Crisis, Resistance, and Radical Reform In Public Education

MAY DAY, SATURDAY, MAY 1, 9am-3pm
Lower Level of the Institute for Labor and Employment Relations, 504 E. Armory (plenty of parking in the lot on the corner of 6th and Chalmers)
A One-Day Forum Sponsored by Socialist Forum on class, race, and the crisis in public education, and the political and economic institutions and forces that now determine its character and quality.

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 underrepresented 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.

EDITORS/FACILITATORS:
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The Public i
Urbana-Champaign IMC
202 South Broadway
Urbana, IL, 61801
217-344-8820
www.ucimc.org

PEOPLES’ COMMUNITY POTLUCK
Sunday, May 2, 6–8 PM, Independent Media Center, 202 South Broadway, Urbana

The Peoples’ Community Potluck is a food-sharing communal gathering to discuss the economic and social problems in our community. The intention is 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 over the past 8 years, and government economic policy that has been most concerned with the well-being of the very wealthy, organizations and individuals at the grass-roots level are going to have to use social conscience and talents to find ways of supporting the most vulnerable people in our communities. We cannot just rely on the new administration to turn things around. We envision a new stimulus for coordinated action and communication for a democratic, egalitarian political-economy.

SUSTAINING CONTRIBUTORS

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

World Harvest International and Gourmet Foods
Socialist Forum: An Open Discussion and Action Group, Meets 3rd Saturdays of the month, 3-5 pm, at IMC, Broadway & Elm. (U)
Campus Faculty Association (CFA)
The Natural Gourmet
Progressive Asset Management, Financial West Group
Socially Responsible Investing

Jerusalem Cafe
601 S. Wright St, Champaign; 396-9022
The AFL-CIO of Champaign County
That’s Rentertainment
516 E. John, Champaign; 384-0977
AWARE, the Anti-War, Anti-Racism Effort
Meetings every Sunday at 5pm at the IMC

Milo’s Restaurant
2870 S. Philo Road, Urbana; 344-8946
Graduate Employees’ Organization (GEO) IFT/AFT 6300
1001 S. Wright St., Champaign, 344-8283
www.uigeo.org

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.

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

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Safe Haven
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Imperator Infiltrator
Page 7
Moving Champaign-Urbana Beyond Coal

By Parker Laubach

The Abbott coal plant

Now is the time to tell the University that we do not want any more coal on campus or our community. In such a variable political and economic climate it is time for institutions such as the U of I to step up and lead, and not lag behind others. This is the type of action that Students for Environmental Concerns is asking the university to take. Stand up and lead a movement towards clean energy and leave dirty energy behind as a relic of past times.

By Miriam Larson & Meadow Jones

On March 3-4, 2010, the students at the U of I voted to increase the campus green fees by five dollars, adding to the student funded money that goes towards sustainability projects. This issue was put forth by the students and made the University one of the leaders in student sustainability fees. The students have voted and now it is time for action towards clean energy on the part of university administrators.

The students have voted and now it is time for action towards clean energy on the part of university administrators. Switching off of coal would send a strong message to the state and to other universities that climate change is a serious problem and we need to start taking action. Natural gas is not a permanent solution, but it is a transition fuel while we build the infrastructure for a zero-carbon economy and national energy system.

By Miriam Larson & Meadow Jones

Once upon a time, this land we live on was covered in prairie. The people here called themselves the Peoria, Panhekeewa and Wea Creeks wound freely across the land. One little creek was especially fond of dancing and it glided and skipped across the prairie, sometimes sweeping up the sandbars and rocky barries with it, constantly changing its winding course across the flatlands. One day, people from Europe began to arrive. They liked to build square houses and straight roads. They wanted things their way and locked the creek into a straight concrete gutter through their town. Sometimes it submitted but sometimes the creek overflowed into their basements and backyards and they pulled at their hair and tried new ways to control the creek.

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Prairie Roots Connect Us

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Although it was 2008 when off-duty Champaign police detective Lisa Staples was caught driving drunk in unmarked squad car, only recently were police reports describing the incident reviewed in Illinois. Many were outraged when Staples was given a lighter punishment than other DUI cases in Champaign County, but the publicity was kept from knowing the extent of her intoxication or the embarrassing details of her arrest. This case and others have led to a campaign for stricter drug and alcohol testing for Champaign police officers.

In March 2009, I sent a FOIA request for police reports on the Staples case to the Illinois State Police. Notorious for their denials of public information, the state police summarily denied my request. After new FOIA legislation took effect in Illinois on January 1, 2010, I re-submitted my request. Now forced to obey the law, the state police handed over their records.

According to a report written by Illinois State Police Sergeant B.K. Ingram, he responded to a call at approximately 2:30 a.m. on Sunday, November 30, 2008. Several drivers had spotted a car going the wrong way, traveling westbound on I-74, near Interstate 72. It was too cold night, it was snowing, and there was ice on the road.

A Piatt County deputy stopped the gray 2007 Nissan Altima, found out that it was owned by the Champaign Police Department, and the driver was Lisa Staples, an off-duty police officer. The Illinois State Police were called for assistance. When Sergeant Ingram arrived, he approached the car and asked Staples to open the locked door. When Staples opened the door, Ingram said he, “immediately smelled an overwhelming odor of alcoholic liquor coming from inside the Nissan.”

Asked to exit the car, Staples got out and stood up, “fumbling forward.” She did not know where she was. She was dressed in a long sleeve shirt, blue jeans, and fuzzy pink house slippers. According to Ingram, “It appeared Staples had urinated in her pants as the crotch of her jeans was soaking wet.” When Ingram said that it looked like she had wet her pants, Staples replied, “I probably did. I’m sorry.” Ingram writes in his report, “I observed the front of her jeans was completely unfastened and slightly pulled down, exposing her panties. I brought Staples’ attention to this and asked her to lift her pants.”

Staples was also slurring incoherently. When Ingram asked where her driver’s license was, she said, “Um, I’m sorry. It’s probably on my person which is not on my person, which is correct.” She was eventually given a ticket for not carrying a driver’s license.

Staples refused to take a field sobriety test or a breath test and was immediately placed under arrest. Ingram states that he put her in handcuffs and before putting her into the squad car, “placed several layers of paper towel on the passenger seat.” At the Champaign County jail, Ingram read Staples her Miranda rights. She began laughing and joked that she was waving her rights, “as she waved her raised arms side to side.”

Other reports filled out by Ingram noted that Staples said, “swaying,” “staggering,” and “stumbling.” Although she told other police she only had “three drinks,” she admitted to Ingram that she was “fucked up.” Although being issued a DUI while driving a department vehicle was grounds for termination, Staples was placed on administrative leave with pay while an internal investigation was conducted. Because of her working relationship with the Champaign County State’s Attorney’s Office, the case was assigned to special prosecutor Tony Lee, a former State’s Attorney in Ford County. Unlike Champaign County, where first-time DUI offenders lose their license, in Ford County offenders are often only sentenced to community service. Staples’ attorney Ed Piraino and Tony Lee worked out a deal where Staples only got supervision.

At a hearing on December 18 before Judge Richard Klaus, Piraino and Lee both agreed that this arrangement would allow Staples to keep her job as a police officer. As Piraino said, “If she can’t drive, she can’t be a police officer.” Judge Klaus accepted the deal and Staples pleaded guilty to misdemeanor driving under the influence. She was allowed to keep her driver’s license and therefore remain on the force. Her punishment was 18 months of court supervision, 250 hours of public service, a $570 fine, and she was required to wear an alcohol-monitoring bracelet. As part of her public service, she was allowed to give lectures to high school students about the dangers of drunk driving. If these terms were completed, the case could be expunged, and she would have a clean record.

On December 19, the day after the plea was accepted, Elizabeth Drees was driving drunk going the wrong direction on Interstate 74, struck a minivan, and killed bride-to-be Brittany Rabb. The parallels between this tragic story and the Staples case could not be ignored by the public. Dozens of letters poured in to the News-Gazette complaining about the “sweetheart deal” given to Staples.

Local defense attorneys who deal with DUI cases protest the arrangement. Among the changes is a requirement for mandatory drug and alcohol testing when a police officer is directly involved in an incident which results in death or great bodily harm or if the officer has fired his or her weapon. A campaign for this and other revisions to the police union contract comes in the wake of the death of Kiwane Carrington at the hands of a Champaign police officer.

Charges Dropped Against Jeshaun

On April 13, 2009, State’s Attorney Julia Rietz dismissed all charges against Jeshaun Manning-Carter. Jeshaun was with Kiwane Carrington who was shot and killed by a Champaign police officer. While no charges were brought against police, Jeshaun was charged with felony aggravated resisting a peace officer. A 1,700-signature petition to drop the charges was handed to the State’s Attorney and dozens of community members showed up at the courthouse to protest the case, but Rietz said she did not bow to the pressure. Outside the courtroom, Jeshaun’s mother said, “I’m glad it’s over with.”

UCIMC Receives 3 Arts Grants

The UC-IMC thanks the City of Urbana Public Arts Commission for the recent award of three grants that will support the following projects:

Poetry for the People is a project of the Urbana Free Library and S.P.E.A.K. Cafe that celebrates the diversity of the women in the Urbana community. A series of five poetry workshops supporting and connecting local poets will culminate in the publication of the Public’s i with a pull-out section of poetry and an open-mic at the UC-IMC.

The UC-IMC’s Children’s Arts Festival on May 8, 2010 is a day of opportunities for children to experience new outlets for self-expression through art, music, and media workshops and to share their talents with each other. There will be performances by local youth ensembles, dance workshops, puppet shows, contra dance, a parade on the sidewalks of downtown Urbana, and art on display in featured Urbana Businesses. Say it Loud - Teen DIY Publishing is a series of the UC-IMC workshops that promotes youth literacy, self expression, and community involvement through work- shops, interactive publishing. Programs will include workshops on cut & paste zine making, screen printing, graphic arts, paper-making, and print & electronic publishing. Events also include open mic events, music performances and art openings. The yearlong festival will culminate in a zine festival, bringing individuals from the broader zine community to Urbana for two days of skill-shares, discussions, and events for the UC-IMC to expand public arts programming in downtown Urbana, to expand public participation in the arts, and to further our mission of the UC-IMC to expand community and arts center. All events are open to public and volunteer participation. Please visit www.ucimc.org for more information.

The UCIMC would like to thank the Urbana Public Arts Commission for their past support of the UC-IMC Film Fest in 2010, which was the UC-IMC’s best-attended festival to-date, with outstanding artistic contributions coming from our community.
Many of my fellow advocates for smart growth and sustainability have questioned Urbana’s plan to build the Olympian Drive extension. After studying the issue and its history, I believe that there is a need for the road, and that we should build it in a way that fits our sustainable vision for our city and preserves and supports our local foods movement.

The proposed Olympian Drive extension would be an East-West connection between North Lincoln and Cunningham. It would also include a bridge over the Canadian National railroad tracks to meet up with Olympian Drive in North Champaign. Given all the pressures on the world, why would Urbana even consider building a road?

There is no direct east-west route and none of the existing rural roads can carry truck traffic. North Lincoln Avenue is home to a large and growing base of industrial businesses and blue-collar jobs. Currently there are over 900 jobs in industries including asphalt, asphalt recycling, concrete, grocery distribution, shipping, electronics recycling, waste transfer, packaging, engine and truck repair, and more. It is Urbana’s only area zoned for heavy industry and the only location adjacent to a major rail line, important for moving goods with less fuel. Yet this industrial area is hamstrung by a lack of road connectivity. Because the existing rural roads cannot carry trucks, many of these businesses must route trucks far out of the way on a daily basis. One grocery facility alone generates 40-50 truck trips per day through residential neighborhoods in Urbana-Champaign. These trucks drive down Lincoln Avenue, across Bradley, and up Market Street to get to a produce distribution facility in Champaign. The Olympian Drive project would cut the distance of every trip by more than half and keep these trucks out of our urban neighborhoods.

North End Champaign residents suffer a similar plight. Though not homeless, North End residents have been mistrusted by local officials and their needs have yet to be adequately addressed. For decades, North End residents have endured sub-standard living conditions and inadequate community resources. Local officials have underinvested in infrastructure and services in the north end, and have failed to sufficiently redress environmental contamination. Policies and neglect have translated into a silent war against the poor. Developers and business owners have been reluctant to revitalize the community because of the possibility of little to no return on their investment.

Residents have attempted to work with officials to no avail. For years, the Champaign City Council has failed to protect its vulnerable residents by failing to adequately fund the Township office, which provides services for the poor, and by strict enforcement of zoning codes. Disdain for the homeless among local officials came through loud and clear, when Champaign Mayor Jerry Schweigert was asked at a city council meeting June 6, 2009, where the existed residents of Gate- way Studios were to sleep that winter, he responded, “I don’t care.” This attitude is also reflected in their decision to cut off the funding of the township office and a host of social services agencies, the City of Cham- paign has chosen to focus on business rela- tionships. 3.7 million dollars of tax revenue have been offered to developers and contractors while social services face debilitating cuts. I speculate that local community members and businesses are reluctant to speak out on issues of homelessness and poverty out of a fear of backlash.

In American society, we have bought into the myth that the second home builds up the people. People of their own faults and therefore, are a burden to society. However, many of these individuals have encountered techni- cal and political difficulties, which adversely influence their life circumstances and chances.

The residents of the North End as well as Safe Haven community members have been neglected for far too long. The local govern- ment has been unresponsive to the needs of the residents at the formal meetings and has not come out of public view. In so doing, local officials are participating in perpetuating the cycle of homelessness and poverty. For how many more years, are the local officials expected to survive in these conditions or the mayor allowed to publicly say that he doesn’t care about homelessness? The time has come for us to speak out the forefront and to stop the intimidating cycle of poverty and homelessness.

Olympian Drive, Sustainability and Local Foods

By Brandon Bowersox

Brandon Bowersox is a member of the Urbana City Council.

In the late Spring of 2009, a group of home- less Champaign-Urbana residents formed “Safe Havens” as means to provide a sense of community and safety to homeless residents, who were oftentimes, targets of abuse. This group was formed by local govern- ment officials because of their homeless sta- tus and left on the brink of extinction.

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The Intertwining Cycle

By: Ashley Redding

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Let Safe Haven Help You While We Help Ourselves!

What’s Sweat Equity?

Sweat equity describes a partner- ship where individuals contribute labor in exchange for housing. Safe Haven is seeking sweat equity part- nerships with property owners and/or property management companies, where individuals are given housing while working on properties that need repair and maintenance.

Interested parties should contact us: 217-530-6484 or sweathe- nu@gmail.com, or 217-979-1272 or painterordonnie@live.com

1st Annual Talent Fest

May 15th, 8:00pm-10:00pm, Parkland College The- ater, 2400 W. Bradley Ave, Champaign.

Buy Tickets at Mr. Mike’s, 172 W. University Ave, Urbana, or by calling Shon at 344/3137 or 732/3502, Juan 344/8287. Tickets are $10.00 advanced $15.00 at the door.
By Neil Parthun and David Johnson

Judi Bari, the IWW and Environmentalism

Community organized an effort to support sawmill workers doused with toxic chemicals in a Georgia-Pacific sawmill accident. Her sense of solidarity with the mill workers led her to organize sawmill and timber workers into the Workers Local #1 of the Industrial Workers of the World (IWW). Bari's efforts contributed significantly to a working relationship between IWW Local #1 and the Earth First! environmentalists in fighting against the misdeeds of large timber corporations. The common cause that Judi Bari used to unite previously adversarial timber workers and environmentalists was the demand that timber corporations stop overcutting forests at an unsustainable rate. Environmentalists—opposed for ecological reasons—timber workers opposed this practice because it led to the closing of sawmills and the layoff of workers once the forests were depleted of trees. Local communities also supported ending the practice because they were adversely affected by both the resultant soil erosion and the loss of timber workers. Because of the joint efforts, timber corporations could no longer simply blame environmentalists for job losses.

As we celebrate Earth Day and enjoy the flush of spring, it is important to reflect on those who have made invaluable contributions to the continuing efforts at protecting our environment and our rights. Judi Bari is one such individual and tracing some of her history can inspire all of our continued efforts. Bari's work with the IWW helped to forge a relationship between mill workers and environmentalists to fight their common enemy, corporate domination of workers and natural resources.

Other organizers of earlier Earth Day events had chosen to focus on the local. But this year, a new sense of internationalism has been evident. The international movement has been expressed in the call for a global day of action on the environment. This year, the movement is spreading to other countries and other cultures. In the United States, the movement has taken on a new dimension. The IWW has been at the forefront of the movement, organizing workers and environmentalists to take action together.

The movement has been slow to develop in other countries, but it is gaining strength. In Canada, for example, the IWW has organized a series of mass meetings and rallies to demand an end to the destruction of the forests. In Australia, the movement has been led by a group of young people who are determined to protect the environment.

The movement has been successful in some ways, but it has also been met with resistance. The corporate world has not been slow to respond to the movement. Companies have been quick to try to limit the movement's impact by using legal tactics. The movement has had to be creative in order to overcome these obstacles.

But the movement has also had successes. In the United States, the IWW has been able to win some important victories. In Canada, the movement has been able to win some key battles. In Australia, the movement has been able to gain some support from the public.

The movement is still young, but it is growing. The IWW is working hard to make sure that the movement continues to grow. We are confident that the movement will continue to grow and that it will be successful in the future.
Money is Not a Natural Resource
By Michael Brain

Can money be wasted in a global sense? No, not like fuel is wasted. Money is neither a natural resource nor a manufactured product. There are no resource limits, though there are social limits to its quantity, and there are essentially no costs to its creation and destruction. It takes the same amount of resources and effort to issue a million dollars as just one dollar. Money is all about power and promises, not about relation between human beings.

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Home Defense: A New Blackwater Course

By Dan Kenney

In addition to training law enforcement, Blackwater, now operating under the name Xe Services, is offering a course designed for any gun toting citizen. This is the world’s most powerful and best known mercenary company with a reputation of operating outside of the law in the war zones of Iraq and Afghanistan. This same company is now offering a new class in “Home Defense” at their 6,000 acre North Carolina property, near Charlotte, training location.

Blackwater’s training division is now known as the U.S. Training Center. According to the US Training Center website, the new course has this aim: “The course is designed to make the armed citizen more aware of personal security whether at home or away, considerations in protecting self to make the armed citizen more aware of personal security whether at home or away, considerations in protecting self and family members.”

Closer examination of what the class entails raises questions about who may be included in the target demographic group for this new training. The training involves the following:

- Use of Force
- Security of weapons at home and away
- Away from home considerations
- Gear & weapons
- Mindset/ Indications of Mental State
- Basic room clearing techniques for the homeowner
- Force-on-force scenarios
- Ballistic protection at home and away
- Dealing with the Police

One must ask in what “scenarios” would a homeowner need to conduct a “room clearing” scenario? Also, who would be better to train a citizen on how to “deal with the police” than a company that is involved with training hundreds of police officers every year? It would appear that Blackwater is willing to not only train the police but to train the citizen cops as well.

The only prerequisite for the class is that the “student” knows how to fire a gun. “Prerequisite: Basic pistol marksmanship/familiarization course. This is not a marksmanship course.” Handling skills are required prior to attending class.

The equipment supplied includes: Simunition® Pistol (customer preference of Glock, S & W, Beretta), Simunition® safety gear, 100 rounds of Simunition® holster & magazine carrier.

Simunition is a General Dynamics-Ordnance and Tactical Systems Canada Inc. company that developed in the 1980s. Their mission, according to their website, is “to provide the most realistic training systems possible so that officers and military forces around the world can engage in experience building and ultimately lifesaving exercises.” They also have a philosophy that includes, “helping law enforcement officers and emergency responders who have been trained to improve their tactical skill and condition their fear response, our family of training products ultimately saves lives.” Interestingly that simulator weapons can be referred to as a “family of training products.” This brings a whole new light on the term “family”.

The “Home Defense” course however does come with a disclaimer: “Disclaimer: This is NOT a pistol/shotgun course. Students should come prepared to operate their weapon system and be familiar with weapon handling, safety and marksmanship. Local authorities should be consulted on use of Lethal Force and the use of Lethal Force to defend lives and property” (My underlining for emphasis).

Required gear, according to the course description on their website: “Grefer, belt, flashlight, ear protection, clothing appropriate for climate and conditions, rain gear, a water bottle or other hydration system. Cover garment for concealed draw is highly recommended.”

Now this kind of training for a common citizen carrying a gun taught by a company owned by Erik Prince who has been accused of murder by two former employees under sworn statements filed in a federal court in Virginia last August is especially disturbing. According to sworn testimony by two former Blackwater employees, who were referred to as John Doe #1 and John Doe #2 for fear they may be murdered, they alleged being paid by Prince to murder Afghan civilians. They alleged they may have murdered or facilitated the murder of individuals who were cooperating with Federal authorities who were investigating war crimes. The company stated that Prince “views himself as a Christian crusader tasked with eliminating Muslims and the Islamic faith from the globe.”

In this context, the only excuse for the former governmental arms manufacturer carrying out gun training for the average citizen is that it is helping to train those who are being taught to the military and to law enforcement.

Last month the Government Accounting Office stopped Blackwater from winning a multi-billion dollar contract from the US Army to train Afghan police.

The former has lawsuits which number in the double digits at last count, etc. One thing all of this points to is that if you poke a desperate polecat with a stick, he is bound to fight back.

Here is an excerpt from the two page sworn statements by the former employees:

“...to that end, Mr. Prince intentionally deployed to Iraq certain men who shared his vision of Christian supremacy, knowing and wanting these men to take every available opportunity to murder Iraqis. Many of these men used call signs based on the Knights of the Templar, the warriors who fought the Crusades. Mr. Prince operated his companies in a manner that encouraged and rewarded the destruction of Iraq life. For example, Mr. Prince’s executives would openly speak about going over to Iraq to “lay Hajis out on cardboards.”

Going to Iraq to shoot and kill Iraqis was viewed as a sport or game. Mr. Prince’s employees openly and consistently used racist and derogatory terms for Iraqis, and other Arabs, such as “ragheads” or “bajiks.”

One does not have to stretch too far to see a troubling possible connection between a company headed by someone who according to Jeremy Seabill in his book, Blackwater: The Rise of the World’s Most Powerful Mercenary Army, “was dedicated to a Christian-supremacist agenda” and the creation of the class to train any armed citizen on how to basically be their own law enforcers, just as Prince’s mercenaries operated in Iraq. One can also make the parallel between the rise of armed citizen militias, some of whom have a similar “Christian-Supremacist agenda,” and the need for a class that teaches citizens the same skills that are being taught to the military and to law enforcement.

The Abortion Debate

By Heather Ault

housands of American women, and NOW respond with their own national campaigns that affirm a women’s right to choose? Instead of battling CRS at the national level, where might the pro-choice movement focus their efforts in reframing the debate? What does pro-active, effective pro-woman, pro-choice media look like? A simple search for “abortion” images through Google reveals a gallery of grotesque, sensationalized images of aborted fetuses. To cut through the visual rhetoric of anti-abortion messages is difficult, but on February 25, 2010, Ange Jackson, a Florida woman facing an unwanted pregnancy, did just that. After surviving serious health concerns with her first pregnancy, Jackson decided that as a mother with a young son, she was unwilling and unable to endure a second pregnancy. As a regular blogger with a following, she released a video disclosure about her upcoming medical abortion. She Twittered her abortion as a personal account for other women. “I’m not trying to ignite a culture war,” she told ABC. “I’m just offering a personal experience and true story.” However, her story is notable due to the level of backlash she has experienced. She told webzine The Frisky, “I’ve just been astonished by the level of hatred and death threats and threats of violence against my son. It’s been a very ugly side of people to see.” Perhaps, this speaks to the effectiveness of her message, as personal testimony is a powerful tool. The Internet provides an almost limitless audience, and unlike corporate controlled spaces such as television and billboards, remains available for telling personal and powerful stories about abortion.

Clinics themselves present another public space for pro-choice messaging campaigns. Currently, organizations such as 40 Days for Life and Operation Rescue occupy clinics to protest abortion providers and voice “sidewalk counseling” to women to deter them from seeking abortion services. Other than loosely organized “clinics defenders,” a national pro-choice presence at clinics does not currently exist. The “4000 Years for Choice” campaign began on the 37th anniversary of Roe v Wade in January 2010, attempts to refocus the abortion conversation in blowing the history of abortion and contraception through a visual postcard campaign to the most heavily protested clinics across the country. As clinics are often physically marginalized within communities, this project calls to attention these spaces and celebrates them within the context of a new historical narrative.

Anti-abortion rhetoric will only continue, and the reproductive rights community needs to respond with campaigns that educated, engage, persuade, and promote spaces, and heighten awareness in the daily spaces where women exist when facing choices about their reproduction, the privacy of their own homes or their workplace. Here is an excerpt from a new book by Dr. Susan Henry, Life and Operation Rescue occupy clinics to protest abortion providers and voice “sidewalk counseling” to women to deter them from seeking abortion services. Other than loosely organized “clinics defenders,” a national pro-choice presence at clinics does not currently exist. The “4000 Years for Choice” campaign began on the 37th anniversary of Roe v Wade in January 2010, attempts to refocus the abortion conversation in blowing the history of abortion and contraception through a visual postcard campaign to the most heavily protested clinics across the country. As clinics are often physically marginalized within communities, this project calls to attention these spaces and celebrates them within the context of a new historical narrative. Anti-abortion rhetoric will only continue, and the reproductive rights community needs to respond with campaigns that educated, engage, persuade, and promote spaces, and heighten awareness in the daily spaces where women exist when facing choices about their reproduction, the privacy of their own homes or their workplace.
A New View of A Woman's Body

By Bonnie Fortune

Bonnie Fortune is an artist, writer and educator. Her project-based work explores issues surrounding the environment, health, technology, and aging. She has exhibited in such diverse locales as Chicago, Mexico City, Abenaki and Nashville.

The strategic advantage to Guerrilla Warfare is that through individual anonymity and highly-visible acts of defiance, a small number of motivated people can multiply their reach, amplify their message, and counter a large number of their opponents. The group hopes that seeing zinnias blooming in an alley or a tomato vine growing up a stop sign pole will jar the rest of us from our collective slumber. They want us to reevaluate our insatiable demand for more, bigger, and newer developments so if you see a pie pumpkin growing at the lot line and you want to plant a bounty of crops, flowers and native flora at the location above. You can expect to see (if you can find it) corn, cucumbers, zucchini, beans and peas, sunflowers, herbs, squash, peppers, onions, tomatoes, pumpkins, watermelons, berries, and my personal favorite: big, bad Imperator Carrot. They will of course harvest these crops when the time comes, eating some, donating the rest of the food to one or several of the local food banks/shelters and the friendly Food Bank of the local community.

The article originally appeared at Smile-Polite.com

The article was written by the team of Bonnie Fortune, a nationally certified acupuncturist and a nutritionist. She now owns and runs Progressive Health Services in San Diego, California where she lives with her partner and their dog. I interviewed her in May of 2009 via telephone while she was working at the clinic. She often put me on hold to answer telephone calls from patients. Though she is no longer a practicing artist, her gender politics has continued to inform her work as a feminist health movement remains influential.

To read more about Suzann Gage email me at lefortune at gmail dot com and I will send you a copy of the full interview.

The book's main goal was to bend, shape, and change what the definitions of normal where in relationship to women's bodies and women's medical concerns. In the research process the women discovered that images of the female body in the existing medical literature were for the most part non-existent, but that was where there was more focus on pathology. Gage thought she left out behind, in Illinois, but when the Book Team, as the working group was called, figured out that there were no good images available, Gage was asked to pick up a pencil once again. She made drawings from life at the clinic and worked through a combination of medical textbooks and direct observation to create the medical illustrations of the female reproductive system. Her drawings show the character of this handbook that is still used in feminist health centres today. In addition to Gage's drawings, the Book Team collected photographs of their cervices over several months to show the changes in color and shape that were part of a normal cycle of menstruation and ovulation.

When I first saw A New View of A Woman's Body, Gage's earnest illustration style showing women of all shapes, sizes, color, and age performing breast exams, and cervical exams it was attractive to me. The urgency expressed in her drawings was reflected in her direct conversational manner. Her drawings to me reflect the character of a movement that focused on encouraging women to be comfortable with their bodies and to take responsibility through self-education and discussions for their health and well-being. Gage, a perpetual activist spreading the word about health care justice, is just as direct as her drawing style. She would go on to become a certified OB/GYN nurse practitioner, a nationally certified licensed acupuncturist and a nutritionist. She now owns and runs Progressive Health Services in San Diego, California where she lives with her partner and their dog. I interviewed her in May of 2009 via telephone while she was working at the clinic. She often put me on hold to answer telephone calls from patients. Though she is no longer a practicing artist, her gender politics has continued to inform her work as a feminist health movement remains influential.

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