

# The PUBLIC

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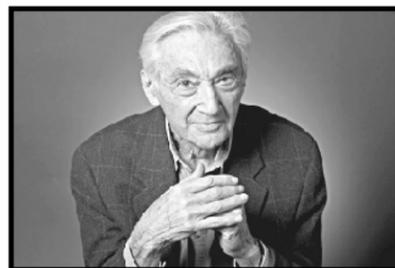
You don't need a degree in journalism to be a citizen journalist. We are all experts in something, and we have the ability to share our information and knowledge with others. The *Public i* is always looking for writers and story ideas. We invite you to submit ideas or proposals during our weekly meetings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

## Reader Feedback

Comments on *Public i* articles may be emailed to print (at) ucimc.org. Send the email with the word "comment" in the subject line.

## The People Speak: A Live Performance

Thursday, January 27, 7PM  
The Red Herring  
1209 W. Oregon St., Urbana



It's been a year since we lost the people's historian Howard Zinn. Commemorate the anniversary of his passing with local activists from the campus and the community as we perform a live staged reading of *The People Speak*.

## ABOUT THE SHOW

Democracy is not a spectator sport. Using dramatic and musical performances of the letters, diaries and speeches of everyday Americans, *THE PEOPLE SPEAK* gives voice to those who spoke up for social change throughout U.S. history, forging a nation from the bottom up with their insistence on equality and justice. Based on Zinn's best-selling books, *A People's History of the United States* and *Voices of a People's History of the United States*, *THE PEOPLE SPEAK* illustrates the relevance of these passionate historical moments to our society today and reminds us never to take liberty for granted.

\$5 suggested donation at the door. Proceeds benefit the Center for Economic Research and Social Change (publisher of Haymarket Books and the International Socialist Review) and *The People Speak*.

Email iso.champaign(at)gmail.com if you're interested in performing, or for more info about the event.

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# The PUBLIC



A Paper of the People

Published by the Urbana-Champaign Independent Media Center

Dec. 2010/Jan. 2011  
V11, #1



## Congress passes the Local Community Radio Act!



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# Thousands of New Community Radio Stations on the Horizon with the Historic Passage of the *Local Community Radio Act*

By Danielle Chynoweth



Danielle Chynoweth is a co-founder of the Urbana-Champaign Independent Media Center and works with the Prometheus Radio Project.

Saturday, December 18, 2010, just days away from the end of Congress when all unresolved bills die, the *Local Community Radio Act* passed the Senate, after a swift victory in the House the day before.

This victory, which was the culmination of ten years of struggle by thousands of grassroots advocates and dozens of public interest groups, ushers in one of the biggest opportunities to expand community voices on the airwaves in U.S. history. It is the first major legislative success for the movement for a more democratic media system and indicates its growing power in an age of massive media consolidation and corporate assault on a free and open internet.

The *Local Community Radio Act* will expand the low power FM (LPFM) service which allows for 100 watt stations to broadcast to a town or neighborhood in a 5-10 mile radius. These stations have helped farm workers organize for economic justice, environmentalists clean up the Chesapeake, and victims of hurricane Katrina find food and shelter.

Prometheus Radio Project, which has led the ten year fight to open up the airwaves, sees LPFM as the most accessible, affordable way for communities to communicate and organize for a most just and democratic future. The stations cost as little as a few thousand dollars to build and a few hundred to operate each year. "A town without a community radio station is like a town without a library," said Pete Tridish, co-founder of the Prometheus Radio Project. "Many a small town dreamer—starting with a few friends and bake sale cash—has successfully launched a low power station, and built these tiny channels into vibrant town institutions that spotlight school board elections, breathe life into the local music scene, allow people to communicate in their native languages, and give youth an outlet to speak."

## THE HISTORY OF LPFM

The LPFM service itself was created in 2000 by the Federal Communications Commission in response to grassroots outrage at shrinking local media. The service was then swiftly curtailed in Congress at the behest of commercial broadcasters. Radio Free Urbana—WRFU 104.5 FM—is one of the lucky 800 LPFM stations that were licensed. This despite restrictions which have kept LPFM stations out of urban areas for the last 10 years.

Since then, the National Association of Broadcasters (NAB) has worked its connections in Congress in repeated attempts to kill the bill. They spent over \$3 million in lobbying April through June of this year on a host of issues including opposing the *Local Community Radio Act*. Exploiting a procedure to allow senators to study a bill before passage, the NAB colluded with a handful of Senators to put



Advocates of low power community radio staging a Hula Hoop Party in front of the headquarters of the National Association of Broadcasters

secret holds on the bill in an attempt to stall it until the Congressional session was over.

But the grassroots fought back. Advocates contacted every Senate office to flush out the holders. They mobilized phone calls, letters to the editor, and local press until the opposing senators yielded. New holds followed. With time running out, groups as diverse as Move On, Free Press, Color of Change and the Christian Coalition created a million person e-mail blast asking people to call their Senators. This generated thousands of calls. When the NAB put out a letter to all senators saying "thousands of slots are available across the country for new low power stations" without mentioning that these slots are largely in deserts or in wilderness areas without listeners, hundreds rang NAB phone lines in protest.

## HULA HOOPING TO VICTORY

Tired of getting the run around, advocates staged a Hula Hoop Party in front of NAB headquarters December 13th to say, "Stop making community radio jump through hoops—pass the *Local Community Radio Act*!" Hoopers, jugglers, stilt walkers, and circus performers offered Gordon Smith, former senator and current CEO of the NAB, a colorful hoop shouting, "come join the future of radio!" You can watch the video at [www.prometheusradio.org](http://www.prometheusradio.org).

This pressure and action sparked a series of national press pieces. Finally, the bill cosponsors were able to bring the NAB to the table and get them to drop their holds. Some amendments were made that will require further work at the FCC, but the bill emerged, providing the mandate the FCC needed to start licensing new LPFM stations. This process could start as early as late 2011.

Taking its cue from the model developed by the Urbana-Champaign Independent Media Center, the Prometheus Radio Project intends to help foster the creation of radio stations as future community media centers across the country to promote social justice and community expression. "We've built community radio stations from coast to coast and around the country," said Hannah Sassaman, a longtime organizer with the Prometheus Radio Project. "The faith and perseverance of low power FM's legislative champions, and the thousands

who pushed for the *Local Community Radio Act*, paid off in incredible ways. After ten years of struggle, it's stunning to know that in the next years, the FCC will work to and begin licensing LPFMs in city neighborhoods, in suburbs and towns, and in rural areas. It's humbling to understand that new young people will gain a love of telling stories at the working end of a microphone or at home listening to their neighbors. And it's powerful to know that these stations will launch leaders in every walk of life to change their communities, and this country. We look forward to launching the next generation of community stations with you."

To learn more about low power FM community radio, visit [www.prometheusradio.org](http://www.prometheusradio.org)



## Part-Time Bookkeeper

The Urbana-Champaign Independent Media Center seeks a PART-TIME BOOKKEEPER/OFFICE MANAGER who will perform bookkeeping functions; completes invoicing and collection processes; generates reports from QuickBooks and assists with grant submissions. This position requires extensive Quick Books experience. For a complete job description, please send a letter of inquiry to: [carolammons\(at\)gmail.com](mailto:carolammons(at)gmail.com).



## Sheriffs Deputy Fired For DUI

By Brian Dolinar



It has been confirmed that Travis Burr was dismissed from his position as investigator with the Champaign County Sheriff's Office. Burr was charged with a DUI after being involved in a three-car accident, details about which have yet to become publicly available.

On August 14, 2010, Burr was driving east from Sadorus when he was involved in an accident. After Sheriff's deputies showed up on the scene and discovered that Burr was a colleague, the state police were called in to investigate. As stated in court documents, "Subject had a slight odor of an alcoholic beverage on his breath and slightly slurred speech. Subject had bloodshot eyes and admitted drinking 6-8 beers since noon. Subject failed SFST's [Standardized Field Sobriety Tests]." Unfortunately, due to a policy enforced beginning in 2007 by State's Attorney Julia Rietz, police reports describing the incident in more detail are not available to the public until after the court case is resolved.

Whatever happened, it must have been serious as a DUI is not grounds for the automatic dismissal of a police offi-



Sheriff's Deputy Travis Burr was photographed at the county jail after failing the Standardized Field Sobriety Test

cer. Some may remember when Lisa Staples, a police detective with the Champaign Police Department, was found guilty of DUI while driving an unmarked squad car the wrong way on Interstate 72. After a special prosecutor was

assigned to the case, Staples was granted court supervision and could continue driving. As her attorney Ed Piraino stated, "If she can't drive, she can't be a police officer." Staples was allowed to keep her job, but resigned after public outrage over the special treatment she received.

At the most recent hearing, Burr's attorney Mark Lipton asked for a continuance. Lipton stated for a second time that he was waiting for discovery from the Sheriff's Department, this day saying there was a booking video he has asked for. Judge Richard Klaus was surprised, saying he did not know there was video taken during booking, and he granted the continuance. Burr is due back in court on January 6, 2011 at 10:30 a.m.

After a candidates' forum on October 20, 2010, Sheriff Dan Walsh, who has since won re-election, told me that Burr had been dismissed but would not explain the specifics. What happened on that day in August may eventually come out, but not until after Burr has been dealt with in the courts. The story has not been followed by the *News-Gazette* since the initial arrest. By the time the public finds out what happened, a sweetheart deal may already be sealed.

## Volunteers Bring Open WiFi Network to Detroit

By Brian Duggan



Brian Duggan is a volunteer with Community Wireless and is the Technical Projects Developer at the UCIMC.

On December 8, volunteers Brian Duggan and Chris Ritzo of CuWin (Community Wireless) and the UCIMC Tech working group traveled to Detroit, MI to help build a community mesh wireless network. In four days, Duggan and Ritzo and members of the Open Technology Initiative (OTI) mounted and connected two small mesh wireless nodes, four medium-sized nodes, and one large node at four sites. The large nodes have a much greater radio reach than the smaller nodes. All nodes can be mounted on rooftops, but the small nodes can also be mounted in windows.

Valuable experience was gained in hardware installation, software development and configuration for the mesh nodes. Duggan and Ritzo plan to use CuWin as a platform group to implement and expand a new mesh

wireless network in Urbana-Champaign.

Duggan, Ritzo and OTI worked with the Detroit Digital Justice Coalition (DDJC) and residents of the 48217 area code in Detroit to install the seeds of what will be a dense and active community internet in the near future. OTI donated hardware and employee labor to perform the installation. OTI and DDJC selected this area code for installation because it's home to an underserved population that stands to immediately benefit from a mesh wireless network and because it's one of the most organized communities in Detroit. OTI and DDJC met with 48217 block captains to discuss the project on the evening of December 8. Within 48 hours, block captains had organized twelve residents to host small mesh wireless nodes on or in their houses.

The nascent network will initially allow users to share Internet access with each other. Currently, most broadband subscribers seek to block community access to their Internet connections through wireless access points. This works because modern consumer routers make it easy to turn on encryption and because an unwelcome user must be in range of the wireless



Ritzo installing a high power mesh wireless radio to allow for the sharing of Internet access

access point—typically no farther than across the street.

A community mesh wireless network turns the 'one subscriber, one user' model on its head. A mesh network can allow several

city blocks to utilize one consumer Internet connection. It will also allow the same users in that area to utilize more than one Internet connection at more than one residence. So the users that subscribe to Internet connections could use community organizations to recoup costs of maintaining that subscription by sharing.

Mesh networks also allow for application sharing. For example, if the residents of 48217 wanted a streaming radio station on their network, they could save money paying just the hardware costs, the bandwidth between the nodes—within the mesh network—is free. For a community like that found in the 48217 zip code, that suffers from chronic government neglect, lack of proper emergency notification systems, and the most polluted air in all of Detroit, localizing services could prove to be a primary function of the mesh network. OTI and DDJC explained that in the future, networked security cameras and air quality testers could use the mesh network as a platform for informing 48217 residents of immediate dangers and for collecting data about the dangers their community faces on a regular basis.

## The Long Fight for a Wind Turbine Comes to a Head

By Amy Allen



Changing how electricity is generated is a crucial piece of solving the climate change puzzle. Current methods of electricity generation produce 40% of CO2 emissions in the US, and on campus generation accounts for 68% of the UIUC carbon. In the spring of 2010, the campus enacted a

Climate Action Plan which includes a commitment to source 5% of energy and electricity from renewables by 2015. For the past seven years, students at the University of Illinois have been lobbying for a wind turbine for their campus, on the south farms. The 1.5 MW turbine would supply around 1% of the campus's electricity use, and serve as an important first step towards the University's renewables commitment. It would reduce demand on Abbott Power Plant, the University's coal-fired plant; the biggest source of SO2 emissions in the county. Currently, the University is in the process of



reviewing bids for the turbine, but if a contract isn't signed soon, the project is in serious danger.

The approximately 4 million dollar project relies on a 2 million dollar grant from the Illinois Clean Energy Community Foundation, due to expire in spring of 2011. The grant has already been extended twice, and is unlikely to be extended again unless construction is in progress by May or June. In order for this to happen, a contract will need to be approved at the January meeting of the University Board of Trustees. UI students have contributed \$500,000 to the project in the form of a grant from the Student Sustainability Committee, which allocates student green fees. Students voted in 2003 and again in 2010 to fund projects of this nature with a now \$14 per semester fee. Yet as students committed themselves to investing in renewable energy, the University retrenched, announcing during finals in 2008

*Continued on next page*



# A Great Literacy Campaign for African America in the 21st Century

By Amira Davis



Amira Davis in a mother-grandmother, artist and currently a postdoctoral research associate in the Department of African American studies researching supplementary education.

## SOME BACKGROUND

The crisis in public education has been likened to a modern day Civil Rights crisis and a human rights tragedy. At center is the debate over educating ex-slaves. Big business insiders in seats of educational authority, like Arnie Duncan and Cathleen Black, demonstrate a corporatist shift in U.S. educational policy. Poverty and family dysfunction are blamed for Black underachievement ignoring the role of schools in serving the power elite.

As an institution of the state, public schools perform the function of labor sorting. In the global, post-industrial economy, the masses of Black children return to chattel-like conditions and are sorted into increasingly privatized prisons where they become producers of low-cost commodities and consumers of incarceration-related debt.

The likelihood of incarceration correlates with 4th grade reading scores. Among 4th graders in Champaign-Urbana, 41% of African American students read below state standards compared to 15% of white students. These numbers closely approximate state figures where 44% African American and 16% white 4th graders read below standard. Between 1980 and 2004, Illinois opened 21 prisons, bringing the total to 28. As of 2005, African Americans in Illinois were incarcerated at a rate of 2,020 per 100,000 population. Incarceration numbers mirror other social ills such as teenage pregnancy, un/underemployment, teen violence and drug use.

Educational crisis is not new to African America. Less than 60 years prior, in 1954, Brown struck down the 1896 Plessy apartheid doctrine of 'separate but equal' schooling. Though Brown was of critical importance, it lacked the financial specificity to engender equality. The Blair Education Bill of 1880 could have addressed this. Sponsored by Republican Senator Henry Blair from New Hampshire, this bill would have mandated federal funding of public education using a formula based on illiteracy rates. Though its passage would have maintained separate schools, it would also have increased literacy for whites and Blacks, Blacks would have received greater benefits in a system with funding tied to actual need (as seen in illiteracy rates). Sadly, Blair was never enacted.

Most discussions over education ignore and obscure the richness of Black intellectual heritage. The great Islamic learning centers in Timbuktu and Djenné in the Malian Empire between the 15th and 17th centuries attracted enlightenment seekers from other parts of the world. Such attainments followed the intellectual prowess of ancient Egypt. More readily available to us, however, are the biographies of people like Phillis Wheatley, enslaved in the Gambia when she was 7,

brought to New England, became proficient in English and Latin and was the first published African American.

Many literate Africans disembarked in the Americas and found ways to preserve and perpetuate their literacy. Education, beyond reading, writing and ciphering, was conceptualized as the transmission of intergenerational knowledge for individual and group survival. These literacies were developed in Sabbath schools through bible stories, songs, folklore, trickster narratives and adult modeling. Additionally, a number of whites were disposed to teach Blacks to read and write. Free Blacks started and maintained schools as early as 1790.

Following the unsuccessful revolts and inflammatory acts by literate men and women like Prosser, Vesey and Turner, Sojourner Truth, and Walker, prohibitions were placed on Black education. Blacks responded with improvisation, establishing schools in homes, church basements, barns, one room schoolhouses and even covered pits. Understanding the relationship between literacy and freedom resulted in radical interventions, even under the threat of death.

Since the early 20th century, citizenship and freedom schools have provided political education for African America. Following the Black Power/Black Arts Movements of the 70s and 80s, independent Black institutions formed across the U.S. These programs recognized the state's usurpation of Black educational self-determinancy, particularly the role of the family, through compulsory, state sponsored education. Additionally, these schools produced outcomes that flew in the face of financiers and philanthropists who questioned the intellectual capacity of Blacks. A culturally centered approach recognizes all children's ability to learn. These schools have produced students who display advanced academic, social and personal development; models that should be widely replicated in the 21<sup>st</sup> century literacy campaign.

## SUPPLEMENTARY EDUCATION

Supplementary education is ubiquitous among immigrant groups in the UK as spaces for the preservation of their language, cultural practices, and rituals. Blacks from the Caribbean began creating supplementary schools in the 70s in response to the educational apartheid system they encountered. Large numbers of their children were arbitrarily assessed and labeled educationally subnormal and placed in special schools from which few were able to extricate themselves. The supplementary schools charge a modest fee to pay for specialty teachers and space, but for the most part they are supported by volunteers and donations. Saturday schools augment mainstream schools by providing instruction in core academic subjects as well as history and culture.

The Nubian African Community Foundation School, a Saturday school in southeast London, provided a community of caring adults to about 20 children. Classes began with a circle to learn and demonstrate communal values and engage in intergenerational dialogue. The remainder of the day was divided into 45 minute sessions of age appropriate group work in math, science, history, commu-

nications, and moral philosophy. They also shared a mid-day meal. Children ranged in age from 5 to 15. Mothers worked alongside younger children. Many of these programs offered adults classes on parenting, personal development, economic literacy, law, arts, history and culture.

A modern literacy movement should seek to develop intergenerational programs that draws on the cultural knowledge of the African American community, restores communal values and reclaims vital traditions such as rites of passages and life-cycle celebrations. An effective movement must be predicated on understandings of human similarities and diversity, incorporating principles of humanism and civility. It must proceed with the type of vigor and volunteerism witnessed in early African America, in Mao's education initiatives, Castro's campaign in Cuba and Freire's work in Brazil's *favelas*.

Intervention sites include curricula, home schools, and community and school based youth development programs. Public education should include community lectures, read-ins, adult literacy programs, and community-based classes on topics relevant to African America. Blogs, websites, and social networking sites can provide additional spaces for radical interventions to animate and make accessible a Black public sphere. The cultural arts and performances also offer critical pedagogical spaces.

Education must, once again, be the singular focus of African Americans. Enhancing the educational achievement of African Americans enriches all. We must create a new, just social order. Embracing principles of truth, balance, order and reciprocity should be our guiding praxis in developing the human potential of all children.

## THE ODYSSEY PROJECT, Free College Classes for Adults

Tuesdays & Thursdays 6-8pm, first class meets Tuesday January 18

Douglass Branch Library in Champaign  
Call Jane Marshall or Michael Burns at 244-3981 to apply.

APPLICATION DEADLINE JANUARY 14

The Odyssey Project, a FREE college-accredited course in the humanities offered to adults in the Champaign-Urbana community, is seeking applicants for the Spring 2011 semester. Classes meet twice a week from 6 pm to 8 pm at the Douglass Branch Library in Champaign. Tuition is free, as are books, bus tokens, and on-site childcare. Classes are taught by University of Illinois faculty. The course focuses on philosophy, art history, literature, U.S. history, and writing. Students who complete the course can receive up to six college credits, which can be transferred to other colleges and universities, including The University of Illinois, Parkland College, and other institutions of higher education.

# The Long Fight for a Wind Turbine Comes to a Head

Continued from previous page

that the project would be put on hold due to budgetary constraints. Ideally, the wind turbine would already have been installed then, but University stalling postponed it until it no longer seemed feasible. That was until 2010, when, thanks to student and faculty lobbying, the project was revived under Chancellor Bob Easter. After one close call, advocates of the project are deeply committed to seeing it through.

Most wind power developments sit in rural areas, often on property leased from farmers, and for the most part far out of sight of those who use the power they produce. The proposed site on the south farms, near to the intersection of Philo and Old Church Roads in Urbana, is much closer to its users, and this is a good thing. Awareness of where power comes from is an important step in building public support for investment in renewable energy. Out of sight of

the smokestacks of coal fired power plants, it is easy to ignore the impacts of electricity generation on our air and water quality. Coal-burning power plants, the source of most electricity in Illinois, produce the highest greenhouse gas emissions, and among the highest levels of air pollutants of any energy source. In contrast, observing wind turbines provokes consideration of energy issues and discussions over where our power comes from.

The wind turbine project is a pioneering first step toward further investment in renewable by the University and in the Champaign-Urbana area. It is vital that it happens now, while grant funding is available. Community support, in the form of letters, emails and calls to University administration and the Board of Trustees has the power to influence the University to move faster on this project. Together, the University and the community can make this happen.



## Local Youth Talk Gay Marriage

By Kristina Williams

On November 30, 2010, the Illinois Senate passed SB 1716, "Illinois Religious Freedom and Protection and Civil Union Act." This law will grant legal recognition of same-sex couples. Governor Quinn has pledged to sign the bill into law in early 2011. Urbana High School hosts a local chapter of the Gay Straight Alliance (GSA) student group, where students can meet to discuss LGBTQ issues in a safe environment. In light of the recent passage of SB 1716, several students from the GSA wanted to discuss their views of civil unions, gay marriage, and gay rights in general. Here is what a few of them had to say:

### ANNIE VALOCCHI

On why some people disagree with gay marriage

I'm always interested when people approach marriage equality from a religious standpoint, or this standpoint of "well, it's not a right," or "it's going to ruin the idea of the nuclear family." I personally think that while a lot of gay couples would love to be married just to say they're married, a lot of it is that they're living just like a heterosexual married couple, only they're not getting the same legal and financial rights. I don't think civil unions address the civil rights side of it. In a way, civil unions establish a separate but equal precedent for marriage, which is something we've just got to keep working on. I understand the viewpoint of people who say 'you can't create a child, therefore you shouldn't be married'. I don't agree, but I see where they're coming from. When people have been raised on an idea it's one of those deep-set things, and I don't necessarily think you can change their minds. People try so hard in this world to extinguish love. With all the violence that's going on and hatred and people who are hungry, why would you put your time and energy into telling someone they can't love someone else. That just seems so trivial to me. I really see marriage equality as my generation's big civil rights issue. For my parents and grandparents, it was race equality. Now, I have the opportunity to give my children a world that is more accepting, where there won't be this weird stigma connected to someone loving someone of the same gender.

On the recent passage of the "Religious Freedom Protection and Civil Union Act" and other legal actions taken by the state of Illinois to protect persons identified as LGBTQA

It's really cool to see how excited the gay community is about this bill. It's cool to see a step in the right direction toward marriage equality. Laws being set in place are going to help. It's hard to say it's perfect, because once you leave the state of Illinois, you're not guaranteed any of these rights, and you still can't file your taxes together. There's stuff that's missing, but it's definitely still a good thing. There's also an Illinois

comprehensive bully act that passed in June that specifically named gender identity, gender expression and sexual orientation within it so there's more protection for LGBTQA youth.

not exposed to the concept of being gay at an early age. When they do see [homosexuality] for the first time in middle or high school, it seems strange and is often delegit-

**For my parents and grandparents, it was race equality. Now, I have the opportunity to give my children a world that is more accepting, where there won't be this weird stigma connected to someone loving someone of the same gender.**

On how Urbana High School's Gay Straight Alliance (GSA) student group has affected students

I think that this club is really important for raising awareness because high school is one of the worst places for a student who is LGBTQA. High school is a place where everyone is incredibly judgmental and bullying is really bad. You hear students in the hallways using these gay slurs and they don't even know they're being offensive. Nobody is there correcting them or explaining why it's not alright. A lot of people are scared of having anything to do with someone who's gay. They've grown up being scared of it. They've never known someone who's gay and this club puts a face on these issues, as if to say, 'There are people in your school for whom this is the way they live. You need to accept them and they need to feel safe here.' I think the club is important for working with-

in our school to create a positive image. Obviously we want to do work on issues at a higher level like marriage equality or civil unions, but it's going to start by first changing people's perceptions and attitudes here, within the high school.

On the response of high school students to the presence of the GSA

Both the other co-president and myself identify as straight. The biggest thing is that people don't understand why [as a straight woman] I'm involved in this. There's not a

lot of blatant homophobia in this school. I'm proud of that. We've made great strides. We have pink signs in the hall with derogatory terms that aren't going to be accepted. We have a social justice committee. But there's more of an underlying homophobia, which is more difficult to attack. This idea of people saying they don't mind gay people, but then still treating them differently. Like I said, I think this world could be enhanced greatly if everyone would just be more accepting. It's less of an issue of being gay or straight. It's about human compassion and as humans, we should have compassion for one another, raise each other up and make each other feel like it's okay to be ourselves.

### ABEL ESBENSHADE

Why do some people oppose gay marriage?

In modern day society, I believe everyone (or almost everyone) is brought up to be heterosexual. Most people are

imized as a result. Most youth are pulled into the modern social trend that being gay is wrong and a sin. When they ask their parents (if they even get to that stage), they only hear what most Christian families are taught: that [being gay] is a sin. Many grow up never having a second thought about homosexuality, let alone gay marriage, and most likely never questioning their own sexuality. Thus, the belief of homosexuality as a foreign and disagreeable thing is built. In addition to this "straight-ness" being forced upon kids, they probably hear marriage to be a spiritual bond between a man and a woman, rather than "two people who love each other." They never stop to think that the equation could work with two men or two women, making it impossible to see that a gay couple, like a straight couple, could be in love.

What "social or cultural meanings" does marriage convey to you? Do any of these meanings prohibit gay marriage? Why or why not?

I look at marriage as something two people decide to do to make their love official in the eyes of their friends, the state, and/or God. To me, it does not seem very important to one's relationship, though I acknowledge that it is to others. I believe everyone is entitled to the right to marry, especially since it is no longer only a religious joining.

Should persons be granted the civil right to marry someone of the same sex? Why or why not?

I believe any two people should be able to marry each other, regardless of any reason anyone else tells them not to, whether it be race, or sex, or religion. It is not that other person's choice to make... If you don't like gay marriages, don't have one.

Is there extra stuff you'd like to express about gay rights?

As long as we are a "freedom of religion" state, religion should not cloud our ethics. As long as we protect the right to life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness, we should protect one's right to love.

### NATALIE ORTA

Basically I feel like it's great that Illinois has finally taken a step toward equalizing relationships of straight and gay individuals. On the other hand I'm afraid that the government will use this as an excuse to push the decision on legalizing same sex marriages even further back. As was brought up in our meeting, I'm wondering if having half a loaf will become a problem, instead of a good thing.

Abel, Natalie, and Annie are all students at Urbana High School and members of the Urbana High GSA. Annie is also the co-president.



The Urbana High GSA

## Marriage vs. Civil Unions in the State of Illinois

By Phillip Reese

Phillip Reese is the outgoing Secretary of the Board of Directors for the UP Center of Champaign County, a multi-service agency, for youth and adults, to support and promote human care, educational, and community-building activities directed at furthering the well-being and development of the LGBTQ, and ally community.

It's important we distinguish between the civil unions and marriage. Though many religious institutions in the area provide same-sex couples with recognition before God and their

friends and neighbors, a civil union is anything but marriage. Despite what anti-gay activists want to try to convince people, civil unions do not infringe on any religious institutions. They will not/cannot be forced to recognize any same-sex relationship. They cannot be forced to hire Illinoisans in such relationships, nor can they be forced to offer insurance benefits to the spouses of their workers in relationships they don't approve of.

This law is very explicit in its language demanding "hands off" religious institutions.

Regardless of one's feelings about the moral and religious issues that swirl about

these unique families, they do face significant and unnecessary challenges under the law that this bill will help remedy. Many same-sex couples around the nation experience discrimination at the times that are the most difficult—when a loved one is sick in the hospital, or—sadly—when a spouse has passed. Despite decades of building love, a life, a home and a family together, the law has considered these two people strangers.

The civil unions bill will help provide same sex couples with only a handful of the more than 1049 benefits given to married couples, but some of the most crucial. Spous-

es united in a civil union will be granted next-of-kin status in case of medical emergencies and death. *The Family and Medical Leave Act* will now protect these families that were previously left in the cold. Non-religious workplaces will be encouraged to provide fairer benefits to their workers.

In-short, this law will help to protect the children and families of same-sex couples from unfair hardship promoted by current law.



# Illinois Civil Unions: A Step forward, But Still Only A Step

By Paul Nolan



Paul Nolan is a C-U resident and a member of the local LGBT activist group eQuality Champaign-Urbana.

*"A journey of a thousand miles begins with a single step."*

—Lao-tzu, Chinese philosopher (604 BC–531 BC)

On December 1, 2010, the Illinois Senate passed SB 1716 (the Illinois Religious Freedom Protection and Civil Union Act), just a day after the Illinois House had passed it. When the bill was introduced nearly two years before, it had seemed that it would go nowhere fast. Even when the governor said that he would be willing to sign the bill, it seemed like so many campaign promises made by so many candidates, it would be forgotten after the campaign was over. Yet after winning the election, Governor Quinn continued to assert that he would sign. I was pleasantly surprised when the Illinois legislature started to take real steps toward putting the bill up to a vote. When the bill finally passed with so much support, I was shocked.

The day before the Senate passed the bill, eQuality Champaign-Urbana, a local LGBT activist group of which I'm a member, voted to have a rally on Friday, December 3, 2010, in support of SB 1716. We didn't know what was going to happen, but we were determined to speak out about the need for LGBT equality. Fortunately, it turned out to be a celebration.

There are good reasons to celebrate, in fact almost 650 of them. This is the number of rights, benefits and protections that opposite-sex couples start to receive from the state of Illinois the moment they get married. Starting June 1, 2011, same-sex and opposite-sex couples who enter into a civil union will be able to receive those same rights, benefits and protections. Some of these include the power to make emergency medical decisions, hospital visitation rights and the right to share a nursing or hospital room. By passing this law, Illinois joins a growing number of states that give committed same-sex relationships state-level spousal protections in the form of domestic partnerships, civil unions or civil marriages.

But civil unions are not the same as marriages. While we don't have a constitutional ban on same-sex marriage in Illinois, we do have a state law passed in 1996 that defines marriage as being between a man and a woman. This law could be changed by a simple majority vote in the Illinois General Assembly, and *The Equal Marriage Bill (HB 178 / SB 2468)* would do that very thing. It would allow same-sex couples to be legally "married," just like opposite-sex couples are. Until this law is passed, civil unions will be seen by many as second-class relationships because the same-sex couples in civil unions are not allowed by law to be "married."

An Illinois marriage is not the same as a federally recognized marriage. Federally recognized marriage instantly gives couples over 1,000 federal rights including automatic inheritance (even if there isn't a will), the ability to put a partner and the partner's children on your medical or life insurance, the ability to make a partner a US citizen (and prevent deportation) and recognition of the marriage in all

50 states. In 1996, the United States Congress passed The Defense of Marriage Act (DOMA) which defines marriage as being between a man and a woman. Because of this law the federal government does not recognize any same-sex couples as being married even if they have been legally married in a state that does recognize same-sex marriages. Every time they travel outside the borders of their home state they risk the chance of legalized discrimination.

The United States should grant full federal equality for all of its citizens. In order for gay and lesbian couples to have true legal equality in the recognition and protection of their committed relationships, it is necessary for the United States to have full federally recognized marriage. The only way to do this is to repeal *The Defense of Marriage Act (DOMA)*. Furthermore, in the fall of 2009 the *Respect for Marriage Act (HR 3567)* was introduced into the House of Representatives. This bill would finally allow for full equality in marriage on a federal level.

What the Illinois legislature has done is great and it needs to be celebrated. Illinois civil unions give committed same-sex couples many important protections as well as the recognition that gay and lesbian relationships are just as loving and valid as heterosexual relationships. It also shows that Illinois values all of its citizens, not just the heterosexual ones. But civil unions are not marriage equality, not in Illinois and not in the United States. What has happened is good, but much more must be done if we are to be truly equal.

Illinois civil unions are not the entire "journey," nor are they even most of the journey, they are merely "a single step." That, after all, is how every journey begins.

## Everybody Wins

By Kumars Salehi



You know when I see someone in the street or in a class dressed in that greenish camouflage / and sometimes the cap I feel anger and resentment and guilt because it's not their fault / just like it's not the fault of the kids in low-income housing who idolize drug dealers (who harbor glocks and techs for each other and an understandable hatred of the police) / and want to be just like them and then they do but in our society we villainize those people / you know, they call themselves soldiers too and with as much validity because that's what a soldier is / someone who raises their hand when the teacher asks who will kill for the community / who will engage the enemy / who will be the one to put the gun to the heads of those who would do the same to us / I

promise they would / see how they hate us when we walk into their house / and military psychologists invent terms like collateral damage and / everyone we kill is the Taliban or Al Qaeda until proven brown at the wrong place at the right time / and even those who lampoon right-wing ideologues check their critical irony at the door when those who serve are involved

The men and women overseas who fight to protect our freedom, some of them, "they don't have a choice" / Perhaps they're poor and can attend college no other way / perhaps the problem children of the street corner who bang with evil gangs / and run with stolen guns have no other way to feed themselves / and feel part of something larger than their own socially marginalized existence / so when they put bullets in the heads of other little children or grown-up children / you can say they do it because they have no other choice / this is their community and they fight for it and it's true that oppression is violent / hierarchy is coercive but we always have a choice, don't we? / We may not know it but as the tired saying goes, what about Gandhi and Martin Luther King? They had a choice, too / To that, Hollywood, the government, and the rest of the dominant culture says: what about Private Ryan and Kill Bill? / Violence is justified if you're rooting for the good guys / The US military is the biggest, baddest gang of all

The state always has a choice before it sanctions its own violence / and we are truly fucked when we deny ourselves the subjectivity that comes with choosing not to fight in the name of empire codename 'freedom' / 100x as much pure cocaine as crack will get you the same jail time / A million times as many brown people as Americans could die / and we would still count the cost of war in dollars / there is a choice to regard complicity in violence as normal and honor it as courage / there is a choice before we pick up a gun and say yes sir I was born in the USA / and I will walk into that house across the sea and fix their shit up good and we'll do it for 300 million beating hearts back home and if they don't want us by God we'll just defend our freedom to be there *alaykum as-salaam*

## Clear Bad Baggage

By Durell Callier, Suzanne Hassler, and Kristina Williams

Clear bad baggage  
Accept. Forgive without circumvention  
Quiet all.  
A sanctity of blackness.  
Telling. Strong. Stronger. Braver.

This poem is a product of the Poetry for the People workshop featuring local poet, Ruth Nicole Brown. For more information on upcoming poetry events, email the-public.i(at)gmail.com.

### Poetry For the People



Do you write poetry? Are you seeking a poetry workshop to share and improve your writing? Do you have memories that you would like to preserve with words?

Poetry for the People, a project funded by the Urbana Arts Council, is hosting its final poetry workshop at the Douglas branch library on February 12. Join poet and children's author, Janice N. Harrington. You'll write poetry, journal, and learn ways to make writing poetry a daily part of your life. Two hours of writing, writing, and

more writing. What could be better?



### Offer Your Voice to the Public i

Everyone has a voice, and we want to hear yours. Everyone has experienced wonder in their life, and fear, and pain, and strength, and courage, too. And, we have the ability to share our experiences with others. The Public i is always looking for writers and words in all shapes, sizes and forms. We invite you to submit your creativity to our email address, the-public.i(at)gmail.com, or visit our weekly meetings (Thursdays at 5:30PM at the Urbana-Champaign Independent Media Center).



# Disciplinary Actions Against Champaign Officers

By Brian Dolinar

Despite being public bodies serving a public good, most police departments operate as secret societies. The push for police accountability includes making their practices more transparent. I recently obtained all disciplinary actions taken against Champaign police officers. Contrary to what I expected, only a small percentage of the disciplinary actions were the result of citizen complaints. The most common reason was for damage to a squad car. Yet there were still several instances of misconduct that threatened both citizens and officers.

This investigation began with a *Freedom of Information Act* (FOIA) request for complaints against Champaign police officers. In a recent case of *Gekas v. Williamson*, an Illinois appeals court ruled that complaints against officers are public record. Yet my request to the Champaign Police Department was denied. However, when I spoke with city attorney, Tricia Crowley, I was told that in such cases where an officer has been disciplined, whether for a complaint or for any other reason, the records are publicly available. For example, when Officer Daniel Norbits was suspended for 30 days after the death of Kiwane Carrington, the disciplinary letter from City Manager Steve Carter was released to the public and the press.

I then decided to file a FOIA request for all disciplinary actions taken against Champaign police officers since 2004. I received letters for 48 cases where an officer had been disciplined. They indicate some curious patterns.

## "PROGRESSIVE ENFORCEMENT"

Of the 48 disciplinary actions, only three were the result of complaints filed by citizens. One case in 2007 involved Officer Kristina Benton who, when she responded to a domestic call, was "rude and discourteous" toward the individual who originally called the police. The unnamed person then filed a complaint. Officer Benton only received a letter of reprimand. A 2008 incident involved Officer Chris Young who was also, "discourteous" and failed to perform his duties in a "productive, effective, and efficient manner." The letter does not specify any further, but the citizen filed a complaint, and for his offence Young received a one-day suspension. In the third case, also from 2008, Officer Jamie Bowersock approached a car with a loud stereo. Despite departmental rules prohibiting abusive language, "concerning race, sex," he told the driver of the car, a man named Marcell, to "stop whining like a girl." After Marcell lodged a complaint, and the incident was investigated, Bowersock was given a letter of reprimand. Lieutenant Michael Paulus

expressed his disappointment in the officer for allowing Marcell to "bait you" and for failing to uphold the department policy of "progressive enforcement."

Disciplinary letters were also handed out to officers for things like failing to show up in court, being absent during training, or using profanity. As mentioned earlier, the most common reason for disciplining an officer was for damage to a squad car, or, as stated in departmental policy, failing to operate vehicles in a "careful, prudent manner." Out of 48 disciplinary letters, 23 were for failing to properly operate a vehicle.

Other disciplinary actions were for more egregious violations. In 2009, Officer Eric Bloom was twice told to return an individual's wallet. Failing to do so resulted in the owner's mother becoming "extremely upset." A letter of reprimand was given to Bloom. In a case from 2007, Officer Douglas Kimmie ran a criminal background check on a citizen "for reasons which were not entirely duty related." Kimmie was only issued a letter of reprimand.

Out of the total disciplinary actions, only four led to suspensions of one or more days. Three have been mentioned already: Young (one day), Bloom (two days), and Norbits (30 days). In 2007, Officer Elizabeth Mennenga was suspended for 12 days because she displayed "contact of an insulting or provoking nature."

## FIVE CASES IN MORE DETAIL

In most cases, there were no arrests and therefore no police reports describing the incident. There were five cases in which I was able to obtain further documentation. In one case from 2006, Officer Alison Ferguson was given a letter of reprimand for making an "inappropriate comment" to an African American woman she placed under arrest. Officer Daniel Ward received a letter of reprimand for car chase in 2009 because he failed to follow departmental policy in police pursuits. Ward unnecessarily engaged in a high speed pursuit without sounding his siren and not notifying others of the 90 mile per hour speeds. When Champaign police responded to a call about a suicidal man in September 2009, Officer Andre Davis was given a reprimand for accidentally firing his gun. This was just a month before Kiwane Carrington was, according to police account, killed when Norbits' gun accidentally discharged.

Two other incidents, when juxtaposed, reveal the racist practices of the Champaign Police Department. In 2009, two black men named William and Calvin were walking at

the intersection of Hedge Road and Hedge Court in Garden Hills when they were stopped by officers Jeremiah Christian and Rob Morris who were riding in their squad car. According to police reports, the two men were "improperly walking in the roadway" in violation of the vehicle code regulations. Yet there are no sidewalks on either side of the two streets. William had two small bags of weed and was put in the back of the squad car. Calvin took off running and Officer Morris chased him down in his car and put him in handcuffs.

As it turned out, Calvin was avoiding giving police his name because he had an outstanding warrant and he was charged with obstructing justice. The warrant was for driving on a suspended license. Calvin was arrested and taken to jail while William was let go and given a city ticket for possession of a narcotic. After the incident was reviewed, Officer Morris was given a letter of reprimand because he left William unsupervised in the back of the squad car while he went on a foot chase with Calvin.

In contrast is a case from 2008 in which a 20-year-old white student named Michael was carrying an open can of beer when Officer Brian Ahsell drove by in his squad car. As the officer pulled up, Michael dropped the can. Michael confessed he was underage, but told the officer he was not "causing trouble." Officer Ahsell wrote him a ticket for underage drinking, explaining that he would not ticket him for the open container as long as he was cooperative. Michael became increasingly indignant. As Ahsell gave him the ticket and got into his car to leave, Michael stood in the middle of the street screaming at him for his name and number. Ahsell finally decided to arrest Michael and took him to the county jail.

While Michael was being booked, Ahsell changed his mind and decided to release him. In his report Ahsell wrote, "It should be noted that I based this decision on Michael being a U of I student with no known prior police contacts." Ahsell returned Michael to campus and let him go. After review, Ahsell was given a letter of reprimand for failing to give his name and badge number, which, according to department policy, officers must willingly provide if asked.

In the end, none of the 48 disciplinary actions addressed the racially disparate policing practices rampant in the Champaign Police Department, only infractions to police-defined guidelines.

# Racial Disparities Reflect Laws and Policies

By David Green



In her recently published book *The New Jim Crow: Mass Incarceration in the Age of Colorblindness*, civil rights lawyer Michelle Alexander connects the legacies of slavery and Jim Crow to the mass incarceration of African-American males. "The American penal system has emerged as a system of social control unparalleled in world history. As a formally race-neutral criminal justice system (manages) to round up and arrest an extraordinary number of black and brown men, when people of color are actually no more likely to be guilty of drug crimes and many other offenses than whites."

This important book documents an overwhelming body of research and a relentless logic of systematic social injustice that attributes massive increases in imprisoned African-Americans over the past decades not to their behavior, but to the biased nature of the law and its enforcement: by police, courts, prisons, and the punitive society to which the criminalized return.

An equally convincing body of research documents that in parallel fashion, in the era of so-called "zero tolerance," school discipli-

nary, suspension, and expulsion policies have arbitrarily but systematically targeted African-American males as part of what has come to be called the "school-to-prison pipeline."

At the most fundamental and 'for most white people' counterintuitive level, it is urgently important to recognize that the baseline behaviors of African-American children and youth are no better or worse than those of their white counterparts, in any setting. In some areas, including alcohol abuse, they are markedly better.

Social researchers have developed reliable methods for establishing accurate baseline data through self-report surveys; these have been administered and refined for decades, with standard sampling and analytical procedures. Neither in relation to school nor societal behavior have racial differences been documented that remotely explain the drastic disparities that have emerged in relation to school suspension, expulsion, arrest, and incarceration.

Thus, in June of this year, the "Morbidity and Mortality Weekly" of the Centers for Disease Control reported that between white and black male students, grades 9-12, whites are more likely to binge drink, take prescription drugs without a prescrip-

tion, smoke cigarettes or use smokeless tobacco on school property; white males are also more likely than black males to use cocaine, inhalants, hallucinogenic drugs, ecstasy, and methamphetamines. Meanwhile, blacks are more likely than whites to use heroin, marijuana, and steroids without a prescription; they are also more likely to inject illegal drugs, and drink alcohol or use marijuana on school property.

Regarding school behavior, Russ Skiba of the University of Indiana's Equity Project has examined school disciplinary referrals by race. Of 32 infractions examined, there were eight significant differences. White students were referred more for smoking, vandalism, leaving without permission, and obscene language. Black Students were referred more for disrespect, excessive noise, threat, and loitering.

Regardless of these baseline behavioral realities, the comparison regarding students who have ever been suspended from school by age 17, documented in the same OJJDP study: white, 28%, black 56%. As with incarceration, nothing in the "real world" of racial differences accounts for these disparities. Instead, they are explained by the racialized functioning of

schools, police, and the courts, all facilitated by legislatures at various levels.

Paul J. Hirschfield of Rutgers writes: "A multilevel structural model of school criminalization is developed which posits that a troubled domestic economy, the mass unemployment and incarceration of disadvantaged minorities, and resulting fiscal crises in urban public education have shifted school disciplinary policies and practices and staff perceptions of poor students of color in a manner that promotes greater punishment and exclusion of students perceived to be on a criminal justice 'track'."

Individuals in authority are trained and conditioned to live in a culture of suspicion and fear that is created by this racist and often lethal system; this should be kept in mind as we look, for example, at the death of Kiwane Carrington. Similarly, those boys and men who endure the system are well aware of (white) society's "expectations" regarding their behavior and potential. African-American males continue to struggle for their dignity, but there's no reason for white people to think that they do so based on comforting fairy tales that white people tell themselves about colorblindness and equal opportunity.



## IMC Barnraising Space (de)Construction

\$15,000 GRANT AWARDED TO RENOVATE THE URBANA-CHAMPAIGN INDEPENDENT MEDIA CENTER

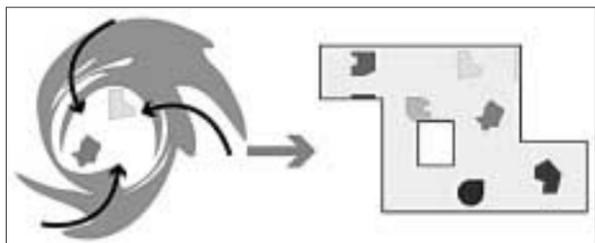
February 5, 2011 8:00AM–February 6, 2011 5:00PM

February 19, 2011 8:00AM–February 20, 2011 5:00PM

The UCIMC and faculty partners in the University of Illinois School of Architecture will be holding a barnraising event to construct a new staffing and work area in the main lobby of the building. The first of several first floor space renovation projects will re-envision our staffing area in the front lobby of the old post office. Our partners were recently awarded \$15,000 from the University of Illinois Office of Public Engagement to fund the project. Join IMC members, volunteers, UI students and our faculty partners from the School of Architecture, at two Barnraising weekend events in February 2011. No prior expertise is required to volunteer, but if you do have construction, car-

penry, or other experience, we welcome you!

If you can't make it to either event, consider other ways you could be involved.



A slide from the presentation given by the faculty partners from the University of Illinois' School of Architecture at the IMC's Annual Membership meeting last November.

- Organize other volunteers!—Our project coordinator can help coordinate group or individual volunteers
- Loan tools to use on-site during the event. Hammers, screwdrivers, table saw, circular saw, etc.
- If you have leftover construction materials please contact us! You can make a tax-deductible donation based on the estimated value of the materials. Here are some of the things we're looking for:
- 2x4s and other construction quality lumber of various sizes
- nails, screws, fasteners of various kinds, hinges, casters, etc.
- Plywood, OSB, pegboard, masonite, etc.

For more information, contact the Community Connections working group: [community\(at\)lists.chambana.net](mailto:community(at)lists.chambana.net)

## Reflections on the GEO Strike a Year Later

By Kerry L. Pimblott



Adapted from a speech the author gave at a commemorative event entitled, "A Year After the GEO Strike: The State of Labor at the University of Illinois," on November 17, 2010.

Students and workers are celebrating the first anniversary of the successful strike by the Graduate Employees' Organization (GEO) and Local 6300 (AFT/IFT/AFL-CIO), the union that represents over 2,500 graduate assistants and teaching assistants at the University of Illinois at Urbana Champaign.

Last November, over one thousand graduate employees and their allies joined together in a fight to ensure that graduate education remains accessible to working-class students and people of color in Illinois. After months of unsuccessful negotiations with the university's administration, GEO members voted overwhelmingly to strike in an effort to protect the tuition waivers that afford us a place in the learning and labor that takes place on this campus. For two rainy days, striking workers shut down buildings on the main quad, formed picket lines, and danced collectively to the beat of a different drum. By the end of the second day we were celebrating a momentous victory for workers on our campus and across the country that included securing unprecedented contractual protections for tuition waivers.

As the GEO's lead negotiator and one of the strike planners, I learned a lot personally from the strike about both the university and the collective power of workers. However, in the year since the strike, three lessons stand out as offering key insights for current and future struggles.

First, strikes are not spontaneous; strikes are produced. While this may seem obvious to many of us today, the labor involved in mobilizing a strike cannot be understated. The process of building our strike potential took almost two years of concerted planning and labor by organizers. On one level, this labor was highly visible. It involved creating new activists, organizing in departments, planning events, and building up gradually to the levels of mass mobilization required to sustain an open-ended walkout. But, at a more fundamental level, the labor we performed was part of an unseen cognitive battle for the minds and hearts of our fellow workers.

While grievances are ever present, as workers we know that grievances do not inevitably lead to collective action, let alone strikes. Getting people that feel powerless to sacrifice their limited time and resources and, in some cases, take tremendous personal risks to secure a better quality of life for themselves and their peers is no easy task. Organizing at institutions of higher education is no different than in the corporate world, and prior to the GEO strike, the University of Illinois had only experienced two

strikes in its 150-year history. Therefore, a key part of building our strike potential was talking with workers about their experiences, solidifying a sense of shared-identity, and empowering each other to believe that collectively we could make a difference.

Second, strikes are easy to fetishize but, ultimately, a strike is just a tactic. People can get very romantic about strikes and for me, at least, it is understandable. Strikes bring workers together and help us believe that collectively we have greater power than we had previously imagined. But sometimes we can imbue strikes with a kind of mythical power that abstracts them from the concrete political conditions in which they operate and, ultimately, succeed or fail. Today, as a loosely knit international movement to "defend" and/or "liberate" education is beginning to take shape, avoiding romanticization and dealing with the hardcore political realities of our own historical moment is particularly critical. In this context, tactics should be selected because of the pressure they can exert on our opponents and the leverage this offers us in terms of securing short-term concessions to the status quo. The GEO strike worked, in my mind, because it articulated a very clear demand (tuition waiver security), exhausted traditional institutional avenues (the bargaining process), and then mobilized workers to withhold their labor disrupting—the campus and bringing negative press attention to the administration. As we move forward, students and workers must grapple

with a wide range of tactics looking for those most suitable for manipulating the inverted power relations on campus and beyond.

Finally, strikes have unforeseen consequences. In a very practical sense, the process of building for a strike ensured that the GEO was able to fight off regressive proposals like furloughs as well as secure important contractual gains including tuition waiver security. However, the impact of the strike transcended these basic, albeit invaluable, contract victories. Over the past year, I have had the tremendous privilege to visit with students and union workers from across the country who have been inspired by our strike to act. In the past year, K-12 educators in Danville and Mahomet have gone out on strike in efforts to protect compensation, benefits, and working conditions. Sadly, these strikes-like the GEO strike—were necessary simply to preserve the status quo and are, thus, reflective of the unethical approaches of management in handling the financial crisis. However, these defensive strikes have transformed the culture of our schools, campuses, and communities and inspired workers in East Central Illinois to believe that we do have the right to fight back and, more importantly, we can win. In the end, the most invaluable lesson these strikes have taught me and other workers is to believe in each other, to work collectively, and to have faith against the odds that a different world is possible.

## Open Invitation to the Follow-up Meeting of the eBlack C-U Campus-Community Symposium

By Noah Lenstra

The eBlack CU Symposium was a great success, with over 180 people attending or all part of the event. The full record of the Symposium is available online for anyone to access at: <http://eblackcu.net/portal/symposium>. We need to do more to get community members and community organizations able and motivated to take advantage of technological tools to better our local community for all.

This follow-up meeting will be held January 8, 2011, from 9 a.m. to noon at the Champaign Public Library, in the main Robeson room on the first floor. We are organizing this follow-up meeting around the themes of technology, jobs and the future of our local economy. The title of this event is: "Community Technology and UC2B: Careers, Jobs and the Future of our Local Economy." We need you and your organization to co-sponsor this event. As a co-sponsor all we would ask of you is to help mobilize your

organization's membership and family and friends to come join in the conversation of how technology has already, and will continue to, change the skills needed to use technology both in the work-market and in community life.

### ANTICIPATED AUDIENCES

- **Youth and Unemployed** individuals of all ages and backgrounds. Find out what jobs already exist in the technology sector, what jobs are being created, and what you need and can do to prepare yourself for employment in the high-tech sector;
- **Parents/Grandparents/Mentors**—Hear about the new skills your loved ones will need to stay competitive in a changing job market;
- **Employers**—Offer opinions about the technological skills you expect from employees;

- **Educators**—Hear the technology demands of the work-force and present the responses you already offer and may offer in the future;
- **General Public**—Continue the conversations on technology and the future of the Champaign-Urbana community begun at the November 5–6 Campus-Community Symposium.

We are still organizing the program and speakers for this event. Flyers will be made available in the very near future. If you or your organization would be willing to co-sponsor this event we would be happy to distribute flyers to you the week of December 27 for you to disseminate to your members and members' family and friends in the lead-up to this event.

If you are interested in co-sponsoring, or desire more information, get in touch with us by e-mailing [nlenstr2\(at\)illinois.edu](mailto:nlenstr2(at)illinois.edu).