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

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- AWARE, the Anti-War, Anti-Racism Effort
- Meetings every Sunday at 5pm at the IMC
- Tribal Life, Inc.
More than 50 years after the landmark case of Brown v. Topeka Board of Education (1954), this country still has not fulfilled the dream of desegregation. In fact, there are many indications that the country is seeing a trend toward re-segregation in the public schools after several decades of white flight.

On December 4, 2006, the Supreme Court heard arguments in a law suit brought by white families against the school boards in Louisville and Seattle claiming their white children have been denied equal treatment. The Republican-stacked Supreme Court could hand down a decision this year that would reverse Brown v. B.O.E. and have a direct bearing on the consent decree here in Champaign.

In January 2002, the Champaign School Board resolved a legal suit spearheaded by John Lee Johnson and Herb Stevens that admitted to the unfair treatment of African American students and agreed to make several improvements. The school board “consented” to making these changes, hence this was called a “consent decree.” Last year, a judge said significant changes have been made by the Unit 4 School District, but there has not been enough improvement in the five years since the consent decree was signed.

Those voices who would like to strike down the consent decree, like those who wish to undo Brown v. B.O.E., have invoked the language of “quotas.” This is the rhetoric of those who want to default on the promises of integration and refuse the right of black students to receive an equal education.

SUPREME COURT CASE

White families from Louisville, Kentucky and Seattle, Washington, with the backing of the Bush administration, have taken a law suit to the Supreme Court. Crystal Meredith, a white mother, has sued the Louisville School Board arguing that her son was denied access to the school “because of his race.” Her lawyer, Teddy Gordon, claims the school board’s considerations of race are unconstitutional. He has used inflammatory language, saying the board makes decisions based on “color coded children” and is practicing “a pure quota.”

Solicitor General Paul Clement, speaking for the Bush administration, told the Supreme Court that the Louisville and Seattle student assignments represent “very stark racial quotas.” Ironically, lawyers for the plaintiffs claim these racial guidelines violate the 14th Amendment, enacted after the Civil War to ensure equal protection. While the amendment was intended to provide equal treatment for African Americans, it makes no explicit reference to race. Now the plaintiffs in this case are arguing that their white students have not received such equal protection under the law.

In 2003, another Supreme Court case supported by the Bush administration claiming that schools were enforcing arbitrary racial “quotas” was brought against the University of Michigan Law School. The Supreme Court decided that race can be one factor among others in determining which students are admitted because the state has an interest in promoting diversity. The case currently before the Supreme Court will determine whether this rationale can be applied to primary and secondary schools.

The charges of “quotas” ignore a larger nation-wide pattern of re-segregation. Jonathan Kozol in his recent book Shame of the Nation documents this trend and the creation of what he calls an “educational apartheid.” He gives several examples, such as Chicago where 87 percent of students in the public schools are black or Hispanic and only ten percent are white. One school at the center of the Supreme Court controversy is Franklin High in Seattle, where the number of white students since 2000 has fallen from 23 percent to 10 percent.

These trends are damaging not only to children of color, who are often left behind in deteriorating school buildings with outdated textbooks. They are also harmful to white students who become increasingly provincial-minded and possess little ability to function in an increasingly diverse American society. But this is not the kind of harm that concerns the plaintiffs in the current Supreme Court case.

CONSENT DECREES

On October 19, 2006, U.S. District Judge Joe Billy McDade responded to a status report on the consent decree compiled by the Champaign School Board. Judge McDade had already turned down an extension the school board had asked for in July. After reading the final report, McDade said the school was “largely unresponsive” to his orders and did not have a plan for how to speed up progress before the consent decree expires in 2009.

A ten-year organizing drive, the consent decree began in 1996. John Lee Johnson, a black community activist who passed away last year, and Herb Stevens, a local white millionaire who believed in Johnson, hired the Chicago law firm Futterman and Howard to file a class action law suit on the behalf of the African American community. After five years of negotiating with the Champaign School Board, the consent decree was approved in January 2001. The agreement was to eliminate racial disparities in student achievement, gifted education, special education, and discipline, as well as to do a better overall job of integrating the Champaign schools.

When organizing efforts began, the situation for black students was bleak. Only two percent of African Americans were placed in gifted classes. The law suit filed claimed the fundamental problem was that the burden of desegregation was placed on black students, who were bussed one-way out of their communities while their white peers were not being bussed north of University Avenue. Among other improvements, the consent decree agreed to provide school facilities to fill an additional 220 classroom seats north of University, a number which still has not been met.

A $6 million bond referendum for three new schools in Champaign went before the public in March 2006. To meet the consent decree requirement for additional seats, one of the schools was planned to be built in Boulder Ridge, at the intersection of Staley Road and Bradley Avenue. While this site was technically north of University, it was on the outer reaches of Champaign, a plan clearly designed to cater to sprawling housing developments and white families.

The School Board announced the Boulder Ridge location on March 13, just a week before the March 21 election. A swift organizing campaign to defeat the referendum was organized by Imani Bazzell, head of the Urban League’s Center for Civic Engagement and Social Justice, as well as other community members who canvassed neighborhoods and made phone calls.

A masterpiece of political propaganda, they passed out a flyer that showed an image of African slaves being dragged off of boats that read “Slavery. We won’t go back!” The black community was outraged when they found out about the Boulder Ridge plan and they shot down the referendum at the polls.

Two days later, on March 23, 2006, after being hospitalized for several weeks, John Lee Johnson died. While his presence in the community will be missed, several other activists have come forward to pick up where he left off.

THE GREAT CAMPUS

After Judge McDade told the school board their progress had fallen short, those supporting the status quo remained indignant and, like others, resorted to the rhetoric of “quotas.” Sally Scott, a lawyer for the school district, claimed there has been a “sea change” of improvements and objected to any “quotas” imposing standards for these changes. Yet the Judge has stated consistently that guidelines of racial fairness are not “quotas” but achievable goals for eliminating the unfair disparities for black students.

Since the defeat of the school referendum, a collaborative project has begun between the school district, community advocates, and University of Illinois experts to develop a plan for what is being called the “Great Campus.” The proposal is to build an elementary school that would meet the need for additional seats on the North End. The Great Campus would be a new elementary school at 1103 North Neil Street linking Stratton Elementary School and the Early Childhood Center. It would provide an innovative educational model for students from preschool to the eighth grade.

The plans for the Great Campus involve many innovations in curriculum, architecture, and community outreach. It is funded by the UI Chancellor’s Task Force on
Witnesses Appear in Post-trial Motion for Patrick Thompson

By Brian Dolinar

A motion for a retrial filed by attorney Robert Kirchner on behalf of Patrick Thompson was heard Thursday, January 5, 2007. Nearly 50 of Thompson’s supporters were in the courtroom. In July 2006, Thompson was found guilty of home invasion and sexual assault. Thompson is facing 6-30 years for what his supporters believe is retribution for his political activism. Patrick Thompson is one of the videographers that created the controversial documentary Citizens’ Watch in 2004 that exposed the unfair treatment of the black community by local police.

The post-trial motion was turned into a trial-within-a-trial by attorney Robert Kirchner and assistant Ruth Wyman. Ineffective counsel was the underlying theme of Kirchner’s lengthy motion for a retrial. In the July 2006 trial, attorney Harvey Welch had called only one witness for the defense. On Thursday, Kirchner called a total of six witnesses: Thomas Tarr, correctional officer; Susan Frick, jail nurse; Terrence Ware, accuser’s co-worker at Provena; Michael Hediger, Urbana officer; Maria Thompson, Patrick’s wife, and Dawn Miller, the accuser’s former friend. The testimony of these witnesses, in addition to legal arguments, builds the case that a jury has not heard all the evidence and Thompson has not received a fair trial.

Thomas Tarr was the correctional officer that processed Thompson when he was taken to jail on August 24, 2004. Tarr testified to filling out a medical intake form at 2:56 p.m. and interviewing Thompson. He also checked Thompson. Susan Frick was the staff nurse who examined Thompson. She testified that she had indicated on her form that Thompson had said he had hit his hand on a metal object and that she had taped his fingers. We find out later from Maria Thompson that Patrick had been wearing a splint on the index finger of his right hand, which was never identified by the accuser.

Terrence Ware worked with the accuser. What was a bombshell to many in the courtroom, Ware testified that the accuser was on time to work at 7 a.m. on August 24, 2006 (contrary to her testimony she was late) and that she acted like nothing was wrong. Ware worked at Provena for four years and said he knew the accuser because he bought DVDs from her. When he heard that the police had arrived that day because the accuser said she had been raped, his response was, “She’s at it again.”

Ware said that in 2003 the accuser had made allegations that he had showed her his private parts. Ware, an African American, said that he was aware of other incidents where the accuser had made sexual allegations against other men of color. When this white woman accused Ware, he was suspended from his job and nearly fired. Like the entire Thompson trial, Ware’s story is further evidence of how the charges of rape by a white woman can destroy the life of a black man in America.

Urbana officer Hediger was the first cop who was on the scene, filled out a police report, and arrested Thompson. Kirchner questioned Hediger’s report which states that the accuser was “yelling” and “screaming” when she was allegedly attacked and testified that these were her words. Kirchner highlighted the accuser’s inconsistent statements that she was “not a yeller” and had spoken just above a talking voice. Kirchner also verified that the accuser made no mention of a finger splint.

When Maria Thompson took the stand, she was calm, collected, and confident. Ruth Wyman questioned her about the morning of August 24, 2004. Maria said she woke at 6:10 a.m. and her husband was in the shower. Between that time and approximately 7:30 a.m. when Patrick left to attend the first day of class at Parkland College, she was with him the entire time.

Maria also testified that Patrick had been wearing a splint on the index finger of his right hand. She said they had gone to Osco the previous Sunday because Patrick’s finger had become so painful. The splint had a metal backing, blue foam, and was wrapped with tape. He had worn it all week and did not take it off in the shower. This splint has never been identified by the accuser.

Ruth Wyman asked Maria if she had ever been interviewed by Harvey Welch. Maria said no and that she had told Welch during the trial that she wanted to testify. Welch told her it was not a good idea and that her testimony would not help. Of course, Maria’s testimony is Patrick Thompson’s sole alibi.

Lastly, Dawn Miller was a fellow resident at Sunny Crest Apartments and testified that she was with the accuser the night of the alleged incident. Miller had known the accuser for about three weeks. Nearly every night between 8 p.m. and midnight she was at the accuser’s apartment drinking and playing cards. On August 24, 2004, they were once again at the accuser’s apartment. Miller said the accuser acted like her normal self and there were no signs that she had been assaulted.

Miller said that when Special Prosecutor Michael Vujovich spoke with her, she told him not to talk to Patrick Thompson’s lawyer. He then did not call her to testify. According to Miller, it was because, “If I took the stand, I’d hurt her [the accuser] case.” Miller also said she was never contacted by attorney Harvey Welch in the second trial.

Time had run out before Kirchner had the chance to call all the witnesses he had subpoenaed. A continuance was granted until February 7 at 9 a.m. in courtroom A to hear the other witnesses. Others on the witness list include: Anthony Bates, the former boyfriend of the accuser; Harvey Welch, Thompson’s attorney in the second trial, and as well as the accuser.

Join US at the Book Fair Hosted by UC Books to Prisoners & Barnes & Noble from an in-store wish list display which would be sent to the inmates. Date: Saturday, February 10, 2007, 0 a.m.-2:00 p.m. Location: Barnes & Noble, 65 East Marketview Drive, Champaign, IL

Happy Birthday To All fellow Aquarians—Logic And Truth Will Take Care Of Us!

By Aaron Ammons

I would like to extend a happy birthday to my family: my father Jerry Ammons (Feb. 6), sister Alicia Boss (Feb. 18), grandfather Bob Bailey (Feb. 15), and Jelani Saadiq (Feb. 24) and to myself (Feb. 7).

During this month of February (Fevrier), we will all experience a flood of “toben gestures” toward memorable, deceased “African-Americans” for their sacrifices; however, logic and truth will not be exalted.

Have we asked the question, gotten the answer, made the decision and done the work necessary to understand how these “great” people came to the conclusions that they obviously did? Or will we, for example, continue to insult the intelligence and disregard the disobedience of Rosa Parks by saying “she was just tired that day,” or “her feet were hurting too bad to give up her seat that day?” Why have we reduced the courage and commitment it takes to stand in the face of ignorance to cliches? “I Have a Dream,” “By Any Means Necessary,” “Power to the People?” Where is the investigation and research that uncovers the “method to the madness” so that the onlookers of history can walk away with the processes that lead to the reshaping of the American political and social landscape? If the masses are not taught the “how-to” of social movements such as the Civil Rights Movement, how will they translate the problems of today into solutions that bring about the restructuring of the establishment?

Does the “I Have a Dream” speech move you to tears, or does it extinguish your fears? An emotional outburst usually amounts to a fleeting immediate pleasure. In contrast, studying, meditating upon and practicing the principles that Dr. King lived for, will produce just outcomes. For the sake of charity, we must understand that along with his belief in God and mastery of theology, Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. was also well versed in history, philosophy, and sociology. In order to fulfill his duties, Dr. King challenged many of the traditional beliefs of the church, while internalizing the fact that “…the good shepherd lays down his life for the sheep” (John 10:11).

Many people continue to ask the question, how did they do what they did? The answer, as simple as it may seem, was that each person individually committed themselves to education. Education is defined as the acquiring of knowledge (principles/philosophical science) for the sole purpose of serving the health, rights, interests and needs of all people. It is this understanding of education that achieved the greatest change in the economic, political, and social fabric of America. Education led Dr. King, Rosa Parks, Reverend Bevel, John Lewis, Bernard Lafayette, Septima Clark and others to study at Highlander Folk School with Myles Horton (see highlanderworks.org). A thorough search into the biographies of “great” people will unveil a dedication, commitment and obedience to love, truth, wisdom and discipline (among other principles and sciences) that led them to being remembered forever. The melodic voice of Dr. King certainly had an attraction but it was the content of his speeches that resonated in the subconscious mind of millions. Remember his dream? “…not judged by the color of their skin (Black history) but the content of their character” (integrity, dignity, wisdom & discipline).

I leave you all with what has now become my favorite quote by Margaret Mead because of the truth, love, and wisdom within it: “Never doubt that a small group of citizens can change the world. Indeed, it is the only thing that ever has.”
Campus Academy Youth Reflect On The Legacy Of Paul Robeson
By Carol Ammons

Beginning Aug. 23, 2006, Campus Academy opened its doors to six families with African American male middle-school-aged students seeking an innovative and advanced learning experience for their children. The purpose of this academy is to provide African American boys an exceptional foundation for college achievement, leadership, and world citizenship.

All students must have a complete knowledge of the accomplishments and contributions of Africa-American people! All of the students at Campus Academy are African American males, and we refer to them as young scholars. Therefore, as they began working on numerous assignments for this issue of the Public i, I asked them what they knew about African American history. I quickly realized that they had received very little educational exposure to the complete historical accounts of Africans in America and almost no exposure to the historical or present conditions of Africans on the continent of Africa.

Furthermore, their knowledge of contributions made on their behalf by African Americans was, overall, very limited. The inquiry even included such people as Nelson Mandela and the anti-Apartheid movement, Malcolm X, and Paul Robeson and almost every student struggled to give me any real information about the aforementioned. Now, of course, this doesn't shock me. It simply reminds me of the challenges that are still facing students in the educational system.

A few necessary points must be mentioned at this time. One, the lack of substantial information being presented to the entire student body regarding African American contributions, and two, the portrayal of African American history in a way that shapes us as only slaves, or prisoners. African American history is a part of World History. If one were to educate children of all races about African American contributions, just as children are infused with the colonial history of America and the world, perhaps white children would be encouraged to seek the complete story and move away from this idea of privilege based solely on their "whiteness." Subsequently, black children will begin to relinquish this idea that their "blackness" is the reason for their lack of accomplishment. Remember, the myth of white supremacy was directly connected to "manifest destiny." This ideology is the basis for justifying the annihilation of the Native American and the enslavement of the African, thus leading to the marginalization and outright neglect of children of African descent.

By presenting American children a lopsided and "dismaying" concept of African and African American history we are guilty of perpetuating racism and classism in the institution of education. The reason why the submissions from Campus Academy were centered on Paul Robeson is because he exemplifies courage, discipline, perseverance, and caring. His life is a testament to the internal drive necessary for the world to truly become a better place. I pray that you, the reader, will find something in the pieces shared to do two things. One, demand that your school begins the process of inclusion of African American history as more than a footnote. Two, start teaching your own children about the true accomplishments of African American people minus the stereotypical images that are being portrayed. May the Creator be pleased with our efforts. Peace.

Sis. Carol Ammons

MOSES MUHAMMAD, 13
Paul Robeson was a great example for the world. He showed me that there is no limit to my dreams. Before I learned about Paul Robeson, I thought I could only do one or two things for a living but that is not true. I can do unlimited things in my lifetime. Paul Robeson was an African American, whose story related to me as an African American young man. He also showed me that there is a purpose of life. Paul achieved lots of things in his life time such as American law, acting, singing, and activism. He also became an activist. He spoke out against the international policies of the United States. He made me want to be educated to the fullest and there is no place to stop to ensure that I am educated. He also became an activist. He spoke out against the international policies of the United States government in defense of the Russian people. Then the government took his passport. In the mist of everything he pulled through and helped all people, including the United States. I have been greatly inspired by his life and accomplishments.

JELANI SAADIG, 11
Paul Robeson was “truly the tallest tree in our forest.” His father once was a slave. So he did all that he could to be educated. He went to Columbia law school to become a lawyer. He was famous for singing songs that inspired people all over the world. He made me want to be educated to the fullest and there is no place to stop to ensure that I am educated. He also became an activist. He spoke out against the international policies of the United States government in defense of the Russian people. Then the government took his passport. In the mist of everything he pulled through and helped all people, including the United States. I have been greatly inspired by his life and accomplishments.

JORDAN PATTERSON, 11
Since Paul Robeson was a singer that kind of amazes me because I wouldn't think of him as being a singer. The way Paul did all of those languages was cool because I thought that he only spoke English. What I don't really understand is why Paul had a concert at the border of the U.S. But I do feel nice that he was an activist and fought for other people's rights. When I learned that Paul's passport was revoked, I felt bad because he couldn't go and have concerts other places but he got his passport back later on and he could go around the world again.

FORREST BREWSTER, 12
Paul Robeson's life inspired a goal for my life in academics and athletics. His life gives me an idea on how I should live my life. He inspired me to improve my language skills and learn new languages. He inspired me to be an activist. Can you believe that they revoked his passport for being an outright supporter of the African and Russian people? He teaches me to live up to my dreams. He inspired me to never stop even when it gets hard. He inspires me to be a role model for other people. He inspires me to speak for people who cannot speak for themselves. I did not know of this great man before we watched a video documenting his life. Now that I have learned of him, I plan to live up to my own dreams.

"At Risk Youths: A Documentary and Discussion ” with Special Guest Patrick Thompson, of Visionaries Educating Youths and Adults (VEYA)

Thursday, February 15, 2007, noon, Room 407 Union
A boxed lunch will be provided for all who RSVP at cdms@uiuc.edu
Sponsored by The Center on Democracy in a Multiracial Society's Criminal Justice Action Network

This documentary shows youths in their daily environment, how they interact and socialize with their peers, as well as their perspective on education, local government, and jobs and how they see themselves in society.

Patrick Thompson is the founder of Visionaries Educating Youths and Adults (VEYA) a non profit organization that focuses on the education, social and judicial issues that affect at-risk youths and adults. Mr. Thompson has spent over 10 years incarcerated in such places as Leavenworth Federal Penitentiary. His knowledge and expertise is in the area of at-risk youth and individuals in the criminal justice system. He is currently seeking an associate degree in Criminal Justice at Parkland College.
SHIFTING JUSTIFICATIONS

However, it was not Lt. Acree but Lt. Foster who was on duty that Saturday and it was possible, Lt. Acree said, that Foster was not aware of Acree’s conversation with Mr. Cotton. Lt. Acree also accused that the Champaign Police Department had intervened in a situation he felt should have been handled by the University Police. He admitted there had been a breakdown in communication. About five minutes after the incident, Jan Kruse met with the CPD. They spoke briefly with Sgt. Scott Friedlein who stated that the officers were only following orders. Whose orders? His own, Sgt. Friedlein answered, made upon the request of Dana Brenner, the number-two man at the Department of Intercollegiate Athletics (DIA). Sgt. Friedlein had not checked to see if the request was legal. When Mr. Kruse showed him the Student Code he responded that he had never seen the document before. He had not been aware of any permission given to us and he refused to acknowledge any possibility of a civil rights violation. He did state that there could have been better communication between the DIA and the University Police.

On Tuesday, November 28th, Durl and Jan Kruse met with Mr. Brenner, who after hearing their story maintained that he, as the university representative in charge of the event, had the right to move us because we were on university property since UIUC is a public university and its property is state property and therefore public, although the University does have the legal authority to regulate activities if they disrupt the educational environment. He did not explain why he did not want us to hand out flyers. Although Mr. Brenner is a UIUC employee, he did not seem familiar with the Student Code and its policy on leaflet distribution. He stated he would review the case and contact the Kruses, but never did. Nor did Mr. Brenner respond to our request for an interview.

Lt. Acree later notified Durl Kruse that the case had been discussed with the DIA and the CPD and had been forwarded to the legal department of the University for a ruling. On December 13th, Lt. Acree called Durl Kruse to explain the conclusions of these discussions. Acree cited the following section of Article 2 of the Student Code:

“Certain buildings, due to the nature of the activities within them, are governed by separate policies. For those buildings, appropriate restrictions as to time, place, and manner for distributing materials may be established by the agency responsible for the building. These may include, for example, requiring prior permission to distribute inside the building, or restricted distribution to designated areas only.”

Comparing the incident at the football tournament to the University Police’s reaction to the Illinois state’s IHSA event legal according to university policy, but approving the IHSA after November 25th and spoke with assistant director Anthony Holman who revealed that the National Guard is a sponsor of IHSA. He would not give further information, explaining that the specifics of IHSA contracts and sponsors are not public information, only an administrator of a member school may request it. Principal Kathleen Patton of IHSA member school Urbana High requested the names of all IHSA sponsors and the amount of money they gave in mid-December, but never got a response.

TO BE CONTINUED….Durl Kruse requested an appeal and hearing with the Committee on the Use of Facilities in early January, but Dean of Students Bill Riley informed him that this committee has not existed for a couple of years. The incident has been forwarded to the chancellor.

We spoke with Vice President of Academic Affairs Larry Mann on Monday, January 29th. “I find it disappointing and discouraging that you were asked to leave,” he said of the incident. While he thought that the University flying policy needs to be brought to the attention of the campus, he stressed that the University policy’s spirit was to encourage the free expression of differing opinions. The problem lay in individuals acting outside of that spirit to make had calls, but not, he accentuated, malicious calls.

AWARE hopes to get a hearing with an appointed University committee to have the incident and the policy clarified. This will be important because it will set a precedent for possible future controversies about campus flying.

SOME IMPORTANT LESSONS

The incident showcases police incompetence in Champaign-Urbana. Both Lt. Acree of the University Police and Sgt. Friedlein of the CPD admitted there was a lack of communication within and between departments. In addition, the separate police departments seemed to operate with different understandings of the laws at different times: the CPD on November 25th told us we could not fly on University property because it was private but that the sidewalk was okay. The University Police gave us three different, contradictory statements with regard to flying at the IHSA event: that it was entirely permissible, that no one was allowed to fly in the parking lot (although they allowed the National Guard to do so), and that we had been moved because flying was illegal or because university property was private property but because they wanted to protect us. It is clear that there are gray areas in university rules, but it seems that the CPD and the University Police make up policies as they go. This is especially disturbing in the case of the IHSA football tournament because they seem to have altered policies depending on the group.

If the National Guard was allowed to fly and to deny the right of flying to other groups, then they were, in effect, buying free speech. Free speech is a civil right held sacred by the constitution of the United States of America. To deny a group free speech while denying it to another is not only unconstitutional but violates the ideals this country was based on. For the National Guard, an institution which is meant to protect the United States, such an un-American act is truly inappropriate.

A TWISTED MESSAGE

This is scarcely the first time the police in Champaign-Urbana gave orders without sufficient reason. We know it

Continued on page 6
No Child Left Without A Skill: The Case For Vocational Education In The Building Trades

Belden Fields

The public schools in Champaign and Urbana are meeting the needs of only a few students very well but are not meeting the needs of other students, low income and minority stu-

dents nearly so well. All students should receive a sec-
dondary education that would enable them to go on to higher education if they choose to do so. But many stu-
dents will not be going on to higher education and they need to be given an education that will prepare them to support themselves and their families.

The building trades offer such a possibility. The remu-
neration, especially in the commercial sector where pre-
vailing wages are paid, is substantial. At one time, there were substantial offerings in a number of trades in the high schools. Those opportunities have been severely dimin-
ished. Part of the problem was that vocational education was part of a two-tier tracking system. Students were iden-
tified early on as either potential college students or as potential skilled manual labor. Following a program in vocational education precluded the possibility of going on to college. But judgments of people as an early age often turn out to be wrong. They are also often driven by the class and racial identities of those who make the judg-
ments. Thus doing away with such a tracking system was a good thing. But doing away with the possibilities of young people to have a choice in which direction they want to go was not a good thing. Many leave high school with no skills and too often find themselves with low paying and dead-end jobs, too often engaging in illegal activity such as selling drugs, and/or winding up incarcerated.

It does not have to be this way! High school, and per-
haps middle school, vocational education in the construc-
tion trades would be of benefit to both students who will go on to college and those who will not. For those who will go on to higher education, it offers useful and satisfying life skills and could offer a more concrete and hands-on preparation for such professional careers as architecture and engineering. I was talking last week with a very accomplished engineer whose firm designs duct work and steam and cooling systems of hospitals. She said that she wished that she had had such a program available to her in high school because her engineering curriculum was too theoretical and mathematical for her to fully appreciate the work in installing the systems she designs.

For the person who does not go on to higher education it offers the same skills and satisfactions, but it also offers attractive career opportunities as both a wage worker and an independent contractor. Construction jobs cannot be outsourced abroad. They will always be here. It is a myth that graduating from college assures one of a high paying job. Construction jobs pay more than jobs that many col-
lege graduates perform. A significant program also offers a motivation to attend school regularly and to perform well. Many students now go to school because the law requires it and the state enforces it. If this were not the case, they would not be there at all. Many students sit in math class-
s with glazed looks on their faces. They know that they will not be going to college and that they will never actual-
ly use the math. So, why study it? But if there were a pro-
gram in, for example, carpentry, and the instructor taught applied math, the student who chose not to go to college would have a motivation to be attentive and do well in both the general and the applied math courses. Further-
more, courses preparing students for these trades would also emphasize the virtues of dependability, promptness, and the ability to work cooperatively with other people.

There are a number of ways that one could rebuild strong programs in the construction trades, and they are not mutually exclusive. One would be to establish a voca-
tional and technical academy for both students who will go on to higher education and those who will not. But the latter are still prepared to further their education if they choose to do so later in life. In other words, no student would be tracked out of that possibility. Such schools exist in Chicago and St. Louis.

Another way is to significantly build up the scaled-back programs already existing—such as those in Champaign Central and Urbana high schools—in collaboration with our community college and tie them to union apprentice-
ship programs and internship.

Finally, we could offer summer programs that might include middle as well as high school students. Why should our schools be closed down in the summer when students could be learning in them? I don’t want to discount some of the hurdles we must overcome in order to meet the challenge I am proposing. First, school funding is inadequate in many areas of the state, including ours. Second, the federal mandates associ-
ated with No Child Left Behind, which were intended to help minority and poor students are actually hurting them by tying the hands of schools districts. So much time is devoted to testing that there is little left over to try differ-
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pare teachers have almost completely stopped training minority and poor students. Why should our schools be closed down in the summer when students could be learning in them?

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But with the cooperation of community organizations and individuals, state agencies such as Education for Employment, skilled trades people who are willing to serve as tutors and mentors and perhaps even willing to become certified teachers, the building trades and teachers unions, Parkland College, other units of county and municipal government and the park districts, we can overcome these obstacles. Too many of our young people are being lost to not meet this challenge. We can, and WE SHALL, OVERCOME.
Media Reform Activists Come Together in Memphis

By Marcia Zumbahlen and Brian Dolinar

The 2007 Media Reform conference organized by Free Press took place in Memphis, Tennessee this year. After holding conferences in Madison and St. Louis, this year’s organizers are to be congratulated for taking the event to the South, where many stories go untold. Public Journalismists Marcia Zumbahlen and Brian Dolinar attended the conference. They report on a great coming together of media policy analysts and media makers.

Amy Goodman spoke of how appropriate it was that the conference was held in Memphis the weekend of Martin Luther King Jr.’s birthday. When King came to Memphis, he was supporting a strike organized by 1300 local sanitation workers who were demanding a living wage. King’s presence was a catalyst that the struggle must continue. Outside the Lorraine Motel, where King was assassinated, a billboard reads, “Become an activist today.” Help wage peace.

The atmosphere of racial hostility in Memphis is still palpable. When we drove to the conference, we passed the courthouse where there was a long line of people outside entering for their court cases. As we left the conference that day, we went by the jail where another line of people was waiting to see their loved ones during visiting hours. Both lines were overwhelmingly African American.

Inside the conference, the community was diverse in age, in media focus, and in background. Panelists included professional journalists who had made careers in the mainstream media, became disillusioned, and forged their own paths. They were working to develop cable TV programs, Air America and Real TV to compete with the major cable TV news programs.

Josh Silver, founder of Free Press, explained the forces that influenced him to fight for independent media. He cited Michael Powell’s attempts to allow great media consolidation and the response of three million people in 2003 who sent a message to the FCC that they did not want such corporate control. He also cited the figures that 60 percent of the U.S. public gets their news from mainstream TV sources. This has disastrous consequences after 9/11 and the wars in Afghanistan and Iraq.

Young activists spoke about their fights for public access cable stations. They discussed the struggles to get permits to hold events in cities like New York and Chicago. They have been a lifeline for the LGBT community, for people of color, and for the youth. While much local news coverage is being downsized, local TV gives communities the chance to decide their own issues and get the word out to those shut out of the corporate media.

Activists from Prometheus Radio, who came to Urbana-Champaign to help start WRUFI, were well represented. Prometheus held a table that was well attended and encouraged many others to form radio stations in their own town. Pete Trudish gave a talk about the mammoth efforts of Prometheus radio. He told the story of founding a pirate radio station in Philadelphia and being shut down by the FCC. The radio pirates stood in front of the Benjamin Franklin printing press and vowed to fight the FCC’s dictatorship over the public airwaves. Three years ago, the FCC passed legislation to disallow low power radio in urban markets. The challenge for Prometheus is to roll back that legislation and open up low power radio in major cities across the United States.

Panelists who addressed the topic of hip hop activism leveled an important criticism of independent media and the conference organizers. Rosa Clemente, a Puerto Rican activist, noted that in the talk by Bill Moyers, a keynote speaker for the conference, there was no analysis of race. Rosa pointed out how questions of race were relegated to a few select panels. She also said that an entire panel on the media coverage of hurricane Katrina was cancelled. On the flip side, audience members in the “Women in Media” presentation questioned how to define diversity in media. “I’m tired of diversity being race and gender,” one woman said, “I look like plain vanilla but I am a 54-year-old disabled Appalachian lesbian pangan.” Another asked, “Where are the ‘old women?’” A third suggested that, “It is the queer women who are diminishing cross-cultural divides.”

Perhaps the moderator’s response synthesized these two sides: “Everybody should be able to speak power to the backgrounds they represent.” If the media showed Black folk how they really are, in an honest, raw depiction, this civil rights movement would take care of itself—sentiment of Dr. Martin Luther King’s autobiography.

Independent media is a way to speak that power. The Texas Media Empowerment Project encouraged conference participants to organize and to tell the truth—self awareness in the case of women—and tell the truth about how they live rather than turning their stories into a sound bite. Change rarely comes from sweeping the hard parts of reality under the rug. Vigilance is the only thing that is going to stop anything you want to stop.

The “Diversity in Media Content & Representation” panel reminded us that even the littlest things have an impact (e.g., referring to a Mexican immigrant as a “illegal” or an “illegal alien,” or splitting people in their personal complex humanness). Creating an avenue by which immigrants can tell their own stories will help others hear what’s missing and strategize ways to bring it forward.

But strategizing requires unity, a prized commodity in a world of techies heading in different directions, on their personal time together forms bonds between members and communities.

With that, we ended our conference by dining with other activists and sharing core beliefs, and they’ll soon realize how inseparable these beliefs are from the political work that’s happening. They will want to meet in a real place and plan a meeting or a convention that provides a positive outlet for social action. There is no demarcation between social actions and desired outcomes. Spending personal time together forms bonds between members and communities.

As Alexis de Tocqueville observed in the 19th century, American democracy would not survive long if it were not for the involvement of civic groups. When police do not feel the need to check their actions against the laws and rules, rights are violated and political activity is stifled. It is crucial to understand the effect this abuse of police power has on the minds of youth. It is intimidating, especially to a generation that has grown up during a time when the president’s message is “dis- sent is unpatriotic.” The police’s readiness to arrest, and propensity to act against political activity, regardless of its legality, discourages political action and civic responsibility.
Consent Decree 101: The Mis-education of Champaign’s Black Students

Continued from page 1

Civic Commitment in part. Three classes were offered at the University of Illinois as part of a scoping study. Together, professors and graduate students came up with ideas for the Great Campus. In the Fall 2006, classes were taught by Bill Terri, professor in Educational Policy Studies, Rochelle Gutierrez, professor of Curriculum and Instruction, and Ann Bishop, professor in Library and Information Science.

Several other professors are participating in the coming year. Brenda Lindsey, a professor at the School of Social Work said, “This is the most exciting collaboration to come along in Champaign since I’ve been here.”

Mark Aber, a psychology professor who compiled a 2001 Climate Survey in the Champaign schools, is also excited about the Great Campus. “I can’t wait to send my children there,” he said.

The Great Campus would be a “green” building constructed with environmentally sound materials. Class sizes would be smaller and after-school programs would be available. After speaking with teachers who wanted more parent involvement, graduate students and professors developed an idea for a community center to provide health care and employment services for parents.

The idea behind building a 21st century, state-of-the-art school in the heart of the black community is that it would attract white students into the community and meet the demands of the consent decree. Fighting the tendencies of white flight and suburban sprawl, the Great Campus would be a reinvestment in the city.

Imani Bazzell explains how the Great Campus would address the demands of the consent decree. “How can we best take this original idea which is that we need more seats to the North and make it about more than buses and seats? Because if we’re just talking about the need for more seats on this side so there’s an even number on both sides of University, that doesn’t speak to the fundamental reason we ended up at the table, which was about the quality of education a whole segment of our student population was receiving.”

In 1933, Carter G. Woodson, the father of Black History Month, brilliantly described this original idea which is that we need more seats to the North:

On January 17, 2007, the Executive Committee of the Oglala Sioux Tribal Nation submitted a resolution to the President and Board of Trustees of the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign, Chancellor demanding the return of the Lakota regalia used in the portrayal of the school’s mascot to the Oglala Sioux Tribe.

The official resolution refers to the “theatrics and antics of chief illiniwek” and notes that the “Oglala Lakota regalia is being misused to represent ‘Chief Illiniwek’” and needs to be returned to the rightful owners of the tribe. The resolution further states that “Chief Illiniwek” not only “perpetuates a degrading racial stereotype,” but violates the integrity of traditional Indian tribes including the “Kaskaskia, Peoria, Pankeshnow, and Wea nations.” Moreover, the resolution by the Oglala Sioux supports the Peoria Tribe of Indians of Oklahoma “in its request that the University of Illinois recognize the demeaning nature of the characterization of ‘Chief Illiniwek’ and cease use of this mascot.”

In 2000, the Peoria Tribe of Indians of Oklahoma passed a resolution “Request to University of Illinois to Cease Use of Chief Illiniwek as Mascot.”

Given the increasing concerns regarding the experiences of racism and oppression facing American Indian nations and communities, the faculty of American Indian Studies (ASS) and the staff at the Native American House (NAH) at the University of Illinois seek to respond to this resolution with due respect and action. There can be no misreading of the Oglala Sioux Resolution ‘those to whom the Lakota regalia belongs and whom the Board of Trustees claims to be the rightful owners of the tribe.’

Further, AIS/NAH faculty and staff call upon the Board of Trustees, President White, and UIUC administration to respond to this resolution with due respect and action. There can be no misreading of the Oglala Sioux Resolution ‘those to whom the Lakota regalia belongs and whom the Board of Trustees claims to be honoring have clearly requested that the performance and charade of ‘chief illiniwek’ end.’

To obtain a copy of the resolution of the Executive Committee of the Oglala Sioux Tribe, please visit the Native American House website at http://www.nah.uiuc.edu/.

Contact Information:
Wanda Pillow, director, Native American House/American Indian Studies, 217-265-9870, or John McKinn, assistant director, American Indian Studies, 217-265-9870

Resolution of the Oglala Sioux Demanding the Return Of Regalia Used By “Chief Illiniwek”

Natural Gourmet

Natural Gourmet is a family owned and operated health food store, carrying organic foods and supplements. The bulk foods section includes a large selection of herbs and spices. There is a deli in the rear of the store that serves a variety of Thai meals and Misc. items of interest for sale. Natural Gourmet is open Monday through Saturday 9 to 6. The address is 2225 South Neil Street, Champaign. Feel free to call to see if we have specific items or what’s for lunch or dinner at the deli at 217-355-6365.

Natural Gourmet is proud to be a sustainer of the Public i’s newspaper.

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