2/19 "Business as a Solution to Poverty in Africa," The University YMCA Friday Forum, 12pm, $6 ($3 students)
2/19-21 Legacy: Celebrating the 40th Anniversary of the Bruce D. Nesbitt African American Cultural Center
2/20 Middle East Story Time Urbana Free Library, Megan’s Room, 2pm-3pm
2/22 Melting Ice: Climate Change and the Humanities 7:30pm, Lewis Faculty Center, Third Floor
2/26 Korea Workshop, South Korea’s Queer Internet and the Making of Democracy, 1 NOYES 16, 11am-3pm
2/27 Celebrating African Women Writers Teacher’s Workshop Urbana Free Library The Satterthwaite Conference Room, 9am-12pm
2/28 UCLA Reads Memoirs--This Life Ain’t Gravy Urbana Free Library, The Lewis Auditorium, 1-3pm

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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Campus Faculty Association (CFA)
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A History of the Douglass Center

By Michael Burns

The Fredrick Douglass statue

In the heart of the North End, the historically black community of Champaign-Urbana is the Douglass Center. It was named in honor of the great African American abolitionist Frederick Douglass who reportedly made a stop in Champaign while on a speaking tour. When the Center was first conceived, it served as a recreational center for black enlisted men who were stationed at the Chanute Air Force base in Rantoul but denied access to white facilities. Among the ranks of these soldiers were the Tuskegee Airmen, the famous black pilots who served in World War II. Among the ranks of these soldiers were the Tuskegee Airmen, the famous black pilots who served in World War II. The Center was critical of the city legislature’s overemphasis on sports. "We cannot turn our backs upon drug addiction," he wrote, "by handing a kid a basketball." Discussions began about the construction of a new Douglass Center that would include space for a library and a senior center.

The Douglas Center as it now stands

In 1975, despite the community’s need for a more diverse facility, the park board claimed it could only provide a building for a gymnasium, "because of lack of funds," and announced that the old Douglass Center would be demolished. Some 200 local residents showed up at city council meetings to protest the decision. Former director Erma Bridgewater and her mother Sarah Scott, along with others, attended a large rally in the park. John Lee Johnson organized a committee to protest the demolition.

February 2010

The original logo of the Douglass Library

Over the following weeks and months, the North End staged several forms of protest and advocacy for a "complete center." A petition line was set up at the offices of the construction company the city had hired. A steering committee was formed to represent the demands of the local community, and citizens attended meetings at the Park District to make their demands clear to local government officials.

After several months of struggle, the community and local agencies arrived at a compromise. In December 1975, the old center was razed and construction began on the new Douglass Center. The project was completed a year later. While the finished structure was the building as it now stands, Douglass Park is now also home for both the Senior Citizens Annex and the Douglass Branch of the Champaign Public Library. Taken together, these spaces serve to connect the history of struggle in the North End to a future where there is always room for progress.

February 22, 12:00–1:30PM

Dept. of African American Studies

Chairs: Sondiata Keita Cha-Jua, Departments of African American Studies & History

Panelists:
• Abdul Alkalimat, Department of African American Studies & the Graduate School in Library Science
• Bruce Levine, Department of History
• Bob McChesney, Department of Communication
• Lou Turner, Department of African American Studies

Ubuntu is a classical African ethical philosophy. The term originates in the Kwa Zulu language and culture of South Africa and as a concept has parallels throughout southern and eastern Africa. Ubuntu means "belonging and interconnectedness," conveying a communal rather than an individual life philosophy. As a political philosophy, Ubuntu is synonymous with participatory democracy, and like Kafu in West Africa expresses the democratic spirit of the people. It incorporates the communal ethos of sharing, mutuality, and collective decision-making that have been at the heart of African American civil society and social movements.

Marxism and the Black Experience in the Era of Global Capitalism

Ubuntu, The Black Radical Work Group in the Department of African American Studies

2011 West Nevada Street, Urbana

On February 22, 12:00–1:30 PM

Ubuntu, The Black Radical Work Group in the Department of African American Studies

2011 West Nevada Street, Urbana
Interview With Deborah Thomas Who Lives In The House Where Kiwane Carrington Was Killed

On December 8, State Attorney Julia Rietz released a 13-page report concluding that Kiwane Carrington had been shot “accidentally” by Champaign police officer Daniel Novikov. While deducting only one paragraph of Novikov’s history, and failing to mention his involvement in the 2000 death of Gregory Brown, Rietz spends several pages discrediting the black witnesses. After reviewing the interviews with Deborah Thomas, who lived at 906 W. Vine where Kiwane was killed, Rietz said her statements were “not considered to be credible.” In particular, Rietz said Thomas incorrectly stated that Kiwane was not allowed to be in the house. In this interview on Dec. 11, 2009, conducted by Melodye Rosales and Chris Evans, Thomas responds to the claim that she changed her story, explains how police lied to her, and says Kiwane was always permitted in her home.

WHAT HAPPENED THAT MORNING?

CE: So, what was your schedule that day? You got up at about 6 a.m. and then...
DT: Got those two ready for school, my step sister usually comes to get those two and I usually take off for school. Which is what it did.
CE: What time was your class?
DT: 7 a.m.
CE: What time did you get over there?
DT: 7:50.
CE: How did you come back?
DT: I came back home. I drove my car.
CE: That’s right. And you got here at about 7:50.
DT: No. I got here—class is out at 7:50. I got here maybe about 10, 20 after 8.
CE: OK. When you came in the—
DT: It had to at least be about 8 25, 8:30 to tell you, to be exact, because Eboney and Isaiah, at that time were both going to Central. My brother comes to pick them up at exactly 10 after 8 and they were all gone. When I came home, Kiwane was sitting, was standing right here, where my microwave is. Right down there. And he was cooking him something to eat. And I said: “Boy, how come you are not at school like the rest of the kids?” He said: “Mrs. Debra, you know, I go to READY, I don’t get to be at school until 10.” I said: “OK” [...].
CE: And Kiwane had spent the night?
DT: Yeah.

CE: And he had full permission all summer to be in the house, part of the household.
DT: Yes he was. If I went to McDonald’s, bought the kids something to eat, he got something too. He didn’t even have to ask [...]. After that I went back to Parkland.
CE: OK.
DT: Because I had to be in class at 12.
CE: OK. You got out at what time?
DT: 12:30. But I didn’t leave from there [...]. I went to the library and printed out some papers and things.
CE: OK.

POLICE LIE ABOUT SUPPOSED BURGLARY

CE: Yeah. Then from there I had all the calls on my phone, but you know I couldn’t answer, you can’t answer the phone you know when you are in class. So I didn’t think none of it until I got to the Y in the YMCA ‘cause I was trying to get my two younger kids from the Y. And I started getting all these phone calls. And my sister called. My step sister, Mary. She’s like: “You have got to get at your house real fast ‘cause a whole bunch of police is out there. They’ve got their guns out and everything. Something is going on.” And I’m like “What? Let me hang up.” Then my phone blows up again and then I said: “Let me check all these messages.” So I checked one. And one was from the dispatch or something from the Champaign police. She gave me her name. I can’t remember right now. It’s on my phone. And she said: “You need to get to your house real fast. Someone’s been shot” [...].

DT: OK. Where did you meet the—

CE: So where, did you meet the first police officer?
DT: Actually at the neighbor’s part of the driveway ‘cause I couldn’t get nowhere near my home. And that’s when I was fussing about. I’m like: “What’s going on? What happened? Who got shot at my house?” “Ma’am, we don’t know right now. We don’t know anything right now. We don’t know nothing.” That’s all I was getting. “We don’t know nothing.” You know. And I’m like: “What’s going on?” Someone was trying to break into your house. And I’m like: “Who got shot?” And then I see my dad. He was walking down the street. And I’m like, “It was one of those kids. Was it one of those kids?” They’re like “Ma’am, we can’t tell you anything.” That was [Champaign police officer John] Schweighart [...]. My dad said the same thing, he said: “Was it one of those kids?” Schweighart, out of his mouth, said, “We can assure you guys it wasn’t a kid” [...].

DT: Did you sign anything?
CE: Yeah.
CE: What did you sign?
DT: I signed a consent to come into my home [...].
CE: What did you think you were signing?
DT: They asked me to sign a piece of paper to make sure, to check that no one else was inside my house. That’s what they told me. I just kind of got pressed to believe that the house had been broken into. So this is why I’m thinking it was already a burglary. And I’m thinking in my head it’s grown people’s, cause that’s what they told me. They told me it was no kids. They said it was two grown men [...].

REFUTES CLAIM SHE CHANGED HER STORY

MR: We read in the newspaper and other places about you changing your story. What was that about?
DT: I don’t know, I’m trying to think. What part of the story did I change? You talking about the question, oh, the Champaign question: “Was anyone supposed to be at your house? That’s the question, the only one I can think of. And that’s one that came up. Actually, to me what kind of sparked my memory, when I went to court with Jessham. The very first time. And they said they were still trying to say he got in trouble for burglary because they said “You changed your story” And I’m like: “Well, how? That’s when Jesshan first went to court. And they said: “You saying wasn’t nobody supposed to be at your house.” And I said: “But that’s what I meant. During that time of the day all the kids are supposed to be at school.” So that’s what I was meaning by, ‘cause my brother is usually here from 1:30 in the afternoon to 2:00. He picks my two younger kids up at Dr. Howard at 2:00, from 2:30 on until what, 4:40-30, my brother is here.

For the full 40-page transcription of this interview go to the all-new website dedicated to Kiwane Carrington created through a collaboration between Smiley Politely and UC-IMC: http://timeline.chambana.net
February 2010
www.ucimc.org / www.publici.ucimc.org

WILL Changes FM Format, Cuts Jobs, and Eliminates Weather Department

By Kimberly Kranich

On February 11, 2010 Illinois Public Media General Manager Mark Leonard announced steps the organization’s leadership will take to address ongoing budget concerns and ensure that Illinois Public Media is sustainable in a new financial and technological environment. Changes include:

• Elimination of nine staff positions
• Phasing out the weather department, resulting in the elimination of in-house forecasts for WILL Radio and WILL-TV Weather reports and severe weather coverage will continue, provided by regular radio staff using National Weather Service information.
• A change in format for WILL-FM, which will become a classical radio station April 1, adding news programs from National Public Radio to its classical music line-up, while expanding classical music on the weekends and retaining its locally produced music programs.
• Shifting WILL-AM staff responsibilities to provide more in-depth coverage of local issues, informed by outreach projects in the community.
• Addition of new staff positions, including a web developer, in critical areas or areas with potential for revenue growth.

The changes are a continuation of a reorganization, began last summer, designed to make Illinois Public Media competitive as the web and other new technologies are playing increasingly larger roles in media, Leonard said. “We cannot continue to do things the way we’ve done them in the past,” he said. “If we do, we’re spreading ourselves too thin across too many projects. And we’ll miss the opportu- nities that technology offers to provide public media in new ways.” In addition, Illinois Public Media is making changes to ensure that its services can continue in a time of shrinking state support, he said.

Illinois Public Media has been operating with a deficit during the current fiscal year as a result of $110 million in budget cuts from the Illinois Arts Council that were announced in October, he said. Since 2006, Illinois Public Media’s annual arts council funding has decreased by more than $280,000 and the contributing picture continues to be bleak. “We’re cutting deeply enough with these changes that we hope no more cuts will be needed next year,” Leonard said. “In the past, as our state funding decreased, we’re relieved mostly on attrition to downsize and automation to cut costs. Most of these changes have been invisible to the public. But now we have to make changes that viewers and listeners will notice.”

Without the steadfast financial support of members who have been contributing at about the same rate as last year despite the bad economy, WILL-AM’s and WILL-TV’s radio budget situation would be worse, he said.

The Illinois Public Media web site at willislandu.edu has a list of frequently asked questions with more information.

WILL Radio and WILL-TV will eliminate their independent weather service, which has employed a full-time meteorologist and other full- and part-time staff for many years limited coverage area to the west and the fact that WILL-AM must reduce power after dark, many potential listeners cannot receive NPR signature news magazines, he said. “We’re moving our strongest NPR programs, along with our local news, and offering them on our FM station where they can be heard by more people.”

WILL-AM’s signal is strong north and south, but it’s so limited to the west that people in southwestern Champaign and beyond have trouble receiving it.” Leonard said. “We want to serve Champaign, Mont- icello and other communities with news and information.

Trusted local and national news reporting is more important than ever, and some news sources are struggling to remain viable, he said.

So it is essential that sources such as public media continue to be available. The reor- ganization plan will allow WILL-AM staff to spend more time on issue-oriented reporting based on what producers learn from projects in the community.

“Our commitment to classical music on WILL-FM remains strong, and classical music will continue to make up a large portion of our FM schedule,” Leonard said. “In fact, we’ll be adding 27 more hours of classical music on the weekends.” Jazz, folk and other music formats on Friday and Saturday even-ings and Sunday afternoons will be replaced by classical music from the C-24 classical music service. FM is already airing music from C-24 in the mid-morning and afternoon on weekdays, Sunday mornings and Sunday evenings.

The station will realize a cost savings by replacing individual programs with the C-24 service at additional times.

WILL’s locally hosted weekday morning music program with Vic Di Geromino will move from early morning to 9 a.m.—now in the much admired University of California system. Today’s facts; tomorrow’s future, they say, is the future of the state’s citizens to be productive members of society and informed, engaged participants in democracy.

How Some U of I Faculty Members Will Deal With Furloughs

By Megan McLaughlin

Megan McLaughlin is President of the Campus Faculty Association (CFA)

Susan Davis is taking her first unpaid furlough day on February 15, along with other faculty and members of the Campus Faculty Association at the University of Illinois. “Since the University demands that we not do our jobs,” she says, “we will be on campus devoting our furlough time to the future of the University of Illinois, and taking action to break the logjam in Springfield.” For many faculty members at the U of I, furloughs (pay cuts) are a parallel but short-term issue. They are much more worried about the growing threat to university jobs (staff as well as faculty), to the institution’s reputation, and to accessible, high-quality public education in the state of Illinois. What is the current uproar over furloughs/pay cuts really about?

• A state legislature that has consistently underfunded the university over the past thirty years. While the state provided almost half of this “state” university’s budget in 1980; it provides only about 16% of it now.
• A state legislature that now can’t even get itself together to balance its own budget, and as a result is delaying payment to all kinds of providers, including the university.
• A university administration that has swallowed like a cancer, soaking up funds that should have been spent on teaching and research.
• A university administration that routinely ignores the established principle of “shared governance” by offering professors propaganda, denying them accurate information, and making major decisions without consulting with the faculty.
• A public that all too often thinks of the university as a glorified job-training center, rather than as what it was meant to be—a place for educating the state’s citizens to be productive members of society and informed, engaged participants in democracy.

So, on Monday, February 15, faculty members came together with students to talk about what the University of Illinois will be like in the next century. What will it be like as a place to learn and work if tuition triples? If programs close and class sizes triple? If most classes have no TAs? If poor and middle-class families have no chance to send their students here? All these things are happening right now in the much admired University of California system. In the midst of the worst unemployment in decades, professors like Davis and myself feel lucky to have jobs—for now. But the federal stimulus money runs out soon, and the University administration has large cuts planned. As teachers and scholars concerned with education’s future, we don’t feel it is “time to sit down and shut up.” It’s time for a democratic discussion of the university’s future, which is a big part of so many people’s futures.
2010 Martin Luther King Essay Contest Winners

* The organizers of the 2010 MLK Essay Contest asked that the names of these young authors be withheld.

Dear Barack Obama,

My name is K____ and I am 18 years old. I go to the READY Program and I am a senior. I am writing this letter for my English class. I love to play sports and watch them, especially basketball. I have eight brothers and sisters, and I live with my mom and step dad. I will go on and talk about what I have experienced or heard of about social injustice.

I didn’t see it, but everybody heard about a boy named Kiwane Carrington. He was climbing through someone’s window that he knew because the door was locked. The police came on the site and saw him. They told him to put his hands up and he didn’t.

They shot him. I don’t think that was fair because they could have done something else besides shoot him. The police are always so quick to shoot people and he was just a kid.

What I hope to change is the law enforcement. They have so much power and they abuse their authority. The police are always harassing me every time I walk the streets or drive around. I think somebody needs to change the way law enforcement is. I think police officers take advantage of their power.

Police officers worry about the wrong things. You could be walking down the street, minding your own business and they automatically think you are doing something wrong just because you are BLACK. They should worry about more important things, like people getting killed.

From this experience, I learned that you have to be careful when you are around the police because they will find any little reason to mess with you or in Kiwan’s case shoot you. So do what the police tell you to do, even if you don’t want to and you will be all right.

Thank you Barack Obama for taking the time in your busy schedule to read my letter. I have been going to the Levis Faculty Center first hour English class and the first one is going to be about how policemen abuse their authority. About a month ago I had a student from my school get shot by a police man…now understand I was not there when it happened but what I have gathered is that the boy died for nothing. But like I said I don’t know the whole story. All I know is that I knew him. I had chatted with him and he was an ok kid just to be blown away by a gun...for nothing. Now you tell me how you think they should have gone about this. I think that there was no reason to pull a gun out on a kid anyway.

That is my opinion on this situation.

In my poem I will be talking about how unfair things are and how they affect us as people who can’t do things because of unfair treatment. People can not get jobs because of a mistake that they made. There are so many things people can not do because of unfair treatment. Being unfair is unfair, its like if I would say that you can’t get a job because you stole a car five years ago, that’s a double whammy...because have I not already paid the price once before?

Poem by R____

Why unfair?
Why do people have to be unfair?
Can’t get a job because you made a bad decision.
Giving dirty looks to everyone like racism.
Why do people have to be unfair?
It’s wrong... But we deal with it.
Unfair we can’t work with it.
Why do people have to be unfair?
Abusing authority to get the job done fast.
Taking someone’s life with the sound of a blast.
Why do people have to be unfair?
Unfair... we hear that every when.

The government, school, home, it’s all unfair.
Why do people have to be unfair?
Being put in a place you don’t want to be.

For something you didn’t do and now all you can do is plead.

It’s just that one word that we all are used to saying.

Ever since we were little that’s the one word that is staying.

But what will happen if it gets out of hand?

It’s been said so much...the word could be banned.

If we as the people...as a town...as a community...as a world and as a society work together to fight for our fairness.

We will be able to beat out this crazy child ness.

It’s been around for too long.

We are grown now and that should be dead and gone.

But it’s not...it’s still here...lingering like gas in the air.

We have to stop this unfair pollution.

But until then we still ask ourselves. Why do people have to be unfair?

Sincerely,
K____

Dear President Obama and Dr. King,

Hello my name is R____. I am a junior at the Ready Program. In my first hour English class we are learning about social justice in our world. So we have been asked to write a letter, a poem, or an essay. I have chosen to write both a letter and a poem. In my letter I will be talking to you about how there is a lot of “unfair” treatment in the community. Also how there are people who have high authority but are very unfair on how they use it. Those are the things that I will be talking about.

There are two things I would like to talk about in my letter and the first one is going to be about how policemen abuse their authority. About a month ago I had a student from my school get shot by a police man...now understand I was not there when it happened but what I have gathered is that the boy died for nothing. But like I said I don’t know the whole story. All I know is that I knew him. I had chatted with him and he was an ok kid just to be blown away by a gun...for nothing. Now you tell me how you think they should have gone about this. I think that there was no reason to pull a gun out on a kid anyway.

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Sincerely,
K____

UPCOMING BLACK HISTORY EVENTS

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For more information: www.bnaacc.illinois.edu

Speak Cafe (Open mic/poetry set)

“The Women Gather,” Women’s History Month Open Mic
March 11, 7–9pm, Krannert Art Museum, 500 E. Peabody, Champaign

Part-Time Union Staff Position

The CFA is hiring a staff person to replace the departing coordinator. Please share the job announcement below with any qualified candidates.

Seeking CFA Coordinator: The Campus Faculty Association (CFA) has an opening beginning March 1 for a 10-hour per week staff person.

Duties include: editing/formatting newsletter, correspondence, liaison with union/community groups, research, attending CFA meetings, maintaining email lists and the CFA website, and such clerical tasks as updating a membership database, event planning, and mail distribution. Compensation of $12 per hour plus contribution to health plan. Please call Mark Leff at 493-1706 or email application letter to mleff@illi-nois.edu. Applications received by 2/19/10 will receive full consideration.
New York/Champaign: Policing and Race

By Relden Fields

In his New York Times of February 2, columnist Bob Herbert discusses the 2009 statistics on NYPD stops and other police practices in that city. The data are for the first three quarters of that year, when 990,000 pedestrians and drivers were stopped by the police. That represented a 13% increase over 2008. What is striking is that 84% of those civilians stopped by the police were black or Hispanic.

Many might argue that these data reflect realities of crime and not racism. However, further data disputes this. For example, when people are frisked, whites are more likely than people of color to have illegal contraband (usually drugs)-2.2% of the whites had contraband, compared to 1.6% of the blacks and 1.5% of the Hispanics. The whites stopped were also more likely to have weapons on them-1.7% of the whites, 1.1% of the blacks, and 1.4% of the Hispanics. Based on evidence such as this, it would seem that whites are more likely to be responsible for crime (not even talk about white collar crime!) in New York City than are people of color. In response to these findings, the Center for Constitutional Rights has filed a class action suit against New York challenging the constitutionality of the NYPD's racially discriminatory pattern of stopping people.

However, the problems in the NYPD are not limited to stops. There are also the problems of overly violent policing, and of incredible brutality on the part of some officers. An example that gained national attention was the 1999 latching of an unarmed street peddler from Guanea named Amadou Diallo, who was shot forty-one times in front of the door of his own apartment building by a team of four white police officers. Some of the violence is pervasively sadistic. Such was the 1997 case of Haitian immigrant Abner Louima who was beaten and then sodomized with a broom handle that was then forced into his mouth. He suffered internal injuries and bro-ken teeth. And lest one think that this is old business, another NYPD officer is presently accused of a 2008 attack in which he rammed a police baton into the rectum of a man. In both of these New York cases the police were prosecuted, but that was made more difficult by the "code of silence" on the part of other officers who saw or knew of the violations.

However, such prosecutions are not the norm. In his 1995 compara-tive study of the New York and Los Angeles police departments, Profes-sor Paul Chevigny of the John Jay School of Criminal Justice in his book Edge of the Knife, found that police departments tended to not only disregard the validity of civil suits (from 1995 to 1997 the amount paid out to victims of police misconduct in NY went from $13.9 million to $27.3 million) and refuse to draw policy implications from them, but that the most violent officers tended to be rewarded with promotion and even to be made trainers of other officers.

The Champaign Police Department has just come out with its 2008/09 Report. The department does conduct periodic widespread stops of anyone out in public in the pre-dominantly African American areas of the city. Unlike the New York data, such stops are omitted from the report. But clearly these stops target blacks and if black people protest these stops or refuse to stop, they find themselves faced with obstruction of justice and/or resisting arrest charges, as was the case with 17 year-old Brian Chesley in March 2007 (see publici.ucmc.org/garyl308.pdf).

Regarding the vehicle stops, of a total of 9,159 such stops, 1,856 or 20% were of black drivers, 428 or 5% were of Asians, 240 or 3% were of Hispanics, and 4270 or 47% were of whites. If we compare these traffic stop data with the New York data on stops, it might seem that there is less discrimination in stops in Champaign. However, in Champaign Blacks comprise only 15.625%, and Hispanics only 4.03% of the popula-tion according to the latest (2002) census, while Whites comprise 26.6% and Hispanics 27% of the population of New York according to the same census. People of color are a majority in New York and a small minority in Champaign.

If we compare the number of white stops (4,270) over the white population in the 2000 census (49,398), with the number of black stops (1,856) over the total number of blacks (10,543), we find that blacks were over twice as likely to be stopped as whites—17.6% of black versus 8.6% of white stops. When it comes to consent searches, where the police ask for stopped drivers' consent to search their vehicles, 20 white drivers were asked for such permission and 38 minority drivers were asked. Keep in mind that we are not factoring in here the non-vehicular warrant sweeps in the black community that snare up exclusively or almost exclusively black people.

Ul Campus Antiwar Network Hosts Conference

By Pete Rhomberg

On February 27 and 28, the University of Illinois chapter of the Campus Antiwar Network (CAN) will be hosting the first national conference for the organization since its October 2008 Conference in Chicago. The Campus Antiwar Network is a col-lection of local chapters with one overarching aim: to immediately end the continued invasion and contextualizing the continued US war movement to speak at this upcoming conference. Headlin-ing it is Professor Michael Schwartz, a sociologist from Stony Bri-ant leaders in the national body of CAN graduated from Pace e Bene, and also be speaking, a veteran who has since worked tirelessly on the continued US war movement to speak at this upcoming conference. Headlin-ing it is Professor Michael Schwartz, a sociologist from Stony Bri-ant leaders in the national body of CAN graduated from Pace e Bene, and also be speaking, a veteran who has since worked tirelessly on

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Howard Zinn (1922–2010)

By Ned Parthun

Historian, author and activist Howard Zinn died on January 27, 2010. He was 87. He was involved in social justice movements and the author of over twenty books including *A People’s History of the United States*. Reading *A People’s History* was, for me, one of those moments that I’ll always remember. During my junior year of high school, my Catholic Social Justice teacher suggested the book, knowing that I was interested in teaching history. We worked our way through the book and put down. The stories were not only incredibly riveting but my attention also was grabbed by the fact that so much of this history had gone unreported in my previous courses. I immediately wanted to find out more about Zinn and the divergent history he so eloquently described.

Zinn would be the first person to admit that his work is not neutral, but it serves as a counterbalance to the god-like tone and revisionism of modern textbooks by giving voice to unrepresented and underrepresented groups. As Howard wrote, “My history...describes the inspiring struggle of those who have fought slavery and racism, of the labor organizers who have led strikes for the rights of working people, of the socialists and others who have protested war and militarism. My hero is not Theodore Roosevelt, who loved war and commercialized a general after a massacre of Filipino villagers at the turn of the century, but Mark Twain who denounced the massacre and satirized imperialism. I want young people to understand that ours is a beautiful country, but it has been taken over by men who have no respect for human rights or constitutional liberties. Our people are basically decent and caring, and our highest ideals are expressed in the Declaration of Independence, which says that all of us have an equal right to ‘life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness.’ The history of our country, I point out in my book, is a striving against corporate robber barons and war makers, to make those ideals a reality.”

Writing for the *New York Times*, historian, author and activist Alice Walker discussed Zinn’s writing, saying, “He was thrown out because he loved us, and he showed that love by just being with us. He loved his students. He didn’t see why we should be second-class citizens. He didn’t see why we shouldn’t be able to eat wherever we wanted to and sleep where we wanted to, and why we wanted to be with. And so, he was with us. He didn’t stay back, you know, in his tower there at the school.”

Ultimately, Zinn’s efforts showed the disparate interests between corporations/elite politicians and the nation’s people. This theme was made clear in his seminal work, *A People’s History of the United States*. From the instance I first read his book, I became thankful for Zinn’s scholarship as it is very much needed in today’s society. As James Loewen noticed about most history classrooms: “Students consider history to be the most irrelevant of subjects... They also learn history especially poorly... If you’ll look in your grammar, nonwhites do worse in English and most worse in history. Something intriguing is going on here... surely history is no more difficult for minorities than trigonometry or Faulkner. Students don’t even know that they don’t like Social Studies or aren’t good at history.”

As a 7th grade Social Studies teacher, I have found Zinn’s work indispensable to combat the problems Loewen’s analysis has uncovered. The first lesson my class does is a poll. I ask my students how many like history as their favorite subject. At most, two or three people raise their hand. For the rest of the period, the class develops a list of reasons why they don’t like history. Invariably, the lists become “the books too big, it is boring, people never seem to make mistakes, the stories are melodramatic and that it doesn’t apply to real life.”

To understand why they do not like the traditional texts, we look at why textbooks are written. To quote the case of Helen Keller as an example to discuss how human beings become heroes who never err. Helen Keller was blind and deaf, but she knew that it is those of us who are most wretched who are the most likely to be able to eat where we please and speak as we wish. As sociologist James Loewen puts it, “Many people serve as models for us when we are young; for these models, the ills we want to fight most are the ills we want to fight least.”

*NYC/Champaign: Policing*

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When we turn our lens onto other police practices, a highly disturbing picture emerges in the schools. School Resource Officers made 84 arrests at the Springfield South High School in one day. As of this writing, police violence tends to fall most severely intervention of the SROs. Of these arrestees, 62 were students. Students don’t like Social Studies or aren’t good at history. If you’ll look in your grammar, nonwhites do worse in English and worst in history. Something intriguing is going on here... surely history is no more difficult for minorities than trigonometry or Faulkner. Students don’t even know that they don’t like Social Studies or aren’t good at history.

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February 2010

Taking Back Our University

By Kerry Pimblott

Kerry Pimblott is a graduate student at African-American History at the University of Illinois and a member of the Graduate Employees’ Organization, Local 6300 (AFT/IFT-AFL-CIO).

Over the last year, it has become almost impossible to ignore the movement growing on college campuses both within and outside the United States. While diverse in their demands, seemingly independent local struggles converge around a common critique of the corporatization and privatization of public universities. Resulting in a demand that students and workers take back these institutions and re-imagine their composition and function. I remember organizing a Graduate Employees’ Organization (G.E.O.) rally that focused on this theme and received complaints that the anti-corporatization message was “too abstract.” Today, in the throes of a financial meltdown, the vast majority of the campus community recognizes the devastating effects of University corporatization and seeks meaningful solutions. Here at the University of Illinois we—and students and workers—are faced with an exciting and momentous opportunity to help build an international movement to take back our public universities, democratize them, re-imagine their composition and function, and extend access to all.

What do corporatization and privatization mean in the context of public universities? Put simply, they refer to an administration of this University—like others across the country—has already delimited access to an elite few. The promotion of an unstable and inequitable labor system has been one of the hallmarks of the corporatization of the University. As management sought to expand enrollment, they did so on the backs of a new, largely contingent labor force. Graduate employees, adjuncts, lecturers, and undergraduate TAs are being utilized as a form of cheap labor. Many work for low pay and no benefits. Of course, the tenure system has also been eroded, ensuring that the majority of contingent workers now have little or no hope of ever attaining job stability in the field for which they trained. Those that do “make-it” are confined to a field in which corporate logic powershapes the distribution of funds and, consequently, the range of acceptable intellectual projects.

All of these changes have been enacted by a corporate management structure in which decision-making is centralized in the hands of a few non-representative, highly paid administrators who have little understanding of the day-to-day realities of learning and labor on this campus. Systems of shared governance that have traditionally functioned as important mechanisms of accountability and oversight have been eroded and compromised. Decisions are made behind closed doors with little input from those that will be affected by them. In this context, it is no surprise that academic institutions are the hottest spots for unionization in the United States today. Academic labor systems are in flux, workers are alienated from decision-making processes, and the only way we can get our voice heard is through collective bargaining. For the most part, management resists the presence of unions and their incessant demands for better pay and benefits. Whenever possible, management seeks to limit the power of campus unions by excluding union representatives from important decision-making processes, engaging in aggressive bargaining practices, and outsourcing jobs to non-union workers.

While the problems faced by faculty, graduate employees, adjuncts, staff, service-workers, and students appear disparate, the reality is that they stem from the same root cause: corporate encroachment. Many of the aforementioned changes have been taking place for several decades, but when state and national financial structures imploded in 2009, campus workers and students were forced to navigate hostile labor negotiations, tuition increases, and furloughs rendering the implications of corporate management, skewed priorities manifest in poor investments, and a long-term failure to secure adequate state revenues have led most of us to believe that a new approach is necessary.

Now it is time for us—students and workers—to struggle collectively to re-democratize the campus. We must come together and develop a new vision for a public university that is equitable, accessible, and democratic.

If we truly believe that students from all backgrounds should be given the opportunity to attain a college degree, we must take a principled stand on halting tuition increases now. We must inform the Board of Trustees that as a campus community we will no longer allow them to balance the budget by restricting access to the privileged few. Rather, we should take a unified stand on public funding increases for higher education and back that up by lobbying in Springfield and staging major rallies and protests in solidarity with our peers on campuses across the globe.

While we push for these larger fiscal changes, we also need to educate each other on the administrative operations of our campus by studying the budget and taking collective stands on how funds should be allocated. The administration has shown that its priorities are inconsistent with the rest of the campus community. We must articulate our own priorities and organize to ensure that they are represented. While we could utilize the language of “excellence in teaching and research” that has often characterized demands in higher education—we might also add new priorities reflective of our broad-based coalition. These could include the expansion of access, the promotion of a stable and equitable labor system, and the fortification of meaningful relations between campus and community.

Ensuring that our priorities resonate in the long-term will require that we commit ourselves to the democratization of the university. The interests of faculty, students, and organized labor must be democratically represented at all levels of decision-making from the smallest academic unit to the Board of Trustees. While administrators are focused on the bottom line, workers and students are best situated to understand the effects on the ground. Our collective knowledge of what works and what doesn’t is invaluable to the effective operation of this campus. Therefore, we must fight to decentralize administrative decision-making, restore and enhance mechanisms of accountability, and promote the practice of participatory democracy.

If you would like to help build this movement to promote an equitable, accessible, and democratic university, please join us by participating in the "March Forth on March 4th National Day of Action to Defend Public Higher Education!"

OCTOBER 7

PEOPLES’ COMMUNITY POTLUCK

Sunday, March 7, 6–8 PM, Independent Media Center, 202 South Broadway, Urbana

The Peoples’ Community Potluck is a food-sharing communal gathering to discuss the economic and social problems in our community. The intention is to harness the talents and resources of local organizations and individuals to improve the conditions of working people, unemployed people, poverty-stricken people, and those who are physically or mentally unable to care for themselves. Given the sorry state of the economy over the past 8 years, and government economic policy that has been most concerned with the well-being of the very wealthy, organizations and individuals at the grass-roots level are going to have to use social conscience and talents to find ways of supporting the most vulnerable people in our communities. We cannot just rely on the new administration to turn things around. We envision a new stimulus for coordinated action and communication for a democratic, egalitarian political-economy.