Why Unity?

By Aaron Ammons

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

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

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Iraq War veterans being arrested by riot police at the Capitol Building, September 15,
— Photo by Chris Tucks
Increasing actions have been taken against protesters and dissenters. In 2005 a Flag Amendment was passed that made burning the American flag a felony. In 2002, Joseph Frederick unveiled a 14-foot paper sign declaring “Bong Hits 4 Jesus”. Although he was on a public sidewalk outside his Juneau, Alaska high school, he was suspended. The case was to reach the Supreme Court, where the court’s decision drew a murky line between advocacy of illegal conduct and political dissent.

The Democracy Now! archive is replete with news stories of peace and anti-war activists who have been spied on, jailed, or fired from their workplaces, including long-time progressive columnist Robert Scheer who was fired by the L.A. Times in 2005. Many of these violent actions were intensified by signing into law the Uniting and Strengthening America by Providing Appropriate Tools Required to Intercept and Obstruct Terrorism Act of 2001, better known as the Patriot Act. In response, Michael Steinberg of the American Civil Liberties Union encouraged political dissent saying, “In times of crises, it is even more important for citizens to dissent when the government is doing wrong... Dissent is not antipatriotic.”

DISSENT AND THE PRINCIPLE OF LOVE
Given this repressive moment in history, it is so important that we, as world citizens, take on issues of social justice in a serious, forthright, and sustained manner. Emancipatory principles of life make it impossible to deny that dissent is an essential political ingredient for the evolution of a just democratic society. This is particularly so when we must contend with institutional conditions that marginalize, exclude, and repress our existence.

Dissent is, in fact, absolutely necessary to the enactment of democratic principles, particularly within a nation so diverse as the United States. A politics stripped of the creative and transformative fuel of dissent leaves the powerful unaccountable, to run roughshod over the interests, needs, and aspirations of the majority of the world’s population, irrespective of what is said in the public arena.

A revolutionary love compels us to dissent, to become part of a decolonizing culture that cultivates human connection, intimacy, truth, and honesty, from our bodies out into the world. Hence, the moral and the material are inextricably linked. And as such, our politics integrates love as an essential ingredient of a just society.

Love, as a political principle, inspires and motivates us to create mutually life-enhancing opportunities for all people. It is a love grounded in the interdependence of our human existence. As philosopher Terry Eagleton reminds us, such an emancipatory love allows us to realize our nature, in a way that allows others to do so as well. Inherent in such a love is the understanding that we are never at liberty to be violent, authoritarian, or exploitative.

It is precisely a commitment to such a political principle, fueled by our imagination, which has been the anchor for generations of students, workers, women, and other oppressed communities around the world. Many of whom have dissented under the most dangerous and cruel conditions, armed principally with a revolutionary love and a burning desire to create a world where social justice and human rights are the impetus for our labor and relationships, rather than the bloody profits that insure exploitation, powerlessness, and human suffering.

COLLECTIVE POLITICAL ENGAGEMENT
Yet, no form of political dissent or emancipatory struggle can exist in a vacuum, for it requires connection, dialog, and solidarity. It is precisely for this reason that we can safely say that the struggle for justice or a politics of dissent constitutes one of the most powerful pedagogical dynamics in the history of humankind. At each stage of our collective political engagement, knowledge, power, and difference challenge us to grow, demanding from us respect, humility, and faith in our capacity, as individuals and social beings.

Truly, examples of political dissent exist everywhere, including right here in the Champaign Urbana community. We live in a community rich in a legacy of progressive collective struggles and a will to persevere, despite what may seem the worst odds. Many of these examples are found in the political efforts of students, workers, parents, and others who embody the passion of justice, clear-sighted and unambiguous in their political intent. We are fortunate to struggle in solidarity and are ever fortunate to discover, through our labor and unity, the collective power of our humanity.

A Day in Baghdad Comes to Champaign

By Shara Estbenshade

On the afternoon of Thursday, September 20th, over sixty people laid down at the busiest intersections of campus town. At 5 pm, a crowd gathered in front of the Alma Mater to hear from the UIUC Campus Anti-War Network, Iraq Veterans Against the War, Vietnam Veterans Against the War, the Green Party’s position on congress’ responsibility in ending the war in Iraq, and a perspective on the media’s complicity in the war. Following the Speak Out, there was a local reenactment of what happened in Washington D.C. the Saturday before.

On that September 15, 100,000 people marched through Washington D.C. demanding an immediate end to the war in Iraq. Led by veterans of the Iraq War, they marched from the White House to the Capitol building, where 5,000 laid down in a symbolic act of solidarity with our brothers and sisters dying in Iraq.

The police arrested nearly 200 people for this dramatic action, a majority of them uniformed veterans. Although the mainstream media misrepresented the day’s actions, trivialized its importance, and lied about its size, to see 5,000 motorless bodies on the clean-cut grass outside the Capitol was truly inspiring.

September 15 was just a kick-off action to a week of national anti-war protest. The Campus Anti-War Network (CAN) is a nation-wide coalition of students working to end the war. The local CAN chapter planned the Die-In on Green Street as part of the protests taking place across the country throughout the week. This is the third youth-led Die-In to take place in this community since May, the other two being organized primarily by local high school students.

The essence of successful protest is to disrupt the calm of our accustomed blissful ignorance. Organizers had written to senators Durbin and Obama and representative Johnson urging them to cut funding for the war immediately and inviting them to attend the protest. However, the main goal of this Die-In was to force onto the attention of Urbana-Champaign residents the reality of the suffering in Iraq. It is not right for Americans to be able to ignore this war. It is not right that in Iraq there is hardly a person who has not lost a friend in the violence. In Iraq, the lack of energy, water, and food is a daily struggle. Although this war is waged in our name, here in America it is more than easy – almost expected—to ignore it all.

Daily Illini Columnists may trivialize the Die-In, but creative, disruptive local protest has important and undeniable results. Several hundred passersby were forced to pause and ask themselves why “dead” people were scattered on the street, and many more when they saw the photos in the paper. To get people thinking about the Iraq War and how they as citizens can end it is an accomplishment in itself.
On Sunday, June 10, a square block sur-
pounding the Champlung County Cour-

The Champaign Police Department has the resources to
maintain its own SWAT team, information on which is hard to find. After 9-11, Champaign purchased an Armed
carried out their prized
been arrested during a SWAT raid was
released. The Champaign Police Department has the resources to
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Carriers look like stormtroopers when in full gear. They wear green camouflage clothing, black flak jackets with
police “written” on the back, ballistic helmets, and face shields. They usually conduct raids in the early morn-
ing hours, around five or six a.m. "Breaking down doors with a "ram" device, they often they find the suspect in bed, naked and unarmed. Officers carry AR-15 assault rifles. At least twice it has been mentioned in the reports that a suspect was shot at by police at the suspect’s residence, police may carry a rifle that shoots non-lethal bean-bags (at $2 a bag). The police also have their own drug dogs. The intent is to apply the maximum use of force to surprise and over-
whelm the suspect.

STATISTICAL BREAKDOWN

During the study, I collected the complete records for the raids conducted by the Sheriff’s METRO team in 2006, which are representative of the trends in Champaign County. Of the 12 raids conducted by METRO in 2006, all were for drugs. African Americans made up 11 of the 12 individu-
alists. Some very clear pat-
terns were evident in my find-
ings.

I found that in 49 incidents where race was indicated, 44 were black. That means that 90% of SWAT raids were conducted on African American homes.

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Overkill

Since the Reagan era, we have seen a proliferation of spe-
cialized SWAT teams, although their origin goes back to the 1960s when the LAPD formed a SWAT team after the Watts riots and first used it in a 1968 shoot out with the Black Panthers. Today, these raids have become so common that they have even raised the ire of right-wing groups. A study by Radley Balko titled, Overkill: The Rise of Paramilitary Police Raids in America, was funded by the Cato Institute, a libertarian think tank. Balko reports that an astonishing 40,000 such police raids are carried out each year in the United States.

There are past cases in Urbana-Champaign where the use of SWAT teams has ended in tragedy. On December 11, 1998, the News-Gazette covered the story of an 81-year-old African American woman who claimed she was grabbed by the chest and thrown to the floor by Champ-
paign’s SWAT team and had to go to the hospital for injuries. The Champaign SWAT team was there to serve an outstanding warrant from Wisconsin to the woman’s grandson, who was not even in the house at the time.

When I asked Sheriff Dan Walsh what the ratio of black to white suspects involved in SWAT raids is, he said, “I do not know the answer to that. We don’t keep statistics based on that.”

In 52 SWAT raids where the cause of the warrant could be determined, 45 were for drug searches. This indicates that 87% of SWAT raids were for drugs.

Recently, a man arrested during a SWAT raid was acquitted of drug charges after a jury heard questionable testimony from multiple con-
victions, who said she hoped to get a break on her own pending charges in exchange for her testimony (News-
Gazette, 9/15/2007).

In 2000, all but one of the searches conducted by the Sheriff’s METRO unit were gained through the use of infor-
inars. Surpassing the example of Raleigh-Durham, 92% of SWAT raids were conducted on African American homes.

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Capitalist Academy Fund Is Anything But Limited

By Belden Fields

For almost two years, some self-described “good Capitalist” allies of the University of Illinois have been at work in forging the Academy on Capitalism and Limited Government. In line with the conservative agenda of the University of Illinois, they seek to use its resources and powerful influence to reverse what fellow founder and board member Tom O’Laughlin refers to as “a decided left-wing bias in schools.”

Chancellor Richard Herman claims “This is a fund and nothing else,” the Fund has already raised over two million dollars singing the praises of the free market, limited government, individual rights, individual responsibility, enterprise, and entrepreneurship, which they refer to as the lynchpins of the Fund.

In the name of promoting political freedom and economic opportunity, the sponsors of this initiative seek “the development of curricula leading to the establishment of majors, minors, and other academic credentials” that perpetuate and propagate the neoliberal ideals that support this initiative.

In addition, “support for faculty scholars will come in the form of endowed professorships and chairs”, as well as scholarships for students and fellowships for graduate students engaged in studies, research or teaching pertaining the purpose of the Fund.

Concerns by UUCF regarding the lack of faculty participation in the development of the Fund, the stealth nature of its formation, and the lack of academic accountability led to the establishment by the Chancellor of an advisory committee to function as a guiding body on the Fund’s academic exploits.

However, despite the Faculty Senates efforts to create some faculty oversight of the Fund, there are those who believe that faculty are still giving away far too much in terms of academic integrity if the proposed Academy on Capitalism is enacted according to its expressed purposes. The stealth nature of its formation, and the lack of academic accountability, led to the establishment by the Chancellor of an advisory committee to function as a guiding body on the Fund’s academic exploits.

There are a number of central concerns about this forceful regeneration of neoliberal lymphins, touted as the cutting edge panacea for “a productive and successful American society.” I want to briefly point out the five most obvious include:

INFLUENCING THE CURRICULUM WITH ECONOMIC POWER

Conservatives are usually eager to urge jurists to go to the law schools to exert economic power over public universities with an explicit objective to set their curriculum, teaching of education and economics according to its expressed precepts. The notion that capitalists are now the new excluded minority of the academy and that a “forum for another point of view” is sorely needed underscores the sentiment of the Fund’s literature. To ameliorate this condition “The Academy on Capitalism and Limited Government Fund will encourage intellectual diversity and civil debate by opening discourse to a greater range of perspectives.”

The founders imply here that those with their views are silenced and marginalized, while the academy plunges into the depth of left-winged radicalism. But the facts belie such a claim. For example, the Department of Economics, which had a great diversity of views on the place of markets relative to the state’s role, when I was an undergraduate at the U of I, has today become increasingly homogeneous in its views of markets, Milton Friedman, and the government’s role in the economy. If representation for their view is what they seek, then the proponents of the Academy should be well pleased by this shift.

Meanwhile, the Department of Finance, and the College of Business as a whole, is certainly teaching the kinds of ideas that the donors contend are absent from the discourse on this campus. The College of Engineering, too, is heavily invested in entrepreneurial relations with the private sector and the private enterprises. The College of Agriculture enjoys close ties with the private agricultural sector, including the Farm Bureau Federation.

In the College of Law, the Law and Economics school of thinking that privileges corporate interests is very well represented. New hires over the last two years have especially tilted the college in that direction. Even the Institute of Labor and Industrial Relations, which had been greatly aided by the state and local AFL-CIO’s, is turning out to be a graduate students who wind up working in personnel departments on the side of management. The Research Park offers corporations a place and many cooperative relations. The College of Business as a whole, the privatization of the development of Orchard Downs is well on its way.

So given this enormous amount of capitalist-inspired activity, how can, by any stretch of the imagination, it be claimed that there is an exclusion of capitalist viewpoints and interests at this university? In truth, it cannot. The Academy on Capitalism, which is now being referred to by the administration as a Fund rather than an Academy, is not an attempt to fill a lack. Quite the contrary, it is a breach attempt at ensuring a conservative ideological hegemony over the campus.

THE IDEOLOGY IS ALSO QUITE SPECIFIC

The framers of the Fund derive their theoretical inspiration from Friedrich von Hayek who, in volume 2 of his tome, Law, Legislation, and Liberty (itself entitled The Mirage of Social Justice), defies the validity of the very concept of social justice. The Hayekian social good is achieved only by individuals making rational self-interested economic choices, not by governments trying to remedy market effects or trying to control corporate power. Monopolies are good, considered signs of economic efficiency.

Meanwhile, governments that seek to pursue social justice or advance economic or social rights are perceived as disrupting economic efficiency. Consequently, those who see a moral or efficiency problem in severe economic inequalities, those who argue that governments should use fiscal policies (e.g., progressive taxation) to reduce economic inequality and poverty, those who support government measures to bring about universal healthcare, or those who are gravely concerned about the economic and social rights stipulated in the 1948 U.N. Declaration of Human Rights, all fall beyond the ideological pale and are, thus, ineligible for any of the resources offered by this Fund.

POWER DRIVEN HEGEMONY OR INTELLECTUAL CHALLENGE?

So, rather than accepting such a blatant attempt to propagate a specific political and economic viewpoint, would it not be more academically respectable to insist that the Fund be devoted simply to the relationship between economy and government. In this way, it could be opened up to the diversity that the founders claim is missing. Indeed, this diversity is already here at the university, where it is missing is in the founders’ own proposal. Approaching this as I am suggesting here would open up opportunities to people with varying views of that relationship and a number of other important related issues.

Some issues that such an approach would raise include: how we should think about economic rights; the status and rights of the corporation as a legal person; the effect of free markets nationally and internationally, the meaning of the “right to work” and the “right of workers to organize,” and how to morally assess inequalities. The university could set up public forums and symposia on these issues where students, faculty, and community people could be exposed to serious debates and probing analyses across disciplinary lines.

At the Annual Faculty Meeting on September 24, two contradictory ideas were put forth by the Chancellor: “No one will be hired on political grounds. Those who have supplied the resources are entitled to determine where the resources will go.” If the Academy/Fund operates according to its stated mission, people will have to be hired on political grounds. They might be very good scholars, and I am confident that the Chancellor and his Advisory Committee would insist on that, but they will have to meet a political litmus test as well.

Therein lies the rub. That is a huge, and to my knowledge unprecedented leap in how we operate. If we insist on using the Fund as I have suggested, to truly further diverse exchanges on these major issues, the founders might decide to withdraw their offer of money because it would not have the same ideological propagating force. That would indeed be their right. But accepting a political litmus test in recruitment of faculty, curricular decisions, and foundation grants is, in my view, infinitely more damaging to us and other public universities in this country than giving up the proffered money.
I Can’t Vote, But I Have A Voice
By Jelani Saadiq

Jelani Saadiq, eldest son of Carol and Aaron Ammons, is a 5th grader at Urbana Middle School. He has travelled extensively for his young years and practices Shaolin Gong Fu at Precious Sword Martial Arts School in Urbana. He hopes to study abroad in China when he turns sixteen.

Rally For Designated Suppliers
By Alison McGuire

A rally was held to make the UIUC community aware that the system by which the University of Illinois gets its apparel is horribly flawed and rife with human rights violations. Companies like Nike, which make Illinois apparel, demand that factories lower their prices more and more each year, until there is little or no money left over for workers’ wages, benefits, or even basic safety precautions. Workers who try to unionize are fired immediately, because as soon as a union gets recognized, the brands pull their orders, and move to a cheaper factory.

The Designated Suppliers Program would be a huge step toward fixing this problem. Brands would be required to source a certain percentage of their university apparel from factories where workers earn a living wage and have a real right to form a union, creating a safe space for workers to organize. Brands would also be required to pay high enough prices for their goods, so that workers would be able to bargain for living wages, making it possible for factory owners to meet the demands of a unionized workforce without the fear of losing orders.

Inclusive Illinois? Hell No!
By Brian Dolinar

On Wednesday, September 19, at noon the Student Transformation Oppression and Privilege (STOP) Coalition successfully took over the student union and reclaimed it as a public space. Approximately 60-80 people marched through the main floor of the union, going in and out of the building several times. STOP protestors marched past the ice cream corner, the Credit Union, and past the Espresso Royale. As counter as employees looked on in wonder. STOP organizers Treva Ellison, John Gergely, and Paty Garcia led chants of “Whose Union? Our Union!”

The march drew upon the coalitional structure of STOP and called out students of color, students of conscience, community members, union members, LGBT people, and many others. SEIU workers were there to protest going for a year without a contract. In the Courtyard Café they chanted, “Who Cleans the Buildings? B-S-W!” (Building Service Workers). “Who Feeds the Children? F-S-W!” (Food Service Workers).

STOP then marched over to the Student Administration Building shouting, “Inclusive Illinois? Hell No!” and “They Say Cut-Backs. We Say Fight Back!”

Disorientation 101
By Antonia Darder

As more than a dozen campuses around the U.S. and Canada, students have taken the college orientation process into their own hands, by publishing a series of alternative student guides. Each publication specifically addresses its own campus, in an effort to provide community with the real deal on university politics and the college experience, particularly for those concerned with issues of social justice and human rights.

Whether it be the Boston College Freshman Disorientation, the Stanford University Disorientation Guide, the Harvard University Disgudge, or the UIUC Disorientation Guide: Lifting the Curtain on the UIUC Experience, these publications seek to provide access to an often silenced history of the institution and helpful hidden facts. The UIUC Disorientation Guide, for example, introduces students to sites of historical student struggle, highlights the invisibility of queer students, offers a history of the Chief Illiniwek controversy, articulates student demands since 1968, and introduces students to progressive organizations.

More importantly, “the aim of disorientation is to critique and unravel our socialization, to break solidarity with one another and to document and discuss dissent, resistance, and change on the UIUC campus and the larger community.”
In Memory of Student Protesters
Mexico City October 2, 1968

40 years ago, academic life throughout Mexico was haunted by antigovernment demonstrations initiated by student grievances, with many discontented sectors of society also joining the protests. As the Olympic Games approached, the government prepared the country to show foreign vis- itors that Mexico was politically stable and economically sound. But student unrest grew louder and more violent, as they demanded freedom for all political prisoners, dismissal of the police chief, disbanning of the antipolice police, guarantees of political and cultural autonomy, and the repeal of the "law of social dissolution" (regulating the punishment of acts of subversion, treason, and disorder).

Luis Echeverría Álvarez, the new interior minister, agreed to meet with the students but changed his mind when they demanded that the meeting be televised. When their demands were not met, the students escalated the scale and frequency of their protests. On August 27, 1968 the students convened the largest antigovernment demon-
NWC: The Race Play Controversy

Continued from page 5

a Black actor has been “blind casted” into a Tennessee Williams’ role in which he must use the N’ word repeatedly.

As an artist, I am sensitive to the role that art and culture play in the liberatory efforts of subjugated groups. In that same respect, I am acutely aware of the lack of performance spaces for African-Americans, Native Americans and Latinos in the community that hosts this university. As an African American, I must have an obligation to ensure, as the performance venue for Champaign County, that programming decisions do not merely reflect diversi-
ty, as viewed from the perspective of Mike Ross or others who are not members of mar-
ginalized communities. Instead they must take into account the types of art that truly reflect diversity and divergent ideas.

To that end, a stronger statement should be made with regards to the fall schedule of events at KCBA, beyond just boycotting the performance and the talkbacks associated with NWC. Perhaps a more visible presence, the nights of the performance, will be more efficacious in sending Mike the message that if he wants to trust (as he indi-
cated last year during the Katrina events), he needs to first be trustworthy. This entails being responsive to the needs of all consumers of art & culture.

Challenging the Wasteland of Racism

D. Anthony Tyecn Clark (Meskwaki) is Assistant Professor of American Indian Studies at UIUC and co-editor of the Indigenous Futures Series at the University of Nebraska Press.

The Kramenrt Cultural Performance Arts programming decisions, including the current pre-
sentation of NWC: The Race Play, reflect a three-part core problem at this historically white university: 1) the lingering residue of historical white privilege; 2) the intergenerational post-traumatic stress of unhealed trauma caused by heterosexual, misogyny white-inspired and perpetrated forms of violence and colonialism; and 3) the neo-liberal structures through which power and privileges are distributed today and into unforeseeable future. Panning forward to a broader context, the Chancellor’s Inclusive Campus initiative, in the end will fail far short of creating social justice. It will do so, because the most counter-
hegemonic events will likely have the smallest audiences, reaching mostly those people who are already calling for redistribution of institutional power and a flattening of insti-
tutional privileges at this university and the broader society.

Reflecting the mainstream ethos of this initiative, Mike Ross and the KCBA program-
manship certainly will bring good people together who, basking in the joys and exotism of liberal multiculturalism, will frolic with their people-of-color allies in the wastelands of overproduction and marketing. This was made evident when the University’s explanation of his choices when challenged and the hierarchical structure through which his decisions are made. Unfortunately, this “race play” is not likely to move the university even one millimeter closer to the much needed and long-overdue structural changes.

Left to Answer Sloppy Questions

Genevive Tenaso is a Lakota/Ojibwe tribally enrolled, and a PhD student in anthropology at UIUC. Her work centers on Native representation and decolonization theory.

I inadvertently purchased a ticket to the Wednesday evening NWC show; and after I had committed to going, I became aware of the controversy of the nature of the event. I found the overuse of the words NWC to be unnecessary. While I might find celebration in witnessing a performance by a cast of people of color, their messages were not new. Though I have no doubts that those words are still widely used as slurs today, they are most-
ly used in all-written settings and rarely make their way into the public discourse today.

I suppose engagement with racial slurs has some value, though NWC’s method is greatly flawed. After massive usage of these slurs, they simply proclaim that African

Americans, Latinas/os and Asian Americans are not the stereotypes depicted. Then remi-
niscent of Rodney King, they naïvely argue that there is just one race. Moreover, they seem to have no conceptualization of institutional racism, which is what we mainly con-
front at UIUC.

NWC is at best hopelessly naive and at worst insidious. The routines are not good comedy. The trio lacks the sophistication of Dave Chapelle or Chris Rock or even Carlos Mencia, who though offensive, are occasionally funny. But even Chapelle discovered that despite his sophisticated critique of racial oppression, his white audience did not “get it.” It would be wonderful if the positive impact of this “play” can be blunted. Especially when the performers seem devoid of an understanding of the complicated nature of racial oppression and are presenting poorly conceptualized material.

The NAACP recently performed a symbolic burial of the N-word, movements to ban it have emerged at schools in several states and cities have passed resolutions either ban-
ning the use of the word or urging their citizens to voluntarily refrain from using it. I find it curious that just as a movement develops to ban the N-word, this series of skits emerges as a darling of the campus newspapers and the mainstream press.

Finally, I am dismayed that Mike Ross made the decision, in a “play” which even he agrees is controversial, without first consulting people of color on campus and in the community, especially those who study, teach and regularly engage these issues. Why weren’t the racialized studies programs and cultural centers engaged before a commit-
ment was made to bring this parody to our campus? I, for example, was only “consulted” after Ross learned that the Kramenrt Art Museum refused to schedule a performance between NWC and SPEAK Cafe because our program opposed the performance. Given all that happened on campus last year, how do you make this kind of decision without consulting the victims of racism?

The point is that we are weary of white arrogance. And the decision to impose this “play” on us without consultation represents the height of white liberal arrogance! I do not doubt the good intentions of the decision-makers. But, unfortunately, African Americans and people of color will suffer the consequences of the institution’s bad decision. What happens when members of ZBT or the Tri-Deltas complain that they were disciplined for doing the same thing—“parodying” racialized minority group?

Creating a Truly Progressive Cultural Politics

Faculty of the Asian American Studies Program.

As a program that aims to provide students with the critical tools to examine racist and racialized everyday and spectacular images, situations and meanings, the Asian American Studies Program neither endorses nor endorses the Speake Theater Arts Production of NWC: The Race Play nor tacitly approves of the performance. Instead, we strongly believe that the University of Illinois community should take this opportunity, and the unfolding controversy, and transform them both into teaching moments.

The controversy around the Speak Theater Arts production of NWC speaks to larger issues of representation in programs of the University. There are many arists-of-color working through a multitude of aesthetic and cultural practices whose works address the intersections of race, gender, and sexuality in sophisticated ways, but without the kind of publicity and support given to this particular production by the University and the Kramenrt Center. The focus of attention should not be on Speak Theater Arts, but the ways in which both students of color and the performing arts are marginalized on campus. Important ques-
tions about the University’s response to the campus climate of racialized tensions and con-
fl ict s cannot be addressed, let alone alleviated, by its support for this particular production.

Furthermore, it is the position of the Asian American Studies Program that boycotting the Speak Theater Arts production of NWC, without having seen the production, disal-
wows a critical engagement with its content. Works by many theater scholars and profes-
sionals, notably Lucy Mac San Pablo Burns and New World Theater’s former manager Roberta Uno’s co-edited anthology The Color of Theater, theater scholar Meling Cheng’s In Other Los Angeles, and David Roman’s Performance in America provide the theatrical context in which the politics and aesthetics of Speak Theater Arts’ production of NWC emerge. Speak Theater Arts joins the growing body of performance art by artists-of-color whose work speaks to issues of race, ethnicity, and identity, through ironic re-appropria-
tions of color stereotypes.

NWC follows a long tradition of artists using ethnic humor to subvert stereotypes and political correctness in irreverent and controversial ways. NWC is also in dialogue with productions companies such as Culture Clash, 18 Mighty Mountain Warriors, and other artists such as John Leguizamo and Michael Zia, whose works stage stereotypes of Latino and Asian American masculinity in order to acknowledge and confront the pain caused by racial stereotypes, while also proposing new ways of re-staging and empowering Lati-
no and Asian American bodies with agency.

The Asian American Studies Program acknowledges that these works often reproduce problematic stereotypes but within a liberal multicultural context, or otherwise incorporate a critical lens with regard to gender or sexuality. These issues have been and continue to be part of ongoing debates about cultural politics in which we seek to inter-
vene as scholars, artists, and activists. That said, Speak Theater Arts adds another dimen-

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I, in concert with the faculty of the African American Studies and Research Program, adamantly opposed the NWC: The Race Play performance. After reading and viewing their material, I found the routine simplistic and shortsighted. Apparently, the production aims to challenge personal prejudices, by performing stereotypes and using offensive racial slurs. Though I have no doubts that these words are still widely used as slurs today, they are most-
ly used in all-written settings and rarely make their way into the public discourse today.
Breast Cancer Survivor  
by Marti Wilkinson

In the year 2003, I am 35 working, raising a child, trying to get by. I go to the women’s clinic for my yearly probe. It becomes more than a matter of routine when the nurse says, “Hey you’re 35 and that means, baseline mammogram time.”

No big deal, a lot of women do it. I make the appointment and get my breasts clamped, so a technician can take the screens. I go to work. I go about my business.

In the year 2003, I am 35 working, raising a child, trying to get by. Within a week, I get the call. The left side is dense. They need to take another look.

So once again, I return to get my left breast clamped, down hard and good. In a sterile machine. In a sterile room.

I did not know what was going to happen, when an attendant asked, “follow me.” She led me quietly to yet another sterile room. I’m placed on a table, as I see the sonogram machine, being fully loaded and prepared just for me. While a cold probe explores my left breast, I watch the ladies chat amongst themselves. Then, the room falls silent.

One of the technicians leaves and returns with the doctor who wants to see the strange mysterious lump, the one that looks “suspicious.” Suspicious is not a good word. I started to feel fear.

In the year 2003, I am 35 working, raising a child, trying to get by. The nurse calls and tells me my doctor wants me to be seen by a surgeon, who can take a further look at me. I make the appointment and see the surgeon, who wants to perform a biopsy. I’m told not to worry, after all it’s a common procedure and a mere precaution.

No big deal, a lot of women do it.

Two weeks later the biopsy is done. A few days later, driving I-74, I make the call that changes my life. The nurse tells me she is sorry to give me such terrible news.

The pathologist calls it invasive ductal carcinoma. The insurance company calls it a malignant neoplasm of the breast. I call it breast cancer.

In the year 2003, I am 35 working, raising a child, trying to get by. A partial mastectomy permanently alters my breast, which no amount of reconstruction will ever fix.

The chemo takes my hair. Radiation burns break my skin. I seek support and learn a lot, but I just can’t identify with the women, who are older and have partners to help them weather the rough seas of treatment and recovery.

No one in the group is 35, working, raising a child, trying to get by. My daughter turns 11 and feels all alone; adrift in the world, which has suddenly dropped out from under her. It’s hard for a child to have a mom with breast cancer.

She thought I was going to die. All her life, I’ve been both mother and father.

She becomes depressed and withdrawn. I get her professional help. In spite of my sickness, I try to be a good mom, caring, loving, and attentive.

I am a breast cancer survivor; not a breast cancer victim.

The Last Word on the ‘N’ Word: Asim Jabari

“I dream a world,” wrote Langston Hughes. “I entertain similar visions in which the language we use helps us determine a new and invigorating reality. I imagine a way of life derived from our past, wisest, fiercely loving selves. I dream of a world where “nigger” no longer roams, confined instead to the fetid white fantasy land where he was born.”

FREE THE JENA SIX!!!

C-U Citizens for Peace and Justice is bringing to town Terry Davis who took the initiative to go to Jena during this intense time, contributed his skills as an investigator on the Mychal Bell legal team for over three weeks and was there during the historic protest, September 20.

She and will be visiting us on Oct. 12th and 13th to share her observations and inside info about the events that have us all in an uproar! You don’t want to miss her!

Terry Davis will be co-sponsored at the URBAN LEAGUE of Champaign on the corner of Neil and Springfield Friday Oct 12, 2007 at 7 p.m. to share info and answer questions from the community.

She will also be participating in the Unity March on Saturday, October 13 at noon.

National Breast Cancer Awareness Month

October is designated as National Breast Cancer Awareness Month. The campaign is dedicated to increasing awareness about the importance of early detection of breast cancer, through a nationwide campaign that seeks to save lives. Breast cancer is the second leading cause of cancer deaths in women today. There are more than 25,000 women 40 and under in the U.S. living with breast cancer; over 11,000 young women will be diagnosed in the next year. Yet, despite the fact that breast cancer is the leading cause of cancer death in women ages 15 to 54, many young women and their doctors are unaware of the risk. According to the World Health Organization, more than 1.2 million people are diagnosed with breast cancer each year worldwide and over 500,000 die from the disease. Yet, breast cancer death rates have begun to drop steadily in all communities since 1990, because of earlier detection and better treatments. Nevertheless, over 40,000 breast cancer deaths are expected this year alone. African-American women suffer the highest incidence of deaths.

UFPJ National Day of Action Against the War in Iraq

Saturday October 27 in Chicago. Interested in riding the bus? Email Shara Ebenhade ebenhahd at uni.uic.edu

UNITY MARCH IV

October 13, 2007 at Noon

There will be two starting points: West Side Park in Champaign, and at the Courthouse in downtown Urbana for your 4th annual Unity March. We will march down University, up John Lee Johnson Way, and rally at Douglass Park. Don’t forget to join us at the Don Moye Boys and Girls Club on 2nd and Park for the appreciation dinner honoring Catherine Hogue and Bob “Grandpa” Wahlfeld. The dinner is free but we are accepting donations at P.O Box 1 Urbana, IL 61801. Please make checks payable to C-U Citizens for Peace and Justice, BE, just