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

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

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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 is always looking for writers and story ideas. We invite you to submit ideas or proposals during our weekly meetings (Thursdays at 5:30pm at the UCIMC) or to contact one of the editors.

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‘As in Iraq... So it is at home...’ [Carlos Latuff is a Brazilian political cartoonist who's hard-hitting commentary is often controversial, but always timely. More of his work may be found at http://latuff2.deviantart.com]
The C-U Political Action Project is Andrew Bloeser, Chuck Allen, Rosemary Tharlaith, Mariyah Chaudhry, Katie Hayesman, Sunnana Chaud, Allison Adams, Dion Harris, and Sylvia Oglivie. The Project aims to merge political scholarship and community action. Its current work is a partnership with North End residents to address environmental and health-related concerns.

TO SEE THE VACANT LOT AT 5TH AND HILL streets today, you would never know that a coal-to-natural gas plant once stood on the site. You would never know that this plant once dumped thousands of gallons of coal tar—a toxic byproduct of the coal-to-gas process—directly into the ground. And you would never know that even today, coal tar and a related substance known as BTEX still remains on site. You would never know that a coal-to-natural gas plant once operated with a number of health problems, including cancer.

What remains under the ground at 5th and Hill is only one piece of the site’s toxic legacy. An equally consequential part of this legacy is the community relations plan that Ameren, and its predecessor, Illinois Power, have practiced to date. The toxic legacy of the 5th and Hill site is not news to Ameren, the company that operated the plant on 5th and Hill. At the plant, the coal underwent cleaning, and its final product was a clean-burning natural gas, used to heat people’s homes. However, not all the coal treated at the plant became natural gas. Substances left over from the process—the BTEX-laden coal tar—remained on site. Today, prolonged exposure to the chemical components of BTEX has been associated with a number of health problems, including cancer.

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

CORPORATE SECRECY

The toxic legacy of the 5th and Hill site is visi-ble. It is effectively buried from sight, both under the ground and in a morass of information that Ameren, the sitethe site’s owner, has largely failed to provide to neighborhood residents. To see this toxic legacy for what it is, you have to do some digging. AGAINST TOXICITY

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For the people living near the 5th and Hill site, the digging has only just begun.
that the eavesdropping charges were only January 2008

2 • the public

January 2008

2008

By Seth Jackson

By Tom Royer

The Demonstration at the School of the Americas

Tom Royer has been the pastor of St. Mary Church since 1973. In the 1980s St. Mary joined with four other local churches to form the Sanctuary Program, which offered hospitality to refugees and other victims of the violence in Central America. Since 1988, the parish has had a sister relationship with five small mountainous villages in eastern El Salvador. Each year since 1992 a parish delegation has visited these settlements.

I was one of over 25,000 who participated recently in the demonstration at the gates of Fort Benning, in Columbus, Georgia, where the School of the Americas (SOA) is located. The annual demonstrations, this year on Sunday, May 17-18, are called vigils. They are non-violent protests that involve speeches and great music from a large stage in front of the gates, as well as the drama of large “puppets,” and other demonstrations related to SOA activities.

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

SOME HISTORY

On March 16, 1989, six Jesuit priest-professors at the University of Central America and their cook and her 15-year-old daughter were assassinated by a death squad. The death squad were members of the military, a U.S.-backed counter-insurgency program in El Salvador during the 1980s, but this event stirred a great public outcry throughout the world and in the United States. During the 1980s, the U.S. had been deeply involved in the dirty war that raged in that country. The U.S. supported

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

Patrick Thompson Returns to Court Again

By Seth Jackson

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

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

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

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

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

In the November 2004 election, Piland, the 10-year incumbent, was defeated by current State’s Attorney Julia Reitz, who credited her victory partially to the uproar over the videotaping of police.

Due to the revelation of the videotaped police activity, Federal Civil Lawsuit Against the Champaign Police Chief, 2 Champaign Police Deputy’s, 4 patrol members of Police, the Champaign City Attorney, the Champaign Police Department, the assistant Urbana Chief of Police, the Champaign City Attorney, the Champaign City Manager, and other defendants, Thompson, who had represented Thompson in a prior matter, and due to this fact, was named by then-State’s Attorney, Reitz dismissed the remaining eavesdrop charges against Thompson.

Thompson was scheduled for a third jury trial in late January or early February. Thompson, 38, of Champaign, has been in custody since the creation of VEYA’s controversial video documentary, Citizen Watch, in August of 2004.

In June of 2005, Thompson and Miller had represented Thompson in a prior matter, and due to this fact, Thompson's defense witnesses at the first trial because presiding Judge Tom Difanis, who had hired Elizabeth Dobson to be an assistant state’s attorney, ruled that the accused's past record of false sexual allegations could not be allowed into evidence in the Thompson trial.

During the 1980s, the U.S. had been deeply involved in military violence in Central America and their cook and her 15-year-old daughter were assassinated by a death squad. The death squad were members of the military, a U.S.-backed counter-insurgency program in El Salvador during the 1980s, but this event stirred a great public outcry throughout the world and in the United States. During the 1980s, the U.S. had been deeply involved in the dirty war that raged in that country. The U.S. support
February 5th Primary for State’s Attorney

ALFRED D. IVY, III, DEMOCRAT

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Alfred D. Ivy, III

JULIA RIEZET, DEMOCRAT

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

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

As an Assistant State’s Attorney, I learned to respect the prosecutor’s position to protect victims and those accused of committing crimes, through prosecutorial discretion in charging decisions and law enforcement. My understanding of that grew in private practice, where I represented people caught in the legal system. I believe in the words of Supreme Court Justice Robert Jackson, “the citizen’s safety lies in the prosecutor who tempers zeal with human kindness, who seeks truth and not victims, who serves the law and not factional purposes, and who approaches his task with humility.” In 2002, I ran for State’s Attorney because I was disappointed with the direction the office was taking at that time. I was elected in November, 2004, winning 63% of the vote, the first female State’s Attorney in Champaign County (one of only 6 in the state) and the first Democrat in the office in over 20 years. As State’s Attorney, I work to ensure that we live up to Justice Jackson’s standards. I am proud to have brought respect and integrity back to the State’s Attorney’s Office, and look forward to continuing to serve Champaign County.

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

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

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

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

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

Republic Miller-Jones’ responses will be in the next Public

IBEW Local 601 Absolved of Discrimination

By Richeld Fields

In its June/July 2007 issue, the Public published an article on a lawsuit that Henry Bell III brought against the International Brotherhood of Electrical Workers Union Local 601, the headquarters of which are in Champaign County. Bell and another electrician, accused the union of two things: discriminating by not sending him out on a job and discriminating by not sending him out on a job. After Bell withdrew his complaint, the union was cleared of any wrongdoing.

Initially, Bell was required to bring such charges to the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission. This he did. While the Commission did not find in his favor, it did give him a right-to-sue letter that permitted him to bring the complaints before the Federal District Court in Urbana.

Bell filed two suits against the IBEW and one against two union electrical contractors. The cases have now been decided. In one case, the union court granted a summary judgment against Bell caught in the legal system. The judge in the other lawsuit. I believe in the words of Supreme Court Justice Robert Jackson, “the citizen’s safety lies in the prosecutor who tempers zeal with human kindness, who seeks truth and not victims, who serves the law and not factional purposes, and who approaches his task with humility.” In 2002, I ran for State’s Attorney because I was disappointed with the direction the office was taking at that time. I was elected in November, 2004, winning 63% of the vote, the first female State’s Attorney in Champaign County (one of only 6 in the state) and the first Democrat in the office in over 20 years. As State’s Attorney, I work to ensure that we live up to Justice Jackson’s standards. I am proud to have brought respect and integrity back to the State’s Attorney’s Office, and look forward to continuing to serve Champaign County.

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

Wednesday, January 23 at 7:30 pm, at the Chan-ning Murray 1209 W. Oregon in Urbana. Fee & Open to the Public. Refreshments will be served. Sponsored by Uni High Activism Club & the Channing Murray Foundation.
Environmental Justice an Overview

By Marti Wilkinson

Eco-Resolutions for a Healthy Planet

• Eat locally grown foods: Just as we have an individual carbon footprint, our food does too. Consider how many miles your food has traveled, how many chemicals were used, and how much pollution and waste was generated in its production. Instead, eat less meat and support local agriculture by shopping for produce at the farmers market. The goods will be fresh and you will meet the folks who grow your food. This one can also help with kicking the processed food habit—another ecologically expensive habit.

• Walk, bike, or use public transportation: According to the American Public Transportation Association, public transportation saves 1.4 billion gallons of gasoline each year and can reduce household expenses by $6,200. If you don’t live near public transportation, try organizing a carpool with coworkers or fellow students. You’ll save on fuel and reduce greenhouse gas emissions by removing cars from the road. When possible, ride a bike or walk! It does wonders for our hearts.

• Turn off electronics: Connect all electronic equipment to power strips that can be switched off when not in use. This includes disconnecting computer cords, cell phone chargers, and DVD players. Switching off reduces the “phantom load,” the energy that’s consumed by electronics when they are not in use. While you’re at it, trade inefficient light bulbs for compact fluorescent lamps. They’ll save you money and reduce energy use.

• Kick the bottled water habit: Last year alone, we consumed enough water to fill 50 billion plastic bottles. Meanwhile plastic bottles and containers are grossly contaminating the environment and our health, in the name of pure water. Unfortunately, “pure” bottled water is mostly hype. Several bottled water brands actually use water with the same or worse water quality than regular tap water. If you must carry water around, then think of buying an eco-friendly bottle and refilling it for free. If you’re still concerned about the water, consider buying a water filter.

• Use canvas bags: Purchase several canvas bags and take them with you to the grocery store. Plastic bags are made from petroleum and contain about 1 percent of the estimated 500 billion to 1 trillion plastic bags consumed worldwide are recycled each year. Most end up in landfills, where they take perhaps 1,000 years to decompose, or end up in the sea.

• Buy recycled paper products: By purchasing recycled paper products we prevent trees from being chopped down, and paper waste from ending up in landfills. In addition, less energy and water are required to produce a recycled paper product.

• Use biodegradable cleaning products: Many traditional cleaning agents are very caustic and toxic when inhaled or in contact with skin, earth, and water supply. Instead switch to eco-friendly cleaning products that work as well or better, without endangering children, your body, or the planet. Visit <http://www.care2.com/greenliving/clean-house-top-10-eco-friendly-ways.html> for the top 10 eco-friendly ways to clean house.

• Consume water wisely: Taking 5-minute showers helps to conserve thousands of gallons of water per year. Use the soap water from washing dishes (with green instructions.

• Program the thermostat: By programming the thermostat in your home or office, the energy use can be reduced, by reducing the temperature when there is nobody around. Keeping the thermostat, when in use, at 68 degrees in the winter and 78 degrees in the summer is another way to conserve energy and money. Wearing a sweater in the winter and short sleeves in the summer also saves energy and reduces pollution.

• Recycling, Reuse, Renew: Recycling newspapers, magazines, cardboard, metal, glass, and lots of other items for reuse in renewable ways has been found to be the most efficient method to dispose of household waste. This practice is beneficial in two important ways: it reduces the costs of energy and raw materials and also the amount of waste produced for disposal. So take advantage of recycling opportunities available through city and community recycling plants. Visit http://earth911.org/recycling/ for more information on recycling.

• Shop consciously: Think twice about the utility of the things that you’re bored with and think you need to replace. The landfills are overflowing with televisions, computer monitors, and other discarded items and will remain there for years. Incidentally, organizing closets, shelves, and the garage can help to reduce wasteful shopping and needless accumulation.

Prof. Ken Salo at the 5th and Hill site during a “toxic tour” of Champaign.
From the Abolition of the Slave Trade to the Exploitation of Black Women

Amin M. Davis

ON JANUARY 18, 1808, A FEDERAL LAW ended the trans-Atlantic importation of slaves into the United States. So, as a woman descended from a motherline of Black women, I am compelled to bear witness to this bicentennial of the abolition of the U.S. international slave trade. This act, which resulted from the deals made among white men in constitutional settings, was thought by some to be the prelude to the end of this nation’s “peculiar institutions.” It is worth noting here that the British, who ended their international trade in bonded Africans in 1807, held in 2007 a year long commemoration to the abolition of the transatlantic trade. As early as mid-year 2006, I began to receive emails from U.K. associates that documented Black British community demands for inclusion in the development, planning and production of events and programs designed to celebrate this moment in human history. Today, as I prepared to write this article, I received yet another email about a last discussion within the British Black community in December about the “so-called abolition and its significance to African struggles for social justice.” But to date, I’ve seen nothing from Blacks in the U.S. (or any other groups) calling for recognition of the event, with the exception of a December 30, 2007 op-ed in the New York Times, written by historian Eric Foner, calling the bicentennial a “Forgotten Step Toward Freedom.”

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

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

If the growth of the enslaved population was “natural,” then I need to question Foner’s definition of the word “natural.” Abolitionist Theodore Weld, in an effort to gain support for the movement, gathered testimony from noted personages in his 1839 book, American Slavery As it Is: Testimony of a Thousand Witnesses. These testimonies supported the contention that upper South states, like Maryland and Virginia, were slave-breeding states.

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

Hence, the growth rate witnessed from 1810-1860 can only be explained in one way: the forced breeding of enslaved Black women. Following the abolition of the international slave trade in 1808, Black women’s bodies became the site of increased reproductive labor and remained so for the 57 years until the ratification of the 13th amendment abolishing slavery in the U.S.

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

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

Environmental Justice an Overview

Continued from previous page

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

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

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

Can the dead speak?

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

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

Who will give water to their thirst?

Who will unleash the collective pain of braidetd leather growing into flesh that bleeds the bone in escape?

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

Who will re-member them?

Who will call spirit into being?

Who will stamp it on the ground to ease the passage between worlds?

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

Who will call spirit into being?

Who will brace their back and let them mount?

Who will lend their mouths so the dead can speak?

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

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

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

Who will call spirit into being?

Who will brace their back and let them mount?

Who will lend their mouths so the dead can speak?

Do You Know Your Carbon Footprint?

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

By Stephen Gasteyer

The Demonstration at the School of the Americas

Continued from page 2

“The only indication at all that the government of El Salvador had any involvement.” The U.S. Congressional Task Force concluded in its April 1990 report that the men responsible for the massacre were trained at the School of the Americas at Fort Benning. They were part of the elite U.S.-trained Atlacatl Battalion.

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

The SOA has been an instrument of U.S. foreign policy in Latin America, training over fifteen years, beginning in 1977. The wall is a monument to the Salvadoran victims and to raise the consciousness of U.S. citizens, like those of developed countries worldwide, about the issues and the scale of the problem.

To keep alive the memory of the Salvadoran victims and to raise the consciousness of U.S., CIA documents show that the Reagan White House was fully aware of who ran, funded and protected the El Salvador death squads in the 1980s and planned the assassination of Archbishop Oscar Romero.

In a city park in San Salvador there is a memorial wall for the 75,000 victims of the civil war. The wall is 60 feet long and 15 feet high and has 16,000 names inscribed on a long black marble wall. The annual vigils at the gates of Fort Benning provide an opportunity to join in solidarity with the victims of the massacre at El Mozote. It should make us angry that the U.S. has never acknowledged its role in that war. During the vice-presidential debate leading up to the 2004 election, Dick Cheney said: “We’ve brought democracy to El Salvador.” What our government brought to El Salvador was bloodshed and tragic suffering across the country. The U.S. still dominates the Salvadoran military-political-economic picture. El Salvador is the only Latin American ally that still has its troops in Iraq.

In comparison the SOA Watch seems insignificant. The SOA is the only military center for Latin American soldiers to receive training in counter-insurgency tactics. The U.S. has trained a large number in over 100 other facilities in the United States, and even more in schools outside this country.

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

The Demonstration at the School of the Americas

Continued from page 2

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Kenya IMC formed in 2007 around the World Social Forum. UC-IMC is a fiscal sponsor for Kenya IMC and donations made from individuals locally have helped to start the project. In this zine, we feature stories and opinions on the current political climate and new challenges especially important during recent election tampering. The following report was sent to us by a member of Kenya IMC.

Five days ago, on the 27th of December, I stood in a queue for six hours—from 5:30 AM to 11:30 AM, waiting for my turn to cast my vote in the national elections. In addition to presidential, parliamentary, local elections and civic elections. When the votes were counted later that night, Raila Odinga, the opposition leader, began taking a near-unassailable lead. At one point, he led by almost one million votes. But somehow, Mwai Kibaki, the incumbent president, squeezed through a disputed victory. I can live with a million votes. But somehow, Mwai Kibaki, the incumbent president, squeezed through a disputed victory. I can live with that. What I can’t live with, is that in the last three days, more than 200 Kenyans have lost their lives because of this disputed election result.

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

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

I blame the people who commissioned and condoned the rigging of these elections. While I realize that most leaders blame vote rigging for their losses, these particular rigging claims are not mere speculation. Samuel Kivuitu, the chairman of the Electoral Commission of Kenya has already admitted that he announced the presidential results under pressure. The man of the Electoral Commission of Kenya has already admitted that he announced the presidential results under pressure. The chair of the Electoral Commission of Kenya has already admitted that he announced the presidential results under pressure. The chairman of the Electoral Commission of Kenya has already admitted that he announced the presidential results under pressure. The chairman of the Electoral Commission of Kenya has already admitted that he announced the presidential results under pressure. The chairman of the Electoral Commission of Kenya has already admitted that he announced the presidential results under pressure. The chairman of the Electoral Commission of Kenya has already admitted that he announced the presidential results under pressure.

Host the Kenya Independent media website:

1. Share this information far and wide: Send this piece to your local newsmen and radio stations. More and more people are informed, more possibilities avail themselves.

2. Volunteer as a web designer for the Kenya Indepen dent Media (Indymedia) website: This Kenya Indymedia website can and should act as a platform for accurate and widespread expression. We need to publish dozens of first hand stories that may not make it to the mainstream media. We also need to publish photos, audio and video. We therefore need volunteer web designers and programmers to work on it consistently for a period of 2–3 months as the Kenya Indymedia team builds its web design and programming capability. As Kenya Indymedia, we now need to communi cate to the world what is really happening and a vibrant website will be one way of doing this. We are liaising with a national movement known as Million Young Youth Alliance. Action to call and text people from across the country, moro the worst hit areas of western Kenya and Rift Valley, so that we can in turn share their stories. This way, statistics will cease to be cold figures and people will understand the human face of violence.

3. Host the Kenya Independent media website: In order to enable a download of videos, images and audio of this conflict, the website needs to have sufficient space. We would like to use this site to keep track of all the Kenyans who are needlessly losing their lives, getting injured, robbed and displaced in this post-electoral violence. We would also like to use it to keep track of who is instigating, undertaking and condoning this violence. Even more important, we would like to know the victims of this vio lence that no one can reach out to them one way or another, in our own small way.

4. Mobile phone communication: The only way that most endangered people can be communicated with is through mobile phones. We would like to distribute mobile phone air time to as many people as possible, so that we can enable them to communicate about what happened, is happening or may be about to happen. As already mentioned, we will file all this communication on the website and post it on to relevant websites. This will ensure that we vide four minutes air time. These four minutes may make a difference between life and death.

5. Help relocate someone from a danger zone: This vio lence has taken on ethnic dimensions, which means that people from certain communities are now no longer safe in certain places in which they are the minorities. Property belonging to such individuals is being looted and destroyed. Even worse, their lives are in grave danger. Many of them are, however, not able to flee since many public means of transport have suspended their services due to rampant insecurity on the roads. We intend to relocate such people through any means possible. This includes tipping food delivery trucks, cargo trains, newspaper vans and any other vehicles that are moving from one point to another for whatever reason.

6. Help feed a relocated person: We have identified and are continuing to identify families in Nairobi and other parts of the country that can temporarily host relocated persons. As this is a grassroots movement with an emphasis on grassroots roots solutions, we intend to temporarily host displaced persons in host families. These families will greatly appreciate whatever food supplements we can give them. Embassies can do more than issue blanket statements for people to ‘keep the peace,’ as if don’t already know that!

7. Tender to a child: More than 75,000 Kenyans are now internally displaced. Most of them are women and children. A tragedy when young children are caught up in such a mess. There is no perfect formula for reaching out to such innocent ones. We intend to take them toys, clothes, chocolate, drinks, books and more gifts that can cheer them up. We will particular ly target children who have been displaced or those whose parents have died in this conflict.

8. Pray: For those of you, who like me, believe in God, do whisper a prayer that peace will eventually prevail in Kenya.

9. Share your ideas: It will greatly help if you share any concrete ideas that you may be having. Most politicians are just telling Kenyans to keep the peace and not real ly taking any concrete action to address this situation. People power and solutions can make a BIG difference. Many of them are, however, not able to flee since many public means of transport have suspended their services due to rampant insecurity on the roads. We intend to relocate such people through any means possible. This includes tipping food delivery trucks, cargo trains, newspaper vans and any other vehicles that are moving from one point to another for whatever reason.

Water and Environmental Justice in Palestine

Continued from previous page

Water resources in Palestine

Consumption per capita might be written off as a problem of inefficiency, lack of management, or other economic and political forces. But the operational and maintenance problems on the part of the Palestinians—and indeed groups like CAMERA have used these arguments against the West Bank. It is true that Western states have provided the Palestinians with some water resources. Roughly one quarter of the water in Israel’s National Water Carrier (the Melkor) comes from the Jordan River. Even though 93% of the river separates the West Bank from Jordan (making Palestinians full riparians) they do not have direct control over its water resources. Israel also consumes a disproportionate amount of the groundwater resources. The Coastal Aquifer Region is largely overlapped with the Gaza Strip, under the Gaza Strip, which is overdrawn both by the large Palestinian population and by ongoing Israeli mining of groundwater. Of the water available from West Bank aquifers, Israel uses 73%, West Bank cities use 11%, and Gaza Strip cities use 10%. This is enforced through restrictions on well driling in the West Bank, which is rarely granted and all wells of greater than 100 meters have been prohibited since 1967.

Groups like CAMERA argue that this disproportionate access is more than offset by Palestinian overdraw on the West Bank and Gaza. This is not true. Palestinians use 17%, and Jewish settlers use 35,000 meters of water pipes. This is enforced through restrictions on well driling in the West Bank, which is rarely granted and all wells of greater than 100 meters have been prohibited since 1967.

Water is crucial to public health and economic development. Rectifying this inequity through sincere steps toward joint management of shared water resources will be critical to moving toward real peace and justice in Israel and Palestine.