Economic crises are not natural disasters. They are brought about by the actions of bankers, developers, and ordinary folks struggling to get by in a world we didn’t choose.

For all the talk of collapse, capitalism itself is as healthy as ever. The fundamental relationships remain unchanged: employers and employees, politicians and voters, police and people. Our masters may fool us with promises to make it better, but the system itself will persist.

Our masters may loan us cars or houses to pacify us, but we still lack control over our own lives. Crises like this are part of the protection racket that keeps them in business. They profit on the industries that heat up the earth’s atmosphere, and when hurricanes destroy our neighborhoods they replace them with condominiums and sell us energy-saving light bulbs. They profit on the invasions that secure more resources for the economy, and also on the occupations in which our friends and relatives die. They profited from the sub-prime mortgages that contributed to the latest disaster, and now they’reprofiting from the bailout.

Imagine another kind of crisis, one that could really pose a threat to their precious market: neighbors defending each other from eviction, workers seizing the goods they need, people building communities based on cooperation and self-determination, a world in which we’d never be vulnerable to the whims of the market again.

---

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@ucimc.org. Send the email with the word “comment” in the subject line.
WRFU Tower Is Approved

By Tatyana Safronova

The April 4th unanimous vote by the Urbana City Council approving the plan for construction of a new 100 ft radio tower for WRFU was a victory for a multi-year community effort. That evening, WRFU volunteers, friends and supporters filled the City chambers and spoke out for the tower. People in the audience and in the Council were excited by an idea we at WRFU and volunteers at the Independent Media Center had been working on for years—extend the tower from 65 feet in the air to 100 and allow our signal to reach farther into Urbana and Champaign. This new infrastructure will be an asset for our community, both maximizing the reach of our signal and attracting possible partners for co-location on the tower, like wireless Internet projects already in the works in town.

For now, however, our signal, will continue to originate from the 65 ft tower that sits atop the Independent Media Center building. The approval of our permit was an important step, but it’s not the end. An additional challenge lies in meeting our funding goals. We are continuing efforts to raise close to $5,000 for construction.WRFU also requires the approval of the Illinois Historic Preservation Agency to start the groundbreaking. A letter of support sent by city council member, Eric Jakobsson helps put the historical question into context.

A LETTER FROM ERIC JAKOBSSON, 2ND WARD, URBANA CITY COUNCIL

In dealing with the Illinois Historic Preservation Agency, perhaps some points about the history of the Eiffel Tower in Paris are instructive.

Today, the Eiffel Tower is the most distinctive feature of the Paris skyline, an iconic image that nobody would dream of tearing down. It is Paris, to the same degree that Notre Dame and the Louvre are Paris.

It was built for a worldwide exposition in 1889. Its building aroused fierce opposition from Paris’ cultural elite, because of inconsistency with other Paris architecture. The elite were partly placated by the promise that it would be torn down in 1909, when the property lease to the builders expired. But by 1909 it was judged that the tower had become too important for the then-new means of communication across the nation—radio! Many of the cultural elite were furious all over again, but to no avail.

Needless to say, almost everybody is now happy that the Eiffel Tower was built and was not torn down. The moral of this story is that it is very good to preserve history, but even better to MAKE history.

 Vive la tour Eiffel! Vive la tour WRFU!

Now more than ever, WRFU needs you. Interested in fundraising, community radio, radio engineering, music or community engagement? Have a personality for radio or you wish you did? Become a WRFU member and share your expertise or start a show and learn about radio broadcasting. 65 or 100 feet in the air, we’re always broadcasting locally grown programming. We look forward to our expansion and hope you’ll join us. Let’s make community radio by the people for the people for our community like the Eiffel Tower is to Paris—inseparable.

WRFU Tower Is Approved

Bob Kirchner, only 54 years old, died of a heart attack on the morning of Sunday, April 17. Bob was a local attorney who defended many who had no resources; he helped and legally supported many local non-profits, including CCHCC, he served on the County Board and the County Board of Health; and did much more. Bob was a true champion of justice for people… and for the organizations who fight for justice for the people.

Our deepest sympathies go to Bob’s wife Gerri Kirchner, with whom he had a great and beautiful partnership and to whom he was utterly devoted. Our sympathies also go to Ruth Wyman, our dear friend and the young attorney with whom Bob worked for many years.

I first met Bob in 1999, when I was a scared and very green “Interim Director” at CCHCC. He had agreed to help CCHCC, pro bono, in a legal struggle against Provena Covenant when the hospital ended the Medicare 100/Plus Program. (Please note that CCHCC now has a very positive working relationship with Provena Covenant, and the Medicare 100/Plus Program was reinstated in 2005.)

The struggle with Provena Covenant was very nasty and I was clearly out of my league. One day, I received a very intimidating package from the then-IL Attorney General’s office. It was a set of “interrogatories” demanding that I produce a bunch of documents and answer a bunch of questions that clearly implied that CCHCC was undertaking fraudulent and illegal activities in the efforts to reinstate Medicare 100/Plus. The letter basically said that we were lying to seniors about the program and trying to coerce, under false pretenses, their involvement in the program. It also said that the IL AG’s office could bill CCHCC for the costs of their investigation into us! An action like this could have sunk CCHCC financially, and the threat was very real.

The first person I called was Bob. He was calm, of course, and I felt the tiniest bit reassured. I was a very new Director and I didn’t want CCHCC to fail on my watch, and certainly not for something so unfair. Bob set up a meeting with staff of the AG’s office with my colleague Mike Doyle and myself. We traveled to Chicago for the meeting. It was terrifying, and I could see from the cold blank stares of the AG’s staff that it was not really going well.

I didn’t understand where the AG’s office got the idea that CCHCC was defrauding consumers, and when I tried to ask about this, we got no answer.

Then, out of nowhere, Bob said, in his very calm and soft voice, that he knew that high-ups from Provena had met with staff from the AG’s office, and he gave the dates and times of the meetings—and he looked at each one as he said “they met with you, and you, and you, and you”—and he went on to say that the AG’s office seemed to be subverting their legal and ethical duties in order to do the bidding of a corporation.

Stunned silence! …followed by awkward throat clearing noises and furtive glances between the AG’s staff and me.

I sat there knowing that Bob had just dropped a bombshell that was going to turn everything around. What the AG’s office was doing was illegal and wrong, and they were busted! Bob had this information up his sleeve, from who knows where. He was never one to brag or talk unnecessarily.

In that moment, I felt that I and CCHCC had been rescued from the forces of corruption, and Bob became my first personal hero.

In less than a week, CCHCC got a letter from the AG’s office saying that they were dropping their investigation and thanking us for satisfying their interrogatories. That’s just one of many stories. But it’s the one where I learned that I could totally and completely count on Bob, and that he would fight with all he had in the pursuit of justice. Not only was Bob my personal hero, but I knew that he was a champion, the likes of which I’d never known. I never imagined that he wouldn’t be here.

Beyond helping us with the Medicare 100/Plus Program, Bob was a champion for low-income children while he served on the County Board and the County Board of Health. On Bob’s watch, we (CCHCC, Bill Mueller, working with public health advocates on the Board of Health—Michele Spading, Karen Bojda, Jan Thom and oth-
Jackie Robinson Day

By Neil Parthun

April 15 marks the 64th anniversary of baseball's desegregation. Many see Robinson as a pioneer who did things that Negro Leaguers were not lucky enough to do in their lifetime. He received probation and a two-year suspended sentence. This incident, and other rumored encounters, established Jackie's reputation for being unafraid to confront racism.

Jackie further demonstrated his athletic excellence at UCLA where he became the school's first athlete of any race to letter in four sports. After two years, Robinson was assigned to Fort Riley, Kansas. As a shortstop and white southerner, Pee Wee Reese. In 1948, Reese put his arm around Robinson in response to fans that were shouting slurs before a game. In another instance, Ku Klux Klan publicized threats that they would shoot Robinson. Reese responded saying, "I think we'll all wear 42 and have ourselves a shooting gallery." The solidarity helped Jackie on the field and he led the league in stolen bases, had a 297 average and earned the Rookie of the Year award.

Over time, Jackie was given more latitude. By the start of the 1949 season, Robinson was allowed to argue calls. As Robinson recounted, "...I just tried to play ball and ignore the insults but it was really getting to me. For one wild and crazed moment, I thought, 'To Hell with Mr. Rickey's noble experiment. To me, it was a hollow victory, a false victory. I'm the manager of this team, and I say he plays.'" After this, most of his teammates began to support Robinson.

Despite this growing support, opposing teams harassed and used dirty plays to harm him. A week after Jackie's debut, the Philadelphia Phillies were playing the Dodgers. As Robinson recounted, "...I was convinced that no amount of education could help a black man get a job, due to discrimination. He played semi-pro football and became a youth football director. This career was put on hold when he was drafted into the Army.

In 1942, Jackie was assigned to Fort Riley, Kansas. As a morale officer, Robinson used his position to speak out. In one instance, he agitated for increased seating for black soldiers at the post exchange and confronted racist defenses of the arrangement. On another occasion, Robinson faced a court martial for refusing to move to the back of an Army bus. Jackie openly confronted the military police over what he called, the "elaborate lengths to which racists in the Armed Forces would go to put a vocal black man in his place." After his commanding officer refused to charge him, Jackie was transferred to a different unit where he was made a honorary discharge in November 1944.

While waiting for his discharge, Robinson began playing for the Negro Leagues but he tired of the schedule and segregated accommodations. Robinson wrote: "In those days, a white ballplayer could look forward to some streak of luck or some reward for hard work to carry him into prominence or even stardom. What had the black player to hope for? A black manager of baseball, who was both Mountain Landis, who maintained the color line, limited a white ballplayer could look forward to some streak. Jackie Robinson was hesitant to appear because Robeson had developed a public perception that Robinson had gotten his civil rights the 'right way.' This perception led to some backlash against Jackie as well.

In July 1949, Robinson was called to testify in front of the House of Representatives Un-American Activities Committee (HUAC) about comments made by Paul Robeson. Jackie was hesitant to appear because Robeson had been one of the most notable early agitators for desegregating baseball, but chose to do so because he feared repercussions for himself and others. While Robinson made statements like: "[T]he fact that it is a Communist who denounces injustice in the courts, police brutality, and lynching when it happens doesn't change the truth of his charges," his testimony also strongly criticized some of Robeson's stances. Due to his HUAC testimony and lifelong support the Republican Party, Robinson was derided as the 'white man's black.'

As he embraced the Republicans needs context. The Democrats of his era were the party of Southern racism. Jackie was Republican but was appalled by what the Republicans had become in 1964. With Barry Goldwater won the nomination, Jackie reacted by saying, "That convention was one of the most unforgettable and frightening experiences of my life. The hatred I saw was unique to me because it was directed against a white man. It emboldened a revolution for all he stood for, including his enlightened attitude towards black people. A new breed of Republicans had taken over the GOP." (Referring to Goldwater's supporters attitudes toward other Republican candidates.)

Robinson was also heavily involved in the burgeoning civil rights movement. He supported the sit-ins and free-ride movements, sponsored the student Non-Violent Coordinating Committee and was the most requested speaker from the NAACP. Much of the nuance of Jackie's legacy has been stripped away. His playing career marked the start of integration in the 'segregation, integration, celebration' framing of baseball history. Through that traditional manner, we must revert to our enlightened attitude towards human intricacies and emotion. As we celebrate another Jackie Robinson Day, let's retire the static, elementary school book report style of history.

A Tribute to Robert G. (Bob) Kirchner

Continued from page 1

ers) were able to create the child dental access program to provide free dental care to low-income county children. Believe it or not, we had to fight year after year to keep that program alive—there were opponents to the program! And year after year, Bob championed that good fight.

Over time, that program grew and led to the creation of the now well-established non-profit, SmileHealthy, where Nancy Greenwald is the Executive Director: www.smilehealthy.org. I do not know how many suffering low-income clients I brought to Bob to help with some legal issue or another where I would offer to pay for their consultation or they would offer to make payments as they were able. Bob always helped my clients, and me too, pro bono. Once I asked why he wouldn't let me pay him for legal services he provided to me and he said that it was because I was always helping others—as if somehow there was a community debt and that community debt was due by him and it was up to him to repay it—as if he himself wasn't also always helping others.

I marvel when I think of how generous Bob was with his time, energy, intellect, and character that at the core of all was his deep and abiding love for people, his love for justice and corruption and the devastation that those produce.

In 2005, because of Bob's tenacious, principled and dedicated work on behalf of CCHCC, we established the Robert G. Kirchner Legal Justice Award. We at CCHCC mourn the death of Bob Kirchner, a great and steady champion for justice, a champion for the people, and our beloved friend. We wish to honor and celebrate Bob's life and his accomplishments by working to protect the valuable programs in our community that Bob helped to create, helped to save, and helped to maintain.

With deepest sympathies to all who mourn for Bob Kirchner. (The above is an abbreviated version of a fall tribute that can be seen at www.healthcarconsumers.org)

The staff of the Public i joins with Claudia in mourning the loss of Bob Kirchner who fought so tenaciously for justice, within the courts and on the County Board, for the most vulnerable in our community. We extend our condolences to his family and his legal associate, Ruth Wyman.
Over the last year, the Public i has put on a series of poetry workshops to promote more poetry in the Champaign-Urbana community. The project is culminating with this special issue of works by local poets in commemoration of National Poetry Month. Workshops were held by local poets Matt Murrey, Ruth Nicole Brown, Janice Harrington, and Oakland-based poet Lisa Marie Rollins. We want to thank Aaron Ammons of SPEAK Café for promoting our project and emceeing our final issue release/open mic party on April 30. We are grateful to Carol Inskeep at Urbana Free Library, Janice Harrington at Urbana’s Neighborhood Connections, and Amanda Raklovits at Douglass Library for hosting workshops. Thanks also go to artist Damian Duffy for our poster design. We are greatly appreciative to the City of Urbana Public Arts Commission for a grant to fund this project.

“Poetry for the People” Celebrates National Poetry Month

You Can’t Hang This on the Wall
By Elizabeth Barrette
Snowdrops sprout and bloom. Sparrows mob the feeders. Crocus, hyacinths, tulips, daffodils—Peonies come late to the party. Cardinals whistle in the wind. Apricots open their pale umbrellas; Pear blossoms smell yeasty-sweet. Cherry trees give it up at last, Their petals like tiny white kites. Hawthorn dons her crown just as Blackbirds come home from vacation. These are the signs by which I count my seasons, winter into spring. This is my calendar.

The Son Who Is Lost To Me
By Sharon Henson
Declared a biological impossibility, you willed yourself into existence and entered my world anyway, already impatient and bored. Sobered by parenting responsibilities, I devoted myself to sharing with you the best of myself: positive outlook on life strong faith in God joy of reading and learning time for fun and play love of nature appreciation for a simple life But the mix wasn’t right. What I offered wasn’t what you needed. Each year the divide between us grew wider until the day you crossed the river into adulthood. The rift remains. It hangs between us when we speak to one another. *You let me down,* it seems to say. *God gave you the wrong mother,* I reply.

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.

My Dedication to Music
By Brittany Wilson
Melodies I hear as I drift up and away Words that I write on a slate that was once blank Pictures I paint on a canvas once clean Rhythmic movements etched on the ground as I dance Involuntary reflexes as I clap my hands A smile that resembles the sun in the sky In the worlds of John Legend, in the clouds, I’m so high As the melodies fade away my feet touch the ground I’m not tired yet, I beg, one more round So away I go as I close my eyes Saying, *"This is my jam"* as I pretend to fly Up in the air, no worries live here Now I am the pilot, it is I who will steer Living in bliss, ooh it feels so good Who knew it’d be you who truly understood Quarters and eighths, sixteenths and more Thirty seconds and sixty-fourths so fast I get sore I beg for you to stop so it comes to an end Back to reality, pain is my friend

Coal Dreams
By Elizabeth Abraham
With up-raised glasses the two young men stare out from the photograph, brown with age. As they toast, their future is unknown, whereas I see the image and hear the cage groan as it lowers them into the mine. They smile at me and I recall tales of how they came to a new land lush with harsh opportunity. Grandfather speaks of two brothers, of thirty years of darkness underground, heaving coal that fueled their children’s dreams and mine. He cradles his glass for a new toast. I know his hard hands but not the brother lost, yet feel the pain of drinking all alone.
Buho and Lucerito
(Owl and Little Star)
By Matt Nelson
And the one-eyed owl
Dances silent
With little star.
Encircling
In the inky dark,
Drawn to the twinkling
Light.
The shadow of their waltz
Cast dense on the bareness
Of winter earth.
Little star glows and pulses,
Sparkling at the owl.
Enricting him to persist.
The owl’s deep chest
Fills with blood and glee
As his outsized wings cut
Brisk air…
Drifting as close to his friend
As he can…even if
He can never seem to soar high
Enough to touch.

The Bicyclist
By Matt Nelson
Mom rode at night.
On an old ten speed my
dad bought off one of his drunk friends for
five bucks.
Mom wanted to learn earlier but
Was too poor when she was younger to have a bike.
She would climb onto that rusty Schwinn
And would push off with a slight expel of
Air.
Pedaling with determination
For the few brief seconds she was upright
Grace and freedom surrounded her
Self-conscious frame.
She was most beautiful during those moments.
Her face beaming smiling
Doubt drowned out by the soft glow
Of the streetlight.
She would eventually fall down
After a few times circling the yard.
All of us laughing and clapping
Loving her for being so brave.
She would always laugh with us
Her embarrassment hidden under the bike that
Laid upon her body.
She rode that bike
Like this every night for one whole summer.
Mom never got better at staying upright
But it mattered so little…
Each night she would climb again and again onto
That old ten speed.
The wheels turning in time with her heart.

There’ll Come a Day
By Conrad Wetzel
There’ll come a day when the hearts of all rejoice,
And altogether join with one great voice
One great song of one great good,
Peace and joy and brotherhood.
There’ll come a day when the hearts of all rejoice.
There’ll come a day when the wars on earth will cease,
And all shall work together building peace.
When our guns and bombs and spears
Will be buried with our fears.
There’ll come a day when the wars on earth will cease.
There’ll come a day when the wrongs of race will end,
And each shall honor each one as a friend.
Heart to heart and hand to hand,
In each city, in each land.
There’ll come a day when the wrongs of race will end.
There’ll come a day when we gladly turn from greed,
And each shall seek to serve a neighbor’s need.
Share our silver and our gold,
Conquer hunger, want, and cold.
There’ll come a day when we gladly turn from greed.
There’ll come a day when the hearts of all rejoice,
And altogether join with one great voice
One great song of one great good,
Peace and joy and brotherhood.
There’ll come a day when the hearts of all rejoice.

Miz Plantation
By Elizabeth Simpson
Miz Plantation had sweet tea and linen—
Let me tell you the rest:
Being told to give my baby to your darker breast.
Seeing my husband’s child coming from between your thighs.
Late at night hearing his grunts, and your cries—
What could I do? This was my test—
I chose to despise you.
What could I do? Not sympathize, because that leads to action and
What could I do?
White women were property, too.
The compromise?
I took myself, and tore her in two:
On one side was whiteness,
on the other was you.
Sister against sister, our ancient hearts: broken.
The song of our blood: divided.
Our wombs cut open.
I hated her for taking my man
though he took her
after she was bought—
do you see the plan?
He never gets caught.
My mothers chose their comfort against yours—
the soft of their skin against the sweat of your pores
That’s how it begins—
she set the course, and I followed it.
That’s what she fed me—
and I swallowed it.
Sister, we’ve been divided for four hundred years—
our stories, our blood, our pain, our tears—
It may take centuries to restore what’s been denied,
but now, it’s my turn to decide,
and I, putting the safety of whiteness aside,
choose you.
Problem Solved?
By Anne Ehrlich

when Johnny looks at grampa's watch he sees not only numbers but a work of art first sticks and stones to track the playful sun which sometimes disappeared and then returned.
The birds knew when to sing but when to plant was what the peasant knew he had to know and Kings and Emperors to plan their wars. They had to find the key to read the skies.
And so great minds assumed the task to make a frame of time with days and hours and months and seasons yea of years. Justinian.
So why did not the seasons match the frame? Required; calibrations be revised! And hence the cry—GO GO GREGORIAN!

A Sonnet
By Sandra Batzili

As history tells us time again
A tyrant's quest for wealth and power
Will cause the people grief and pain
Destroy their lives from hour to hour.
Encircling round, they use their might
Ignoring cries to stop, to cease.
Amoeba-like beneath the light,
Engulfing all within their reach.
Do only wise men see man’s plight?
The greater battle to be won
Requires all to merge and fight
Without the need for sword or gun
To figure ways to heal our earth
Or lose our common home and berth.

Then, Six Weeks Later...
By Tauby Shimkin

On Sunday, the day that Daddy was free,
For afternoon play before it got dark,
Like angel children, their father and me
Six rode in the car to Allerton park
In the light of September's golden air
I’m with Lisa, the youngest, aged three
Piggy back, I hold her in my arms
For a moment caught as the camera’s prize
I'd never known content in such measure
The others are playing where we can’t see.
Hand in hand in dappled lane, not a care.
I'm with Lisa, the youngest, aged three
In the light of September's golden air
Six rode in the car to Allerton park
Like angel children, their father and me
For afternoon play before it got dark,
On Sunday, the day that Daddy was free.

Chocolate Veggies
By Arola Oluwehinmi

Carrot, Cabbage and Cucumbers
Mom says they'll make me grow
Snickers, M&M's and Milky Way
Mom says they've got to go.
I ponder and begin to wonder
What about chocolate cauliflower and toffee celery
Vanilla broccoli, Reese's green beans and Skittles on a cob
Lettuce ice cream and pepper popsicles
They'll sure make grow
And no one has to know.

Billy, my Pigow
By Arola Oluwehinmi

I have a pigow named Billy.
He is part pig and part cow.
Billy is very, very silly.
He ate my brother's shoe
And chased my sister's dog Willy.
The other day we went to church
And left Billy on the porch.
The other day we went to church
And chased my sister's dog Willy.

I wish I would have been told to treasure
The moment caught as the camera's prize
I'd never known content in such measure
The others are playing where we can’t see.
Hand in hand in dappled lane, not a care.
I'm with Lisa, the youngest, aged three
In the light of September's golden air
Six rode in the car to Allerton park
Like angel children, their father and me
For afternoon play before it got dark,
On Sunday, the day that Daddy was free.

Life

Life is a journey
Take the right path
Learn, love and
Live each day like your last
Face your fears
Cause no tears
Make the right move
Win don't lose
Do your bet
Worry less
Help others
Be nice
Show affection
Get through life

From the Champaign County Juvenile Detention Center (Names withheld)

Two Weeks, One Day
Saturday around 7:30 am
In my bed, I'm layin' my momma
Starts yellin' like a lion, she
Tells me to get up I said hell
Naw, and then came the Brawl
She pulled off my warm protection
Then that's when I got to Acting
Court ordered, charged with electricity
Realized there had to be changes
In my simplicity
See, it's been two weeks
And one day, after this im only
Going one way, that way is up
I'm changing my ways, gonna
Do what's right day and night
Because life is a fight so
Carefully pick and choose Your battles
Pick the right path to travel
And on your way don't bite
The hand that feeds you
'cause that hand can point
The way to go, like my mother
Who removed the protection
I want, but in reality was the Protection I needed, and I cut it down so now I have time
To think about what imma do
Now
Lilacs In Bloom
By Jasmine T. Williams

Sometimes
I see it.
Clear as
light upon water.
A tendril
of Blue smoke
in a sunbeam.
A moment.
A possibility.
A breach
in the Samsara
of the preta loka.
Where the love-less
the life-less drone
of the undead
cannot go.

—altazor

The Storm
By Jasmine T. Williams

Rain sounds
Thunder echoes across the sky
The World trembles and holds its breath
Everything is flipped upside-down as Nature weeps for her planet
Terror stalls even the bravest heart
The scent of the end hangs heavy in the air
Silence thick as dirt clings to all who witness
Nothing is safe as destruction takes its iron fists and strikes
down man-kind

Seascape
By Durango Mendoza

I
fly
high
on gusts
with gulls.
Plummet earth-
ward through lull
holes in the blue, to
smack the sparkling water-
points for fish and shoot back
up
as
sails pop like rifles, and the wind, feisty as a girl, plays gaily
with the heaving schooner’s probing mast, then rolls,
out-stretched, over the water, becalmed.

Just a Mattress
By Nneka J. Howell

Soft and pleasant as I rest my skull on the soft utters beneath me; teething on energy lost.
Buried upon the quilt are the sheets
My black outline sinks into the shadows
When revealed, one see’s the stains;
wondering what caused her to spill
So even when I dress the bed,
For this blessing once was hers;
Laying upon her presence even if
I lay in memories of such disguise
For this is not just a mattress,
wrapping me with wisdom and
holding my figure in place as I rest.
in memory of my loving grandma.
once touched by her shaking hands-
such liquids on an unknown demand.
I picture me by her organs as I settle.
something to soothe her mind with.
she is far beyond the sky’s eyes.
by no surprise, I close my blinds.
I feel her touch me with security-
loving me with opportunity.

One day this mattress will distort, and when it does I will call it art!
On Wednesday, April 13, 2011, UIUC student Andrea Rosales spoke at “Whose Side Are You On,” an event sponsored by University of Illinois Student Organization, La Colectiva. The event, held at Ikennberry Commons, was a fundraiser for the “Georgia Seven”, a group of undocumented students arrested in an act of civil disobedience on April 5 in Atlanta. Andrea was one of those arrested that day and she came out to share her experiences.

Andrea told the story of the weeks of planning leading up to the action, her experience of being arrested, and her 24 hours in jail. Andrea was brought to the United States when she was five years old. She is to graduate in May with a Bachelor’s degree in Sociology and Latino Studies. At the fundraiser, Andrea talked about her decision to carry out a nonviolent demonstration. “How many other of my fellow students would I have to see disappear?” she said. “How many would I have to see drop out of college because they couldn’t afford it?”

The Georgia Seven had planned their action on Facebook using fake names and photos. They met in person for the first time in Atlanta. They were among a group of students who delivered petitions to the President of Georgia State University asking him not to comply with the state’s ban on undocumented students. They then marched across the GSU campus and ended at a busy intersection. With hundreds of supporters surrounding them, the Georgia Seven sat down in the street in an act of nonviolent protest. They were subsequently placed in plastic handcuffs by police, put in the back of a squad car, and taken to jail. Andrea recalled the bumpy ride in the back of the police car as four of them sat with their hands behind their backs.

While they were being booked, the Georgia Seven openly told jail guards they were undocumented. When a guard referred to them as being here “illegally” one of the students corrected them and said they were only “undocumented.” The term “illegal” was a dehumanizing term, Andrea explained, which took away their personhood.

Fulton County, where they were arrested, currently participates in the “Secure Communities” program, in which immigration status is automatically checked, and may result in further detention and possible deportation. (Champaign County is also a “Secure Community”) Andrea said the ICE agent who questioned them was himself from the Domini- can Republic. After the seven refused to fill out documents, the ICE agent agreed he was not going to “touch” them. Andrea suspected this was because he was afraid of negative publicity. While they were in jail, images of their arrest were being broadcast on the nightly news.

Andrea remembered one scene when she and her fellow students were sitting in a jail cell with other inmates. One young man was in an orange jumpsuit, with tattoos, and had been questioned about his gang affiliations. After they talked to one another, it was discovered that one of the students and the young man had both been born in the same town in Mexico and had both grown up in the same city in North Carolina. At this point, Andrea said she was reminded of the reason they had done the demonstration. While undocumented students are being banned from campuses in Georgia, thousands of others are quietly being deported throughout the United States.

The Georgia Seven bailed out of jail and were free the next day. Andrea said that most of the donations that had come in were from UIUC. She encouraged the audience of more than 100 people to support the other students.