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.

EDITORS/FACILITATORS:
Antonia Darder
Glynn Davis
Brian Dolinar
davep
Shara Esbenshade
Belden Fields
Bob Illyes
Paul Mueth
Niloofar Shambayati
Marcia Zumbahlen

The Public i
Urbana-Champaign IMC
202 South Broadway
Urbana, IL, 61801
217-344-8820
www.ucimc.org

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The National Guard deploy at the St. Paul Republican National Convention to protect democracy from its people.

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**What Is SAIC Doing In UI’s Research Park?**

By Paul Mueth

A Science Applications International Computing (SAIC) corporate spokesperson said in the journal, *Business 2.0*, “We are a stealth company. We’re everywhere, but almost never seen.” Indeed, they were there when pardoned felon Admiral Furdenbaker fed the Total Information Awareness (TIA) project and SAIC received some of those early development contracts. TIA has been nominally ended but the data mining techniques, fundamental to NSA and other government surveillance largely contracted to SAIC, go on full speed ahead. Retroactive immunity for the “telecoms” just passed by Congress is extremely important for SAIC and its land in operations which with the flood of data from the illegal links to the many networks involved.

Tim Shorrock’s recent book, *Spies for Hire: The Secret Intelligence Outsourcing Industry* points out that SAIC is almost fully dependent on the government: 90% of its revenue comes from federal contracts. Further, he asserts “the agency (NSA) is the company’s largest single customer and SAIC is NSA’s single contractor.” Shorrock closely examines SAIC and a variety of entities that compete and cooperate on activities once solely governmental functions. He estimates that 70% of the current intelligence budget goes to contractors and argues persuasively that, even more than ordinary corporate influence over government, intelligence functions in the private sector to undermine democratic control of foreign policy, covert and overt.

One of the places where SAIC isn’t seen, of course, is at Congressional hearings. Yet, SAIC’s board has always had many CIA/NSAD/ADIA alumni, among its past directors: ex-US Secretaries of Defense William Perry and Melvin Laird; ex-directors of the CIA John Deutsch, Robert Gates, Admi-

ral Bobby Ray Inman (ex-director of the National Security Agency), other retired military staff including Wayne Downing (former commander in chief of US Special Forces) and Jasper Welch (ex-coordinator of the National Security Council); Duane Andrews, longtime SAIC executive, still be joined (rejected), (UK privatized DRBM equiva-

lent, think James Bond’s Q) was then Sec’y of Defense Cheney’s director for strategic defense policy. Andrews remains close to Vice President Dick Cheney, his former boss at the Pentagon. In a 2002 interview with Govern-

ment Computer News, he listed Cheney as his hero.

“Deep Green, a project to assemble a state-of-the-art battlecontrol system. Is Deep Green intended to run on BlueWater, IBMs new water-cooled supercomputer that’s being built on UI campus? Are there “experiments” in local corporate offices that involve remote control of Predator drones firing Hellfire missiles?”

The several individuals I have spoken with who have worked at the local SAIC unit have been bound from speaking of their work by confidentiality agreements, as are a large percent of SAIC employees. There has been a long standing rumor that Operation Stockpile, computer simu-

lation of nuclear explosions, might be one of the projects that SAIC is conducting on this campus. These virtual nuclear tests undermine the spirit of the nuclear Non-Pro-

liferation Treaty (NPT), as the Bush gang skirts the letter of the treaty. Of real concern here is the manner in which SAIC activities could be pernicious to our safety and that of millions of lives, as well as a threat to the spirit of democracia and academic integrity within this community.

**Satellite Spy Program Fails to Meet Privacy Concerns**

New questions are being raised about the Bush administration’s controversial satellite surveillance program, known as the National Applications Office. The Department of Homeland Security says it will proceed with the first phase of the program despite objections it doesn’t comply with privacy laws. The satellite program is designed to provide federal, state and local officials with extensive access to spy satellite imagery to assist with emergency response and other domestic security needs. But critics say the Bush administration hasn’t created legal safeguards to ensure the program won’t be used for domestic spying. According to the *Wall Street Journal*, a new report from the Government Accountability Office says the Homeland Security Department has failed to address the privacy and civil liberties concerns.

SAIC participated in the managerial strike against PdVSA (rank and file workers were locked out), designed to destabilize the populist anti-corporate government. This was the year prior to the coup against Chavez, applauded by the Bush gang and the New York Times before it failed. The story, in English, of the accusation of internet indus-

trial sabotage can be found by searching for Hector Mon-

dragos, Colombian activist and his translator Justin For-

due. Given its covertness, it is extremely difficult to estab-

lish the nature and full extent of this gambit.

So what is this fiscal and politically corrupt corpora-

tion doing on south First St. at the UI Research Park? In just what way is this enterprise related to the mission of a land grant public university? We know that SAIC has recently signed an agreement with Adaptix to work on Deep Green, a project to assemble a state-of-the-art battlecontrol system. Is Deep Green intended to run on BlueWater, IBMs new water-cooled supercomputer that’s being built on UI campus? Are there “experiments” in local corporate offices that involve remote control of Predator drones firing Hellfire missiles? Would we not be better served by having to SAIC be more transparent with its activities and more accountable to science and its public, than having this corporate behemoth building a supercomputer on our campus?
would you vote for a tax increase if you didn’t know what it was for? If you live in Champaign, this is exactly what you’ll be faced with on Election Day unless you read the referendum closely. You may regret voting “No” once you understand what’s at stake.

INSCRUTABLE LEGALESE

On Election Day, November 4th, Champaign voters will be asked to vote on the following referendum: Shall the limiting rate under the Property Tax Extension Limitation Law for City of Champaign Township be increased by an additional amount equal to .02% above the limiting rate for levy year 2007 and be equal to .0550% of the equalized assessed value of the taxable property therein for levy year 2008?

Unless you educate yourself beforehand, just the first four words will be enough to throw you off (what’s a “limiting rate”? It’s a “Property Tax Extension Limitation Law” or “equalized assessed value”?). Yet, it’s crucial to understand and make an informed vote on this referendum. A “No” vote will neglect the already threadbare safety net of last resort for the city’s poorest, most vulnerable citizens.

Though it’s far from clear in the referendum’s wording, the increase requested is quite small—about $10 for a home with a market value of $150,000, the approximate median home value in Champaign. By comparison, the same homeowner would pay about $1300 in property tax over-all. The Champaign City Township’s share of overall property tax is tiny, at about three tenths of one percent.

Champaign City Township Supervisor Linda Abernathy has said the additional funds would allow her to help reverse drastic cuts that had to be made in a financial aid program for the poorest of the poor called “General Assistance.” This state-mandated program is the primary function of Abernathy’s office. It provides financial assistance to Champaign residents who are living in abject poverty (less than $3000 in annual earned income), who are unable to qualify for any other state or federal aid. The maximum monthly aid under this program is typically around $200, though currently the maximum is $150 in Champaign, due to the lack of funds. In fact, the funding shortfall created by PTELL has completely cut off more than half of the program’s clients last year, a desperate situation that prompted the pending referendum.

CHAMPAIGN’S CRITICALLY FRAYED SAFETY NET

How did things get to such dire straits? There is a long and complicated history here, but it’s mainly due to a combination of three conditions:

First, the Champaign City Township property tax levy is artificially low—radically lower than comparable townships in the state. For instance, while Champaign’s levy stands at 3.5 cents per $100 assessed value of one’s home (“assessed value” is essentially 1/3 of market value), Urbana’s rate is about 5 times higher, at 19.3 cents. Among all comparable townships in a 100 mile radius of Champaign, including Springfield, Champaign Township is probably the most similar. Bloomington’s levy is 23 cents per $100, which is 6 times higher than Champaign. Since Abernathy’s tenure as Township Supervisor and it’s regretfully been stuck there ever since, due to property tax caps. The second contributing factor is that in recent years there has been a significant increase in demand for “General Assistance” in Champaign City Township, largely due to Abernathy’s efforts to better serve the poor by being more responsive and helpful, fulfilling campaign promises made when she originally ran for the office in 2005. For a while, Abernathy was able to meet the previously hidden need using reserve township funds, but as those funds dwindled, the artificially low property tax levy began to severely strangle General Assistance funds.

The third and most consequential factor in the current predicament is the enactment of PTELL, the Property Tax Extension Limitation Law (commonly known as “property tax caps”). At the county level back in 1996, PTELL acts to set hurdles that must be cleared to enact property tax rate increases. In the Township’s case, PTELL’s hurdles are prodigious. Not only must any increase in the township’s property tax levy be approved by voter referendum, the wording on the ballot may not provide any indication of the levy’s actual purpose. It may only indicate the magnitude of the increase in a strict, pre-determined boilerplate format imbedded with technical jargon. The upcoming referendum’s arcane wording is expressly dictated by PTELL.

A YEARS-LONG BATTLE

Since PTELL requires that the voters be asked for a tax increase with no justification and using perplexing technical language, it shouldn’t come as a surprise that a prior attempt to pass a property tax increase referendum for the Township failed decisively. In November 2006, voters were asked to decide on an increase of 5 cents per $100 of assessed value, which would have fully funded the General Assistance program (the upcoming referendum only asks for 2 cents per $100 in the hopes that the lower figure may pass!). Since the failed referendum, there have been efforts to educate the community about this issue. Through the efforts of local citizens, an advisory referendum was put on the Primary ballot earlier this year to educate and directly gauge the support of Champaign voters regarding the restoration of General Assistance aid to the poor. The referendum failed.

Shall the voters of the City of Champaign Township ask the Township Trustees to restore the level of general assistance funding by actively pursuing any and all means necessary to relieve the plight of our Township’s most impoverished among us?

It was a beautiful day for the fifth annual Unity March on Saturday, October 4, 2008, an event organized by Champaign-Urbana Citizens for Peace and Justice. This year’s march was dedicated to passage of the coming Township referendum on the ballot this election day, a measure that would raise funds to help the poorest of the poor in Champaign. A diverse crowd of approximately 150 people marched to stamp out poverty. The march kicked off at the Township office in Champaign. Participants were passed out that read on the back, “Freedom From Extreme Poverty is a Human Right.” They were made to promote The Faces of Poverty, a documentary video made about the Champaign Township showing on television this month.

Several members of the Champaign Township Board were present, including Mayor Jerry Schweighart, Michael La Due, Karen Foster, Tom Bruno, and Gina Jackson. A long procession of marchers walked up Randolph, went through downtown Champaign, and met for a rally in Doughlass Park. As the crowd assembled on a hill in the park, they chanted, “Whose park? The people’s park.” In route, marchers passed by the Catholic Work- er’s House and the Times Center, two other places where the poor receive assistance but which remain largely hidden in our community.

Aaron Ammons led the crew in chants such as, “We’ve got money for war, but can’t feed the poor” and “Get up! Get down! Anti-racists in this town.” After the march, free food was provided in the park annex. A check-in list at the front door was signed by 130 people who stayed around to eat pizza, fried fish, and cupcakes. Thanks to all the sponsors of Unity March V: AWARE, Radio Liberation!, Prate Green Party, Central Illinois Jobs With Justice, School for Designing a Society, Urbana-Champaign Friends Meeting, Central Illinois Industrial Workers of the World (IWW), Champaign- Murray Foundation, University Coalition of Traders and Labor Unions. Additional thanks goes to the iHelp stu- dent volunteers from the University of Illinois.

The Faces of Poverty will be aired by City Government Television. CGTV is carried on Insight Communication’s channel 5.
By Brian Dolinar

IN NEGOTIATIONS THIS SUMMER, Patrick Thompson and Martel Miller arrived at a settlement in a civil suit against local authorities claiming their civil rights had been violated when eavesdropping charges were leveled against them in 2004 for videotaping the police.

In June 2005, Thompson and Miller filed a federal law-suit in the U.S. District Court against Champaign, Urbana, and Champaign County. The complaint contained three major components: 1) Patrick Thompson had been racial-ly profiled by Champaign police in three traffic stops in late 2003. 2) Martel Miller had his Fourth Amendment rights violated when Champaign police illegally seized his videocamera, which contained police officers' private and non-public Fourth Amendment activities. 3) Assistant State's Attorney Elizabeth Dobson had maliciously prosecuted Miller and Thompson on charges of felony eavesdropping.

Those named in the original suit included Champaign City Manager Steve Carter, Champaign Police Chief R.T. Finney, Deputy Chiefs John Murphy and Troy Daniels, Sgt. David Griffet, Officer Justus Clinton, State's Attorney John Poland, and Assistant State's Attorney Elizabeth Dobson.

In a series of events that led up to the eavesdropping charges, there were several questionable traffic stops. Thompson was stopped by Champaign Police in October 2003 for an alleged seat belt violation. In December 2003, Thompson was sitting in his car in a parking lot waiting to merge into traffic when Champaign Sgt. David Griffet approached him and asked what was in the cup he was drinking from, apparently suspecting it was alcohol. Thompson answered that he was drinking tea. Although he was allowed to go, Thompson says he was followed by several police cars and later stopped by one of them. He was given a warning ticket for having a license plate light out, an illegitimate claim according to Thompson. He entered a formal complaint for what he said was a case of racial profiling. On January 9, 2004, a meeting took place between City Manager Steve Carter, several members of the Champaign police command staff, Patrick Thompson, and John Lee Johnson, attorney for the Johnson/Jones law firm. Despite Johnson’s opposition to Thompson, the complaint was dismissed. In a letter dated February 5, 2004, Steve Carter wrote: ‘‘After reviewing the information from our meeting and the police reports, we are satisfied that no civil rights violation occurred and that the officers did not racially discriminate in their dealings with the citizens of Champaign.’’

As the judge in the small claims suit said, this case was ‘‘a rather unusual situation.’’

On August 17, 2004, Thompson was arrested and charged in Champaign police court on a felony eavesdropping charge. Judge Heidi Ladd issued a warrant for his arrest, and Thompson turned himself in. On October 17, 2004, Thompson was arrested and charged with a similar offense. It was alleged Thompson’s purpose for the arrest was to prevent Thompson from helping the City Attorney with the complaint. Thompson was. In a small claims case local black activist Patrick Thompson filed pro se against his former attorney, Harvey Welck, a judge decided that legal malpractice had been committed and ruled in Thompson’s favor. Thompson says he is donating the $3,000 in attorney fees that Welch must pay back, to Champaign Urban Citizens for Peace and Justice who helped raise funds for his legal defense.

In a 2006 trial, the second of three trials, Welch had called only one witness and Thompson was found guilty on charges of home invasion and sexual abuse. The conviction was overturned due to ‘‘ineffective assistance of counsel’’ and in a trial that took place in May 2008, Thompson was found not guilty of the charges.

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As the judge in the small claims suit said, this case was ‘‘a rather unusual situation.’’
Bye, Bye To Freedoms Of Protest And The Press

By Helen Fields

The IMO movement is an international one. When the G8 Summit (the wealthy and more powerful nations) took place in Genoa, Italy in 2001, there was an IMO in place in that city that would introduce the doctrine of ‘proactive’ arrest, i.e., arresting people who had not yet done anything illegal, to assure that they would not do that. This is, perhaps, an apt analogy to the doctrine of “preemptive war” that George W. Bush would introduce in the international arena a year later.

The following year, the 2003 Free Trade of the Americas (FTAA) meeting in Miami was a turning point in the organization of repressive responses to demonstrations against the meanings of economic and political elites. First, the amount of money spent, and the number of participants in the effort, were massive. There were about 2,900 armed officers. Armored personnel carriers were introduced. $8.5 million were spent on police (the first time that the United States would introduce an appropiation bill passed by Congress to rebuild Iraq). In other words, the mission was no longer demonstration or crowd control, or dealing with civil disobedience; it was now part of the war against terrorism. So, when Amy Goodman asked the St. Paul police chief how journalists are to cover demonstrations or protests without getting arrested, is it a surprise that he would answer “you should have to be embedded with the police”? This, in fact, how it began with the U.S. invasion of Panama and exists now in Iraq and Afghanistan. Some of us remember that the rationale offered to the public for embedding journalists was to protect the journalists from the enemy. So are the police now seeking to protect the journalists from the nasty demonstrators? There was heavy AFL-CIO presence at those Miami demonstrations. The organization had rented an amphitheater in which it held a counter-rally to the FTAA meetings. It also wanted to deliver its objections to the Free Trade of the Americas being promoted by the FTAA to the “old I-Witness Video before they could witness the police arresting retirees, union members, and other peaceful coalition march against the FTAA. Our right to deliver this message in a safe environment was systematically thwarted by police in Miami. Thous-
dands of police were deployed to guard the FTAA Ministry—international trade summit hosted by the Bush administration. The police intimidated participants, cut off access to buses, blocking access to the amphitheater where the [AFL-CIO] rally was occurring, and deploying armored personnel carriers, water cannons and scores of police in riot gear with clubs in front of the amphitheater entrance. At the conclusion of our peaceful coalition march against the FTAA—which was off from access to its full permitted zone—police advanced on groups of peaceful protestors without provocation. The police failed to provide those in the crowd with a safe route to disperse, and then deployed pepper spray and rubber bullets against protestors as they tried to leave the scene. Along with the other peaceful protestors, AFL-CIO staff, union peacekeepers, and retirees were trapped in the police advance. The police intimidated a chair as crowd tried to disperse was sprayed directly in the face with pepper spray. An AFL-CIO staff member was hit by a rubber bullet while trying to leave the scene. When the wife of a retired steelworker verbally protested police tactics, she was thrown to the ground on her face and a gun was pointed behind her. As the unprovoked sweep continued, police arrested retirees, union members, and other peaceful protestors on false or trumped-up charges and with unnecessary violence. Many of these arrested were held overnight without cause, only to be released the next morning when charges were dropped.

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For the last decade, we have been witnessing a promise of resurgence in political activity, from small youth walk-outs to protests against the global giants—the World Trade Bank and the International Monetary Fund. Renewed anti-war and peace efforts and massive immigration demonstrations have sent thousands to the streets to protest infringement of their rights.

But the street demonstrations at the Republican National Convention showed signs that a new wave of protest and civil disobedience has finally taken root in the U.S. The arrests of over 800 people, including dozens of independent journalists, illustrate the extent activities are now willing to take to struggle for change. Yet, none of this should be seen as an aberration. Instead, it bears witness to the unwillingness of people across the country to support business as usual, given the state of democratic deprivation we currently face.

In the U.S. today, the negative consequences of neoliberal economic policies are devastating. The concentration of wealth and power is staggering. The Bush administration has spent over $650 billion on the war in Iraq, without an end in sight. We face unparalleled pollution of our waters and fields. There is unprecedented surveillance of the population and an alarming consolidation of the mainstream media. The U.S. incarceration rate is the highest of any industrialized nation. Poor racialized populations of wealthy communities were their explicit call for a change in the way we live with many of the forgotten legacies of the 60s. Today, we live with many of the forgotten legacies of the 60s. What loosely united the protests of these very distinct and dissent of millions was viewed as dangerous—a phenom that reinscribe human suffering. In the U.S. today, the negative consequences of neoliberal economic policies are devastating. The concentration of wealth and power is staggering. The Bush administration has spent over $650 billion on the war in Iraq, without an end in sight. We face unparalleled pollution of our waters and fields. There is unprecedented surveillance of the population and an alarming consolidation of the mainstream media. The U.S. incarceration rate is the highest of any industrialized nation. Poor racialized populations of wealthy communities were their explicit call for a change in the way we live with many of the forgotten legacies of the 60s. Today, we live with many of the forgotten legacies of the 60s. What loosely united the protests of these very distinct and dissent of millions was viewed as dangerous—a phenomenon to be stopped by any means necessary. It is not surprising, then, that when King was assassinated in April—a few days prior to the Poor People’s national march on Washington—civil rights activists saw this as a ploy to quell dissent. Two months later, when Democratic presidential candidate Robert Kennedy (shout by many to be committed to the poor) was assassinated, it was felt as a blow to those who still embraced the hope for change. And in August of the next year, the murder of journalist Ruben Salazar was seen as a plot to extinguish an important voice for the Chicano Movement. Nevertheless, these efforts persisted, as movement organizing continued to demand change.

Drawing on a Forgotten Legacy

Today, we live with many of the forgotten legacies of the 60s. A close eye on the era’s unprecedented civil unrest, we can’t help but wonder about the manner in which FBI surveillance and counterintelligence worked to stifle democratic participation and wither the trust of people in one another. Similarly, we are left to contend with the long-term effects of social and economic injustices upon poor communities of color and other working class people. The distortions created by these conditions have left many unsure of our capacity as a people to, once again, speak truth to power.

The current political chaos also makes it evident that a government wishing to transcend its historical crimes against humanity must stop its denial. Official government denial of wrongs has played a key role in preserving inequalities of all stripes. What also cannot be overlooked here is that it is always in the interest of the powerful to conceal the ruthless machinations of power that produce its advantage. By the same token, it is in the interest of the oppressed to expose the ways in which power and privilege injustices that impact their lives and communities.

Hence, to counter the daily acts of disrespect and humiliation engendered by racism, power, and privilege requires that the powerful suspend their denial. If we as a nation are to undergo a process of political reconciliation, the illegitimacy of governmental and corporate excesses must be confronted. Such a process is especially necessary to a society built on the genocide, slavery, and exploitation of oppressed populations. Breaking out of the fog of historical denial is the only path to creating honest and sincere political communion. Anything short of this simply functions to preserve the pain and grief of historical injustice.

Making Power

For those who organize and struggle tirelessly to confront the denial of the powerful, the power we must seek cannot be given to us, but rather it is power that we must make together through our labor. The legacy of activism in the 60s confirms that we can only make political power through our collective development and participation in organizations, within and across the communities we wish to transform. In concert, our work for social justice requires that we return to the collective labor and serious solidarism of the protest social movements. To move toward a change that redistributes wealth in society also requires that we refuse to adhere to power that speaks apologically in public, while privately preserves the oppressive structures of privilege and hierarchy that reinsert human suffering.

If we are determined to build a democratic society for a new era, we do well to learn from the past and to harness the passion of our histories of struggle. As such, we must choose to govern through an ethics of human dignity and a firm commitment to challenge the dominion of any group over another. By so doing, we come to embrace all life as, indeed, precious and worthy of love and respect.

Epilogue

My evolving political understanding of the events of 1960s began as youth, contending with the civil rights movement, the assassination of John Kennedy, the burning of Watts, and the trial of Mahatma K. When I started connecting and silencing a strong voice of the Chicano community. This year, a postage stamp to commemorate the life of Salazar was released. Incidentally, the sensitivity to the post office website fails to mention that Ruben Salazar was murdered by a law enforcement officer. Such are the unacknowledged crimes that continue to erode the fabric of U.S. political life.

Ruben Salazar (1928–1970)

Ruben Salazar was a reporter for the Los Angeles Times and news director for the Spanish language television station KMEX. On August 29, 1970, Salazar was covering the first Chicano Moratorium March, organized to protest the disproportionate number of Chicanos killed in the Vietnam War. The peaceful march ended with a rally at Whittier Park. The rally was disrupted by LAPD officers and L.A. County sheriffs who, in full riot gear began to move the crowd. At the time it was over, 150 people were arrested and three had been killed; including Salazar who was shot in the head at short range with a tear gas projectile while seated at the Silver Dollar Bar. A coroner’s inquest ruled the shooting a homicide, but the police officer involved, Tom Wilson, was never prosecuted.

For more information: www.coldsnap.org/
Police Fail to Obtain Warrant for Convergence

The Convergence Center for activist coordination and planning, etc. is about to be raided by the Denver Police Department. Two people have been arrested, another is being detained, reports from the inside say that the police are attempting to get a warrant to raid the entire location and carry out more arrests.

Show your support: 4301 Brighton Blvd. Denver. It’s at 38th & Brighton.

Police Attack Demonstrators

We expect to see that kind of thing in Myanmar, not here in the U.S. — Matt Kellegrew

Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion, or prohibiting the free exercise thereof; or abridging the freedom of speech, or of the press; or the right of the people peacefully to assemble, and to petition the government for a redress of grievances.

Black bloc and police faceoff

Tuesday that officers were getting ‘spit on’ by protesters. Three days later he acknowledged he ‘couldn’t verify’ any spit ‘for certain.’

“It may have been just a rumor,’ he admits.

National Lawyers Guild, DNC People’s Law Project Criticizes DNC Court Procedures

Denver—The National Lawyers Guild DNC People’s Law Project (FLP) criticizes the procedures that created a high risk of accused persons waiving their rights without access to lawyers or an adequate understanding of their cases.

ABC News Staffer Pushed Into Traffic, Jailed By Police

Telling Eslocker that the sidewalk is owned by the hotel, then pushing him into traffic.

“We expect to see that kind of thing in Myanmar, not on the streets of Denver,” ABC spokesman Jeffrey Schnei-der said in a written statement.

Amendment IV

The right of the people to be secure in their persons, houses, papers, and effects, against unreasonable searches and seizures, shall not be violated; and no warrants shall issue, but upon probable cause, supported by oath or affirmation, and particularly describing the place to be searched, and the persons or things to be seized.
Fascist New Normal in St. Paul
twincities.indymedia.org/2008/sep/fascistic-new-normal-st-paul

Bruce Nestor: “What happened in St. Paul, Minnesota from—really going back to the militarization and surveillance two years, but from September 1 to September 4, 2008—had happened in any other country, that’s the type of coverage and description of it we would have read. And I think that you can either be for or against that political repression, depending where you fall on the political spectrum, but that is an objective description of what happened and of the political content of why people were in the streets, why people were demonstrating, and the political nature of the response that was organized by the $50 million gift by the federal government. It was a targeted and specific police presence and repression. The police told people to get down on the ground and shoved guns in their faces in the middle of the night while they were sleeping in their beds. Over the course of the weekend, five people were arrested in these raids, at least 100 were put in handcuffs and then questioned by police. At the Welcoming Committee’s convergence center, the police photographed people and held them for an hour—no arrests were made, but materials were confiscat ed and the police issued a fire code violation.

Ramsey County Sheriff’s Office, the FBI, Minneapolis and St. Paul police, the Hennepin County Sheriff’s Office and other agencies were involved. Police confiscated normal household items claiming they were going to be used for illegal activities. They searched through the houses and the welcoming center, taking computers, laptops and video cameras.

The near future. [...]

RNC Denies Iraq War Visitors

twincities.indymedia.org/2008/sep/rnc-denies-iraq-war-visitors

In the early hours of Monday September 1st a formation of Iraq Veterans Against the War (IVAW) marched to the gates of the Republican National Convention. Wesley Davey, a retired St. Paul police officer and Iraq veteran, led the group. With a permit to march from the Capital building to the RNC location at the Xcel center, the group took the streets at 8:30 local time, arriving at their destination at approximately 9:30. Upon their arrival, Mr. Davey was escorted through the police lines carrying a tri-fold American flag, a document addressing the needs of returning service members, and a copy of the U.S. Constitution to be delivered to a representative of the McCain campaign. [...]
A Local Legacy of Torture: The Sgt. Burge Scandal

By Neil Tartuch

When the Arab Gulf War pictures surfaces, showing the systematic torture of detainees by United States military personnel, public was shocked and outraged. Subsequent exposes detailing the horrid uses of waterboarding and the degrading treatment of prisoners at Guantanamo Bay have continued to offend American sensibilities.

While these examples have dominated the media and focused the issue to American torture in foreign countries, citizens of Illinois should know that “interrogation” tactics and methods torture have had a local presence for decades. From 1973 to 1991, Sergeant Jon Burge of the Chicago Police Department and other officers in Area Two Police Headquarters used electric shock, mock execution and suffocation to elicit confessions from approximately 100 African Americans.

Jon Burge served in the United States military during the Vietnam War as a military police officer where he received training in interrogation. Burge learned of the use of electric shock as an interrogation technique during his service in Vietnam. It is common knowledge that U.S. forces used field phones to provide electro-shock torture to suspects in Vietnam. Other veterans in Burge’s company have reported that they participated in the electrical torture of Viet Cong suspects using hand cranked field phones. A fellow MP serving at a similar time with Burge stated: “It would not take much effort however for someone like Burge to pick up this knowledge, even if he were not directly involved. It’s not rocket science.”

Burge returned to Chicago as a highly decorated war vet. He then became a police officer for the Chicago Police Department in 1970. During Burge’s first years on the force, he again earned considerable commendations for his work. Jon Burge was soon promoted to detective and sent to Area Two Headquarters as the Commander of the Violent Crimes Unit. Burge’s return to Area Two not only marked his promotion but also a return to his neighborhood.

In Burge’s youth, the area was 93% white. It had undergone a population shift from 93% white by Burge’s arrival as an Area Two Commander in 1972. Many in Burge’s community were upset at the “infiltration” of minorities into what was traditionally a white community. Soon after his promotion, Area Two Police Headquarters received the “House of Screams” moniker, due to the systematic torture by Burge and his fellow officers.

Starting in 1972, officers in Area Two alleging that Commander Burge and fifteen other officers were engaging in the use of electrical shocks via hand cranked field phone to interrogations using plastic bags and typerwriter bags, mock executions, and beatings in order to elicit confessions for trial. Courts, judges and lawyers often would not believe the torture victims because there were no marks showing evidence of abuse.

Most of those alleging abuse were poor African Americans and they were accusing middle class white policemen, so their claims were frequently discounted. Prosecutors used the confessions and those alleging abuse were sentenced to lengthy prison terms, some even receiving the death penalty. Chicago Mayor Richard Daley, who was State’s Attorney when these abuses took place, has denied Burge and his fellow officers tortured. Then, things began to change.

In February 1982, Andrew Wilkins killed two police officers after a shoot out on the South Side of Chicago. In response, Burge and the Chicago Police engaged in a draconian dragout to find the killers. As a detective who worked for the Chicago Police said, “It was a reign of terror. I don’t know what Kristallnacht was like, but this was probably close. Their idea is you go out and pick up 2,000 pounds of nigger and eventually you’ll get the right one.” The Police were particularly brutal because one of the many innocent African Americans caught up in the dragnet happened to know Wilson had a car that fit the police description. Wilson was brought to Area Two, interrogated, and confessed to the murders of the two police officers.

But during his trial, Wilson alleged that the police had used torture to get him to confess. Wilson stated that he was physically assaulted and received an eye injury. According to Wilson, officers also stuffed him in the plastic typerwriter bags to make him pass out. He also told how Burge and his subordinates used electric shocks via hand cranked field phones to his genitals, fingers and ears. When Wilson was able to disguise the field telephone wires from his ears, Burge’s officers handcuffed Wilson to two rings across the room. This positioning caused Wilson to sustain burns on his chest caused by the room’s radiator. Wilson was still found guilty and sentenced to prison.

In 1989, Wilson sued the Chicago Police Department for their use of electrical shocks. The People’s Law Office represented Wilson in this lawsuit. Soon after the lawsuit started and the torture of Wilson was revealed, the People’s Law Office began receiving anonymous letters from the Chicago Police Department. These letters gave explicit details of Burge’s torture of African American suspects. One letter stated Burge had a group of “ass Kickers” who engaged in torture and “weak links” who were not involved in the systematic abuse of suspects.

The anonymous writer also stated that the hand crank field phone and bags belonged to the Sergeant and that Burge encouraged their use. It was also alleged that State’s Attorney Richard Daley chose not to investigate complaints against police. The communications concluded by suggesting the names of others who were in jail due to torture. When the Peoples’ Law Office spoke with these men, they found out Burge and his fellow officers tortured those men as well. The list of those alleging abuses by the Chicago Police Department quickly ballooned.

The Illinois Supreme Court ruled that defendants received their injuries while in police custody. Justice further concluded that constitutional rights were violated and that there was a policy whereby the police were allowed to abuse certain suspects. The City of Chicago even admitted that “savage torture” took place under Burge’s command at Area Two. A special prosecutor from the US government said that one would have to be a “chump” to deny that torture took place. But what has come of these admissions?

Due to Wilson’s suit and the anonymous letters that exposed Burge’s “ass Kickers” and their systematic torture, Burge was removed from the police force in 1993. Two other officers were suspended without pay. As of 2007, the City of Chicago has had to pay out over $20 million to the victims of “The House of Screams.” Yet, there has been no criminal accountability. No charges were ever filed against Jon Burge or any of the 15 officers accused of the brutality, because the statute of limitations for assault and battery has elapsed. Yet, the officers have not yet escaped prosecution.

The US Attorney in Chicago subpoenaed five to ten torture victims to bring them before a grand jury in June to see if they engaged in perjury and obstruction of justice, by denying their use of torture for decades.

The City of Chicago has spent over $9 million defending the officers after admitting that these officers engaged in “cassette torture.” Their costs will continue to rise as the City of Chicago has had to pay out over $20 million to the victims of “The House of Screams.” Yet, there has been no criminal accountability. No charges were ever filed against Jon Burge or any of the 15 officers accused of the brutality, because the statute of limitations for assault and battery has elapsed. Yet, the officers have not yet escaped prosecution. The US Attorney in Chicago subpoenaed five to ten torture victims to bring them before a grand jury in June to see if they engaged in perjury and obstruction of justice, by denying their use of torture for decades.

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Number 1
You have the right not to be killed
Muder is a crime!

Unless it was done by a policeman
or an istocrat
Know your rights!

And number 2
You have the right to food money
Providing of course you
Don’t mind a little
Investigation, humiliation,
And if you cross your fingers
Rehabilitation

Know your rights!
These are your rights
Know these rights

Number 3
You have the right to free speech
as long as you’re not dumb enough to actually try it.

Know your rights!
These are your rights
All three of them
It has been suggested
In some quarters
that this is not enough!
Well?

Get off the streets
Get off the streets
Run!
You don’t have a home to go to?
Finally, then
I will read you your rights…
You have the right to remain silent
You are warned that anything you say
Can and will be taken down
And used as evidence against you
In a court of law
Listen to this!
Run

Know Your Rights!
(Th eFlash)
By Joe Strummer/Nick Jones

This is a public service announcement
With guiltless!

Know your rights all three of them

Human Rights and the Struggle for Global Justice

Geoffrey Robertson, O.C. Founder and Head, Doughty Street Chambers, London and Distinguished Jurist, UN Internal Justice Council

Wednesday, November 5, 4:00pm
Third Floor, Levi Faculty Center
919 West Illinois Street, Urbana

Human Rights and the Struggle for Global Justice
Surveillance is at an all time high across the land. In schools, hospitals, stores, theatres, and street intersections, people have become commonplace. The Big Brother we feared in 1984 is now here in 2008, masquerading as homeland security, with a complicit corporate media that can’t or won’t tell the truth. The difference this time is that surveillance, irrespective of how many people die, are displaced, or incarcerated at the hands of U.S. foreign and domestic policies is extreme.

The passing of the Uniting and Strengthening America by Providing Appropriate Tools Required to Intercept and Obstruct Terrorism Act of 2001 or simply the PATRIOT Act took things to a whole new level—so much so that our biggest enemies are not Islamic terrorists but our own government’s deception and impunity. The possibilities for surveillance, linked to our heavy reliance on technology, are countless. In fact, the surveillance carried out 40 years ago against the Black Panthers’ COINTELPRO can more easily (and legally) be carried out today by agents of Homeland Security, who now benefit from the protection of the PATRIOT Act and access to much sophisticated technology that was available 40 years ago.

With these concerns in mind, we asked two prominent scholars working on issues of the prison industrial complex to briefly share some thoughts about surveillance in the U.S.

Stephen Hartnett, Associate Professor of Speech Communication at the University of Illinois

BD: Could you please give us a brief history of surveillance.

SH: Oh, boy! You know we’ve got to talk about slavery if we’re going to do this. Folks need to understand that back in the plantation days under slavery, the populations were strictly divided into house slaves and the field slaves. Surveillance back then took the form of an overseer; a hired, white working-class overseer who, whenever the slaves messed around or tried to do anything would, be whippin’ on them. So surveillance took the form of a pair of eyes watching a body. The punishment was physical. And, the punishment was immediate.

BD: So it’s all of this history that leads to surveillance now?

SH: Yes and no. After construction, all the slave codes were abolished. And the South had to pass a series of laws to criminalize the now freed black population, in order to keep their labor cheap. So in the South, I propose a series of laws pertaining to surveillance. For example, over in South Carolina following the civil war it was illegal to spit. So, you could look bad in a lot of ways. In thousands of new ways, the freed, former slaves getting arrested for spitting. In North Carolina, it was illegal to walk on public grass. So if it was a particularly nice sunny day and you sat down on the lawn to have your lunch, Bingo, man! Arrested! So surveillance then took the form of the use of the law to criminalize black bodies.

Following the civil rights movement, the surveillance system in the United States is incredibly high-tech. Today we have cameras at street intersections, surveillance cameras monitoring black populations. And keeping an eye on people, and keeping an eye on people involves all different kinds of social and economic surveillance. The level of surveillance in the United States is incredibly deep and it involves all different kinds of social and economic actors. So much so, that there is the kind of machinery of surveillance, such as whatever is taping or listening to our telephone conversation today, cameras at street intersections, the swipe cards and other materials that people use to come and go from work now, that don’t just let one in the door but record that you went through the door. A metal key leaves in the black. No record. It is a metal key that opens the door rather than says who went through the door when.

There are many, many other forms of surveillance which in their constant perfection become an economic sector that in its increased power, lobbies for more surveillance in society, so that they can have grants and contracts to do their work.

BD: So we’re not going to talk about a way in which ordinary people, the most educated women and men in the prime of their life also participate, however unwittingly, in the surveillance society. For example, think about how many of us now wear photo ideas as though they were jewelry. This is extremely symbolic of the way in which we have all become so accustomed to being constantly surveilled in such a way that the surveillance in this society is highly militarized.

AD: Can you contrast surveillance in the U.S. with its practice elsewhere?

RG: The United Kingdom is a good example for comparison. The UK is probably one of the most surveilled societies in the world. I think every square inch of the United Kingdom has a camera trained on it. The whole country is being constant in the private sector. Even for low level surveillance which is not benign, the incidence of criminalization and incarceration there is one tenth of what it is here. So while surveillance is deep in the UK, its outcome is not the same as in the United States. In the United States, the outcome is very often criminalization and incarceration.

AD: How does surveillance link to undocumented work?

RG: We all get sort of fenced up about surveillance and the ways that the politics of fear affects all of our society, all the time. And, certainly, one of the key issues that has captured people’s attention throughout the US these days revolves around the issue of people who are not documented to work. (I will not use the word “illegal” to describe any human being.) But there are so many people in the United States today who are not documented to work and persistently we see government—governmental bodies at all levels—trying to figure out ways to surveil those people. And all kinds of people, who are document to work, are mistaken if they think that the surveillance of those without documentation is going to secure those with documentation. It won’t.

And the people who are between those not documented to work and those of us who are documented are, of course, all the people regardless of citizenship status, who have been cornered of their rights. They are the people who are the in-between category of folks, without rights. And that in-between category opens us all up for peril. Not because these people have been in prison or had been convicted and now are lose, but, rather, because the ways in which their citizenship rights have been chipped away—which means that everyone else is next.

I guess that’s another thing folks should know: these databases in California are amazing. They have the ability to share our information and knowledge of who’s in prison, who’s on parole, who’s on probation, who’s on released; and all kinds of people, who are documented to work, are mistaken if they think that the surveillance of those without documentation is going to secure those with documentation. It won’t.

AR: That’s a way in which ordinary people, the most educated women and men in the prime of their life also participate, however unwittingly, in the surveillance society. For example, think about how many of us now wear photo ideas as though they were jewelry. This is extremely symbolic of the way in which we have all become so accustomed to being constantly surveilled in such a way that the surveillance in this society is highly militarized.

SH: Oh, yeah! We got blue light districts in Chicago.

BD: So now on the South Side of Chicago we now have

GetInvolvedwiththePublic

You don’t need a degree in journalism to be a citizen journalist. We are all experts in something, and we have the ability to share our information and knowledge with others. The Public is always looking for writers and story ideas. We invite you to submit ideas or proposals during our weekly meetings (Thursdays at 5:30pm at the UCICG), or to contact one of the editors.

RG: The United Kingdom is a good example for comparison. The UK is probably one of the most surveilled societies in the world. I think every square inch of the United Kingdom has a camera trained on it. The whole country is being constant in the private sector. Even for low level surveillance which is not benign, the incidence of criminalization and incarceration there is one tenth of what it is here. So while surveillance is deep in the UK, its outcome is not the same as in the United States. In the United States, the outcome is very often criminalization and incarceration.

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The Science and Politics of Medical Cannabis

By Nilofar Shambavari

Following the retreat of a medical cannabis bill in 2007, Ray Warren, director of state policies for the Marijuana Policy Project (MPP) adamantly stated that “We are not going to abandon our work here. Doctors are going to order cannabis for patients who have worked so hard to protect the sick and suffering. Science, compassion and simple common sense say this is the right thing to do. We’ll be back.”

And back they are with Senate Bill 2865 and House Bill 5938! The Compassionate Use of Medical Marijuna Pilot Program Act was introduced by Senator John J. Cullerton (D-Chicago) and Representative Angelo Saviano (R-River Grove) in February 2008. The Senate bill will be voted on after the November national election. For now, however, HB5938 remains in the hands of the House Rules Committee.

The proposed legislation “provides that when a person has been diagnosed by a physician as having a debilitating medical condition, and the person’s primary caregiver may be issued a registry identification card by the Department of Public Health that permits the person or the person’s primary caregiver to legally possess no more than 12 ounces of usable marijuana.” Qualifying conditions consist of the following: cancer, glaucoma, HIV/AIDS, hepatitis C, Lou Gehrig’s disease, Crohn’s disease, agitation of Alzheimer’s disease, and nail psoriasis. Doctors may also recommend medical cannabis for cachexia, severe pain, severe nausea, epilepsy, and multiple sclerosis (See, www.ilga.org for full text).

Rummaging through the contents every conceivable safeguard against potential abuse. Specifically, it includes a sunset clause of three years, during which the proposed legislation is in effect. The bill has a defined scope and seems experimental, it includes a sunset clause of three years, during which the proposed legislation is to be tested thoroughly. If the bill becomes law, Illinois would be the 13th state to allow the use of medical cannabis. According to Dan Linn, the executive director of Illinois NORML (ICAN), Illinois chapters of Students for a Sensible Society (SSS) and the National Organization for the Reform of Marijuana Law (NORML), and Illinois Senate Education and Legislative Reform (IDEAL REFORMS).

If the bill becomes law, Illinois would be the 13th state to allow the use of medical cannabis. Although this bill has a limited scope and seems experimental, it should be actively supported as the first step towards potentially creating a multi-billion potential beneficiaries. According to Dan Linn, the executive director of Illinois NORML (ICAN), Illinois chapters of Students for a Sensible Drug Policy (SSP), Illinois chapter of National Organization for the Reform of Marijuana Law (NORML), and Illinois Senate Education and Legislative Reform (IDEAL REFORMS).

As part of his Machiavellian politics to crush the anti-war and civil rights movements, Richard Nixon created the DEA in 1970 through the Congress. The Act placed marijuana in Schedule I of the Controlled Substances Schedule which consists of highly addictive and dangerous drugs which have not accepted medical use. The goal was to intimidate the activists and create a rift in the opposition. Despite several legal challenges, marijuana remains in the same category along with LSD, heroin and crack cocaine!

Over the years, the majority of legislators have ignored the power of scientific evidence and the will of the people, supporting instead a fear-based politics predicated on racism, class inequalities, and maligning dissent. Fortunately, the debate is at a tipping point, one in which science, compassion and simple common sense are more likely to prevail. The science of cannabis demonstrates that marijuana can be used to treat a variety of conditions, including cancer, pain, epilepsy, and multiple sclerosis. The benefits of medical cannabis have been supported by numerous studies and clinical trials, and have been shown to be effective in reducing symptoms and improving quality of life for patients.

Ultimately, the decision to legalize medical cannabis is not just a matter of public policy, but also a matter of personal freedom. People should have the right to access the medicine that works best for them, without fear of criminalization or discrimination. By supporting the legalization of medical cannabis, we are supporting a more compassionate and just society that values the well-being of all its members. The time is now to pass the Illinois Medical Cannabis Bill! Help pass the Illinois Medical Cannabis Bill. Contact State Senator Michael W. Frerichs and urge him to vote yes on SB 2865 Springfield Office: (217) 782-2507 District Office: (217) 355-5252

Call Naom Jakebson at (217) 373-5000 to urge them to vote yes on HB5938

Call (202) 224-1321 and urge Tim Johnson to vote yes on HR 5942.

HELP PASS THE ILLINOIS MEDICAL CANNABIS BILL

• Contact State Senator Michael W. Frerichs and urge him to vote yes on SB 2865 Springfield Office: (217) 782-2507

• Call Naom Jakebson at (217) 373-5000 to urge them to vote yes on HB5938

• Call (202) 224-1321 and urge Tim Johnson to vote yes on HR 5942.

UICU chapter of SSDP urges everyone to participate in a letter-writing campaign on Monday, October 20th at 6pm in room 215, Gregory Hall (Armony and Wright) on UICU campus. Contact Ashley Barys for more information: abarys2@illinois.edu


Calvina Fays [Drug Free America Foundation and Save Our Society from Drugs (S.O.S) ] recent power point presentation at the Midwest Security and Police Exposition at www.ideoa.org/downloads/Midwest%20Security%20&%20Police%20Conference%202008.ppt

Mary: Lynn Mathrs’ Reformers: The War on Drugs and the Politics of Failure, (Eds.), Cannabis in Medical Practice: A Legal, Historical and Pharmacological Overview of the Therapeutic Use of Marijuana.

Privatization Threatens Our Democracy

Friday October 10th
Urban City Hall Council Chambers, 7:00 pm
It will be televised on UPTV

The talk, given by Dan Kenney, will address how privatization of our military, police services, prisons, and schools threatens our democracy. Outsourcing of political decisions, service, and other significant functions that were once inherently the government’s responsibility has stripped the power from the people and given it to companies and corporations such as Blackwater and Halliburton. Feasible changes need to be made to reverse this dangerous trend.

GRAN KERMS! MUSIC & FOOD

LUGAR: El Centro de Romero de la Iglesia Santa Maria 612 E. Park St. Champaign
FECHA: Domingo, 12 de Octubre
HORA: 7:00–10:00 p.d.m.
QUE SE VENDE: Tamales, Pozole, Tostadas, Atole
MUSICA: SONIDO CALLEJERO
WHERE: ST. MARY CHURCH 612 E. Park St.
CHAMPAIGN
WHEN: Sunday, October 12
TIME: 7:00–10:00 p.d.m.
FOOD FOR SALE: Tamales, Pozole, Tostadas, Atole
MUSICA: SONIDO CALLEJERO

SPEAK CAFE

Poetry, Spoken Word, and More...

Dates: Thursday, October 9 & November 13, Time: 6:45–9:00 P.M.
Place: Krannert Art Museum 500 E. Peabody

FOOD FOR SALE: Tamales, Pozole, Tostadas, Atole
MUSICA: SONIDO CALLEJERO
By Charlotte E. Davidson (Dinè, Mandan, Hidatsa, Arikara) & Jamie Singson (Yaqui/Apache)

The symposium presentations framed the importance of different worldviews, in our efforts to ground our scholarship in our humanity. Grandmothers, mothers, brothers, students, and professionals gave voice to the survival of Chi'caná, Missouri Chocotaw, Zapotec, Yaqui, Hopi, Mandan, Hidatsa, Arikara, Diné, and Apache Peoples within our communities and within the academy. There was no concentration on one sole way of ‘being.’ Instead, through a willingness to be self-reflexive about participants’ histories and experiences, the question of how to remain human was revisited throughout the day.

California based legacy, Proposition 21, Hopi identity and boarding school experiences were the focus of a panel on “Media Activism: Community Issues, Voices and Perspectives.” The panelists’ work aimed at disclosing oppressive issues and marginalized histories. How their project fit into their lives and the wider social context (i.e., language issues, social and cultural resources, community power and institutional landmarks) created unique perspectives related to producing a collective vision of justice in communities, through media mobilization. One of the most compelling sessions, “Leaving a Legacy for the Next Seven Generations: Indigenous Women’s Epistemologies,” inspired listening with the heart and respect for every aspect of our human reality. Through tears, female narratives presented a life journey where ways of knowing are informed by how one grounds self to the land and is attached to land. The theme of the panel was infused with care and respect for our languages as a mechanism that embodies ways of knowing and acknowledgement of our relationship with the non-human beings with whom we share the earth. Central here was an understanding of how languages are embedded social meanings that encompass ways of being, including the manner in which land is experienced differently as a result.

Institutions of higher education, too often, exist without compassion, are abstracted, occlude beings (human and non-human) and are spaces that do not allow for grieving and healing of past collective violences and betrayals. In the panel, “Truth and Tradition: Trusting Our Histories and Stories to Decolonize Scholarship,” UIUC graduate students addressed the question of how does one remain human within a structure that has an epistemology and a language of hierarchy, competition, and domination? The panel shared their process of rethinking values, language, meanings and relationships within a course on Decolonizing Methodologies, led by Larry Emerson, a Diné teacher and scholar. The course guided students to recognize themselves as the methodological lens. Through an experience of laughter, grief, and tears, they began to develop a language to carry and restore a vision of hope for the next seven generations. Diné prayers opened and closed the symposium in a way that asked for human beings to be reconnected to a way of life that is healing and restores lohom, harmony, balance and beauty. For, ultimately, it is through these values, and not theory, that truth can emerge and restore our communities. It is in this way that beauty can be restored and prevailed during even the most perilous times.

The New Jersey Seven: A Case of Intersectional Injustice

By Midwest NJ7 Solidarity Collective

ON AUGUST 18, 2006, SEVEN young African American lesbians traveled to Greenwich Village in New York City from their homes in Newark for a regular night out. When walking down the street, a male bystander sexually propositioned them. As he took no for an answer, he physically assaulted them. The women tried to defend themselves, and a fight broke out.

The women were charged with Gang Assault in the 2nd degree, a Class C Felony with a mandatory 3 years. Patreese Johnson was additionally charged with 1st Degree Assault. Chesnese Loyal, Lania Daniels, and Khamydra Coates accepted plea offers. On June 14th, 2007 Victoria Dandridge (20), Patreese Johnson (20), and Renata Hill (24) received sentences ranging from 3.5 to 11 years in prison.

The prosecution of the New Jersey Seven for defending themselves against a homophobic attack illustrates the state’s disregard of street harassment and the ridiculous expectation that women and trans folks should not defend themselves. The perpetrator who attacked the women, sexually propositioned Patreese and followed them down the street, insisting and threatening them: ‘I’ll [**] you straight, sweetheart!’

Buckele’s violent harassment of the women should not be seen as an isolated incident not requiring a response. Only one year earlier in 2005, Sakia Gunn, a fifteen year old black lesbian from Newark was stabbed to death on a downtown street in Newark. Sakia Gunn, a lesbian from Newark was stabbed to death on a downtown street in Newark. Sakia Gunn, a fifteen year old black lesbian from Newark was stabbed to death on a downtown street in Newark. Sakia Gunn, a fifteen year old black lesbian from Newark was stabbed to death on a downtown street in Newark.

The case of the New Jersey Seven demonstrates that pathologizing women of color occurs both on the street and in the courtroom. Not only do Buckele’s remarks exemplify the daily violence women of color face, but the trial proceedings also perpetuate the violence women of color face, but the trial proceedings also perpetuate the violence women of color face, but the trial proceedings also perpetuate the violence women of color face, but the trial proceedings also perpetuate the violence women of color face, but the trial proceedings also perpetuate the violence women of color face, but the trial proceedings also perpetuate the violence women of color face, but the trial proceedings also perpetuate the violence women of color face, but the trial proceedings also perpetuate the violence women of color face, but the trial proceedings also perpetuate the violence women of color face, but the trial proceedings also perpetuate the violence women of color face, but the trial proceedings also perpetuate the violence women of color face, but the trial proceedings also perpetuate the violence women of color face, but the 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