** See, Nicholas Shaxon, “Treasure Islands,” for confirmation…
Despite Increased Production, Employment and Earnings Data Show Long-term Economic Decline in Champaign-Urbana Region

By David Green

The C-U MSA includes Champaign, Ford, and Piatt counties. Between 1990 and 2010, its population grew from 203,000 to 231,000, or 14%. During that same period, the number of employed grew by 5%. Employed workers as a percentage of the entire population decreased from 52.5 to 48.5; in current terms, this means over 9,000 fewer jobs. There are currently nearly 112,000 jobs in the C-U MSA, but this number was first surpassed in April 2000, over 11 years and 20,000 residents ago.

Decreased unemployment rates currently reflect decreased labor force participation more than job creation. In March 2010 there were over 111,775 jobs and a 9.2% unemployment rate, while in March of this year there were 111,930 jobs, and a rate of 7.8%. Over the past year, lower unemployment rates primarily result from nearly 2,000 discouraged workers dropping out of the labor force, a perspective regularly omitted from newspaper articles on the job market.

Nevertheless, data over the past decade show increased worker productivity, lower collective compensation, and growing economic equality among workers and households. From 2001 to 2009, the gross domestic product of the C-U MSA, which includes both private and government investment and spending, continued to grow steadily, from $6.2 billion to $7.5 billion in constant 2001 dollars. This reflects an overall 8-year absolute increase of 21% in output concurrent with a population increase of less than 10% and a numerically stagnant labor force—a steady increase in the productivity of local workers.

By two measures of compensation, it’s clear that earnings do not reflect this increased output. Per capita income, which reflects the average income of all residents in the C-U MSA, decreased by 2.7% when adjusted for inflation. In 2001, each resident earned on average $34,600 in 2009 dollars, while in 2009 only $33,700 in current (2009) dollars. While output grew steadily in real terms, total earnings and purchasing power declined.

Second, median household income declined even more rapidly during this eight-year period, from over $48,000 in 2001 (in 2009 dollars), to under $44,000 dollars in 2009 in current (2009) dollars. This entails an 11% decrease in the real earnings of households at the middle rung of the income ladder.

Throughout the vicissitudes of the bubble economy, tri-county workers continue to expand the per capita real output of all residents. Fewer workers as a proportion of the population are employed to produce this output, leaving more unemployed. Well over half of all households are rewarded with lower total incomes, while the vast majority at best break even. All economic rewards accrue either to the top 20% or fewer of local households, or to non-residents who are beneficiaries of corporate profits and/or management earnings.

If management salaries and corporate profits increased at a rate that reflected increases in worker productivity, then all workers’ earnings would also increase at that rate if those increases were fairly divided among them. In neither case is this true. Moreover, high unemployment and lower earnings constitute a vicious cycle of desperation and lowered expectations.

These realities are the result not of markets but of public policies. Those policies address issues such as trade, taxation, financial regulation, labor organizing, the minimum wage, and more. But it’s clearly not in the interest of the beneficiaries of these policies for the majority of the population to understand either the realities or the policies. From the media to academia, economics has to be made to seem more technical or mysterious than it really is; or, conversely, that the health of our economy is somehow captured by the rate of unemployment and the month-to-month trend. Meanwhile, the data show that our economy is one of legalized theft.
Police reports obtained by the accident on August 14, 2010 that occurred that the State's Attorney is taking this case.

This latest charge appears to be a sign town south-west of Urbana-Champaign.

involvement in a three-car accident on a last summer. Burr was fired after his performed a breath alcohol test on Burr subsequently rear ended Burr's car. Police

front of him and his friend Timothy Griffin had rear ended a white van that stopped in

holding us incommunicado, or confiscating our commu-

"extremists"? Peace activists aren't "extremists," are we? If you concede we are peace activists who are not carrying weapons? If you are concerned "extremists will set the tone" if Israeli commanders board the ships, isn't it wholly within your power to prevent this outcome, by not ordering that Israeli commanders board the ships? Furthermore, if you concede we are peace activists, doesn't that mean that you concede that we are not "extremists"? Peace activists aren't "extremists," are we? If you concede we are not "extremists," but are concerned "extremists will set the tone," doesn't that argue against blocking our communications, or arresting and holding us incommunicado, or confiscating our communications equipment, as happened to passengers on the flotilla last year? Again, avoiding the outcome that would happen if, when I get the report that Palestinian youths have hoisted the Palestinian flag, I don't send any Israeli soldiers there?

What do you think happened? The Palestinian youths would hoist the Palestinian flag, and they would wait for the Israeli soldiers. When the Israeli soldiers never arrived, the demonstrators would get bored, declare victory, and go home. No rocks, no shooting, no violence, no killing, no injuries, no curfew, no schools closed. Of course, there was a downside to this policy: the prohibition on public display of the Palestinian flag was not enforced. But, as it turned out, enforcement of this prohibi- tion was not important to "Israeli security.

Eventually another commander was rotated in, the new commander was not so enlightened, and "things went back to normal." The Palestinian flag was hoisted, soldiers came, rocks were thrown, demonstrators were shot.

This story illustrates that Israeli military officers have the opportunity to use good judgment and common sense in evaluating which actions they should take to "promote Israeli security." Taking extreme actions in response to demands for Palestinian freedom does not make Israel more secure.

The logic of taking extreme actions in response to protest is seductive: if we show we are tough, people will not resist us. But to think that this logic will work, I dare say I naively.

What was the result of the Israeli military attack on last year's flotilla? Did peace activists say: the Israeli military is tough, we better not send any more flotillas? The result that peace activists said: we should send a larg-

er flotilla of ships.

After the attack on last year's flotilla and the resulting international outcry against the attack and against the blockade, the Israeli government announced the blockade would be eased, and since then more goods have been let in to Gaza. Exports from Gaza remain largely blocked, restric-
tions on Gazans' travel to the West Bank and East Jerusalem for work, study, and medical care remain, imports of construction materials remain largely blocked. Restrictions on Gaza's farming and fishing remain. Unemployment in Gaza is now among the highest in the world, the UN reports.

But consider those restrictions on Gaza that were eased: either those restrictions were necessary for Israeli security, or they were not.

If those restrictions were necessary for Israeli security, then Israeli government officials endangered Israeli security by removing them, simply because the world was com-

plaining. Will any Israeli official stand up and claim this?

If those restrictions were not necessary for Israeli security, then for years Israeli officials maintained restrictions which were not justified by security concerns, because they wanted to punish the population and could get away with doing so, because international protest was not sufficient.

Their removal shows that Israeli government claims that restrictions on Gaza are necessary for Israeli security cannot be taken as writ. Organizing flotillas and other forms of international protest against the siege of Gaza is therefore a mitzvah, an obligation. People of conscience around the

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Ex-Cop Charged With Second Count In DUI

By Brian Dolman

On June 22, 2011, former Sheriff's Deputy Travis Burr was charged with a second count of obstructing justice relat-
ed to a DUI he received last summer. Burr was fired after his involvement in a three-car accident on a county road outside of Sadorus, a small town south-west of Urbana-Champaign.

This latest charge appears to be a sign that the State's Attorney is taking this case seriously, after many delay tactics by Burr's attorneys.

State police arrived at the scene of an accident on August 14, 2010 that occurred at approximately 8:00 p.m. According to police reports obtained by the Public i, Burr had rear ended a white van that stopped in front of him and his friend Timothy Griffin subsequently rear ended Burr's car. Police performed a breath alcohol test on Burr who blew a 0.192 (state minimum is 0.08). Griffin had a breath alcohol content of 0.176 and pleaded guilty to DUI in Octo-

ber 2010.

Individuals who receive their first DUI in Champaign County typically lose their license and have their case resolved within six months. Burr hired attorney Mark Lip-

son who filed several continuances, including one in November 2010 claiming he was waiting for a booking video (Judge Klaus expressed his surprise that such video existed, but still granted the continua-

tion). Burr also applied for a special alco-

hol monitoring device on his car—permit-

ted in Illinois on first DUIs—which allows him to continue driving.

In February 2011, Burr fired his lawyer and hired attorney Walter Ding who filed motions for a new judge and a special pros-

ecutor, then withdrew his request for a replacement of judge a month later, and

saw his motion for special prosecutor denied. On June 3, Ding filed a second motion for a special prosecutor; pointing out that Burr was the witness for the State's Attorney in two cases, one of them a mur-

der case. An angry Judge Klaus referred the case to Presiding Judge Tom Dilanis who denied the motion, saying that it was the State's Attorney's determination to ask for a special prosecutor.

The second count of obstruction of jus-

The News-Gazette covered Burr's initial arrest and WCIU reported on his dismissal, but none of the local mainstream news media has followed up on the story. In related news, ex-Champaign police detective Lisa Staples is serving an 18-day sentence in the Champaign County jail for her second DUI.

Get Involved with the Public i

You don't need a degree in journalism to be a writer for the Public i. We all experts in something, and we have the ability to share our information and knowledge with others. The Public i is always looking for writers and story ideas. We invite you to submit ideas or proposals during our weekly meetings (Thursdays at 5:30pm at the UCIMC), or to contact one of the editors.
Champaign Farmers Market
By Marti Wilkinson

Fresh produce, award winning barbe- cue, and a Prosperity Garden run by the Boys and Girls Club are amongst the attractions that residents can enjoy at the Champaign Farmers Market. The market brings opportunities for socializ- ing, learning about local issues, and eating well to a part of the community, which has been neglected over the years. Champaign residents, neighbors from surrounding towns, and all their dogs are encouraged to mix and mingle over the variety of sights, sounds and tastes found there. According to market manager, Wendy Langacker, the market was started by the North 1st Street Association, a group of business owners who wanted to have something to encourage economic development in the area. One way to do this was to bring more people to the area, and they decided that a farmers market could do just that. Unlike tradi- tional models of urban renewal which historically displace people within an area, this effort seeks to respect and build on the history of the neighborhood and the people who live there. This approach aims to be mutually beneficial, bringing more customers in and offering valuable goods and ser- vices for current residents.

The Champaign Farmers Market developed as a “bare bones” project, and a lot of the resources are geared towards meeting the needs of the area. For instance, Lan- gacker runs her office out of her home, and one of the first things the market invested in was a machine that would accept Link cards. Nicole Bridge, from the Boys and Girls Club, also commented on what the market website refers to as the “Double Value Program,” by which a Link card hold- er can purchase twenty dollars worth of fresh produce for ten dollars. Since processed food often tends to be less expensive than fresh pro- duce, this enables individu- als of limited means to par- take in the farmers market on a more equitable level.

The connections between the market and the Prosperity Garden expand the impact of both efforts. Bridge, who works with kids from the Boys and Girls Club, said, “A lot of my kids hate [fruits and] vegetables. Don’t eat them, or just eat strawberries.” Recognizing this, one of the goals for the

I Hate Malcolm X
By Ray Morales

“I HATE MALCOLM X.” These are the words that circulated in my subconscious. And to be honest, the extent of my knowledge of his contribution was scant. But I knew that I hated him. So a week prior to his birthday, I was in dismay when I saw some friends from Lambda Theta Phi post up on their Facebook page that May 19 was his birth- day and that they were encouraging people to circulate more information about him. I actually had to restrain myself before I con- veysed my dissatisfaction directly to any one of them. I thought so lowly of him that I had Spike Lee’s Malcolm X on my Netflix Instant Queue for weeks, if not months, without touching it.

You see, I’ve probably listened to the “I Have A Dream” speech so many times that I could not help but regurgitate fragments or use similar metaphors during speaking opportunities. I had also heard many of Malcolm’s speeches. It was about two years ago when I read “Great Speeches by Mal- colm X” (or something like that). Talk about a serious awakening! I listened to a brilliant scholar intertwine legitimate gripe with hate and anger. Even having felt that same ire and rage, I still felt distant from him. I could not help but conclude that he was estranged by his own friends and col- leagues in that way. Apparently, they had to keep on what side he stood—Islam or America. It was then that I heard first the discrimination that Aaron’s son Jelani had experi- enced at school because he is a Muslim. When Osama Bin Laden had been execut- ed by Navy Seals, Jelani’s peers had turned to him to inquire how he felt about that circumstance. Apparently, they had to keep on what side he stood—Islam or America. It was then that I heard first the discrimination that Aaron’s son Jelani had experi- enced at school because he is a Muslim. When Osama Bin Laden had been execut- ed by Navy Seals, Jelani’s peers had turned to him to inquire how he felt about that circumstance. Apparently, they had to keep on what side he stood—Islam or America. It was then that I heard first the discrimination that Aaron’s son Jelani had experi- enced at school because he is a Muslim. When Osama Bin Laden had been execut- ed by Navy Seals, Jelani’s peers had turned to him to inquire how he felt about that circumstance. Apparently, they had to keep on what side he stood—Islam or America. It was then that I heard first the discrimination that Aaron’s son Jelani had experi- enced at school because he is a Muslim. When Osama Bin Laden had been execut- ed by Navy Seals, Jelani’s peers had turned to him to inquire how he felt about that circumstance. Apparently, they had to keep on what side he stood—Islam or America. It was then that I heard first the discrimination that Aaron’s son Jelani had experi- enced at school because he is a Muslim. When Osama Bin Laden had been execut- ed by Navy Seals, Jelani’s peers had turned to him to inquire how he felt about that circumstance. Apparently, they had to keep on what side he stood—Islam or America. It was then that I heard first the discrimination that Aaron’s son Jelani had experi- enced at school because he is a Muslim. When Osama Bin Laden had been execut- ed by Navy Seals, Jelani’s peers had turned to him to inquire how he felt about that circumstance. Apparently, they had to keep on what side he stood—Islam or America.

I further learned that, after he parted with the Nation of Islam due to a philosophical fracture with those among others, to come on my radio pro- gram, The Show, after seeing or hearing them make some vitriolic speech. Each time, they ran. I extended invitations so many times that I got tired of hawking them and gave up. And yet, it was I who was labeled the “angry minority” or fear monger. I had simply longed for someone of a seemingly contrary position to sit across from me on the stage as they had with Malcolm to sharpen my intellectual wits and let listeners decide for themselves.

For that reason, at a ripe old age of 30, I finally realized that we have all been hood- winked. We have all been bamboozled and brainwashed. One of the greatest advocates for human rights has actually been painted in a manner far from his intellectual contri- bution. And for that reason, I say to you, as I have said to many others, I will not suc- cumb to the same fate as Malcolm X whose image has been tarnished, or MLK whose legacy has been whitewashed. In fact, his- tory will be kind to me, for I intend to write, direct and YouTube it.
When President Obama stepped from the Oval Office into a live broadcast to announce the killing of Osama bin Laden this past May 1, by ‘beliew’ estimates of American political conversation, he had reached an important way-station in his presidency and launched his re-election campaign. With this move, Pres. Obama considerably silenced perennial Republican discussion about effeminate Democratic foreign policy with an assassination plan touted as “surgical,” offering a by-now familiar version of liberal Democratic machismo. No less, his announcement slightly muted, for a moment, the racist backlash and anxiety about his presidency as a “Manchurian candidacy” anchored in a Black, African, or Islamist worldview fundamentally at odds with the alignements of power in the contemporary U.S. (an image which, in mirror-form, a sprinkling of the President’s stalwart “progressive” supporters continues to maintain).

Against the perception of bin Laden’s killing as a historical event of prime magnitude, one that saturated some of the left grievances left raw and festering in American society since 9/11, one must look at the details of the assassination reveals fundamental continuities. For, just as 9/11, and its aftermath, occurred in a long historical trajectory, and not in a vacuum of social time, the killing of bin Laden, in its rhetoric and mechanics, brings to mind earlier operations in the U.S. Amidst the ghoulish celebrations in the streets, public conversation over bin Laden’s killing largely missed such continuities, or the missed opportunities to capture bin Laden and pursue a case in domestic or international courts. In fact, the U.S. quietly dropped all charges against bin Laden on June 17th, amidst a Friday afternoon news vacuum, to little discussion in the press or commentariat.

One space in which bin Laden’s killing did generate considerable conversation about historical continuities was among American Indian nations, political organizations, and critics. As news about the operation against bin Laden came to light, the words “Geronimo—E KIA [Enemy Killed in Action]” were broadcast as part of the larger story, words that garnered strong responses from Indian Country. Who was being referred to as Geronimo, why, and who made this choice? Geronimo was a Chiricahua Apache war leader and continues to be one of the best-known historical examples of armed struggle against U.S. expansion and settlement on American Indian lands. In his case, he was fighting against the establishment of Arizona and New Mexico territories, and the power of Mexican and Texas authorities, over his community’s homelands, from the 1830s through the 1880s. After his 1886 surrender to the U.S., he was held as a prisoner for the remainder of his life, and was buried, though many of his descendants believed his body to be intact, at a prison in Pensacola. Their families, alongside relatives who were living on the Warm Springs Reservation during the fighting, who did not participate in military resistance against the U.S., were held at Fort Marion, near St. Augustine, in overcrowded conditions with poor sanitation, for over a year. Many of the elders in the community, and most of the infants born in captivity, died during their time there, and tuberculosis ravaged the survivors. Many of the adult men held in Fort Marion had actually served in the U.S. Army as scouts, on previous campaigns against Indian communities. On learning of plans for their release, spurred by indignation from humanitarians, but perhaps even more so, by rising costs, the territorial governor of Arizona wrote indignantly to the President, “Arizona has rendered her holocaust to this human agency.

On June 2, Geronimo Ji Jaga Pratt, a leader of the Black Panther Party, passed away. He was a target of federal counterintelligence, and served 27 years in prison on a false murder charge, a change which federal courts eventually vacated. Imagine, for a moment, the words “Geronimo—E KIA” telegraphed on his obituary. Ji Jaga Pratt, who eventually left the U.S. for Tanzania, as a Black nationalist, Pratt’s politics were oriented against the maintenance and reproduction of the U.S. social order. Geronimo Ji Jaga’s moment was one of revolutionary possibility. We might reflect on his life and legacy, and the vast gulf between that revolutionary possibility, and the realignments of imperial power marked by the ascendency of the Obama Administration, as it begins to roll out its 2012 campaign season. This might also be a moment for us to remember pushback against invocations of the Bronx as “Fort Apache,” the use of the Incredible Bongo Band’s song “Apache,” and early rappers, like Cochise, taking on names of Apache and other American Indian resistance leaders, in the early years of hip hop culture. At this point in time, when a type of hip hop provides the baseline for contemporary marketing, amidst the accelerating commodification of space, daily life, and bodies, in contemporary New York City, hip hop’s birthplace, we might remember earlier invocations of solidarity and critique, which, even with their appreciative dimensions, open possibilities of different valence points on continued imperialism, than the ones evoked by the recent branding of Osama bin Laden as Geronimo.
On Civil Unions with Kevin and Brandon Bowersox-Johnson

By Marti Wilkinson

RESIDENTS IN ILLINOIS now have the opportunity to apply for and be joined in a civil union, which recognizes a legal commitment between two adults who wish to have the same rights and privileges afforded to married couples. However, this type of recognition currently only exists at the state level. In the case of same sex partnerships, the new civil union law is a step forward in the fight for marriage equality. For Urbana residents Kevin Bowersox-Johnson, and his husband, Brandon Bowersox-Johnson, the new law made it possible for both men to be united by Judge Ford in a civil union on June 3, 2011 at the Champaign County Courthouse. In an interview both Kevin and Brandon answered some questions for the Public i, on how the new law has changed things for their family, as well as couples throughout the state of Illinois.

Additionaly, the Bowersox-Johnson’s shared some thoughts on how the new law will be beneficial to people in Illinois. According to both men the ceremony gives their family, which includes son Garrett, recognition at a state level. Kevin also serves as the President of The UP Center of Champaign County, which provides resources for the lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, questioning, and ally (LGBTQA) community. The website (unitingpride.org) includes a list of LGBTQA friendly businesses, churches, and organizations. Kevin and Brandon note that, along with churches that are willing to perform civil unions, couples can contact Jennifer Dobson at the Champaign County Courthouse (217-384-3767 option 9), to arrange to have a union performed by a judge. A civil union license can be obtained at the Champaign County Clerk’s office at the Brookens building in Urbana. The website for the Champaign County Clerk (www.champaigncountyclerk.com/), offers information on how to apply for and obtain a civil union license. Currently, civil union licenses are offered at a lower price than marriage license. When asked about this discrepancy, the Bowersox-Johnson’s responded that the pricing was a result of an oversight of a law that the county clerk’s office can charge for different services. Soon the price will be the same as that of marriage licenses, and both men expressed the belief that the fees for civil unions should be equal. When asked about the main hurdles facing marriage equality, Kevin and Brandon wrote, “It’s important that people apply the same language, rights, and responsibilities on things in order for equality to exist. Therefore, by naming our union a Civil Union rather than a Marriage, we are automatically set apart from step one. Secondly, we need federal recognition. By being recognized at the Federal level, we are able to be granted all the same rights and responsibilities that opposite-sex couples have. At this point, in time for those united in Illinois, we can file our Illinois State Taxes together, but still not our Federal Taxes. This complicates things not only for us, but for employers, tax accountants, and other professionals having to sort out the differences.”

In the event that the federal government does end up recognizing same sex unions, Kevin and Brandon don’t anticipate having to undergo another civil union. They believe it’s most likely that their union will be granulated there, and recognized as a marriage. Currently, there are challenges that people joined in a civil union face because of the differences in state and federal recognition. As a result, the Bowersox-Johnson’s recommends that any couple consult with legal professionals to make sure that both individual and couple needs are met. Some of these measures include medical power of attorneys and wills. For opposite sex couples who may consider a civil union, it is still recommended that both parties consult with an attorney regarding federal and state rights. The state of Illinois does not discriminate between same sex and opposite sex couples who wish to join in a civil union.

When asked what they would like for people to understand about civil unions and marriage equality Kevin and Brandon had this to share, “We are both very excited to be united and recognized by the state of Illinois. However, we also recognize that this is a good first step to true equality. We take a deep breath to cherish this moment before moving forward with our advocacy towards true equality. Congratulations to all those in Illinois who have been civilly united.”

ACLU of Illinois Turns to US Department of Justice for Help Reigning in Consent Searches

By William Brown

The American Civil Liberties Union of Illinois filed an administrative complaint on June 7th and asked the U.S. Department of Justice to launch an investigation into “the substantial racial disparity” caused by Illinois State Police (ISP) consent searches of Hispanic and African American motorists.1 Data collected and reported over the past several years demonstrate that ISP troopers are more likely to ask Hispanic and African American motorists for consent to search their vehicles, but are more likely to find contraband when consent searching a car driven by a Caucasian motorist.

A consent search often occurs when a law enforcement official lacks probable cause to perform a lawful seizure or search that criminal activity is afoot, yet nonetheless asks a civilian for permission to search their vehicle or person. The ACLU complaint points out that motorists’ consent is not truly voluntary, often involving a degree of coercion. Illinois State Police data indicate that more than 95% of motorists grant consent when asked. The search is often intrusive and painful for the young men and women, because the search is initiated based on the subjective hunch of individual police officers, consent searches are inherently susceptible to bias. In 2009, the vast majority of search requests were made to Hispanics, and because the search is initiated based on the subjective hunch of individual police officers, consent searches are inherently susceptible to bias. In 2009, the vast majority of search requests were made to Hispanics, and because the search is initiated based on the subjective hunch of individual police officers, consent searches are inherently susceptible to bias.

Traffic stop data collection at the state level began in 2004 and was to expire at 2015. One of the most publically dis-
By David Roknich

Last Call to Save Free Speech for People, Not Corporations

START CALLING THE WHITE HOUSE while you read this, and I'll explain why you need to keep that switchboard well lit. Few people fully understand the threat to democracy today is the Supreme Court decision in Citizens United v. the Federal Election Commission. It guaranteed a radical increase in the cost of running for elected office by protecting the right of free speech for corporations. In January of 2010, the Supreme Court struck down limits on “electioneering communications” supporting or opposing candidates for office 30 days before primary elections and 60 days before general elections. They argue these limits, established as part of the Bipartisan Campaign Reform Act of 2002 violated the First Amendment and were unconstitutional. Their argument treats corporations as people, and takes bold leaps beyond previous court decisions. In the wake of the decision, President Obama chastised the court: "This [Citizens United] ruling opens the floodgates for an unlimited amount of special interest money into our democracy. It gives the special interest lobbyists new leverage to spend millions on advertising to persuade elected officials to vote their way or to punish those who don’t. That means that any public servant who has the courage to stand up to the special interests and stand up for the American people can find himself or herself under assault come election time. Even foreign corporations may now get into the act.

Obama stated his intention to overturn the decision. When this ruling came down, I instructed my administration to get to work immediately with Members of Congress willing to fight for the American people to develop a forceful, bipartisan response to this decision. We have begun that work, and it will be a priority for us until we repair the damage that has been done.

At that time, both houses of Congress were comfortably controlled by Democrats, but attempts to craft legislation to limit the influence of corporate cash were floundering in October 2010. The impact of the Citizens United decision was seen in the mid-term elections when a number of dozens of “tea party” candidates won seats. Various corporations and action committees spent millions to install friendly political allies. A record $300 million was spent in the mid-term campaigns, and the upcoming election in 2012 is expected to break all previous records for spending. Obama himself has set a fund raising goal of one billion dollars for his own campaign.

On January 23, 2010, there was a promise to oppose this trend on the presidential blog: "In this week’s address, President Barack Obama addresses the Supreme Court decision to further empower corporations to use their financial clout to directly influence elections and vows that "as long as I’m your President, I’ll never stop fighting to make sure that the most powerful voice in Washington belongs to you.” In 2012, when another third of our Senate and the entire House of Representatives will be decided, the influence of corporate cash will be immeasurably greater. According to Alex Knott of rollcall.com, at least 3 dozen new political action committees “have registered this year as independent expenditure organizations, a designation that gives them the option of using unprecedented types of funds in the 2012 elections.” Included among them is Citizens United—the group that took this case against the Campaign Reform Act of 2002 all the way to the Supreme Court, where important sections were found to be unconstitutional. The court’s decision only affected spending supporting or opposing candidates, but stated that “Citizens United has not made direct contributions to candidates, and it has not suggested that the court should overturn the ban on campaign contributions.

However, at least one federal judge seeks to extend their argument to allow direct corporate contributions to candidates. Ruling in a criminal case in Virginia, U.S. District Judge James Cacheris found that: "For better or worse, Citizens United held that there is no distinction between an individual and a corporation with respect to political speech. Thus, if an individual can make direct contributions, a corporation cannot be banned from doing the same thing.”

It is disconcerting that our Department of Justice has not yet appealed his ruling. In fact, after some initial rumblings of opposition to the Citizens United ruling when it was first announced, our elected officials have failed to act on it. Polls have found that reversing the decision enjoys bipartisan support with at least 80% of the US electorate.

In the 17th District of Illinois, home to Galesburg where I live, I watched Phil Hare of the Progressive Caucus, get beaten by PAC money spent to oppose him. Signs went up without even mentioning Hare’s opponent, Bobby Schilling. Hare still carried Galesburg, where he is well known, but lost the election by a sizable margin thanks directly to the Citizens United decision.

We should ask, why has Obama relented in his opposition to Citizens United decision? When his party controlled both the houses of Congress, why didn’t he publicly address them and demand an amendment be sent to the states for ratification? John F Kennedy was not afraid to do this in 1962, and the result was a constitutional amendment that overturned the poll tax after decades of frustrated attempts in the House and Senate. Kennedy asked Congress for the 2/3 majority needed in both Houses to send the amendment to the states for ratification. The 24th Amendment was sent to the states and ratified on January 23, 1964.

We have only one chance to assert that corporations are not people and money is not speech. The time is now, or we will be forever silenced. The use of the bully pulpit by John F Kennedy, and the speedy passage of the 24th Amendment shows us the way. Several groups have been circulating petitions urging the passage of an amendment, Public Citizen at citizen.org and “Move To Amend” at movetoamend.org offer similar programs.

Move To Amend has sponsored dozens of Independence Day parties across the country. Declare your independence from money in elections. Phone the President and demand his support at (202) 456-1111 or (202) 436-1414. Find out more at http://reale US.

IMC Teen Creativity Camp

THE INDEPENDENT MEDIA CENTER is hosting its third annual IndyMedia & Arts Lab! The Lab will take place August 1–August 3rd and August 8–August 12, 2011 from 9am-3pm.

Teens ages 10–16 are invited to engage in hands on workshops on radio production, community gardening, painting/art, making musical instruments, computers, and zine making. This year’s Lab provides affordable extended summer activities that will empower youths to learn, express themselves, and build confidence in a safe, confidence building environment. The cost is $150, $75, or $0. Cost is determined by eligibility for lunch fee waivers in school.

Lunch will be served to participants. Enrollment is open now but space is limited. For further information contact Carol Ammons at carolammons@gmail.com or at 217 344 8820.

This fantastic opportunity is sponsored by the City of Urbana and Illinois Arts Council—we thank them! ABOUT THE UCIMC

The UCIMC is a grassroots organization committed to using media production and distribution as tools for promoting social and economic justice. We foster the creation and distribution of media, art, and narratives emphasizing underrepresented voices and perspectives and promote empowerment and expression through media and arts education.

To this end, the UCIMC owns and operates a Community Media and Arts Center in the historic downtown post office building, which houses a radio station, media production facilities, bike coop, performance space, gallery, books to prisoners project, art studios, library, meeting space, and partner organizations. Read more: www.ucimc.org.

Champaign Farmers Market

In addition to her role with the Boys and Girls Club, Bridge has been involved with the market since its inception. She finds that the market helps to promote a neighborhood feel within the community. Langacker noted this as well and added that the market is being designed to be a relaxed environment where community members can engage with one another and develop relationships with the vendors. There is little hustle and bustle at the market.

Beverly Lacy of Lord and Lady Famous Kansas City Style Barbecue finds that the atmosphere encourages partnerships within the community. For the last two seasons, the Lady’s have been selling their award winning barbecue to hungry patrons of the market. Lacy enjoys the camaraderie in the community that she grew up in, and says the market offers potential for people from all walks of life. She describes the market as a group of very friendly people who help each other out like a small, extended, family. It’s a family that is always looking for new members. For more information: Go to sites.google.com/site/farmersmarket-north3/.
Early History of the School for Designing a Society

By Rob Scott

THE SCHOOL FOR DESIGNING A SOCIETY is a grassroots, non-accredited school for social change that was founded in 1991 following a decade of experimentation with formats of art and teaching in the 1980s. The proposal of the School grew out of an experimental college course where the idea was to invite participants to articulate desire statements, to research their interests in the current society, to design, construct, formulate, propose projects, or simply speak in such a way that would not happen otherwise. Almost all of the organizing activity of the school has been in Urbana, Illinois. The originators of the School were motivated by the political necessity for a forum where groups could engage in creative tampering with communication formats in order to trigger social change. The idea was to take art beyond the traditional boundary of the arts and apply it to social structures. I recently researched the “pre-history” of the school during the 1960s, 70s and 80s. During the 1970s and 80s, a group of students around music composer Herbert Brun worked together to make experiments in art and activism around the reception of art in society. In a certain way, one such idea was to have a school that would bounce the ideas of art and design back upon the society. In this sense, from the first the six-week pilot school offered in 1993, and even up to the present day, the project has been a proposal to foment social revolution by grounding struggle in a discourse of the arts. The school now lives at the IMC, and this article proposes to share some of its long history.

PRE-HISTORY

Herbert Brun described part of the pre-history of the School for Designing a Society in a video made at the 1993 Summer School. He described a time “in the late sixties” when students at the University of Illinois approached Heinz Von Foerster, then Professor of Neuropsychology in the College of Engineering, and requested a course on “heuristics.” According to Brun, the students described heuristics as “doing research stepwise, and having the goal change while we do research. Therefore the result will clearly be a case of a process and not of achievement.” Brun was invited to assist in teaching the course, and his first contribution to the class was an assignment that converted the patriotic loyalty slogan “right or wrong, my country!” into a provocation to write statements under the title “right or wrong, my desires.” The assignment was to write “desire statements,” (declarations of what one wants that doesn’t exist), to write as many desire statements as one could, and to make them short, so that one could later be asked about them. Brun added “the concept of feasibility is excluded, you are not supposed to judge whether what you want can be met or cannot be met - you want it, period.” The students from the heuristics class initially thought they wouldn’t need a full week to produce a list of desire statements. Instead they discovered that the assignment was difficult enough to be worthy of an entire semester.

The milieu in Urbana used Brun’s assignment for two decades: not only critiquing the cliches of the current society, but also formulating desires for a different society. In the relationship between Brun and his graduate students, the school was born. Marianne Brun described the origins of the school in a video made in 2001 (by Eric Hilmes—an early member of the UCIMC), just after Herbert’s death. In 1981, I gave a class at Unit One, at the University of Illinois, called Designing a Society. That class was repeated a couple of times. The idea of it, for me, was to make an analysis of the society we live in, and then look at what aspects of the present-day society, the status quo, we don’t want, and what kind of a society we do want. The image of that society had two functions: one, a critique of the society we live in, and [two] the beginning of a path to a new society. That was quite successful with the students, and it was then a few students who had been in that class, or close to the class, who started the School for Designing a Society.

This class at Unit One is well documented, but the less known story comes from the same class. Susan Parenti spoke about the origins of the school in the same 2001 video. “We started the school so that (not because), so that our friends could work together. That’s probably the best way to talk about it. For years, in the 1980s, we had been meeting at Cybernetics Conferences. Meeting, in the sense that our friends were across the country. And so, when we would all come together, one of the main topics would be education, social change, and were we doing some project together? We each had our projects here [Urbana], and Virginia Beach, Lansing, and Chicago. In 1984 - 1986, a group of students of Herbert and Marianne Brun’s met with Marianne for about three days to have an intense talk about a school in Chicago.”

For two years, Marianne Brun tried to get foundation grants for that project, which was called the Institute for Global Education in the Systems Age. The grants were rejected, Marianne moved back to Germany, and people re-grouped.

In December 1987, Herbert Brun and the Performers’ Workshop Ensemble organized the American Society of Cybernetics Conference in Urbana and titled it, “Creative Cybernetics: Our Utopian Audacious Constructions.” This was Urbana’s first encounter with Patch Adams, a medical doctor who focused on happiness and social change, was invited to the conference as a guest speaker. This was also the first time the Performers’ Workshop Ensemble hosted Cybernetics Fair (or “symposium fest”).

In this format, participants would sit at one of several tables for a few minutes with others and discuss issues surrounding topics of conversation that were suspended on cards attached to helium balloons above each table. Then a short musical performance or slot would signal participants to change tables, and thus to engage a multiplicity of subjects for discussion. This format would later be used to generate ideas at the first School for Designing a Society in 1991, which hosted its inaugural session at Patch Adams’ Gesundheit Institute project in West Virginia. That project still exists, and Patch Adams now resides in Urbana, Illinois where he continues to support the work of the School for Designing a Society at the Independent Media Center.

UC-IMC Summer Update

By Austin McGann

PHILANTHROPIST BEQUEST

The UC-IMC recently received a $100,000 bequest from the late Dr. Alice Tang. A Planetary Peace Promoter and philanthropist in California. This is the largest single gift received by the UC-IMC and attests to our high national visibility as a model community media and arts center. We are in discussion about ways to use these funds to build our sustainability. We are grateful to Dr. Tang for her generous gift.

INDYMEDIA IN AFRICA

The UC-IMC sponsored and supported the Dakar Indymedia Convergence, which brought dozens of independent African media makers together in Senegal during the 2011 World Social Forum.

CITY OF URBANA ARTS GRANTS

The UC-IMC received grants from the City of Urbana Arts Program for two of our most successful, innovative programs: the IMC Librarians & Archivists organized a unique recurring project for which we open our 30,000 sq. ft. Community Media & Arts Center to the public for 24 straight hours, making our space and resources available for anybody interested in working on arts or media projects.

PRISON ARTS FESTIVAL

A project of UC Books to Prisoners, the Festival featured work from inmates at the Danville prison, guest speakers, and a film screening of Midwest Vote Five: The IMC Urbana’s 2004 Prison Arts Festival.

MICROTENAL DESIGN UNCONFERENCE MCNORDITIVITY

A method for singing out of tune with conventional wisdom. Hosted by IMC’s Oddmusic and the School for Designing a Society, the Microtional Design UnConference included music composition, instrument building, recordings, research, and more!

HELP “RE-VISION” THE UC-IMC!

Retreat scheduled for September 2011! Get on our Events listserve for updates! Support the process with a donation!

SUPPORT US

To make a recurring annual gift, donate here or mail us a check to UCIMC, 507 S. 5th St., Champaign, IL 61801. Make a commitment to the future of media and arts in Champaign-Urbana: consider becoming a Sustaining Funder. (217) 344-8820 / imc@ucimc.org
Morocco’s Uprisings and All the King’s Men

By Emma Rosen. (Previously Published at Al Jazeera—aljazeera.co.uk/)

THOUSANDS POUR INTO THE STREETS of Rabat on Sunday June 5th to condemn the death of a protester and to demand an end to the country-wide government crackdown on peaceful demonstrations.

“We are here today to protest the murder of Khaled al-Amari,” said a 40-year-old Rabat resident who did not give her name out of fear of the authorities. “But we are also here because we demand dignity, democracy and freedom. This repression must end.”

Last Thursday, 30-year-old Khaled al-Amari, a member of Morocco’s main opposition group, died after reportedly suffering a severe beating at the hands of police during a protest in the city of Safi. Officers deny that his death was a direct result of police violence, despite eyewitness accounts that he was severely beaten.

Police violence against peaceful demonstrators in Morocco has exploded in recent weeks, in what protesters say is a significant escalation of government repression. The swelling crowd proceeded from the Old City down Muhammed VI Avenue, many holding pictures of Khaled al-Amari’s beaten face. Protesters chanted “Down with despotism. We want freedom and dignity,” and “peace, peace, freedom is coming,” as they made their way to parliament. At many points in the march, protesters clasped each other’s hands, sat down in the street, or waved peace signs in the air.

“We are demanding democracy and dignity,” declared Mohammed Aghmaj. “The police are not being violent today because there was a martyr. But we know they have been violent in the past,” he said, referring to the relative calm at the demonstration.

COERCING PROTESTERS AND JOURNALISTS

The protesters are part of what has been termed the February 20 Movement, led largely by young people demanding pro-democracy reforms and an end to government corruption and repression—as well as an end to poverty and inequality. Launched on February 20 this year, the protests have swelled in conjunction with the so-called “Arab Spring” protests and revolutions sweeping the Middle East and North Africa.

Last Wednesday, dozens of his supporters gathered in downtown Rabat to demand that Morocco’s main opposition group, died after reportedly suffering a severe beating at the hands of police during a protest in the city of Safi. Officers deny that his death was a direct result of police violence, despite eyewitness accounts that he was severely beaten.

Police violence against protests in several cities throughout Morocco on the past two Sundays have garnered international attention, with several images of police beatings captured on video. “According to the law, police must ask people to leave three times and give time for this,” explains Elboukili. “But the police don’t do this. They charge and beat people. In our opinion, this does not respect the right to peacefully demonstrate.”

Police violence has been accompanied by a crackdown on journalists. Last month, Al Jazeera was forced by the Moroccan government to cease broadcast operations in Rabat, with a ban on all land and satellite transmitters. Furthermore, Rachid Nini, editor of Morocco’s el-Massa newspaper, who has been outspoken against government corruption, was jailed for writing articles critical of Morocco’s security services and counter-terrorism law. Amnesty International has condemned the jailing as a “severe attack on freedom of expression.” Last Wednesday, dozens of his supporters gathered in downtown Rabat to demand that the government release him.

THE KING’S “REPRESSIVE TACTICS”

The Association Marocaine des Droits Humains has received reports that police have started paying house visits to protest organizers’ homes, telling them they should not attend protests. “Now they are intimidating and watching people,” says Elboukili. “The police are making their presence known.”

This approach contrasts sharply with police treatment of pro-monarchy demonstrators on Sunday May 29. At midday, a pro-monarchy rally on Muhammed V Avenue in front of the parliament chartered slogans supporting the king, with many attendees holding his portrait. The crowd went undisturbed by police, who hung back leisurely at the outskirts. Journalists were allowed to roam freely, marking a drastic distinction from February 20 Movement protests, where journalists covered demonstrations at considerable personal risk from the police.

One attendee, a Rabat native in his mid-fifties who did not give his name, explained: “This demonstration has a permit, unlike the other demonstrations,” in reference to mobiliations of the February 20 movement.

This comes on the heels of Saudi Arabia’s invitation to Morocco to join what has been termed the “club of kings,” the Gulf Cooperation Council, intended to protect the interests of monarchs against the “Arab Spring” uprisings throughout the region. While Morocco is a constitutional monarchy on paper, in practice, power is consolidated in the hands of the king, who can nominate and dismiss the prime minister and cabinet, dissolve parliament, and levy emergency powers.

Muhammad VI is a close ally of the United States, which exports arms to the Moroccan government, reportedly to maintain its military occupation in Western Sahara. Muhammad VI has attracted praise from the Obama administration for his alleged moderation and embrace of democratic reforms.

“Things need to change in my country,” said a 35-year-old Casablanca resident who spoke on condition of anonymity. “This repression makes me fear for my children. We need so many things, we need education and freedom and an end to poverty. The people of Morocco are demanding change. We will not tolerate this repression.”

VIOLENCE means working for 40 years, getting miserable wages and wondering if you ever get to ‘retire’...
VIOLENCE means state bonds, robbed pension funds and the stock-market fraud...
VIOLENCE means being forced to get housing loans which finally you pay back as if they were gold...
VIOLENCE means unemployment, temporary and part-time employment, 400 Euros wage with or without benefits...
VIOLENCE means work ‘accidents’, as bosses diminish their workers’ safety costs...
VIOLENCE means being driven sick because of hard work...
VIOLENCE means consuming psycho/anxiety-drugs and vitamins in order to cope with exhausting working hours...
VIOLENCE means living in a society where the ‘poverty of everyday life,’ alienation, and the impossibility of LOVE is ‘normalized.’
VIOLENCE means working for money to buy medicines in order to fix your ‘labor power commodity’...
VIOLENCE means dying on ready-made beds in horrible hospitals, when you can’t afford babybirth!

...PRECARITY IS VIOLENCE!
Our World Economy: Three Facts, Two Problems, and Two Solutions

By Michael Braun

THREE FACTS, TWO PROBLEMS:

1. Growth, as defined by the capacity to produce goods and services is greater than ever before, and continues to increase. This is what we expect of the economy. Often this is all that seems important in economics. So look, it’s going great, capitalism works!

WHY DO SO MANY OF US FEEL NOT SO GOOD?

2. Even as more and more gets made, the production process requires fewer and fewer people. To work, this requires: a very few people with extreme technical skills, social skills, stamina and discipline; a few more with a lesser degree or number of these skills; and, a moderate number of people with few skills but reasonable work habits. This number is way less than the total population, never mind children, the elderly, or people with disabilities. In fact, one half or more of the world’s potential labor force could disappear overnight, and production would likely drop at all.

This is a big problem. It doesn’t matter how much is produced, people left out of the necessary labor force aren’t going to earn anything. If they are to survive at all, it will be through family ties, public welfare, private charity, or crime. As production grows, this problem worsens. That’s why “growth” doesn’t help get rid of poverty. The more we pursue efficiency—reducing labor and improving productivity—the worse things get. We need keeping fewer people and meanwhile require ever more from those few we keep on. What’s more, those who are left out are still expected to contribute to the societal infrastructure that support this system; we need your contribution—thank you so much; your tax dollars—or your money or your life!

This problem isn’t new; a previous iteration took the form of the Great Depression of the 1930s. That time it was “cured” by World War II. A funny thing about big all-out wars is that aren’t going to earn anything. If they are to survive at all, it will be through family ties, public welfare, private charity, or crime. As production grows, this problem worsens. That’s why “growth” doesn’t help get rid of poverty. The more we pursue efficiency—reducing labor and improving productivity—the worse things get. We need keeping fewer people and meanwhile require ever more from those few we keep on. What’s more, those who are left out are still expected to contribute to the societal infrastructure that support this system; we need your contribution—thank you so much; your tax dollars—or your money or your life!

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By Neil Parikh

Jimmy John’s Under Fire for Health Risks

WHILE SOME HAVE expressed displeasure with the recent photos of Jimmy John Liautaud’s hunting of leopards and other exotic animals, another much more damaging story has fallen under the radar.

In April, a Minneapolis-St. Paul Jimmy John’s franchise fired six employees who were members of the Industrial Workers of the World (IWW) for publicizing the fact that they were forced to make sandwiches while sick. While the franchise owner, Mike Mulligan said that workers were not punished for taking sick days, it was undercut by the company policy that “mandates one to two disciplinary points” for workers who call in without finding a replacement, even if they have a doctor’s note. Workers are fired after accumulating six points. Even if they can get a substitute, the employees do not receive paid sick days and have no benefits.

The policy of having sick workers handle food has had dangerous results for the health and safety of the public. According to the Minnesota Department of Health, there have been “eight outbreaks of foodborne illness at franchises across the Twin Cities area in the past five years, seven of which were due to employees working while sick at the chain.” Two of the outbreaks were at Mulligan’s stores.

The IWW and the workers attempted to negotiate for paid sick days. When management chose not to discuss the matter, workers union went public with protest flyers. For blowing the whistle on this health safety risk, the Jimmy John’s franchise fired these workers.

Along with grassroots pressure, the IWW focused on Jimmy John’s and the franchise owners, the fired workers have filed a charge with the National Labor Relations Board and hope to get their jobs back. Erik Forman, an IWW organizer, said, “Corporate Jimmy John’s is nothing more than a front for the IWW for publicizing the fact that workers were not punished for taking sick days, it was undercut by the company policy that “mandates one to two disciplinary points” for workers who call in without finding a replacement, even if they have a doctor’s note. Workers are fired after accumulating six points. Even if they can get a substitute, the employees do not receive paid sick days and have no benefits.

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Activists Get $50,000 for FBI & St. Paul Police Raid

By Rochester IMC

PREEMPTIVE, POLITICALLY MOTIVATED RAIDS ARE EMBLEMATIC OF POLICE TACTICS USED TO SUPPRESS DISSENT

ST. PAUL, MINN—THREE ACTIVISTS and their attorneys won a $50,000 settlement today in a lawsuit that challenged an August 30, 2008 police raid on a St. Paul home in advance of that year’s Republican National Convention (RNC). The plaintiffs in the case—Sarah Coffey, Erin Stalnaker and Kris Hermes—are giving most of the award to the Committee to Stop FBI Repression, the Institute for Anarchist Studies, and the formation of a national legal defense fund for political activists. The St. Paul house raid was one of several police actions taken against protesters days before the RNC began, including the search and seizure of a central political meeting space, which is also the subject of pending litigation. “The City of St. Paul and the federal government were forced to pay for their politically-motivated attack on orga- nizers,” said Sarah Colley, one of the plaintiffs. “Rather than spend years in court fighting the government over its political surveil- lance program, we decided to use settlement money to invest in projects that oppose such repressive tactics.” The lawsuit, which was filed in August 2009 and accused the St. Paul Police Department and the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) of violating plaintiffs’ First, Fourth and Fourteenth amendment rights, is so far the largest settlement of its kind stemming from the convention protests. “We hope this sends a message to law enforcement officials who would enter homes illegally or suppress politi- cal dissent,” said Colley, “there is a cost to their actions.” The raid garnered significant media attention at the time due to an hours-long standoff between 10 activists and resi- dents and a heavily armed police force that had surround- ed the duplex. Because the police attempted to raid the house within a search warrant, those inside refused them entry. After allegedly getting verbal authority from a local judge, the police used force to enter 951 Iglehart Avenue and detained everyone inside. The owner, several tenants and activists, including members of the I-Witness Video collective were detained for hours. No illegal items were found, no one was arrested and nothing was visibly seized, although computers and camera equipment were searched. The search warrant affidavit, which was under seal until a month after the raid in a likely attempt to avoid media scrutiny, relied solely on a confidential informant who made the outrageous claim of arms- shipment to Gaza-are removed. Such protests will continue until they are no longer necessary.

IMC Hiring AmeriCorps Members To Serve Our Local Community

Applications now being accepted until Thursday, July 14, 2011 for three full time, and two part-time; one year AmeriCorps positions at the Urbana-Champaign Independent Media Center and partner organizations. The UCIMC AmeriCorps program works to support social and economic jus- tice in Champaign County by placing members to serve the programs of the UCIMC and its partners.

Promote arts and cultural events—Apply to be the All-Ages Performance Venue Coordinator

Help the campus and community work to tackle injustice—Apply to be the University YMCA Community Engagement Coordinator

Support high school students getting the resources they need to be self-suffi- cient—Apply to be the Housing Authority-Education to Work Coordina- tor

Find volunteers to support youth recreation and activities—Apply to be the Don Moyer Boys & Girls Club Volunteer Coordinator

AmeriCorps jobs visit: americorps.gov.

Full-time AmeriCorps members receive a living allowance of $12,100; Half-time members receive a living allowance of $6,050, student-loan forbearance, health coverage, and child care for those who qualify. After successfully completing your term of service, you will receive an AmeriCorps Education Award of up to $5,550. Stant date is tentatively set for August 01, 2011. You must commit to one full year of service. All positions are based on funding availability.

For general information about AmeriCorps jobs visit: americorps.gov.

IMC is hosting an Open House scheduled for July 8, 2011 from 3–5 p.m. at 202 S. Broadway Avenue. Come learn about National Ser- vice and six AmeriCorps openings for the fall. For more information about AmeriCorps jobs visit: americorps.gov.
The Killing of the Silverback

By Pat Simpson

This poem was inspired by the cover of a 2010 issue of National Geographic which carried a picture of the dead body of a silverback gorilla being carried on a stretcher by Park Rangers in Virunga National Park, Democratic Republic of Congo. Although the body of this gorilla was not mutilated, gorillas and other wildlife worldwide are often killed by locals not only for meat and skins, but for those body parts that have value in international markets because of their ornamental uses or their role in folk medicine. Of course, damage is done to many other species due to habitat loss and related processes associated with development and population pressures. Notably, many park rangers in Africa and elsewhere themselves lose their lives in their efforts to protect wildlife.

“Oh, the horror! The horror!”

Conrad let his Kurtz know it
this bubbling cauldron of bile
this bitter dirt of endless war
machetes glinting in the Vulcan sun
children fussing over rank rifles
gleaming tall in triumph over dolls
balls, jacks, even the dull stone
marbles of aborted innocence.

Worse, the terrible traffic treading
these ruinous roads to nowhere
the trade that spreads like wildfire
licking at creation’s naked flanks
that harvests whole dominions
that is deaf to the sad symphony
of dying trills, hoots, and shrieks.

At the end of the line are merchants
offering a mad magic: the false pull
of portioned potions, of warped wraps
demonic delicacies—heads, horns, hands
stolen for the vanity of wizened old men
plotting to seed blood-drenched soils
with more of their fecund foulness
This is the trail of tears that webs the world
that catches beauty and neatly quarters it
that sends it forth to the hungry ghosts
the gaping ravening maws of civilization.

Today six sad porters lift the body
of the great silverback up to the sky.
His chest—a many-muscled mountain—
towers above the makeshift stretcher.
His attendants walk stoop-shouldered
weighted not by him but by their failure
once again to stop the wrecking reach.
Around them the sorrowing jungle
Closes in on their guilt and shame
and in its dappled light they plod on
dreaming a final rout of darkness

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IndyKids is a progressive current events newspaper & teacher’s guide for kids in grades 4 to 7.

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** Past! BTW kids… LIFE just doesn’t have to be this way.**