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Patrick Thompson Exonerated

By Brian Dulin

Stories of those being exonerated are becoming increasingly common, with wrongly convicted men and women being released from prisons in the United States at a rate of approximately one each month. Many of these exonerations have come after the DNA testing has proven an individual’s innocence. When Patrick Thompson was set free on May 16, 2008, it was not by any scientific evidence—indeed, there was no evidence in this case—it was by sheer people power.

To understand this case, it is important to go back to 2004 and the copwatch videotaping Thompson was doing with his colleague Martel Miller. That Spring they founded VIEYA (Visionaries Educating Youth and Adults) and sent a letter to Champaign police notifying them of their plan to tape routine traffic stops with the intention of exposing racial profiling and overpolicing of the black community.

Indeed, Thompson and Miller’s video Citizen Watch caught local police in many embarrassing moments. Among other things was footage of Assistant State’s Attorney Elizabeth Dobson videotaping Thompson and Miller while they were videotaping police. Dobson was riding around with Champaign police collecting evidence to prosecute the two black activists.

On Monday, August 23, 2004, Miller was indicted on two counts of felony eavesdropping, an outdated state law that carried four to 15 years in prison. On August 24, 2004, the very next day, Thompson was charged with sexual abuse and home invasion. A white woman who lived next to Thompson alleged that he entered her apartment at approximately 7 a.m. in the morning and attempted to rape her.

The same Assistant State’s Attorney Elizabeth Dobson who was directly involved in stoppings Thompson and Miller from videotaping (and is currently named in a civil lawsuit), was the same person who convinced a grand jury that Thompson should be indicted for sexual abuse and home invasion.

After significant public outcry, State’s Attorney John Piland dropped the eavesdropping charges against Miller, but not against Thompson who remained in jail on an exorbitant $250,000 bond. Challenger for State’s Attorney’s office, Julia Rietz, ran her campaign using the eavesdropping case as an example of Piland’s overcharging. She spoke at the First Annual Unity March in West Side Park organized by CU Citizens for Peace and Justice. Her election was won with the help of Miller and others in the community outraged over the eavesdropping case.

In November 2004, John Piland was voted out of office and Dobson went with him. When Rietz stepped into office, state failed to produce any neighbors who heard anything that morning. When Vujovich began to inquire about her tone during the alleged incident, she said, “I don’t know how to explain it.” She then began crying and the jury had to be escorted out of the courtroom.

After questioning by the state, the accuser was cross-examined by Bob Kirchner who asked several inconsistent statements made in the four times she has testified—July 2005, July 2006, September 2007, and the current in 2008. Before, she said that Thompson had

Trapped her in the laundry room. Another time she said she first saw him at the railing in front of his apartment. One time she testified that she had her laundry in a basket. Another time she said she was carrying it in her arms. Was she yelling or too? When asked about these inconsistencies, she repeatedly responded, “I don’t remember.”

After all the state’s witnesses appeared, Vujovich rested his case. Kirchner then motioned for a directed verdict on the two counts, arguing that the state had not proved its case on the charges of home invasion or sexual abuse.

It looked like a long shot. But in a miraculous turn of events, Judge Clem allowed one of Kirchner’s motions and dismissed the charge of home invasion. Of all things, he ruled that the state had not proven that Patrick Thompson was not a police officer! This is one of the elements required to prove a charge of home invasion and Vujovich had forgotten to question his witnesses on this point.

Vujovich attempted to argue that he had not closed his case, but an angry Judge Clem said that he would not allow that kind of gamesmanship.

It was an emotional moment and Thompson broke down crying. At the recess, he rushed to embrace his longtime friend Martel Miller in the courtroom. Even though the sexual abuse charge remained, the weight of the six to 30 year sentence that home invasion carried was lifted off of Thompson’s shoulders.

The defense presented its witnesses, which included Patrick and his wife Maria. When asked to state her name for the record, Maria began crying and the jury had to be escorted out of the courtroom. After collecting herself, Maria gave her recollection of the morning of August 24, 2004. She said that from 6:10 a.m. when she woke up, until 7:30 a.m. when her husband left to buy books for his fall semester at Puddling College, he was always in her sight.

Thompson then took the stand, confidently testifying to his work with VIEYA in 2004 and his memory of events at the time of the alleged incident. On Sunday, August 22, he was at the Independent Media Center, then a storefront on Main Street in downtown Urbana, filming for a video documentary he was producing. He explained how a microphone stand fell, injuring his right index finger. Monday morning, he and Maria went to Osco to buy a finger splint that he wore to protect it. His accuser never mentioned in any of her accounts that the assailant was wearing a finger splint.

Kirchner asked Thompson directly, “Did you know the accuser and did you ever enter her apartment?” Thompson stated firmly, “No.”

Continued on page 3
A New Clock Tower Does Not Justice Make

The County Board passed in January a proposal for spending $6.81 million dollars on courthouse and tower renovations. Renovations have begun on the clock tower, but community concerns persist. Area residents, such as Chris Evans, still insist that “While we are writing checks for the county clock tower, let’s look into what is going on inside the building.” Instead, Evans contends that increased funding should be going for the Public Defender’s Office, noting that a lack of public defenders violates citizens’ constitutional rights to adequate legal representation and due process in Champaign County.

Belden Fields comments that “The Courthouse is not a church—it does not have to reach up to the heavens,” in response to the millions that are being spent for the renovation of the courthouse building and Clock Tower. Instead, Fields believes that some of that money should have been used to set up a contingency fund for the County nursing home. Although a variety of worthy proposals were presented by area residents to the County Board prior to their decision, it seems that again property—the Courthouse and Clock Tower in this instance—are the priority for community officials, rather than the needs of disfranchised people in this community, who bare the brunt of government neglect.

Whether or not biofuels are the answer to our energy problems is a question outside the scope of this article. Regardless, The Andersons plant plans to withdraw 1.9 million gallons per day of pristine aquifer water to use for evaporative cooling. This would not have an immediate effect on the quality of water in the Mahomet Aquifer. But as well-reported by the News-Gazette, it most certainly would have an effect on the quality of water in the Champaign-Urbana area.

An aquifer is a renewable resource. As part of the hydrologic cycle, some water will return to the aquifer and “recharge” it. However, we must think in geological time: rain falling on Champaign County today will travel to the aquifer at the rate of about one inch per year, completing its recharge function in approximately three thousand years. Remember, too, that human development affects this cycle: construction, agricultural irrigation, and other uses will slowly dewater the aquifer. An aquifer is a precious resource and that our future requires the protection of the aquifer. As part of the recharge process, the law offers little support for water conservation or long-term protection of our water supply. Turn the faucet! The water's there waiting. Would that it were true and true forever!

Evans contends that increased funding—now being directed for the County nursing home, instead of for the Northeastern Illinois Deep Aquifer and the Mahomet Aquifer. In 2007, in response to the executive order, a three-year data-gathering program was begun for our aquifer, with the goal of producing a regional water supply plan to include scenarios through 2050.

What puts the Mahomet Aquifer at risk? In the words of Derek Winstanley, chief of the Illinois State Water Survey, “Groundwater is a renewable resource, but not an infinite resource—we are talking about finite limits, for all purposes and for all times.” Pumping lowers the water table. Over-pumping is the single greatest threat to the continued viability of the Mahomet Aquifer.

Furthermore, while the growth potential for aquifer use as a whole remains quite large, the Champaign-Urbana area may already be approaching local yield capacity. In addition, continued growth in withdrawals from the same part of the aquifer will eventually result in “dewatering,” a serious situation which could dramatically compromise the quality of water in the aquifer. ISWS data gathered so far suggests that we can withdraw an additional 16 or 17 million gallons per day before we begin to dewater the aquifer. WILL WE RUN OUT? Is this enough? Population growth, climate change, continuing urbanization, and the needs of agriculture and manufacturing are among the factors that must be considered when making water use decisions. Springfield, Bloomington-Normal, Decatur and Danville currently rely on surface water sources but are looking at the Mahomet Aquifer as a possible alternative or back-up supply. Climate change studies of Illinois suggest only that the future is uncertain. More frequent or more severe droughts, with a corresponding need for greater irrigation, are definitely one possibility.

Water isn’t just necessary for life; it is a major component in manufacturing. ITT (the telecommunications provider) recently reported that nearly 40% of their business is semiconductor. This ethanol plant, which could, in fact, be located anywhere in the state, will bring perhaps 35 jobs to the county and save transport cost for those local farmers who own their own semis and want to jump on the ethanol bandwagon. That’s not much of a return for 1.9 million gallons per day of “best of the best” water.

At the moment, we do not have a water supply plan for the future. Under current “reasonable use” standards, water rights come with property rights, unless challenged in court. The courts listen to the competing claims of current users; the future user has no voice. Perhaps it is time to change their perspective. What the Mahomet Aquifer may really need is a group of outraged citizens and a good lawyer.

The Champaign County Court House clock tower restoration

Kaskaskia River, the ultimate disposal site for the water. The fates of our rivers and our groundwater are intertwined: ultimately what affects the one, affects the other. More important, in a world of finite limits for all purposes and for all times this is the use we want for water from the Mahomet Aquifer? The price of gasoline right now gives us a tiny glimpse of what it really means to live in a world of skyrocketing demand and scarce resources. But this is water. You can’t opt out of your need for it by walking to work instead. We already know that we need to think ecologically—we need to think in terms of interconnections and we need to think in terms of seventy seven generations. We need to think “for all purposes and for all times.”

But wait! We, the citizens of Central Illinois, don’t get to decide. If the Illinois EPA grants The Andersons their permit to remove water from the Mahomet Aquifer? The price of gasoline right now gives us a tiny glimpse of what it really means to live in a world of skyrocketing demand and scarce resources. But this is water. You can’t opt out of your need for it by walking to work instead. We already know that we need to think ecologically—we need to think in terms of interconnections and we need to think in terms of seventy seven generations. We need to think “for all purposes and for all times.”
Food costs more. Fuel costs more. Metals and other raw materials cost more as well. But this is no traditional inflation. Labor doesn’t cost more; wage rates are not rising, at least not in the US, in the rest of the traditional “developed countries,” or in many impoverished countries either; and so there is as yet no wage-price spiral. In a typical inflation, higher prices lead to higher wages, which in turn lead to even higher prices, and so on. But up to now, it is just prices rising and wages staying the same. Wage earners are getting poorer in many parts of the world. Why is this happening? Here are some factors commonly mentioned:

1. Increased demand for food, especially in China and India, where wages and profits are increasing. This includes increased demand for basic foodstuffs such as rice, corn, wheat, and soybeans; it also includes increased demand for meat and dairy, as the new middle class there develops taste and purchasing power for items higher on the food chain. Meanwhile, low wage levels there still keep down wages here, so no increases are expected to keep pace with higher commodity prices.

2. Increased demand for fuel and nearly all other raw materials in the same countries. These are used as inputs to agriculture, it means that extra cash now coming to farmers from harvest yields will partly or entirely be lost to higher production costs. How this will balance out for small peasant operators and for large modern industrial farms is not yet clear. Already clear, on the other hand, is increased use of farm products for fuel. Agricultural ethanol production should push up food prices even further while restraining fuel prices. Higher food prices lead to starvation and misery among the world’s two billion poorest people, who depend on food relatively more heavily than on fuel, yet the trade-offs make sense to most people in the United States and other “developed” regions, who are not so close to starvation, and for whom fuel is a relatively more important issue. It appears to make sense to entrepreneurs and policy-makers in China and India as well, though some of their own people may be among those currently suffering.

3. Speculators, having long seen this, and wanting to get their money out from the collapsing stock market bubble in 2000 and 2001, and then from the collapsing real estate bubble of the past two years, putting their money into commodities and are perhaps now creating a commodity bubble. In other words, prices are rising more and faster than they would without speculator participation, and might eventually come down again part of the way when speculators sell to take their profits or, in the case of those jumping in or out too late, their losses.

4. Money is losing value, partly due to efforts of bank
groupings and governments to deal with the collapsing real estate bubble. So speculators do not merely want
to get out of real estate, they want to get out of money. Pre
dating interest rates are now so low that even with the moderate level of inflation expected, the actual rate of return on many investments in the so-called “money mar
tet” is expected to be negative. That is another reason now to
to invest in real commodities instead.

5. Increased cooperation among members of OPEC, the Organization of Petroleum Exporting Countries, since 1998 giving them more monopoly power in oil and gas. Around the same time, a wave of consolidations in the pri
ture sector, creating the hyphenated giants such as Exxon
tech and BP-Amoco, has given those corporations more power too. Unlike OPEC, the private firms seem to have
direct influence on the price of crude oil, but they can and do control refining capacity and hence have their
tongue on the price of gasoline, diesel and other refined products.

6. Increasingly tense competition for control of resources. While for most of us it doesn’t matter if we pay $130 per barrel to a US or British, Russian, Iranian, Nige
tian, Mexican or Chinese oil extracting company, it does
ter to those people worried about earning that money, and
worried too about the “national security” associated with control of access to vital resources. They are in strugg
le already and prepared to escalate. The costs of that struggle, including for example the Iraq occupation, are part of the resource price story.

In brief, market forces currently favor raw commodi
ties, military and police services, and perhaps innovative entrepreneurship, at the expense of ordinary labor. Per
haps too much inequality in ownership of resources leads
to too many people depending solely on labor for their income; and so there is too much labor on the market, and
too many people badly making nearly useless things.

Criminal (In)Justice Part I: Police Review Board & the Thompson Case
Libecour! Sunday morning, July 13
at 10:00 am, on WEFT 90.1
The show includes interviews with Patrick and his supporters after the reading of the not guilty verdict in his third trial, material from a recent courthouse protest, and an interview with Danielle Chynoweth on the Police Review Board in Urbana. Tune in.

Sentencing of Brian Chesley
By Brian Dolinar

Upon the recommendations of Assistant State’s Attorney Rob Scales, Judge John R. Kennedy agreed to a sentence of 100 hours community service for Brian Chesley. Chesley was con
icted by an all-white jury of obstructing and resisting a peace officer. On March 30, 2007, he was stopped by Champaign in Frederick Douglass Park after leaving the gymnasium, attacked by three officers, pepper sprayed, and sent to the hospital.

At the hearing Friday morning, May 9, 2008, Chelyes’ Attorneys Bob Kirchner and Ruth Wyman submitted a post-trial motion to appeal the case. Defense Attorney Wyman’s explanation, officers could not stop anybody. He gave the exam
ple that if police saw someone breaking a
car window, they could not question that
individual whether the car was theirs or not.

Scales also said there was no evidence that Chesley was stopped solely because he was African American. If the judge ruled that it was, it would mean officers could never stop individuals in African American neigh
borhoods because it could be a result of race.

Of course, Chesley was not breaking
car windows that night, but simply walking his eight-year-old friend home after playing basketball. Most likely, he would not have faced this situation if he
was a white youth walking in a white neighborhood.

Judge Kennedy, who throughout the
trial proceedings had shot down almost all of the defense’s challenges, denied the post-trial motion.

During sentencing, Brian Chesley’s mother testified to her son’s good char
acter, and Chesley himself gave a statement. He was given 100 hours community ser
vice, which has to be completed in ten months, and has to pay court fines.

Attorney Kirchner says he plans to appeal the case.

For a full account of the trial see “Three Cops Versus An Entire Community” at:
http://www.ucimc.org/node/2743

Patrick Thompson Exonerated
Continued from page 1

EVOLVING STORY
In closing arguments, Vujovich said this case depended on whether or not the jury believed the accuser or not.

Seemingly to direct his remarks at Thompson and his supporters, a rotat-
ing pool of dozens who sat through the trial, Vujovich said that we can blame the police, “But don’t blame the Urbana Police Department.” The jury didn’t believe what happened to [the accuser].

Kirchner, in closing, highlighted the many inconsisten
cies in the accuser’s testimony. His explanation was that
whether because she was late for work or for some other reason, “the excuse offered that morning took on a life of its own.” This “evolving story,” he said, was not enough to
convict Thompson.

After the jury deliberated for approximately one hour, they returned with a verdict of not guilty.

Throughout this four-year ordeal, Patrick Thompson has been the galvanizing force for criminal justice reform in Champaign County. But it has been community mobi
lization which narrowly saved Patrick from the clutches of the prison industrial complex. Thousands of dollars were raised for his defense, many hours were spent watching trials, and numerous protests were held at the courthouse. This is the story of a man exonerated before he served years in the penitentiary. It was people power that set him free.

For a full report of the trial and interviews after the ver-
dict go to ucimc.org.
The glaring similarities between the controversy surrounding the broadcast of the anti-Semitic videos on Urbana Public Television and the characterization of a Native American during athletic events and in the Homecoming parade at the University of Illinois are that: (1) they have been deeply hurtful to the people portrayed, (2) those people have been the victims of genocide, and (3) they have been enmeshed with and facilitated by public bodies, in the first instance a city and in the second a public university.

I want to elaborate on these three similarities and the issues these raise in regard to the principle of our constitutionally guaranteed right to freedom of expression.

THE HURT

We know that people have been hurt by these two sets of portrayals because the people so portrayed have told us that I remember talking with Charleneeters, the Native American graduate student who many years ago took her lead to see a sporting event only to watch in astonishment as the Chief appeared at half time adorned in sacred symbols and proceeded to dance around in imitation of a Native American dance. While presented as a chief of the Illinois Indians, neither his dress nor his dance had anything to do with that group. But just as importantly, the fact that this caricature was used as entertainment was hurtful to Charlene and so many Native Americans both on and off the campus, who have expressed their feelings about it. Similarly, Jewish people have come before the Urbana City Council, and have written letters to the editors of the News-Gazette, expressing the pain caused by the portrayal of Jews as, among other horrible and slanderous things, child molesters. Just as Native Americans find it difficult to understand how a public university could sponsor, facilitate, or legitimize such a bogus portrayal of an ethnic group in our society, so too do Jews find it difficult to understand how their city could facilitate such a vicious and hurtful portrayal under the guise of freedom of expression.

GENOCIDE

All societies, including our own, recognize some limits to freedom of expression. We cannot shout “fire” in a crowded theater, commit perjury, give false statements to a law enforcement officer, defraud a bank, commit theft, defame, libel, or defame someone without some legal penalty. Such is the potential that loss, that fear, and sees with good cause such negative stereotypes and the notion of group or collective rights. This is strange given that we in the United States are largely ignorant of the body of international law that accords groups rights to vulnerable people. Indeed, we have a very strong commitment to individualism and individual rights, but tend to reject any notion of group or collective rights. This is strange given the fact that our very claim to exist as a nation was based upon such a collective claim, the right to self-determination by an oppressed people. We need to retain our commitment to the widest possible right of freedom of expression for individuals and private associations, but we must also take care that public institutions do not violate the collective rights of vulnerable minorities, especially those that have been subjected to genocide, by participating in or facilitating their negative stereotyping.

Happen again in the future and that such negative portrayals could contribute to that.

This is one of the reasons that the 1931 Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide includes not just killing of a national, ethnic, racial, or religious group, but also “causing seriously bodily or mental harm to members of the group.” A people that have been subjected to genocide continues to live with that reality, that loss, that fear, and sees with good cause such negative stereotypes as a continuation of the process. This Convention, to which the U.S. government is a party, confers a right to groups to be not subjected to genocide, including the dimension of mental harm. In some European countries, there is a greater recognition of this reality which precludes governmental support for such portrayals of racial and ethnic groups, but also translates into criminal penalties for hate speech by individuals. Such is the potential of the history of genocide and the Convention in the jurisprudence of European democracies.

An additional issue regarding genocide is intent. The Convention on genocide specifies “intent” to destroy a group. There is no question that the anti-Semitic videos on UPTV have the intent to cause mental harm to Jewish people. Given their similarity to Nazi propaganda, after which they are obviously modeled, it is also clear that the makers of the videos did not mind seeing the same final result that we saw in Europe in the 1940s. The situation regarding the Chief is a bit more nuanced. I do not think that most of the Chief supporters were initially prejudiced against Native Americans. However, once Native American people made clear that they were harmed by the portrayal, the excuse of the original lack of intent fell away. One does not “honor” a group with a history of genocide by appropriating their imagery and forcing a stereotype that they find hurtful upon them.

POWER

There is no doubt that Native Americans are one of the most powerless, if not the most powerless, ethnic groups in the United States. Their numbers are small, resources few, health situation deplorable, and outlets for public expression sparse. In sum, they continue to live in the mire traceable to the original acts of genocide. The situation of Jewish people in the United States is different from that of the Native Americans and even from the their own situations in the first half of the 20th century, when Jews were excluded from residing in certain areas and had quotas imposed upon them in a number of private universities. One Urbana citizen speaking against censorship of the anti-Semitic videos, pointed out that Jews were politically powerful in American society and emphasized the power of what he characterized as the Jewish lobby in determining U.S. foreign policy regarding Israel.

The problem with this argument is that the Jewish genocide of the 1940s began in Germany where Jews were very well represented in the economic, political, and cultural life of that society. One of the major arguments that the Nazis used against them was that they “controlled” everything, they were everywhere, an insidious foreign presence that was driving German as well as international politics and economics and degrading German culture. The “too powerful” accusation itself raises the specter of that genocide in the minds and guts of Jewish people. It is the reminder that “it can happen anywhere,” even in what seems at one moment to be a very favorable climate for living a decent life. Indeed, that is one of the reasons that so many American Jews do support Israel and its policies so ardently and often uncritically.

CONCLUSION

We in the United States are largely ignorant of the body of international law that accords groups rights to vulnerable people. Indeed, we have a very strong commitment to the rights of individuals, but tend to reject any notion of group or collective rights. This is strange given the fact that our very claim to exist as a nation was based upon such a collective claim, the right to self-determination by an oppressed people. We need to retain our commitment to the widest possible right of freedom of expression for individuals and private associations, but we must also take care that public institutions do not violate the collective rights of vulnerable minorities, especially those that have been subjected to genocide, by participating in or facilitating their negative stereotyping.

иясственно нанести ущерб? Что бы они не сделали, они все равно являются ущербным элементом и должны быть удалены.

Таким образом, помимо социальных и экономических факторов, приводящих к геноциду, важным является и психологический аспект. Люди, участвующие в геноциде, часто испытывают чувство вины и тревоги, что приводит к психологическим проблемам.

Выводы

1. Геноцид является преступлением против человечества, и все страны должны быть готовы к борьбе с ним.
2. Национальное и этническое самосознание является основой для предотвращения геноцида.
3. Необходимо повышение уровня образования и информирования о геноциде.
4. Государства должны усилить свои усилия по предотвращению геноцида и пресечению его проявлений.

References:

Aramark™ Makes Horrible Lunches, and Kids Do Something About It

By dcxy

Dezy was a fifth-grader at Leal Elementary School in Urbana and will be entering Urbana Middle School in the fall. He plays cello, and he would like to be an aerospace engineer when he grows up.

I go to Leal Elementary School in Urbana, and our school lunches suck. Most of the kids in my class think the school lunches are unhealthy, and should not be served at our school, or any other elementary school. For me, our school lunches make me feel sick. A couple hours after I ate them my stomach felt like it was turned upside down.

At first we just made jokes about suing Aramark™ Then I decided that we had to do something to protest our school lunches. I mostly didn’t do much except for talking to kids about starting up a protest. So we formed Healthy School Lunch (HSL). Aramark also makes the food for the jail. I hope that their lunch isn’t as bad as ours.

As chronicled in City Bountiful, at least since 1890, socially and politically constructed community gardening has been employed to ameliorate the effects of wars, economic depressions, and social unrest. As stop-gap measures, most of these projects disappear when the immediate crisis seems to be over. Today’s skyrocketing cost of energy and food makes the idea of growing a portion of one’s food appealing again, even in the Midwest with its short growing seasons.

Another related impulse for urban gardening seems to be a sense of helplessness that most of us feel when it comes to big corporations and governments deciding what we can and should consume for the profit of a few. Similar to 1970s and 1980s waves of turning vacant lots into urban gardens, community gardeners of today hope that their efforts would create permanent open spaces to bring neighborhoods together and give them a sense of empowerment and well-being. Such pragmatic and idealistic goals coalesce in a 2-acre plot of land in north Champaign—Randolph Street Community Garden.

On any fair day, at the corner of Randolph Street and Beardsley Avenue, there’s a good chance that you will see a group of neighbors, several senior citizens, and a couple of families working on small patches of vegetable and flower gardens. There’s also a good chance that a smiling Dawn Blackman would welcome you to take a look around and help her with spreading mulch on a newly-raised garden bed. A busy Charles Doty would tell you about hundreds of heirloom seeds which he has been nursing carefully in his Washington Square apartment. This peaceful space provides those who live or work in the neighborhood with the opportunity to share the joys and toils of gardening together.

The origin of Randolph Street Community Garden goes back to spring of 2005 when Master Gardeners of the University of Illinois Extension Service initiated a community gardening project north of the newly built Straton School. The Master Gardeners invited the neighborhood residents to partake of this initiative and allocated patches of garden beds to interested individuals. Dawn Blackman of the Motherlands Culture Club seized upon this opportunity to connect the children in her program directly to agriculture. The children experienced the feasibility of growing food in an urban setting, learn how to grow and harvest a variety of nutritious and culturally diverse edibles, and try to improve various recipes using the available fresh and organic ingredients. Here, you can see the food and environmental justice movement in action—no textbook or lecturing required.

In 2006, the original gardeners left; however, the spirit of gardening has continued to flourish and the Master Gardeners’ program has expanded. Blackman, however, continued her gardening and, in time, the Champaign School District offered to provide the garden with running water. Charles Doty, an avid gardener without a garden, drew some of the residents of Washington Square apartments to the garden. As acknowledged by all, the interaction between the older gardeners and the youngster has been most rewarding to both groups.

This spring, several volunteers from the Association of Students of Landscape Architecture spent several hours to prepare the garden for planting. Small moneys and material donations by community members and the persistent “trespass” hunting by organizers yield small but rewarding improvements to the garden—one day a wheelbarrow, the next a bird bath. Blackman would like to have a mini-market once a week to sell the extra produce and flower bouquets to defray some of the cost of running the garden. Several beds have been raised, already. The organizers plan to build a storage shed and a ramp for gardeners in wheelchairs, install more benches and picnic tables in the shady areas, and turn the garden into a pleasing open space for everyone to enjoy.

As only less than one-half acre of the two-acre land is currently being utilized, the garden organizers invite individuals and families to join in. Indeed, a critical mass of committed gardeners needs to be reached before this garden can flourish. Continued on page 7.
Buying Local and You
By Lisa Bralts

Fuel prices are high, food prices are high, and the costs of both continue to rise while we look on, unable or unwilling to reconcile a lifetime of relatively cheap food and fuel with the current prices we’re seeing for both. We might buy less. We might go without some things we usually buy. A few of us may find ourselves relying on external sources—friends, family, food pantries—to make those food ends meet. Some of us might start new vegetable gardens, or expand existing ones—a meaningful activity on many levels—but it’s often framed as a temporary measure, a stopgap, something to do until things get back to normal. But this, the way things are, is the new normal.

The mainstream media, attempting to puzzle it all out by looking for easy solutions, has hopped onto the latest in food “trends”—locally-sourced food. However, instead of focusing on an array of reasons for buying local—the long-term environmental sustain-ability of such food, its likely eventual necessity due to resource depletion, the benefits to re-establishing the connection between people and their food that seems to have been lost since the end of World War II, and its positive impact on local economies—the emphasis appears to be purely on cost to consumers. “Why isn’t buying local cheaper?” Inquiring minds want to know.

Last season, one local farmer spent over $24,000 in diesel fuel hauling his produce to Urbana for its farmers’ market. That’s just fuel. Local farmers are paying significantly more for seed, animal feed if they keep livestock, and other inputs to be able to bring produce to local farmers’ markets. Most people would agree that our farmers should pay their labor (and themselves) a living wage for farming these higher-quality, fresher, and more varied foods, yet do not understand why the carrots or the tomatoes “cost so much.” When you take government subsidies out of the picture and add an emphasis on quality and freshness and ready access to everyone, the cost, quite simply, goes up. Obviously, while the true cost of food to consumers is one issue that needs addressing (though perhaps not in the way the mainstream media would like to address it), all these ideas around sourcing food locally require considerable breaking down to provide real context.

The Illinois Local and Organic Food and Farm Task Force, appointed by Governor Blagojevich in late 2007 after the passage of the Illinois Food, Farm and Jobs Act, has had an emphasis appears to be purely on cost to consumers. “Why isn’t buying local cheaper?” Inquiring minds want to know.

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The Illinois Local and Organic Food and Farm Task Force, appointed by Governor Blagojevich in late 2007 after the passage of the Illinois Food, Farm and Jobs Act, has been charged with doing just that. On May 28, the Task Force convened a listening session in downtown Urbana, one of several throughout the state, designed to find out what local and regional eaters think about their food system—its successes, its failures, its realities, and its possibilities. The Task Force will present their statewide findings to the General Assembly this fall.

After remarks by Urbana Mayor Laurel Prussing and a series of brief presentations by Task Force Chair (and U of I professor/goat farmer) Dr. Wesley Jarrell and Task Force members Debbie Hillman of the Evanston Food Policy Council and Jim Braun of the Illinois Farmer-Consumer Coalition, the proceedings were turned over to the audience of about 50, which included area farmers, young people, advocates for improving school/institutional food, advocates for better emergency food, advocates for better food access and education about food issues, and other concerned eaters. The conversation lasted for over two hours.

Issues residents would like to see further addressed by the Task Force include:
- More involvement in creating a better farm bill;
- More involvement by municipalities and counties, rather than just the state, in the direction of food policy;
- Developing labeling guidelines for food grown in Illinois and the methods used to do so;
- More involvement in farm-to-institution initiatives (bringing better food to schools, prisons, hospitals, and other institutions);
- Incentives for young people to farm (finding young people willing to farm is becoming increasingly difficult—farmer Diane Moore said, “The hours are killing our boys. They can’t wait to run away”);
- Incentives for farmers to switch production from commodities to “real” food (instead of feed corn and soybeans, e.g., what about sweet corn and shell beans, potatoes, orchards?);
- The proposed National Animal Identification System in Illinois:
- The role resource depletion will play in food production and distribution.
- Despite its “farmy” reputation, Illinois imports over 90% of its food from other places. Most of Illinois’ farmland is used in the production of animal feed, food for processing, and, increasingly, biosolts, which means that the vast majority of acreage used for farming in Illinois is not used to grow food that feeds people directly, but is used by agribusiness to grow commodities for sale on the world market.
- Illinois would be unable to feed itself if it had to. In fact, the current nationwide food production/distribution model ensures that the United States is well on the path to a similar fate. “We’re going to wake up one morning and be a food-insecure nation,” said Triple S Farm owner Stan Schutte.

Support your local growers, if you can. Get involved.

The Task Force meetings are open to any and all who wish to attend. Please go to their website at http://www.agr.state.il.us/marketing/Mkt_ILOFFTaskForce.html.

Other links of interest:
- Urbana’s Market at the Square: http://www.city.urbana.il.us/market
- Market at the Square’s blog: http://www.market-at-the-square.blogspot.com
- The Greenhorns: http://www.thegreenhorns.wordpress.com
- Community Food Security Coalition: http://www.foodsecurity.org

Fresh Vegetables

Folk music

Urbana

Community organizations doing outreach
Local Ownership, Democracy, Community Building, and Cooperation

By Jacqueline Hannah

Common Ground Food Co-op has grown and thrived on these, the seven principles of the international cooperative movement, for 33 years. Now, about to enter into its 34th year, Common Ground is relocating for the first time in its history.

Common Ground was founded in the basement of the Illinois Disciples Foundation building at the corner of Wright and Springfield in Champaign. From the modest beginnings of a few tables scattered about a room with a few organic foods on offer, the co-op is about to more than double its current space in a storefront, newly remodeled shop at Lincoln Square Mall.

The store will face Vine Street and will open directly onto a large parking lot area. Common Ground’s new home is on schedule to open August 15th. Construction started on the new store as of April and is being headed up by Restorations & Remedies, a local contracting company owned by co-op member and former co-op board member Tim Gibbs.

The new co-op will be over twice the size of its current shop. Features will include over 48 feet of organic produce cases and shelves, making the co-op’s produce department the largest exclusively organic and local produce department in Champaign County. A new deli department is being added after receiving huge demand from current co-op owners and community members. The deli will feature local ingredients whenever possible and will have a cold salad bar, hot foods case, three fresh soups every day, a full grab and go case, as well as fair trade organic coffees. Lincoln Square has generously donated the use of indoor seating space exclusively for the use of co-op deli diners as well as an outdoor seating area just outside the co-op’s front door, providing a space not only for dining but to build community.

Community Garden

Continued from page 5

garden becomes an integral and sustainable part of North Champaign. In my opinion, the most beneficial way to reach this goal is to develop a partnership between the garden and the area schools. Many individuals are skeptical and point to the failing policy of No Child Left Behind which has been hanging over our educational system like a Damocles sword and leaves no money, energy, or time to be spent on gardening and cooking with the harvested produce.

My visits to the garden, however, show me something else. I see plenty of opportunities for the students at Stratton and the youth at alternative programs at Columbia Center and I become optimistic. We can demand from our Board of Education and school administrators that they incorporate innovative gardening projects into the curricula of these two educational centers, and that they put aside the fear of low cumulative test scores. Existing models show that such projects make learning more enjoyable and effective, can bring together ethnically and culturally diverse students, and help connect schools and families. Keep pressing on and, in the meanwhile, get involved with the work of Randolph Street Community Garden by volunteering your time and talents, and donating money and needed material.

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A SPECIAL THANKS TO OUR SUPPORTERS!
The Public i would like to thank all of the people who attended our fund-raiser last month. We very much appreciate your support!

READER RESPONSES
The Public i encourages reader responses to the articles, either with letters or with articles that present a different point of view.

email: print@ucimc.org
Imagine being in solitary isolation twenty-four hours a day, seven days a week. Imagine no telephone calls. Imagine limited visits with loved ones. Imagine the few visits that are allowed to take place happening with no physical contact. Imagine the constant loud noises of the mentally ill and having to scream as a means of communication. Imagine being in this horrific place and not even knowing how long you will stay or what you can do to end your confinement. This place is not myth. For 240 people, this is their daily reality. This is what life is inside the Tamms CMAX super-maximum security prison in southern Illinois.

Located in rural Tamms, Illinois, the Tamms CMAX was created in 1998 by the Illinois Department of Corrections (IDOC). According to George DeIella of IDOC, “The Tamms Correctional Center and its mission and its original concept was to be a relatively short term incarceration facility for the sale of reducing violence and disturbances within prisons (which research suggests is not accom- plished), only for inmates who are incapable of normal social functioning when and if he or she was sent into prison.”

Super-maximum security prisons like Tamms CMAX are not about rehabilitation that will allow inmates to become effective, law-abiding citizens in the future. The severe sensory deprivation and social isolation are a combination that is psychological torture. So many inmates have developed mental illnesses as a result of Tamms’ practices that Tamms was forced to open an ‘administrative segregation’ rather than any noted behavioral problem. Likewise, in their years at Tamms, the vast majority of prisoners have never received a disciplinary report or had rules infractions. Most of the inmates at Tamms endure these terrifying conditions with the knowledge that they have no idea how long their sentences will last, even if they are well behaved. Tamms CMAX and the Illinois Department of Corrections have only released fourteen men to a general prison population in the ten years that Tamms has been open.

If these egregious abuses of human rights were not enough, Tamms CMAX is also a waste of money. According to the Illinois Department of Corrections, housing a prisoner at Tamms costs two or three times as much as any other adult prison in Illinois. Menard’s annual cost per inmate is $19,140. Pontiac is $32,121. Statesville is $32,121. Tamms CMAX’s annual cost is an astronomical $58,994. When one pairs the staggeringly high economic cost necessary to run Tamms to the deplorable human rights conditions, it becomes quite clear that Tamms must be closed.

However, there have been recent developments that seek to change this status quo. The Illinois General Assembly has recently introduced House Bill (HB) 6651, sponsored by Rep. Julie Hamill. This bill will set forth strict behavioral criteria to guide what constitutes eligibility for transfer to Tamms to ensure that only violent or severely disruptive inmates are imprisoned there. The bill also bans the mentally ill from ever being sent to Tamms to endure the psychological torture. HB 6651 also institutes a system of objective and fair hearings for inmates to secure their release to the super-maximum security facility to determine about their eligibility once incarcerated. Ramo’s bill also demands the immediate transfer out of Tamms for any inmate who develops a mental illness. The measures in HB 6651 are an excellent beginning to addressing the numerous problems at Tamms.

We must oppose this brutality. While the billboard put out in front of Tamms CMAX states that it is “a good place to live,” we must show the world we disagree. If you would like to get involved in the campaign to reform or close Tamms CMAX, check out www.yeart- en.org for more information.

Tamms CMAX Super-Maximum Security Prison
By Nell Parthum

Graduate Employees Unite!
Andrew O’Baill

Andrew O’Baill is a past President of the GEO and a graduate student in the Institute of Communications Research at the University of Illinois, is at http://igaio.org.

Over the Memorial Day holiday weekend, the Graduate Employees’ Organization (GEO), IFTAFF 6300 held 80 graduate employee unionists activists and leaders for the AGFL (Alliance of Graduate Employee Local)’s conference, a two-yearly gathering to reflect on lessons learnt and challenges ahead. The conference followed a year in which the GEO had successfully increased both member numbers and the breadth of union activity, with active groups working on areas ranging from healthcare, to reform of the SPEAK test (spoken language proficiency test for TAs), to LGBT concerns, and more. This high level of engagement was reflected in the number of GEO members turning out to the conference, with several dozen members taking part throughout the weekend.

One of the highlights was a discussion with the grad union at the University of Michigan about their campaign and contract victory, in which they talked through the timeline of their campaign, from member engagement and platform development to the denouement of a walkout that was cut short when the university administration caved to the union’s strike threat. This and other sessions fed into the broader context of many productive conversations among GEO members about the work of focusing on a committed membership on next year’s contract struggle, and the broader continued push for reforming the quality of the graduate work experience.

Such impromptu discussions are of course, the hallmark of a successful event, where the formal sessions are not self-contained, but bleed into the socializing that surrounds any such event. Another important indicator is the existence of a reflective and engaged discussion on the strategy and tactics of the broader movement. This conference saw a continuation of discussions over the relationship between contingent work, social justice and to critically assess what that should mean for the structures and actions of the union movement.

The graduate employee union movement is one of the most vibrant within the educational sector, representing a workforce that is uniquely vulnerable, exploited, and often conflicted over its status as workers. Here at the University of Illinois graduate employees’ wages are more than $2,000 below living wage rates for a single person. A dual status as both employees of the university and students makes them vulnerable to pressure from faculty, unsure of the boundaries between academic requirements and paid labor, and fearful of the repercussions of any unfair practices. International students, in particular, can be concerned about visa issues, while graduate students with family obligations do not fit the assumptions that often shape university policies.

The work of organizing is often characterized by its focus on collective conversations. This conference and the conversations it generates will play an important role in shaping a richer and more effective union movement, as graduate employees work together for a voice in the conditions that shape their lives, moving us closer to the goals of respect, fair rewards, and quality workplaces.

Red State Rebels Tour: Tales of Grassroots Resistance in the Heartland
Free Event! A Discussion with Jeffrey St. Clair and Joshua Frank. There’s A Rebellion is Breaking Out!
Sunday, June 22 at 2:00PM
Illini Union Bookstore, 217-333-2050
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For more information at www.akpress.org/2008/items/redstaterebelsakpress
In Memory of U. Utah Phillips (1935–2008)

By Antonia Darder

Antonia Darder is a professor at the University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign. She is longtime Puerto Rican activist-scholar involved in issues related to education, language, immigrant, workers, and women’s rights.

I discovered a dignified, ancient, elegant trade, one where I could own what I do and never have to have a boss again. —U. Utah Phillips

Bruce Duncan Phillips, the man who went by U. Utah Phillips and whom others dubbed “the Golden Voice of the Great Southwest,” died at age 73. The folk singer, songwriter, storyteller, and social activist blended music, politics and history, inspiring the world with labor movement songs for almost 40 years. He often jokingly said, “It’s nice to know there are some things in early 21st-century post-industrial culture that don’t change very fast. I am one of those.”

Phillips was the son of labor organizers and as an anarchist, he joined the Industrial Workers of the World (IWW).

Paul Sierra’s Afternoon Landscape at Krannert Art Museum

Paul Sierra was born in Havana, Cuba in 1944. His work reflects on the primary elements in nature and mythology that represent transformation and passage through fire, water, and lush vegetation. His bold brush strokes layer the canvas until they are thick and bulbous with intense color. Attending the School of the Art Institute of Chicago and the American Academy of Art, his work takes the helm of a unique expressionistic quality that has made him one of the most successful Cuban-American artists.

Sierra’s work is included in the Landscapes of Experience and Imagination: Explorations by Midwest Latina/o Artists exhibition, which is showing until July 27 at the Krannert Art Museum. These works reflect the responses of Latina/Latino artists to the natural and built environment. The six, largely Chicago-based artists have explored the theme of landscapes through more traditional means of drawing, painting, and sculpture. Their works address the memories or imaginings of a tropical forest, the suburbs, and the density of urban-scapes, as well as the artists’ own self-identities or understandings of the Latin presence in the United States.

The Second Coming of Marx: A Play on History

Due to some Brigadoon-like miracle, Karl Marx has been granted permission to return to earth for a day to explain once more to disciples and detractors alike what he really meant. But a mix-up in the celestial bureaucracy has resulted in him appearing in the Soho area of New York rather than London, where he lived and died.

This is the premise of Howard Zinn’s one-man play, Marx in Soho: A Play on History, to show in Urbana on July 18 and 19. Zinn, a retired history professor at Boston University, is perhaps best known as the author of A People’s History of the United States. Performances will be at 7:30 p.m., Friday at the Independent Media Center in downtown Urbana and Saturday at the Channing-Murray Foundation, near the University of Illinois campus. Suggested donation is $5 per person. For more information go to: http://www.levyarts.com/

Something So Horrible: Springfield Race Riot of 1908 Exhibit

Upcoming at the Abraham Lincoln Presidential Library in June is Something So Horrible: Springfield Race Riot of 1908: Gathering photographs, news accounts, oral histories, artifacts and other materials, the library will present an exhibition exploring Springfield’s most violent racial confrontation. In the one hundred years since the riot occurred, the historical record has been clouded, reshaped, denied, or forgotten. The purpose of the exhibition is to tell the story of the riot clearly so that the public will know what happened and begin to understand why it happened.

Within hours of a reported rape of a White woman by a Black man, a mob of thousands took control of Springfield. In the violence that held sway in the city for two days, two Black men were lynched, four White men were killed, scores of people were injured, and extensive property was damaged before 4000 state militiamen intervened. Something So Horrible: Springfield Race Riot of 1908 will illustrate how racism and political corruption undermined law and order and set the stage for mob rule. The exhibit will also show how an event of one hundred years ago lives in both the historical record of the past and the racial divisions that continue to confound us.
Chicago May Day March

By Maria Isabel Silva

May 1st marks International Workers’ Day, an official government holiday in most countries around the world, with mass demonstrations, rallies and marches held to express labor solidarity and celebrate workers’ rights. Here in the U.S., May Day is not a government-sanctioned holiday, even though its commemoration began in this country. Nevertheless, 50,000 marchers and activists filled the streets of Chicago to commemorate May Day this year. The march represented a powerful, bringing together people working on a variety of issues, including workers’ rights, human rights, opposition to the Iraq war, and most resoundingly immigrants’ rights.

Immigrant rights activists held both U.S. and Mexican flags, along with banners and signs demanding reform of the immigration law, to be passed this election year. The marchers called for equal rights for the 12 million undocumented immigrants who pay taxes and contribute to the U.S. economy yearly. Speakers at the protest demanded a stop to the violence of ICE raids and deportations being carried out across the country.

The march, which started at Union Park, ended in downtown Chicago, where a platform was placed for performers, activists and politicians to address participants. Among those present were Tom Morello from Rage Against the Machine, singing to the thousands congregated there. Activists and workers representatives from the Teamsters Local 743 addressed the rights of the workers to the 8-hour-day, to medical insurance and the right to form and be part of a union without retaliation from the companies.

Latino politicians supported the demands for legalization and better working conditions for immigrants and expressed the importance of the Latino vote in upcoming elections. Chicago’s Mayor Richard M. Daley told the crowd “immigrants are part of the fabric of the American society. The City of Chicago was built by immigrants, and will continue to be built by immigrants.” Daley affirmed that Chicago has declared itself a welcome city for immigrants.

The marchers and activists were spirited in their demands. The incredible success of the march this year was due to the participation of a wide range of organizations and people who joined together. Of particular note was the presence of young people, white activists, representatives of churches from different denominations, African American groups and activists, activist for sexual rights, union workers, and political officials, who recognize the need for unity in the struggle for a better world.

This cross-cultural and cross-issue approach is effectively galvanizing a movement, which extends beyond unity for Latino immigrants or a fight of one racialized group, but rather a larger struggle, which supports legalization for undocumented immigrants, workers rights, and social justice for all people in this country.

Come to a Listening Party

Tired of only listening to what the herd thinks is best? Every 3rd Wednesday of the month from 7PM to 10PM your local Independent Media Center located at 202 S. Broadway Ave., Urbana, IL 61801 (in old downtown Post Office) will help you break from the herd and invites you to bring a specially burned CD or custom iPod mix (carefully chosen beforehand) and either something outstanding to drink or something rather delicious to eat. We will provide the outstanding audiophile-grade speakers that, when played at high volume, will shake the walls and rattle the windows and peel back your skin without getting all disoriented and annoying loud enough that the sound they produce will easily prevent all discussion until the given song has ended and everyone can breathe again and grab another drink and say, Wow, what the hell was that? (This someone, obviously, also has very understanding neighbors.)

It is called a listening party. It is a loosely directed but passionately devised gathering held purely for the love and discovery of music. New music. Old music. Loud music. It is about quality. It is about range. It is, perhaps more than anything else, about surprise. In other words, you do not bring some common hit song to the listening party, some standard tune that everyone’s heard a million times by an artist that makes most people wince. In other words, you bring something interesting, unexpected. It can be a main-stream band, but the song should be sonically fascinating, well recorded, and somehow unique.

The event moves in rounds. Everyone gets to play a single track in each round. The fun part: You do not announce your song. You do not let it be known whose tune is coming up next. You let the music speak for itself. You let the surprise happen. You get to test your musical knowledge, also how well you know the other participants (“Dude, I knew that Nina Simone techno remix was yours!”). This is part of the adventure. After each full round, a short break for more pizza, drinks and food may or may not be present depend-ing on if we (that includes you) bring any. Be prepared to expand, your musical horizons broaden. This is much of the point. It’s chaos theory with a soundtrack.

The event is free and open to all ages. We ask that you give a donation when we pass the hat/ jar/ cup/ whatever around each night. Bring an open mind, bring music, and if you are bringing children know they may get some exposure. Drinks and food may or may not be present depending on if we (that includes you) bring any. Be prepared to network and meet people with a passion for music, art, culture, and our local community.

Music at IMC

June 19th—Cabinet of Natural Curiosities/Good Night and Good Morning/Morgan Orion/Twin Cats. A quiet folk/electro show.

June 22nd—Jim Atkinson, Peter Bonos, and Ben Segal/Plan B. Jim, Peter and Ben present a multi-genre exploration of temporality through literature, physics, and music.

June 29th—Static Thought/Down We Go/Opiium Den Massacre/Alleyway Sex. Hardcore/punk show.

All of the shows start at 8:00 P.M. and cost $5. If you have any more questions, feel free to email: shows@ucimc.org
Over 50,000 Americans from diverse organizations across Chicago came together to demonstrate for social and economic justice including equal and just treatment for all workers and immigrants.