, increased financing for food stamps, a rescue program for automakers, and, very importantly, passage of *The Employee Free Choice Act* that would force employers to recognize a union if a majority of workers signed a card supporting one. This would eliminate the need for open voting in which some employers intimidate and even fire workers who advocate for the creation of a union. This is strongly opposed by the U.S. Chamber of Commerce and

will require determination on the part of Democrats in the Congress, and pressure on some Republicans in the Senate where the Democrats will not have a veto-proof majority.



Belden Fields with Richard Trumka reading the *Public i*



History Matters, Just Ask Barack

By Aaron Ammons



Aaron Ammons is a poet, community activists, and co-founder of CU Citizens for Peace and Justice.

In 1963 four little girls, Denise McNair (11 years old), Cynthia Wesley, Carole Robertson, and Addie Mae Collins, all 14 years old, were preparing for their lessons at the 16th Street Baptist Church when BOOM! A bomb exploded in the church killing all four girls and severely injuring many others. This heinous act prompted many men and women to anger and they set out to kill whomever they thought was guilty of this crime. Two of those angry people were Diane Nash and Reverend James Luther Bevel, strategists and architects of several of the most memorable events and major accomplishments of the Civil Rights Movement: Bloody Sunday, the Children's March, the March on Washington, and of course, the Birmingham Project, which later became known as the Selma Right to Vote Campaign.

When recounting the events of September 15, 1963 Reverend Bevel told me that he and some others felt that, "any man that blows up little girls ought to die" and that they seriously considered killing the man they all believed was guilty of this act: 'Dynamite Bob,' a well known member of the local KKK. The connection between the deaths of the girls and the election of Barack Obama on November 4, 2008 is that Reverend Bevel and Diane Nash decided not to be a part of a plot to kill Dynamite Bob and instead went home and devised what they felt was the appropriate response to the killing of the four girls. They decided that getting black people the right to vote was the best way to alleviate the anger, frustration and pain. They knew that the negative energy permeating the black community, and the country at that time could be used as a tool for change.

My good friend, Ken Salo, reminds me often that 'History Matters,' which is why I used history to transition into my own personal thoughts about "Oba-Messiah" (just kidding) being elected as President of the United States of

America. I am well aware that there is a vast history that created the context for the right to vote campaign, but I was asked to describe November 4, 2008 from my perspective.

After a long day of electioneering, my wife Carol and I made our rounds to the Obama Party at the American Legion where 99.9% of the crowd was African American. We all wore t-shirts with President Obama on the front and empowering statements on the back. Some were cautiously optimistic about the results while others were guaranteeing a victory. The common theme was that everyone was waiting to erupt, one way or another. Because of Carol's county board race, we chose to run by the Campaign County's Brookens Institute to check the vote counts. That's where we heard the announcement that Barack had won the election. Based upon the tremendous support Barack received from white America and we were in a room that was 99% white, we thought there would be excitement, especially from the Democrats, but to our surprise, Mr. "Big Al" Kurtz (recently appointed to the County Board in district 7) and his wife Linda, seemed to be the only people in the room who shared our jubilation! We felt like screaming for joy and horror at the same time, so we thought it best to just leave. Upon leaving we decided to visit with Rev. Bogan and Ruth, who had decided to bring the change in at home. After a short stay and a sharing of thoughts with them, we went home to be with our children. Of course, Jelani (my 13 yr old son) was following the results on TV and we were just in time to see Barack make his acceptance speech at Grant Park. I went to Amir's (my 7 yr old son) bedroom and woke him up so he could see the first black President elected in the United States. I wanted my two African-American boys to see the results of years of sacrifice, commitment, optimism and vision. I am relieved to know that this memory is forever etched in their minds. It was our 'Mandela Moment' and it simply felt good!

It was a relief of sorts because black folks in America have always wanted to feel like America was our home and today it feels more like home than ever before. The mental chains that Carter G. Woodson spoke of many years ago are all symbolically broken because of the election of Barack Obama. All accepted images of white supremacy

have been demolished, with the election of Obama being the final and most fatal blow. The last symbol of white male superiority and colonial rule fell on November 4, 2008 and the whole world knows it. I am pleased that black people in America can now loosen their grip on the repressing thoughts of black inferiority. Black coaches winning championships and individuals being great in sports, especially in those typically known as 'white sports' such as tennis and golf, gave the oppressed/repressed group of blacks in America some semblance of our ability to achieve. However, to witness the American people, black people for sure and white people in particular, supporting and actually voting so enthusiastically for a black man over a white man, is different from a personal achievement by Serena, Venus, Tiger, Tony Dungy, or Doc Rivers. This was a blow to the ignorant ideology of white supremacy (the worshipping of skin color) and it was delivered by a democratic majority of American citizens. I could just hear that crowd at Grant Park yelling, "Tell me what Unity looks like, this is what Unity looks like!"

Watching Michelle and Barack Obama non-violently handle the attacks on their character and beliefs reminded me again of what I learned from members of the civil rights movement. That lesson is that education mixed with action will always be victorious, even if you don't see the outcome immediately. They all agreed that educating people was the equivalent of empowering people and that eventually educated, inspired people would produce just outcomes. They said the purpose of non-violence is to train oneself to have the patience to educate and the capacity to expose the ignorance of violence. Could Diane Nash and James Bevel see Barack Obama as the President 40 years after they made the proposal to their colleagues to work on the right to vote? What better crash course on the benefits of that strategy than the landslide victory of Obama? The support for a black man (remember the single drop of African blood) by a vast majority of Americans and citizens of the world, implanted a seed of hope that must be nurtured in order to bloom, but it can never be erased, because it is now another part of history that really does matter.

Without Reservations "Yes I Can"

By Chris Span



Chris Span is a professor at the University of Illinois in Educational Policy Studies.

As an historian of American educational history I am still in amazement of the recent political events. November 4, 2008 will go down in history as a milestone moment in American history. For the first time in the history of the nation a person of color, Barack Hussein Obama, was elected President of the United States of America.

The election of Obama was both a moment of pride and amazement to many people I have talked to since the election. I have heard countless people say how proud they are of the election results, because America had finally progressed enough with regard to race relations to elect an African American President. Similarly, I have talked to many people who are still in disbelief that Obama, because of his race, actually won. What strikes me the most in these conversations are the differing ironies that shaped the way people thought about race and its role in this presidential elec-

tion. This is especially true considering Obama did his best to ignore race as a factor altogether.

Most ironic to me in this presidential campaign and election were the conversations I had with people who wondered (even questioned) if Obama could be elected President. Race—far more than merit or qualification—was a foremost consideration in the conversations, and it proved to me once again that there is no logic to race. Regardless of the circumstances, conclusions people draw because of race are without question illogical and illogic does not beget logic.

Take for instance the profiles of the President-elect and the outgoing President. Obama, an always top of his class Columbia and Harvard-educated Senator and former Constitutional Law Professor at the University of Chicago, has been a success at everything he has done in his adult life. No one should question whether he is qualified to be President. Yet, many in the general electorate and some in the media questioned whether he was qualified, and the conversations I had with friends and colleagues questioned whether the fact that he was a person of color would upend his chances at the presidency.

On the other hand, President George W. Bush proudly self-professed to never being a quality student in college or life before his ascendancy to the Presidency, and as President his excessive decisiveness without much deliberation has forced this nation into two unnecessary wars, economic recession, intellectual mediocrity, and global disrepute. Despite his inept presidency, and the immense challenges he leaves for President Obama and the American public, I have yet to talk to anyone who has questioned whether Bush was elected because of his race. Still, it was race that played a role in both candidates' elections. Because of his race, Obama could never be so inept and still be elected (twice), and because of his race, the public never expected or required Bush to be as qualified as Obama to be considered for the highest post in the land.

Notwithstanding, race in both ideology and practice is always evolving, and the election of Obama is living proof that it changes, slowly but surely, every generation. In the words of President-elect Obama, "If there is anyone out there who still doubts that America is a place where all things are possible; who still wonders if the dream of our founders is alive in our

time; who still questions the power of our democracy, tonight is your answer." Obama, to my generation and older, had beaten the odds. He won the presidency despite his race and the role race continues to play in our society. When he spoke these words in Grant Park that election evening, I was watching it with my wife and our three year old son, Langston.

As I glanced down at my son, tears filled my eyes because it dawned on me that, for him, the image of an African American President will be normal. He and his peers (regardless of their ethnic or racial background) will come of age assuming that people like Obama are suppose to be president. Langston will be seven years of age when Obama's first term ends; he would be eleven years old, if Obama is elected to a second term. All he will know in his early childhood is an African American President. So when people say to him, as they did to me as a child, that "if you work hard and do well in school, then one day maybe you will become the President of the United States," he can think of Barack Obama and his momentous rise in 2008 and say, without the same reservations, "Yes I Can."



Unfinished Business: Will Not Talking about Race Undermine Racism?

By David Roediger



Dave Roediger teaches working class history at University of Illinois. This article expands on parts of his *How Race Survived U.S. History: From Settlement and Slavery to the Obama Phenomenon (Verso)*.

When Obama's primary campaign seemed to be heading for victory in early March 2008, he came under sharp attack from conservatives in the media and from the Hillary Clinton campaign for his relationship with Reverend Jeremiah Wright, the former pastor of the church Obama attended. Influenced by black liberation theology, Wright's jeremiads indicted American racism in ways reminiscent of Malcolm X and Martin Luther King. After two weeks of calls to "denounce" Wright, Obama delivered a Philadelphia speech in which he sharply separated himself from the minister's message, but did not abandon the man. The "Cradle of Liberty" setting of the speech—one quickly heralded as the most honest and perhaps important on race by a viable presidential candidate—evoked the "stain" of race on the founding of the US. However, Obama found that an end to that stain was somehow "already embedded within" the Constitution, so that, in his view, long struggles for equality were bound to win and in many ways already had.

Wright's "offending sermons" were therefore not "simply controversial" but deeply "wrong" and "divisive" by virtue of their "profoundly distorted view of this country—a view that sees white racism as endemic." Whatever sympathy Obama professed for Wright stemmed from the latter's specific experience with the frustrations of Jim Crow, which left many in Wright's generation refusing to see that the nation had changed, and apt "to simplify and stereotype and amplify the negative to the point that it distorts reality" where white American practices are concerned.

While Obama did call for expanded discussion of race and vigorous civil rights enforcement, the speech lacked concrete proposals for producing equality. It managed to be vague to the point of indecipherability on affirmative action, broached as a source of understandable "white resentment" rather than as a policy worth defending. By April 2008, Obama denounced Wright more stridently, reckoning his

former pastor as the polar opposite of the unifying figure that Obama himself worked to be. He attributed his angry opposition to Wright's divisiveness to something written in his own "DNA," presumably as a mixed-race person, in a perfect illustration of how biology-based conceptions of race persist in the allegedly post-racial US.

The point here is not to expect that Obama or any mainstream politician will take risks to defend aggressively the last fragments of affirmative action still permitted by the courts and not yet outlawed by state referenda. His reticence on the issue is widely shared. Indeed, many activists are tempted to give up the affirmative action ghost, as even Reverend Wright himself has perhaps signaled in advocating more far-reaching measures like reparations for slavery and for racism. But it is nonetheless worth stressing that Obama does not represent the triumph of an advancing anti-racist movement but rather the necessity, at the level of electoral politics, of abandoning old agendas, largely by not mentioning them.

Adroitly responsive to polling data as they are, Obama's positions potentially distort how we conceptualize and address white supremacy—and therefore much else—past and present. He moves from the casting of race as "divisive," to terming it a diversion from "real" issues affecting all Americans—the environment, war, housing, jobs, and healthcare. However, the problem with settling for that partial truth is that racial inequality itself remains a fundamental and deadly "real" problem, both in coalition-building and in everyday life. Such a departure is not new. Indeed ironically it was a staple of Bill Clinton's strategies to appeal to win back conservative white "Reagan Democrats."

Such a framing of issues may be understandable as the two major parties fight out an election. But the way that Obama portrays today's issues as typically cutting across racial lines cannot guide our campaigns as activists. Nowhere is this more apparent than in the subprime mortgage crisis, the seriousness of which became clear as the

election progressed. The wholesale foreclosures accompanying that crisis fall in distinct racial patterns. These patterns reflect an 80-year history, beginning in the New Deal, of the overwhelming channeling of federal subsidies to home loans for white families, and to the construction of infrastructure for segregated suburbs. Such Affirmative action for white homeowners served decisively to shape the tremendous racial gaps in wealth that exist in the contemporary USA.

The lack of resources black and Latino homebuyers bring to the market because of past discrimination, and the ways that they are still steered and preyed upon by lenders, ensured that they would disproportionately be victims of subprime loans and foreclosures. As the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) entered a lawsuit against the lenders' role in the subprime crisis, the grassroots United for a Fair Economy group titled its 2008 *State of the Dream* report as *Foreclosed*. The report warns that the loss of as much as \$200 billion in wealth for people of color arising from the last eight years of subprime loans would be the greatest such loss in modern US history. Federal data shows people of color to be over three times more likely to have subprime loans, with a substantial majority of African American borrowers in that category as against one white loan recipient in six.

The lack of an aggressive response by Obama to the subprime crisis through much of the campaign led some critics to propose that this issue best marks the limit of his economic populism, reflecting instead his close ties to banking and investment capital. But race has also mattered in the evasion of the full gravity of the crisis in home mortgages. The absence of any racial and historical framing of the subprime issue, a deficiency shared by Obama with Clinton and McCain, strengthens the tendency to rely for a cure on the very banks and investment firms that caused

Continued on page 10



The Contradictions in Signs of Wonder

By Amira Davis



Amira Davis is a poet and a doctoral student in Educational Policy Studies conducting research that examines Black women's history.

Like millions of others around the world, I shed tears at 10:00 CST on November 4 when Barack Hussein Obama became the 44th president of the United States. I cried because my daughters, first time voters, were able to see their faith in democracy work. They, if only ephemerally, are proud to be American citizens, feelings that their great and grand mothers had been denied despite their pained labor to give birth to this moment. I was filled with extremes of joy and sadness at a watershed moment along the Black freedom struggle continuum, a struggle with which I am intimately tied: conceived during Emmett Till and the fall of Jim Crow, born screaming into the fire of Civil Rights and Black Power. I shared the singular happiness of a global community.

As much as I am surreally proud, I can't shy away from my responsibility to critically engage the moment with its ironies and contradictions beyond those offered by the media: the connections with Illinois (Lincoln and Obama)

or that a Black family will be moving into the house built by enslaved men of African descent which, according to Alice Walker, is the family for whom those men had labored.

I find irony in the symbolism of Obama who is as much a testament of personal will and spiritual favoring as the work of a culture industry committed to constructing fantasies. In this instance, Obama has emerged despite the earliest laws of the colonial era being designed to prevent his arrival.

The Virginia Statute of 1662 shifted common law practices of children following the status of their father to following that of the mother. This change was intended to make slavery inheritable through the body of Black women so that mulatto children of white men would not be able to inherit the father's property, including the property of whiteness. Similarly, anti-miscegenation laws were intended to preserve white women's wombs, also the property of white men, for the transference of white men's assets—only. Yet here, the male child of a white woman from Kansas and a Black man from Kenya has inherited the throne as a hero in a dramatic tragedy.

In Obama-the-commodity, we see the compression and homogenization of an "African American" identity so that Obama-the-man would become a symbol of change and hope, of boot-straps achievement at a time when Black, Brown and Red people are witnessing the worse global economic disaster since the Depression. The Obama-brand has

been prepped and packaged for consumption as a talisman against despair in a culture of commodity fetishization.

It is even more ironic that a man who ostensibly represents the end of U.S. apartheid in a way that Mandela signaled the beginning of the end of apartheid in South Africa would, in his first few days as president-elect, align himself with forces that would deny the end to the apartheid suffered by Palestinians. This stance produces not only sadness, but visceral fear.

I realize critiquing Obama is almost sacrilegious. I called my 82 year old mother—the matriarch, political pundit and fashionista of the family—to find out if she had been able to finally deliver her state—Missouri. I expressed my concern over the Obama-brand. She called me a "player hater." Generally more critical of political performances than I and known to make calls to CSPAN, she chose to critique Michelle's election night attire. "That dress was ugly," she said. "Mom," I said, "these people are masterful illusionists. I bet you believe reality shows are really real. I'm talking about policy statements and you're talking about fashion statements. Sounds like you're the 'player hater.'" I can't talk to you right now. Bye!"

Obama is a victory in the ongoing struggle. For my mother, and so many others, signs of wonder are being searched for in American politics. I pray their faith will be rewarded.



Market Fundamentalism and Liberty

By Bob Illyes



Naomi Klein spoke at the University of Illinois in late October about a liberation movement that began in South America on September 11, 1973. It was a liberation movement for the international corporation. The current American economic crisis is a direct result of this liberation (deregulation) of corporations. A shocked former Federal Reserve chairman Alan Greenspan testified to a congressional committee that he had mistakenly believed that rational self-interest would preclude the need for more regulation of the financial sector.

It is sometimes claimed that the failures of the Iraq occupation indicated a lack of planning. Klein found that this was not the case, that the plan used was a particularly severe form of policies routinely applied by the International Monetary Fund. The Bush administration expected to create a democratic and economic powerhouse in Iraq as a result of their policies. Their failure in Iraq was the inspiration for Klein's new book, *The Shock Doctrine: the Rise of Disaster Capitalism*.

Nobel Laureate economist Milton Friedman believed that state interference in the economy was the cause of market underperformance and instability, and that it was dangerous to political liberty. He was so confident of the connection between political liberty and a free market that he suspected that a free market would spontaneously generate political liberty. He had been teaching these ideas, sometimes referred to as market fundamentalism, for some years at the University of Chicago when a unique opportunity presented itself.

The opportunity was the 1973 Chilean coup against elected President Allende. A group of Chileans trained in Friedman's economics had the ear of General Pinochet, who led the coup. Moving quickly, using what Klein calls the shock doctrine, they privatized state industries, gave international corporations a nearly free hand, eliminated the social safety net, and waited for the spontaneous appearance of prosperity and liberty. Instead, the economy sank into deep recession. The measures were so wildly unpopular that a police state was required to keep them in place. The general prosperity that is necessary to a stable democracy did not emerge. Only the newly liberated international corporations did well. What had gone wrong?

The liberation of corporations was tried over and over

with similar results. It was tried in much of Latin America and later in parts of the dissolved Soviet Union. Most recently, it has been tried in the United States, producing a reverse Robin Hood effect in which the wealthy prosper at the expense of general prosperity. The police state is not yet much in evidence in the United States, but the ongoing expansion and privatization of the security apparatus are more dangerous to democracy and liberty than to terrorists.

In retrospect, it is clear that the lack of adequate economic regulation caused the triumph of greed over the public good. The result was not a free market, but only free corporations. The notion that some regulation is needed to preserve a free market may seem counterintuitive. Media scholar Robert McChesney has demonstrated that a functional free press did not arise spontaneously in early America, but was rather partly a result of government policy that supported it. It is now evident that the same must be true for a functional free market.

In discussing how to prevent such excesses of greed, Klein emphasized the importance of a democratic culture and of not trusting the government. She said that a culture of democratic activism is essential to the prevention of the exploitation of disasters to the benefit of the wealthy, as in the ongoing US financial sector bailout fiasco.

Klein is self-described as from the Left, but her emphasis on suspicion of the state is something a Libertarian would heartily endorse. Howard Zinn's warnings that we must never forget that the interests of the government are not the interests of the people come to mind.

Klein gives us reason to hope that there is an emerging consensus between the democratic Left and democratic Right. It might resemble the Progressives of a century ago, who set out to curb the excesses of the Gilded Age, a time similar to our own. We've tried the extremes of complete state control of the means of production and of corporate control of the means of production. They have failed repeatedly in similar ways, producing police states and an absence of general prosperity.

The balance between the interests of the people as a whole and the interests of the individual that is enshrined in the Constitution, if applied to the economy, offers an alternative that is viable, although an anathema to the fundamentalists of the Left and Right. Klein warned against fundamentalisms of all kinds, emphasizing that in our

exploration of good public policy regarding the economy, a free and open conversation is critical.

This conversation is nowhere more needed than between the United States and Latin America. The shock doctrine was visited on Latin America first, and some of the most interesting resurgences of democratic economic policy are found there as it recovers from the damage. No one knows what form or degree of regulation of the economy is best, or even whether or not there are multiple forms that work well. But we certainly know that the extremes do not work.

For more information on Naomi Klein's publications, see www.naomiklein.org. A recording of her appearance on *Focus 580* on October 30, 2008 is available from the *AM/Focus580* archives at www.will.illinois.edu. See www.robertmcchesney.com for information on Robert McChesney's work regarding the free press.



Naomi Klein, Photo by Bob Illyes

The Great Mother Wails

The Earth extends her arms to us;
Revealing through her nature the
changing condition of our existence.

She bends and twists,
Deflecting the swords of
Our foolishness,
Our arrogance,
Our gluttony,
Our deceit.

Unbridled by red alerts or amber warnings,
Her ire gives rise to monsoon winds,
Jarring us from the stupor of
Our academic impunity;
Our disjointed convolutions,
Our empty promises; our
black and white dreams.

Filled with unruly discontent,
we yearn to dominate her mysteries;
reducing her to microscopic dust,
we spit upon her sacredness,
tempting the fury of her seas.

We spill our unholy wars
upon her belly's tender flesh,
blazing dislocated corpses,
ignite her agony and grief.

Still, in love with her creations,
she warns of our complacency
to cataclysmic devastation,
rooted in the alienation of
our disconnection
our rejection,
our oppression,
our scorn.

And still, we spin ungodly
tantrums of injustice
against her love,
against ourselves,
against one another.

When will we remove blindfolds from our eyes?
When will we stretch our arms—to her?
When will the cruelty of our
Hatred cease; teaching us to
abandon the impositions of
patriarchy and greed?

Oh! that we might together renew
Our communion with the earth,
She, the cradle of humanity;
She, the nourishment of our seeds;
She, the beauty of the song within;
She, the wailing that precedes.

—Antonia Darder (2008)

The Politics of Public Pedagogy



Saturday, December 6, 2008

Temple Hoyne Buell,
Plym Auditorium,
611 E. Lorado Taft Dr.
The University of Illinois

9:00 AM to 5:00 PM

Free and open to the public.

For more information, please contact:
Charlotte E. Davidson at cwilkin2@illinois.edu, or
Matt Linick at mclinic1@gmail.com.



Sports, Politics, and Disenfranchised Fans

By Neil Parthun



Sports — that's another crucial example of the indoctrination system, in my view. For one thing because it — you know, it offers people something to pay attention to that's of no importance. [Sports] keeps them from worrying about things that matter to their lives that they might have some idea of doing something about.

—Noam Chomsky

Analysis about sports like Chomsky's has gained ground in progressive ideology. However, sports are not activities "of no importance...that keeps [the people] from worrying about things that matter in their lives." From the presence of baseball players like Larry Doby and Jackie Robinson who began shattering Jim Crow by breaking baseball's color line to the immortalized black gloved solidarity fists of Olympic track athletes Tommie Smith and John Carlos in the 1968 Summer Games to the current activism against war and capital punishment by Washington Wizards player Etan Thomas, there is a rich history of social and political activism in athletics. Sport and politics also continue their collision in ways that impact citizens' lives from increasing costs for fans to stadium funding issues.

Fans spent a record \$32.06 billion in 2007 on tickets, parking fees, concessions and on-site merchandise. This amount notes an increase of over 4% since last year. The average ticket prices for the National Football League (NFL), Major League Baseball (MLB) and National Hockey League (NHL) have all risen 5-10% this year. These growing prices and the significant economic downturn have begun to alienate fans from attending games. As Boston Red Sox fan Kent Haines said, "When you combine the cost of the tickets with the effort it takes to get our fannies in the seats, watching on TV with my wife and kids sounds pretty good right now." The fan sentiment is echoed by Raymond Sauer, an economist from Clemson University: "Many old time fans who aren't so well to do have been

priced right out of the market...They've created a set of disgruntled fans who used to go to games but now watch on TV. They've (been replaced by) richer, corporate fans."

In the face of the economic downturn and empty seats, franchises have taken a variety of steps to cut costs. The NBA laid off 9% of their workforce to cut costs. Several NASCAR tracks have trimmed ticket prices for the 2009 season. The Oakland Athletics are reducing average ticket prices by 5% for 2009 after experiencing a 13.4% decline in attendance. The hockey franchise St. Louis Blues have offered a "name your price" promotion to entice fans to attend games.

While average fans have been "priced out of the market," numerous college and professional sports teams are spending billions expanding stadiums, building luxury suites and raising parking and ticket prices. These suites and premium seating range in costs from \$200,000 to \$1 million for a season with concessions being extra. This movement can also be seen locally with the \$121 million in private funds spent to refurbish half of Memorial Stadium. The wealthy donors of private funds have "replaced" fans that used to watch games from those seats. Half of Memorial Stadium has access to elevators that carry fans to the upper stadium levels while the other half has the foot power ramps. The private funders have plush seats, covered seating, and reserved parking; while the general public has access to smaller steel benches and remotely located unreserved parking. "Richer, corporate fans" have displaced regular fans, locally as well as nationally.

While Memorial Stadium was refurbished with private funds, there has been an epidemic of new stadiums being built with demands that local taxpayers pay the costs. Former part owner of the Texas Rangers baseball franchise, George W. Bush, used eminent domain to take thirteen acres from private homeowners to secure land on which The Ballpark at Arlington was built. Taxpayers largely funded the building of \$600+ million stadium for the Washington Nationals. The New York Yankees have bonded so much taxpayer money to pay for their \$1.3 billion

new Yankee Stadium that the IRS stated the franchise could no longer demand more money from taxpayers. Also, in a measure that clearly shows the intersection of sports and politics, Treasury Secretary Henry Paulson's son is demanding \$85 million in taxpayer funds from the city of Portland, Oregon to build a new sports complex for minor league sports teams that he owns.

Fans are being asked to foot the bill for stadiums to watch their beloved sports, yet many of these same fans have been priced out of using the facilities they are subsidizing. When we are living in a country that is spending billions to bail out greedy Wall Street banking institutions and cutting social program/school funding while millions of people are impoverished and without health care, demanding taxpayers make stadiums a priority for funds is almost criminal.

In order to justify the raiding of the public coffers for private profit, the millionaire/billionaire ownership of sports franchises by stating that these stadiums will provide an economic stimulus to the community. However, there is substantive evidence that stadiums do not have a positive economic impact. Sports economists Dennis Coates (University of Maryland) and Brad R. Humphreys (University of Alberta) researched whether or not the building of new stadiums brought a boost to the local economy. In their study—which spanned nearly thirty years and examined almost forty attempts—they couldn't find a single example of a sports franchise assisting a local economy.

These issues may primarily be sports related but they are inherently political issues also. Discounting sports as a venue for political issues does a disservice to sports and advocating for political issues. Sports fans proudly support and advocate for our preferred sports teams. The presence of sports teams has intangible positive effects on our communities. But, owners and corporate sponsors should not hold fans hostage or treat us like clueless suckers. It is time for sports fans to stand up and fight back in the name of what we love.

Out of Sequence: Underrepresented Voices in American Comics

Krannert Art Museum and Kinkead Pavilion
October 24, 2008 to January 4, 2009

Curators: John Jennings and Damian Duffy



Get Involved with the *Public i*

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

Sgt. Burge Arrested

The October 2008 edition of the *Public i* detailed the systematic torture perpetrated by Chicago Police officer Jon Burge and other officers under his command from 1972 to 1993.

On October 21, 2008, Sergeant Burge was arrested at his home in Tampa on two counts of obstruction of justice and one count of perjury. The charges allege that Burge lied under oath in a November 2003 civil suit that stated Burge and other officers tortured African American suspects.

US Attorney Patrick J. Fitzgerald has said the investigation is continuing and more charges may be filed against Burge and other officers. As Fitzgerald stated at the arrest press conference: "No person is above the law and nobody—even a suspected murderer—is beneath its protection."



Thanksgiving: A Native American View

By Jacqueline Keeler

Jacqueline Keeler is a member of the Diné Nation and the Yankton Dakota Sioux. Her work has appeared in Winds of Change, an American Indian journal.

I celebrate the holiday of Thanksgiving.

This may surprise those people who wonder what Native Americans think of this official U.S. celebration of the survival of early arrivals in a European invasion that culminated in the death of 10 to 30 million native people.

Thanksgiving to me has never been about Pilgrims. When I was six, my mother, a woman of the Diné nation, told my sister and me not to sing “Land of the Pilgrim’s pride” in “America the Beautiful.” Our people, she said, had been here much longer and taken much better care of the land. We were to sing “Land of the Indian’s pride” instead.

I was proud to sing the new lyrics in school, but I sang softly. It was enough for me to know the difference. At six, I felt I had learned something very important. As a child of a Native American family, you are part of a very select group of survivors, and I learned that my family possessed some “inside” knowledge of what really happened when those poor, tired masses came to our homes.

When the Pilgrims came to Plymouth Rock, they were poor and hungry—half of them died within a few months from disease and hunger. When Squanto, a Wampanoag man, found them, they were in a pitiful state. He spoke English, having traveled to Europe, and took pity on them. Their English crops had failed. The native people fed them through the winter and taught them how to grow their food.

These were not merely “friendly Indians.” They had already experienced European slave traders raiding their villages for a hundred years or so, and they were wary—but it was their way to give freely to those who had nothing. Among many of our peoples, showing that you can give without holding back is the way to earn respect. Among the Dakota, my father’s people, they say, when asked to give, “Are we not Dakota and alive?” It was believed that by giving there would be enough for all—the exact opposite of the system we live in now, which is based on selling, not giving.

To the Pilgrims, and most English and European peoples, the Wampanoags were heathens, and of the Devil.

They saw Squanto not as an equal but as an instrument of their God to help his chosen people, themselves.

Since that initial sharing, Native American food has spread around the world. Nearly 70 percent of all crops grown today were originally cultivated by Native American peoples. I sometimes wonder what they ate in Europe before they met us. Spaghetti without tomatoes? Meat and potatoes without potatoes? And at the “first Thanksgiving” the Wampanoags provided most of the food—and signed a treaty granting Pilgrims the right to the land at Plymouth, the real reason for the first Thanksgiving.

What did the Europeans give in return? Within 20 years European disease and treachery had decimated the Wampanoags. Most diseases then came from animals that Europeans had domesticated. Cowpox from cows led to smallpox, one of the great killers of our people, spread through gifts of blankets used by infected Europeans. Some estimate that diseases accounted for a death toll reaching 90 percent in some Native American communities. By 1623, Mather the elder, a Pilgrim leader, was giving thanks to his God for destroying the heathen savages to make way “for a better growth,” meaning his people.

In stories told by the Dakota people, an evil person always keeps his or her heart in a secret place separate from the body. The hero must find that secret place and destroy the heart in order to stop the evil.

I see, in the “First Thanksgiving” story, a hidden Pilgrim heart. The story of that heart is the real tale than needs to be told. What did it hold? Bigotry, hatred, greed, self-righteousness? We have seen the evil that it caused in the 350 years since. Genocide, environmental devastation, poverty, world wars, racism.

Where is the hero who will destroy that heart of evil? I believe it must be each of us. Indeed, when I give thanks this Thursday and I cook my native food, I will be thinking of this hidden heart and how my ancestors survived the evil it caused.

Because if we can survive, with our ability to share and to give intact, then the evil and the good will that met that Thanksgiving day in the land of the Wampanoag will have come full circle.

And the healing can begin.

(From: *Pacific News Service*. Posted January 1, 2000)

WAMPANOAGS FOUR CENTURIES OF STRUGGLE FOR TRIBAL RECOGNITION

The Wampanoag were the Native American tribe encountered by the early colonists when they arrived to the shores of Wampanoag lands. The tribal nation, however, was not to receive federal recognition until last year. The struggle for tribal recognition faced claims by some that the 1,461 members of the tribe were not “real” Indians—a view that has been responsible for efforts to erase the Wampanoag and their history, by relegating them into the shadows of myth.

In 2007, the Mashpee Wampanoag became the 564th federally recognized tribe in the U.S. After four centuries of confronting genocide, colonization, the deadening impact of assimilation, and being slowly pushed off their lands, the federal government finally approved the petition of the Mashpee Wampanoag survivors as worthy of recognition as a sovereign Indian nation. This federal recognition is not only a matter of regaining tribal sovereignty, but is also tied to the Mashpee Wampanoag’s right to access millions of dollars in federal aid for housing, health care and education funds.

In 1976, the Mashpee Wampanoag filed a lawsuit to recover land the tribe says was taken from them illegally. The suit was dismissed in 1978 when a federal judge ruled the Wampanoag did not have official tribal status. With the now newly acquired tribal recognition, the Mashpee Wampanoag’s efforts to recover their ancestral lands has been renewed.



Map of Wampanoag traditional lands

New Director of Native American House/American Indian Studies Issues Statement Against the Continued Use of Racist Mascot Imagery at UIUC

Students, faculty, and staff associated with Native American House and American Indian Studies at the University of Illinois are dismayed about plans by other members of our campus community to bring back the university’s offensive former mascot, which the Board of Trustees retired in 2007.

The planned event represents a step backwards in the process of changing the climate of intolerance, insensitivity, and dehumanization that Native American people experience at Illinois. Those who have planned the upcoming event and those who participate in it are heading in the wrong direction by promoting a caricature, a stereotype, and an insult.

Events like the one planned for November 15 increase the hostile and abusive learning environment that the NCAA has cited in its sanctions against Illinois and other educational institutions that have persisted in using such images. Scores of other governmental and national organizations, including the U.S. Commission on Civil Rights, the American Psychological Association, and the National Congress of American Indians have made clear statements that any continued use and promotion of these images is wrong. We continue to urge people of conscience to join us in opposing such events and working toward eliminating the attitudes that lead to them.

Most importantly, we call on the leaders of our university who are responsible for creating a climate on campus that allows all students to pursue their educational goals to speak up for the rights of Native students as strongly as they have spoken up for the free expression rights of students and others who insist on creating a racially hostile environment. The Trustees, President, Chancellor, Provost, Vice Chancellor for Student Affairs, and many others can and should speak out against these actions that undermine the highest and most basic purposes of our university.

Robert Warrior, Ph.D.
November 7, 2008

Anti-Chief Protest Express Concerns

By Tom Garza

I know you believe you understand what you think I said, but I’m not sure you realize that what you heard is not what I meant. This quote truly sums up the nature of most public conversations about ‘the chief.’

I’ve been actively involved in fighting against the mascot for several years now, and I’ve been to more rallies, protests, and marches than I can count. So, it was without any particular enthusiasm that I headed over Saturday to yet another protest outside of the Assembly Hall, where Students for Chief Illiniwek staged an event titled ‘The Next Dance’. A newly selected ‘chief’ was slated to continue the decades old U of I tradition of playing Indian, albeit this time supposedly without official sanction, given that the University had been forced to ‘retire’ the chief back in 2007.

My friend Allyson and I had decided to document the protest. Now, as I said, I’ve been doing this sort of thing for years, so you’d think I’d be a bit jaded about the whole process. But I have to say that I don’t remember ever feeling such a thrill run



Anti-chief protestors, photo by Allyson Illardi

through me as I did when we made came upon the fiery group of protestors who were stationed near the front doors of the



Cherrie Moraga: *Still Loving in the War Years*

By Antonia Darder

*I am the welder.
I understand the capacity of heat
to change the shape of things.
I am suited to work
within the realm of sparks
out of control.
I am the welder.
I am taking the power
into my own hands.*

Cherrie Moraga delivered this year's Rolando Hinojosa-Smith Jr. Lecture, *Still Loving in the War Years*, sponsored by the Latina and Latino Studies Program, at the UIUC, last month. Moraga is a poet, playwright and essayist, and the co-editor of *This Bridge Called My Back: Writings by Radical Women of Color*, the groundbreaking volume still considered a touchstone literary contribution of the 20th century, given its unapologetic focus on the issues of women of color, including those of lesbian women who struggle daily to contend with the triple stigma of racism, sexism, and homophobia in their lives.

Moraga's recent personal/political meditations respond to the censored sites within trans/gender (queer) and trans/national (immigrant) conversations. In these, she stresses that as a Chicana lesbian who is at "the edge of disappearance, who suffers from silence," she is equally passionate about what is going on with the silence of

queers of color, as she is with undocumented immigrants. For example, this perspective is particularly salient to the trafficking of sex and how this impacts poor undocumented immigrants in the United States.

Through her work, Moraga embraces a multitude of social ills equally. She insists "this has to be the politics of Chicano or Latino queer people. We must have a very multi-issued approach... My feeling is that the more visibility we have in our movement and the more multi-issued we are in work, the better ground there is for building solidarity with others." Moreover, Moraga recognizes that the persistence of institutionalized homophobia and heterosexism function as the biggest obstacle for transgendered people to create soli-

solidarity with others across social concerns. In response, she insists that queers of color must organize together around common causes, speak out, and develop a strong political platform and coalition approach. Only in this way, can transgendered people of color find the support necessary to not compromise themselves and to sustain both their per-

sonal and collective struggles; "because alone you're dead in the water."

Moraga is also the author of numerous plays including *Shadow of a Man* and *Watsonville: Some Place Not Here*. Both plays won the Fund for New American Plays Award in

1991 and 1995, respectively. *Heroes and Saints*, another of her plays, earned the Pen West Award for Drama in 1992. Her collected non-fiction writings include: *The Last Generation* (South End Press); a memoir, *Waiting in the Wings: Portrait of a Queer Motherhood* (Firebrand Books); and, a new expanded edition of the now classic, *Loving in the War Years*, republished in 2000. Moraga is also a recipient of the National Endowment for the Arts' Theatre Playwrights'

Fellowship and is currently Artist-in-Residence in the Departments of Drama and Spanish & Portuguese at Stanford University.

An interview with Cherrie Moraga can be heard on the *Liberacion!* broadcast on Monday, December 14, WEFT 90.1 FM



Prop 8 Protest: Same Sex Marriage Rights Denied

In November, 52 % of California voters passed Proposition 8, which denies same-sex couples the right to marry. The initiative overturned a May ruling by the State Supreme Court that struck down a 2000 ban on same-sex unions. As with other conservative referendums, this action by California voters may serve as a bellwether, with similar actions likely to erupt across the country. In response, a series of nationwide demonstrations against Prop 8 were held to voice their opposition. In concert with the nationwide effort, Champaign-Urbana supporters of same-sex marriage came out to protest the unconstitutionality and unjust nature of the law that prohibits citizens involved in lesbian, gay, or transgender relationships to marry and, thus, access the same legal rights and financial benefits afforded heterosexual couples. More importantly, protesters against Proposition 8 demand the freedom of any human being to love and share their life with whomever they choose, irrespective of gender or sexuality.



Demonstrators on Wright Street, photo by Marti Wilkinson

Anti-Chief Protest

Continued from page 10

Hall. They were organized, energetic, and disciplined, and it seemed to me that the chants never stopped going the entire time we were there. But beyond their enthusiasm which was instantly infectious, the most exciting part for me personally was the sea of new faces! This was an entirely new group of people who clearly intended to stay right where they were, until they'd made a difference. And they did!

United, we were there on that cold Saturday afternoon to fight an ideology and a practice that we believe is wrong. The indefensible nature of the pro-chief position is such that they, instead, saw fit only to attack us as people. Yet, despite the insults they hurled, I guarantee that no one left the

event without being forced to reconsider their position on the chief. Despite their entrenched views, they had to think about what we were saying and what they were doing. And if the intensity of their hostility is any indication, our mere presence made them feel very, very uncomfortable. And that, to me, is a big success, and one that I was very proud to be a part of.



Unfinished Business

Continued from page 7

the problem. The subprime catastrophe was poised to serve either as a perfect vehicle to show how issues capable of dragging down much of the whole economy are about both race and class, or as occasion for generalities, pro-mortgage industry policy changes, and wishful thinking. The latter road has been the one taken by Obama and all of his major competitors. To complete the sad picture, in the weeks before the election, right-wing commentators blamed the worsening economic crisis on poor people of color—the horrific Michael Savage imagined that favoritism went mainly to "illegal aliens"—getting loans they "did not deserve." Race found its way into the discussion purely on terms

set by conservatives.

To expect more that is concrete, forthright, and policy-oriented regarding race from Obama in the context of a presidential campaign was fruitless. Eloquently summing up the ways in which the idea of race has and has not changed, the most important aspect of his campaign has been to show how much and how many people desire peace, and want to find a way to move beyond race. But to make real the latter desire requires going through the question of white supremacy, as South African writers have emphasized, not around it.