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

#### EDITORS/FACILITATORS:

Marya Burke  
 Brian Dolinar  
 davep  
 Belden Fields  
 Bob Illyes  
 Paul Mueth  
 Carly Nix  
 Neil Parthun  
 Niloofar Shambayati

#### The Public i

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



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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.

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# THE POLICE

**The ones who** beat Rodney King, **who** gunned down Sean Bell, Amadou Diallo and Oscar Grant, **who** murdered Fred Hampton in his bed. **The ones who** enforced Apartheid in South Africa and segregation in the United States. **The ones who** broke Victor Jara's hands and Steve Biko's skull, **who** disappeared dissidents from Argentina to Zaire, **who** gladly served Josef Stalin. **The ones who** interrogated Black Panthers and harassed Catholic Workers.

**The ones who** maintained records on 16 million people in East Germany, **who** track us through surveillance cameras and phone taps. **The ones** firing tear gas and rubber bullets whenever a demonstration gets out of hand, **who** back the bosses in every strike. **The ones who** stand between every hungry person and the grocery shelves stocked with food, between every homeless person and the buildings standing empty, between every immigrant and her family.



In every nation, in every age, you tell us you're indispensable, that without you we'd all be killing each other. But we know well enough who the killers are.

**It's Time To Get Organized! Stay Tuned...**

POLICE EVERYWHERE, JUSTICE NOWHERE  www.crimetmc.com/police

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# The Public

A Paper of  the People

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## "COME THE REVOLUTION" GRANDPA W

**Commemorative brick honoring "Grandpa" Bob Wahlfeldt (1925-2008) located in Cherry Alley next to Urbana Free Library**



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## Urbana Neighborhood Connections, Inc.

By Belden Fields



On January 19 of this year, Neighborhood Connections Center, Inc opened its doors as a community learning center for African American young people. It is located at 1401 E. Main Street in Urbana. The Center is the creation of Janice Mitchell, who has been the Parent and Community Liaison for the Urbana School District for the last four years. Prior to that, she had worked with the Prairie Tracks after school program for African American students, and a parent, at Prairie School. Prairie Tracks focuses on African American culture and the performing arts, and takes students on trips to important sites in African American history in the U.S. and Canada.

The new Center is an all-year operation. During the school year, there is after-school tutoring for high school students who need help with their homework. On two Fridays a month there is a 6 to 9 pm evening program in which students are helped to develop their social skills through discussions of films and books. Parents are also welcome to attend these sessions.

During the summer, the Center is open every weekday from 8 am to 5 pm. The day begins with a prayer and breakfast, followed by a discussion of current events from articles in the *News-Gazette*. Political and economic events are discussed, as is the weather. Then the young people work on

journals that can be on either a suggested topic or one of their choosing. At 9:30AM, the students are divided into four age/grade groups: K-3, 4-6, 7-8, and high school. Each group is offered sessions in reading and literacy, math, and social and emotional learning. Four university students majoring in either education or early childhood development lead the sessions. They are part-time paid employees.

The last session in the morning is devoted to a team-building exercise that emphasizes mutual respect, cooperation, loyalty, and teamwork. At 11:45AM, the students are offered lunch. The afternoon consists of arts and crafts, movie/TV time, a snack break, and then some sort of outreach or recreational activity, such as a field trip, service learning, or swimming. High school students are permitted in the summer program from noon to 5. There are only 10 of them, while there are 67 youngsters from grades K through 8 in the summer program.

There is a tuition charge of \$20 per week (\$160 for the full 8 weeks) for a first child, and half that for the remaining children in the family. Ten children who would otherwise not be able to attend do so on a grant from the Local Area Network (LANS).

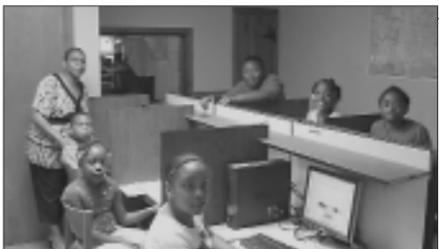


K-3<sup>rd</sup> grade reading and literacy class

Several aspects of the center were particularly impressive. First, and foremost, was Janice Mitchell who came to this project through a lot of both volunteer and paid experience with the Urbana schools. She lives in the neighborhood where the Center is located and she knows the children and their parents. She had a very clear vision of how an educational program should be structured

for children of the different age groups. Second was the large amount of space that was available in the two-story former Harley-Davidson sales store and apartment above it, and the amount of volunteer work that it took to make it useable for this purpose. One of the volunteers in the work was the head of the County Housing Authority, which acquired the property from the former owners and turned it over to the Center. Third was the generosity of the two major hospitals, the VFW post one block from the Center, and other people who donated furniture and equipment that they no longer wanted. This is truly a community center in that it brought together the efforts of the city of Urbana that gave it a grant, the County Housing Authority that offered the property, the local hospitals, the VFW, the Local Area Network, and private parties who offered volunteer labor, furniture, and equipment.

For more information on the Center, call (217) 954-1749.



Janice Mitchell with children in the computer lab

## Human Services in Hard Times: State Budget Deficits Threaten the Most Vulnerable Among Us

By David Green



David Green is a Policy Analyst for the Center for Prevention Research and Development, Institute for Government and Public Affairs, University of Illinois. The editorial views expressed are his own.

Government-funded human services are defined in specific terms in relation to state-level administrative structures and the state's annual budget. These services do not technically include significant portions of the budget devoted to health care and education. Human services—thus narrowly defined—are primarily delivered by the Department of Human Services (IDHS), Department of Children and Family Services (IDCFS), Department of Aging (DoA), Department of Public Health (IDPH), and the Department of Veterans Affairs (IDVA). When defined in this manner, human services account for over 23% (over \$6 billion) of the current fiscal year's (2010) State Operating Budget. More-

over, county and municipal funding for human services is relatively minimal.

Human service-oriented state departments and the contracted nonprofit agencies that most often deliver these services are particularly financially endangered during the current recession due to either budget cuts or delayed payment for services. It's important to understand why this is the case, as these services are delivered to many of the most vulnerable among us: the physically and developmentally disabled, the elderly, poor children, at-risk youth, the mentally ill, and those in need of addiction treatment.

Two major economic factors determine our current predicament of enormous budget shortfalls: the recession caused by the speculative housing bubble and stock market crash and consequently lowered state revenues (income tax and sales tax); and the long-term structural deficit of our state's taxation system. This structural deficit reflects the decades-long disappearance of at least 200,000 well-paid manufacturing jobs and overall stagnant wages—as well as the dysfunctional flat, low, and regressive state income tax.

According to the Center for Tax and Budget Accountability, we have experienced a decade-long real decline in almost all state services other than health care, when adjusted for both inflation and population growth. For human services, this has been on the order of 12% since 2002. In that year, for example, Illinois already ranked 31st nationally in per capita funding for both mental health and developmental disabilities.

The federal American Recovery and Reinvestment Act (ARRA), also known as the stimulus bill, has largely neglected funding for human services as defined above. Of the \$700+ billion national program, \$140 billion over a 2-year period is specifically devoted to addressing budget shortfalls experienced by 48 states (all except Montana and North Dakota). Illinois' portion of that total is \$10.5 billion, equaling about 40% of our state's shortfalls for combined fiscal years 2010 and 2011. At least 80% of that funding is specified by law for health care, education, and employment security.

In contrast, funding specified for IDHS, IDCFS, and DoA totals \$174 million, or

1.6% of total ARRA grants devoted to closing our state deficit. This 1.6% is in sharp contrast to the 23% of the budget that is devoted to human services. The human consequences of these cold facts are clear when one reads in the newspaper about the struggles of local government agencies and nonprofit organizations to not only deliver services, but to fiscally survive.

According to the Social Impact Research Center at the Heartland Alliance, almost 2,600 nonprofit organizations deliver at least \$5 billion of human services ranging from emergency assistance to the homeless, to mental health crisis intervention, to youth development, to residential and day care for the disabled. Of these, the majority has annual revenues of under \$500,000 and 307 have revenues of less than \$50,000. According to the same study, these organizations are lean, efficient, effective, and accountable.

Once nonprofit organizations shut their doors, they are not easily re-constituted at a later date, even if funding is made available.

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# Valedictorian Speech From The Odyssey Project

By Janice Walker

Janice Walker gave this valedictorian speech at The Odyssey Project's graduation ceremony in May.

Good Afternoon Friends, Family and Faculty. Thank you for taking time to celebrate with the 2010 Graduating class of the Odyssey Project.

About 2-years ago I saw the Odyssey Program advertised in the *News Gazette* paper and I thought WOW, what an opportunity but at that time my personal plate was full and I couldn't take advantage of the Project, but I did tell others about it, and one of my

fellow co-workers completed the program last year. Little did I know a year later I would need some additional humanities credits in order to complete my Bachelor of Science Degree and so on a personal note that is what this project has done for me.

Answers.com gives a definition of the word ODYSSEY as an extended adventurous voyage or trip. An intellectual or spiritual quest. Both definitions are fitting to what we've experienced.

This is my explanation of the letters which spell ODYSSEY:

**O Opportunity**—to reach new heights in the Humanities

**D Dignity**—everyone has a story worth telling and listening to

**Y Yearning**—we were here to increase our educational pursuits

**S Solidarity**—there was unity of purpose and togetherness

**S Success**—this is an event that accomplishes an intended purpose

**E Effort**—it took physical energy to get to class and mental energy to maintain in class

**Y Yes**—an affirmative yes you can, it is so, we are the ones who made it through

A quote from Nelson Mandela says education is the great engine of personal development. It is through education that the daughter of a peasant can become a doctor, that a son of a mineworker can become the head of the mine, and that a child of farm workers can become the president.

Thank you Odyssey Project and all who have traveled this odyssey with me.

## Odyssey Project

By Kerry Pimblott



For the past four years, the Odyssey Project has offered a free-college accredited course in the humanities to workers and low-income men and women in Champaign County. Thanks to support from both the Illinois Humanities Council (IHC) and the University of Illinois, we are able to offer students an intensive study of philosophy, art history, literature, U.S. history, and critical thinking and writing. Classes are taught by University of Illinois instructors and take place every Tuesday and Thursday evening from September to May at the Douglass Branch Library in Champaign. Tuition is free, as are books, transportation, and childcare.

This year has been a signal one for the Odyssey Project. After receiving over sixty applications, we were able to admit a full class of thirty-five students in the fall. By May, a record nineteen students received college credits and a total of seventeen graduated making the Champaign Branch of the Odyssey Project one of the most successful in the country.

Graduates from the Odyssey Project receive six transfer-



The 2010 Odyssey Project grads

able college credits from Bard College in New York. This year's graduates are using their credits and the confidence gained from the Odyssey Project to reach a diverse array of goals. For some graduates, like Janice Walker, the Odyssey Project has provided the last six credits needed to graduate from college. For others, the experience of getting back into

the classroom has encouraged them to return to college after several years away or to retrain for an entirely new vocation. This fall, two of our graduates will be enrolling at Eastern Illinois University and a third will be returning to Stanford University to complete her degree. These are just some of the ways in which the Odyssey Project is partnering with non-traditional students to forward their goals and aspirations.

This year, we will also be offering incoming students and alumni access to a brand new computer literacy program during the summer. This computer literacy program is possible due to seed funding awarded by the Community Informatics Initiative (CII) and the Odyssey Project's partnership with David Adcock and the Urbana Adult Education program. Together, we hope to provide an opportunity for past and future students to upgrade their computer skills and build a broader learning community that sustains and empowers members of the Odyssey community.

If you would like to join The Odyssey Project this fall, please contact Kerry Pimblott at (217) 244-3344 or at kpimblo2(at)gmail.com.

## eBlack Project: Online and In The Community

By Noah Lenstra

The history of African-Americans in Champaign-Urbana has gone virtual! A new project, called eBlackChampaign-Urbana, is working to bring together the documentation of this important history online to find new ways to celebrate, remember and use it into the present and future. The eBlackChampaign-Urbana website ([www.eBlackCU.net](http://www.eBlackCU.net)) features digitized newspaper clippings, photographs, church programs, obituaries, research papers, scrapbooks, maps and more on the local African-American experience. All are welcome to add to this database and use whatever content is in it for whatever purposes they wish.

Why a website? By 2012 most homes in the historic "North End" of Champaign and Urbana will have access to low-cost high-speed broadband internet connectivity through the Urbana-Champaign Big Broadband (UC2B) initiative, <http://uc2b.net>. At the eBlackCU project we want to create the digital infrastructure to enable all past, present and future residents of Champaign-Urbana to become inspired by the rich heritage of the local African-American community and its struggles for equality in housing, education, employment, financing, as well as for an end to discrimination and racism. Through this project and others we hope to involve and engage everyone in the use of digital technology for life-long learning. The technology enables us to share this history



The eBlack team

across Champaign-Urbana, and across the globe, but everyone has to be an active participant in the technology for the project to matter.

The eBlackCU project is experimenting with the best ways to animate this archive of local history. Projects so far have included creating bibliographies/webliographies of local African-American history; creating research guides to primary source documentation in area archives, libraries, and museums; using social

media platforms like Facebook to advertise the collections we have brought together; digitizing and bringing together source material; creating oral histories; and creating curriculum guides for local educators to use in the classroom.

Future projects will focus on addressing campus-community issues in Champaign-Urbana. In October look for a publication tentatively entitled "Opening Up the University," which will bring together documentation of the University's impact, through research and engagement, in the African-American communities of Champaign-Urbana. For November 5-6 mark your calendars for the eBlackCU project's campus-community symposium, which will focus especially on technology and its impacts, actual and potential, on civic life, but will also include other issues of interest to local African-American residents. All are welcome to join the steering committee for this symposium. Our goal in these activities is to

change the way the University reports to, and makes itself accountable for, its actions in the community. In the process of building the eBlackCU database we have found that the University has been an engine for creating documentation on local African-American life through theses, dissertations, papers and more, yet this documentation rarely intersects with community life in constructive ways.

Everyone is encouraged and welcomed to participate in the eBlackCU project. The project is organized by Abdul Alkalimat (Gerald McWorter) and Noah Lenstra from the Department of African-American Studies and the Graduate School of Library and Information Science at the University

*Continued on the next page*

### Did You Know....?



- That Champaign County has continuously had an African-American population since the late 1840s?
- That there were over ten African-American newspapers and newsletters in Champaign-Urbana throughout the Twentieth Century?
- That there have been African-American communities not only in Champaign-Urbana, but also in places such as Sydney, Homer, Broadlands, Rantoul and other places throughout Champaign County?



## In Defense of Mumia Abu Jamal From the Campaign To End The Death Penalty

The Campaign to End the Death Penalty (CEDP) is appalled by the news that several individuals of leading anti-death penalty organizations have signed a confidential memorandum stating that the "involvement of Mumia Abu-Jamal endangers the U.S. coalition for abolition of the death penalty." The memo further argues that the World Coalition Against the Death Penalty should not highlight Mumia's case because doing so "unnecessarily attracts our strongest opponents and alienates coalition partners at a time when we need to build alliances, not foster hatred and enmity." ([www.thiscantbehappening.net/node/117](http://www.thiscantbehappening.net/node/117))

This memo was drafted on December 21, 2009, yet it only recently came to light following the 4th World Congress Against the Death Penalty, held on March 4 in Geneva, Switzerland. At this meeting, a telephone call came in from Mumia Abu-Jamal, and he addressed the audience. At this point, several members of U.S. abolitionist groups got up and walked out in protest.

The Campaign to End the Death Penalty strongly condemns this action and completely disagrees with the approach to the anti-death penalty struggle that this memo puts forth.

First of all, we unequivocally support and endorse Mumia Abu-Jamal in his struggle for justice. We believe in his innocence and see Mumia's case as fraught with many of the same injustices as other death penalty cases--racial bias, police misconduct and brutality, and prosecutorial and judicial prejudice.

Mumia Abu-Jamal has been on Pennsylvania's death row for the past 28 years and remains there because the courts, under pressure from the Fraternal Order of Police, have thwarted his efforts to win his freedom. From his prison cell, Mumia has galvanized an international movement of support towards his efforts to win justice. He has written numerous books and articles shedding light on our prison-industrial complex as well as other historical and current political issues. He is widely read, known and respected. His commentaries on prison radio are nothing short of brilliant. He has helped to educate millions of people about the true workings of the criminal justice system. But most importantly, he has been an inspiration to all those fighting to win abolition, lending his voice of hope, his encouragement and his unfaltering determination to our movement.

So why would a delegation of U.S. abolitionists would get up and walk out of a meeting when Mumia addresses

the audience? Shouldn't they have stood and applauded?

The explanation for this reprehensible action is explained in the secret memo, which basically puts forth the argument that to have anything to do with Mumia's case ruins the chances of winning abolition of the death penalty.

Why? Here is what the memo states, in part: "The support of law enforcement officials is essential to achieving abolition in the United States. It is essential to the national abolition strategy of U.S. abolition activists and attorneys that we cultivate the voices of police, prosecutors and law enforcement experts to support our call for an end to the death penalty."

This statement points to a very disturbing direction that we have observed in recent years among some organizations in the abolition movement--of compromising our message in order to win the support of conservatives. This has led leading death penalty organizations to downplay the impact of race in the criminal justice system and to advocate reaching out to law enforcement as a means of winning abolition of the death penalty.

Those who espouse this strategy ignore or downplay the role that police play in railroading many poor people and African Americans onto death row. They ignore the role that police, prosecutors and judges play as guardians of an unjust legal system that disproportionately targets the poor and people of color. The outcome of this strategy has led to the marginalization of prisoners like Mumia, whose voices from behind prison walls are so important in this fight.

The individuals who drafted the memo go on to identify the voices that they seek to include: "The voices of the Innocent, the voices of Victims and the voices of Law Enforcement are the most persuasive factors in changing public opinion and the views of decision-makers (politicians) and opinion leaders (the media). Continuing to shine a spotlight on Abu-Jamal, who has had so much public exposure for so many years, threatens to alienate these three most important partnership groups."

We in the CEDP couldn't disagree more with this strategy. We believe the most "persuasive factor" in changing public opinion is to build a vocal, visible movement that forthrightly puts forward its demands-- instead of working to make our message palatable to the opposition.

Consider the analogies to past struggles. What if Martin Luther King compromised the goals of integration in order to reach out and try to win over segregationists? No, he

reached out to organize and uplift progressive forces into fighting for change. That is the kind of strategy we need.

The men and women on death row across the country--including the guilty--are not our enemy. The enemy is the system of punitive thought that portrays them as monsters so that the public can feel okay about killing them. It is part of the punitive philosophy upon which the legal system is based--the same system that breeds crime in the first place, that gives so little support to victims of abuse, that says it believes in rehabilitation but then won't fund it, that says it believes in education but then takes money away to build prisons instead.

We reject the logic of having the Fraternal Order of Police as a partner or ally. The FOP has organized against our efforts to win justice for Mumia, for Troy Davis, for the Burge Torture victims in Chicago and countless others.

Our approach is based on an anti-racist perspective. We know that the history of aggressive policing, sentencing and the death penalty has its roots in slavery--that the tough on crime rhetoric of lock-em-up-and-throw-away-the-key is racially coded language.

The Campaign stands completely and unequivocally with Mumia Abu-Jamal. We also stand by a different strategy to win abolition.

Instead of marginalizing voices like Mumia, we should be developing more innovative and creative ways to put them forward--and not just Mumia's, but others, including Troy Davis, Rodney Reed and Kevin Cooper, to name a few. We need to put the human face on this issue. We need to build a movement that challenges the racism and class bias nature of the death penalty--and to point out that these injustices exist in the broader criminal justice system as well.

In order to build a fight that can win real justice, we cannot marginalize "divisive" issues like racism. Instead, we have to take them on frontally. And instead of reaching out to the conservative elements in society, we should be reaching out to progressive elements and building bridges there. Let's not forget that the lowest level of support for the death penalty (42 percent) was in 1966, at the height of the civil rights movement. Let's work to place the fight for abolition squarely in the progressive camp, where it most surely belongs.

Please visit: [www.nodeathpenalty.org](http://www.nodeathpenalty.org)

**FREE MUMIA! ONWARDS TO ABOLITION!**

## Alleged Torturer and Ex-Cop, Jon Burge, Convicted of Perjury and Obstruction of Justice

By Neil Parthun



Former Chicago Police Sargeant Jon Burge was convicted on June 28 on federal perjury and obstruction of justice charges. US Attorney Patrick Fitzgerald had charged Burge with lying in court papers during a civil lawsuit that had alleged Burge had tortured and abused an African American suspect during Burge's tenure as a Chicago police officer.

It was common knowledge by the mid-

1990s that Burge had engaged in what the City of Chicago called "savage torture" by suffocating via typewriter bags, mock executions, physical assaults and electrical shocks to over 100 African American suspects during his 19-year career. The article "The Local Legacy of Torture" in the October 2008 edition of the *Public i* discusses the Burge accusations in more detail.

While the statute of limitations for the abuses had lapsed, the 62-year old Burge was arrested and charged with lying about the torture in October 2008. According to

juror Gary Dollinger, photos, medical records and statements from doctors and lawyers bolstered the testimony of the victims. Dollinger stated, "You can't just discount all of it. If it was just their word against Jon Burge, nobody else, maybe you could start questioning it, throw in some reasonable doubt but there's just too much evidence to just say that they're just making it all up." Dollinger referenced the six cases of torture brought up during the trial and said that it made the jury believe there were more allegations not brought before them.

Having been convicted, Burge faces up to 45 years in prison. While Burge escaped punishment for his horrific abuses, his conviction is some measure of justice. However, activists are not finished. Although they are celebrating this victory, there is still a movement to prosecute the other officers involved in the Chicago police abuses, get compensation for those who were abused and wrongfully imprisoned, and free those who continue to remain in prison due to their coerced confessions.

## eBlack Project: Online and In The Community

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of Illinois. Partners include the Champaign County Historical Archives, Urbana Free Library; Early American Museum, Champaign County Forest Preserve District; Salem Baptist Church and the Community Informatics Initiative, UIUC.

We encourage everyone to add to our database with your personal archives of local history. If you would like assistance

digitizing your pieces or memories of African-American history in Champaign-Urbana, the project team, which includes six African-American high school and community college youth interns this Summer, will be happy to work with you to share your history with others. We also welcome volunteers of all ages, and all abilities, to join our effort. Inquiries should

be directed to Noah Lenstra at: Graduate School of Library and Information Science, c/o Noah Lenstra, 501 East Daniel, Champaign, IL 61820, by e-mail at [nlenstr2\(at\)illinois.edu](mailto:nlenstr2(at)illinois.edu), or phone at 244-0263 or 815-275-0268.



# Education vs. Incarceration: The Early Release Program in Illinois

By Brian Dolinar



With a current state budget deficit in Illinois of some \$13 billion, among the largest in the country, state legislators are making tough decisions about where to save money. Recently, Governor Pat Quinn proposed an “early release” program for prison inmates who have committed nonviolent crimes, but it was quickly met by a political backlash. The state has also seen severe cuts in public education. With the current economic crisis, Illinois residents will soon have to decide which they value more education or incarceration.

In July 2009, Governor Quinn announced plans for cutbacks in corrections that would save a projected \$125 million. It included an early release program that would eventually free more than 1,700 inmates in Illinois prisons and put them on parole. Similar programs have been implemented in California and Ohio with some success. According to the Taxpayer Action Board, a panel appointed by Quinn to analyze the budget for possible reductions, the state could save as much as \$65 million this year and potentially \$400 million annually by looking at alternatives to incarceration. This is in addition to increased productivity of those who would remain out of prison, not to mention the emotional benefit to families if their loved ones are not sent away. It costs on average \$24,000 to house a prisoner for a year, while it only costs \$4,000 to supervise a parolee. For many low-level offenders, parole is obviously a much better option.

With fewer people in prison, Quinn wanted to lay off more than 1,000 correctional officers. Republican lawmakers warned that reductions in staff would threaten security at prisons. AFSCME, the union that represents correctional officers in Illinois, promptly filed a lawsuit that blocked the firings. In negotiations, the union accepted deferred pay raises for two years and voluntary furloughs. No other alternatives were offered to save the state in staffing costs.

In 2009, the overall budget for the Illinois Department of Corrections was \$1.44 billion. This was what it cost to house roughly 45,000 inmates in 28 prisons. In comparison, the state expenditures for public universities in Illinois is roughly equivalent, with \$1.4 billion being spent in 2007. This was what it cost to educate approximately 200,000 students at nine public universities.

Currently, lawmakers are looking for ways to cut one billion dollars from public education which has a total budget of \$10 billion, one quarter of the state expenditures. Within the University of Illinois system, some 11,000 employees were required to take four furlough days in 2010 to save the state \$82 million. This was in

addition to a wage freeze already in place. On the Urbana campus, dozens of Facilities and Services workers have been laid off. Positions have not been filled for faculty who have moved or retired.

During the primary election for Governor, Democratic contender Dan Hynes criticized Quinn’s early release program, saying it was done in “secret.” By December 2009, it came out in the newspapers that more than a dozen of those released early had already reoffended. Little mention was made of the statistics showing that, without education, work, or re-entry programs, half of inmates reoffend. Quinn blamed Illinois Corrections Director Michael Randle for the mistake. A state law was passed by the legislature that required inmates had to serve at least 61 days of a 12-month sentence. Those who had been released early were hauled back into prison. Quinn narrowly won the primary in March 2010 and was declared the Democratic Party candidate.

In the run-up to the primary election, local State’s Attorney Julia Rietz, who was supporting Dan Hynes’ campaign, attempted to do a political hit job on Quinn. The *News-Gazette* ran a story in which Rietz said she had obtained a list of the 21 early release inmates from Champaign County, a list given to her by Hynes. Rietz called Quinn “irresponsible” for releasing the individuals without notifying her first. Most of those on the list had been locked up for violating the terms of their DUI convictions and had sentences ranging from 12 to 24 months.

I made contact with one of the early release inmates from Champaign County. Luke Durso is a self-described “country boy” from the small town of Sidney, Illinois. He was caught driving with a suspended license after getting a DUI in April 2009. He was given a public defender who he said, “didn’t try very hard.” Judge Chase Leonard sentenced him to 12 months in prison, of which he had to serve 61 days before being paroled. Durso said he was about to finish a three-year apprenticeship as a Union

Glazer working with metal and glass for Local 1168, but lost the job when he was sentenced to prison. He was sent to Western Illinois Correctional Center in Mt. Sterling, a level two medium security prison where inmates spend 22 hours locked up with two hours of recreational time. As part of the early release program, Durso got out after 34 days of time served. He got two jobs laying dry wall and working on a horse ranch. His parole officer showed up one morning several weeks later and was apologetic, but said he had to take him back to prison. Durso returned to serve the remaining 27 days at Logan Correctional Center in Lincoln, Illinois.

I talked to Durso after he was released and back home in Sidney. Under the terms of intensive house arrest, he had to see a parole officer every two weeks, check in every day by calling a phone number, and submit to drug testing. He was happy to be out of prison, but the two

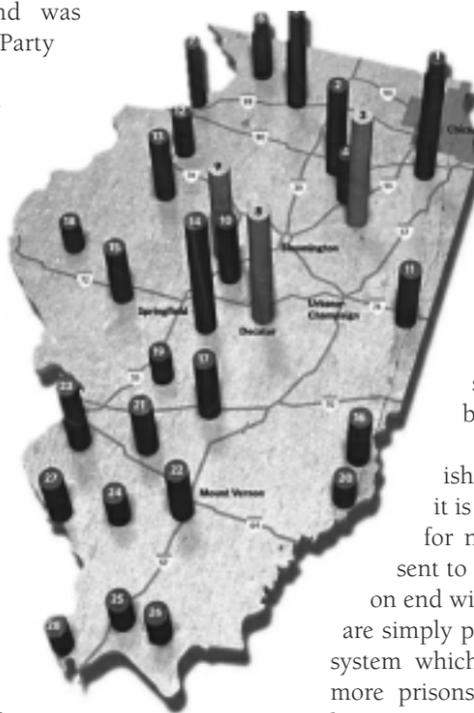
terms he had served in prison had turned his life upside down. He was 25 years old when he was locked up. He owns a house and has a four-year-old son. His inconsistent income has put him in a financial bind.

I asked Durso about the guys he was locked up with. He said most of them were “decent people” with families and jobs, not “dirtball crackheads.” According to Durso, 90% of the guys he met were locked up for “dirty drops” they had smoked marijuana while they were on probation and failed a drug test.

Whether people like Durso should be punished for drunk driving is unquestionable. But it is doubtful that prison time is the best option for nonviolent offenders. Thousands are being sent to prison for years to sit in a jail cell for hours on end with no benefit to themselves or society. They are simply providing the raw material for a self-serving system which has lobbied for three decades to build more prisons, employ more correctional officers, and hire more prosecutors.

State lawmakers in Springfield are not expected to come up with a solution to the current budget shortfall until after the November election. Spending for prisons, schools, and other services is outpacing the revenue that can be brought in by taxes. If anything will roll back the trend of mass incarceration in the United States, it may be the current financial crisis.

*Thanks to IMC interns Adrienne Thomas, Megan Bandy, Joe Cajindos, and Sarah Anane for assisting with research for this project.*



## Human Services in Hard Times

Continued from page 1

The infrastructure is gone, and their skilled employees have moved on. The needy and vulnerable are left to fend for themselves, often in hospital emergency rooms or prisons, if not on the street. Meanwhile, the unemployment of human service workers contributes to decreased economic demand and the tenuous nature of our so-called recovery. The structurally vicious and heartless cycle continues, in both economic and human terms—all in the name of an emphasis on deficit reduction that is profoundly misguided and counterproductive

in terms of both fundamental economic theory and humane values.

Since 2008, the federal government has infused trillions of dollars to “save” the financial system—Wall Street and the major banks. The \$787 billion stimulus package was, in comparison, a drop in the bucket, both in relation to the financial bailout and the need for \$2 trillion of heightened consumer demand. In that context, funds directed at human services have already divided this drop several times over. Given these realities, it is incumbent upon our state officials

and legislature to act decisively to address both immediate needs and the long-term structural deficit. It is difficult to understand inaction in the face of both dire necessity and clearly available solutions. Given the understanding and political will, our state can easily move from being the worst example to the best. The leadership, however, will likely have to originate at a popular level with what is currently described by the mainstream media as “populist anger.”

### Get Involved with the Public i

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.



# The Summer Construction Education Program

Belden Fields



There are not many minorities or women in the building trades. The Summer Construction Education Program tries to do something about that by introducing young minority people and women to the skills of the trades in a hands-on way.

A multi-county office named Education for Employment (EFE) administers the program. Going back several years, two local citizens, Tanya Parker and this author, had been talking with each other and trying to make contacts with others about the need to offer viable skills to young people who might not go on to higher education. One of the people we made contact with was Sean McLaughlin, Director of EFE in this area, to see if he might have the interest and the resources to launch such a program. Shortly after our conversation with Sean, he created a task force made up of trade unionists, public school officials, people from Parkland College and the U of I, and other interested parties to plan a construction training program. It was decided that a four-week summer program aimed at high school students going into their junior or senior years would be the way to go. White males would be eligible, but preference would be given to minority and female students.

The program was launched in the summer of 2008. The participating schools were Champaign Central and Centennial, Urbana, and Rantoul high schools. Lorie McDonald in the EFE office was charged with overseeing the program. Champaign Central's industrial arts teacher Alex Ramirez became the lead instructor in the program, to be assisted in 2009 and 2010 by Rantoul High School teacher Steven Lowe. Brochures were sent to the high school counselors and were circulated in the community in a limited way. In addition to offering credit for the course, the schools paid the students' wages of \$7.50 per hour in 2008 and 2009. Because of the budgetary crisis, the schools could not afford the money, up this year, so the students are now being paid a flat \$500 out of other grant money. The city of Urbana has also made grants to the program.

The process is as follows: the students fill out an application in which they must offer information on their academic standing and their attendance record. They must also write a short essay on their interest in the program and request letters of recommendation from their teachers or counselors. A panel that assesses the appropriateness of the applicant for the program then interviews each applicant. This year there were 16 students accepted, fairly evenly spread between the two Champaign high schools and Urbana's. But there was also a student from the R.E.A.D.Y program and one from Urbana Adult Education. A large majority of the students are African American. There is one Latino student. There was one female student last year. While it was hoped that her experience might attract more female applicants this year, none applied.

The students begin the summer program with brief instruction in the construction lab at Central, but they very soon move out into hands-on experience in building a small structure like a garage for a private party who pays for the materials. The students learn how to pour and smooth the cement floor, frame the walls, install windows and doors, roof, and install electricity. While plumbing is not involved in a garage, they also get instruction in plumbing and pipe-fitting. Trades people in the unions offer help in the instruction in their specialized areas. But the students learn even more, including reliable attendance, promptness, and working cooperatively as a team. In addition, they learn work safety and receive an OSHA safety certificate that they can present to prospective employers or to unions if they should apply for apprenticeship programs.

Even if those students who complete the program choose not to enter the building trades, the skills they learn in this program and the satisfaction that they can actually create things with their hands is bound to be a transformative experience that raises self-esteem. For those who will choose the building trades as their vocation, it will prove to be a good initial preparation for providing materially for self and family. And, it will hopefully contribute to the diversification of the unionized work force.

For more information on the program, contact Lorie McDonald at (217) 355-1382.



Learning cut boards for framing the garage



Grading the foundation



Students are proud of their work thus far



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## 2010 U. S. Social Forum, Detroit

By Sarah Ross



If you want to connect to people involved in just about every social justice issue our nation faces, you would find your people at the US Social Forum. The first USSF was held in Atlanta in 2007. This year the gathering of over 12,000 convened in

Detroit. The USSF program states: "a unifying theme amongst all the forums... is that the solutions to the global crises we are all facing will not come from the governments or institutions, but they will come from the people's movements and organizations. We have the bottom up, trans-local exits to the crises. The alternatives to the neo-liberal agenda are becoming reality." This was apparent not only in the many reports from organizations around the nation, but in Detroit itself. So, it is apt that a gathering of movement-builders, organizers and activists would come to a city that has become the icon of capitalistic disasters. Detroit, the city of hope, had a lot to show the nation, and it did.

The Forum opened with a beautiful march down Woodward Ave., through the downtown, to the waterfront where the conference center was located. The march, a more than two hour walk on a very hot June day, was attended by everyone from local Detroit activists to organized domestic workers from New York to formerly incarcerated "Ban the Box" organizers from Massachusetts. Songs were sung, music was played, and the gathering ended with a plenary in Cobo Hall. The bulk of the Forum followed a somewhat typical conference format, with a dizzying amount of panels, assemblies and plenaries. Workshop tracks included panels discussing pressing issues such as displacement, migration, the rust belt, democracy and governance, media justice, and Indigenous Sovereignty, just to name a few. I followed a track that included ideas of prison abolition and organizing, which I will mention below.

Others in my group found panelists from New Orleans, working together as the Greater New Orleans Organizers' Roundtable, who shared methods for building a regional network of trust and support. Much of their methodology was founded on the work of the People's Institute for Survival and Beyond, an organization that "helps individuals, communities, organizations and institutions move beyond addressing the symptoms of racism to undoing the causes of racism so as to create a more just and equitable society." Some went to the Detroit Black Community Food Security



International graffiti artist Banksy "bombed" Detroit

Network, which detailed how African-American residents in the city were mobilizing food production and land use to build both political and nutritional infrastructure. The significance of food gardens is hard to overestimate in a city with no full-service grocery stores!

I attended a panel hosted by formerly incarcerated youth in Los Angeles—a group called Youth Justice Coalition—who eloquently articulated how aggressive policing in their neighborhoods resulted in more crime, not less. Furthermore, they described how the LAPD has, and is, exporting this model of policing throughout the country. Another panel I attended focused on why rural American matters for prison abolition, hosted by Lauren Melodia. Melodia, a recent transplant into a rural prison town in upstate NY, is working on a project titled "Milk Not Jails," a campaign to make urban connections for a fledging dairy market in rural New York. These kinds of projects are crucial to demythologizing the idea that prisons create good jobs or do anything positive for the community in which they are located. This panel realized the need for people to work, but recognized the costs of particular kinds of jobs—prison jobs—on both sides of the prison wall. All of the panels related to prison reform or abolition reflected on the urgency to reject Arizona SB 1070. In another panel, titled "Beyond Walls and Cages", organizations and activists from all Arizona and New Mexico discussed the ease with which we recently have, as a nation, commingled immigration and criminalization.

Other activities at the gathering involved learning with and from Detroit. The city has seen decline—any visitor

could tell you this—but it is also making radical change. Detroiters have been told again and again that this car plant or that casino will bring the city back, but the results are never realized for the majority of residents. So, like the USSF program statement, residents have initiated block-by-block change. Detroit has more community gardens and urban farms than any other U.S. city. Residents are building a network of social justice centers, leadership training spaces, internet nodes and community radio stations. In response to recent police shootings, they created Peace Zones for Life—in which mediators help resolve conflict between families or neighborhoods, rather than calling the police. So, Social Forum attendees could escape the conference center and participate in building community gardens, building outdoor classroom units, repairing bicycles or painting murals. In addition People's Movement Assemblies organized actions throughout the week: action to stop shut offs of low income and persons with disabilities by the power company, action for environmental justice at the Detroit Incinerator, and more.

The US Social Forum was a remarkable convening of people, ideas, and actions, making clear what's at stake in our future. This gathering also made clear that there are many of us, all working in our towns, cities and regions to make real, sustainable, just change a reality. We didn't need to wait for a new president of a university, or of the nation, the possibilities are in front of us. It is happening now.

### FOR MORE INFORMATION SEE:

**Detroit Black Food Security Network:** [detroitblackfoodsecurity.org/](http://detroitblackfoodsecurity.org/)

**Youth Justice Coalition:** [www.youth4justice.org/aboutyjc](http://www.youth4justice.org/aboutyjc)

**Milk Not Jails:** [milknotjails.wordpress.com/](http://milknotjails.wordpress.com/)

**Beyond Walls and Cages:** [beyondcagesandwalls.blogspot.com/](http://beyondcagesandwalls.blogspot.com/)

**Allied Media Conference:** [alliedmediaconference.org/](http://alliedmediaconference.org/)

**Peace Zones for Life:** [drpop.org/2010/06/detroit-summer-2/](http://drpop.org/2010/06/detroit-summer-2/)

**Social Centers:** [www.boggscenter.org/](http://www.boggscenter.org/) and [www.thehushhouse.org/](http://www.thehushhouse.org/)

**The People's Institute:** [www.pisab.org/](http://www.pisab.org/)

**The Hush House:** [www.thehushhouse.org/](http://www.thehushhouse.org/)

### August Political Prisoner Birthdays

#### Bill Dunne, August 3

#10916-086  
USP Big Sandy U.S. Penitentiary  
P.O. Box 2068  
Inez, KY 41224

Bill Dunne is an anti-authoritarian/anarchist prisoner sentenced to 90 years for the attempted liberation of an anarchist prisoner in 1979. He has published many writings since his incarceration. [www.denverabc.wordpress.com](http://www.denverabc.wordpress.com)

#### Debbie Sim Africa, August 04, 1956

#00-6307  
451 Fullerton Ave  
Cambridge Springs, PA  
16403-1238

Debbie Sims Africa is one of the people who makeup the MOVE 9. There are currently eight MOVE activists in prison each serving 100 years after been framed for the murder of a cop in 1979. The 9th defendant, Merle Africa, died in prison in 1998. MOVE is an eco-revolutionary group dedicated to liberation struggles. [www.onamove.com](http://www.onamove.com)

Send a birthday card to these political prisoners. It's an easy way to help remind these freedom fighters that they aren't forgotten. If you make one, remember- don't use anything like white-out, stickers, tape or glitter on it. We also recommend that you put your name and address and their name and prisoner number on the card, lest the authorities "lose" the envelope and forget where it is going. If you would like to add a birthday, email us at [ppbirthday\(at\)riseup.net](mailto:ppbirthday(at)riseup.net).

Brought to you with love by the Chapel Hill Prison Books Collective. [www.prisonbooks.info](http://www.prisonbooks.info)

#### DR. Mutulu Shakur, August 8, 1950

83205-012  
P.O. Box 8500  
Florence, CO 81226  
Florence ADMAX

Incarcerated freedom fighter, Dr. Mutulu Shakur has been imprisoned since February 12, 1986 for activities in support of the Black Liberation Movement, and during that time he has still managed to contribute to the struggle the legacy of his late son Tupac Shakur. Before his imprisonment Dr. Shakur was a tireless educator and healer. He was one of the pioneers in using acupuncture in the treatment of substance abuse; was a key organizer in the historic gang truce between the Bloods and the Crips at Lompoc Penitentiary; and was just as solid an activist and organizer. [www.mutulushakur.com](http://www.mutulushakur.com)





# Message & Medium, Both Matter in Local Film Fests

By Jason Pankoke



Jason Pankoke is the editor of *C-U Blogfidential* on-line and publisher of *C-U Confidential* in print. Both cover local filmmaking and film culture as it pertains to the Champaign-Urbana area.

For decades, Champaign-Urbana has inspired a long succession of independently made media created by citizens, academics, and students wishing to enrich and inform their friends and neighbors in ways avoided by commercial outlets. This has encompassed print, radio, theater, music, the Internet, and the fine arts. However, the most ill-used form of modern communication to disseminate viewpoints and expression from a local perspective is arguably the one falsely believed to be the province of studio impresarios and celebrity egos the cinema and its domestic offspring, television.

Consumer-priced technology improved and expanded so rapidly through the Nineties and into the new century that the videographer has found him or herself with plenty of effective production tools and work flow options to aid in shooting and editing quality footage without the time and cost concerns associated with traditional film production. Should the videographer be in the right place at the right time with the competence to tape cleanly and confidence to stand their ground while doing so, she or he may come away with material that not only preserves our community's history warts and all but shows by example how to improve its future as well.

A recent example, however inadvertent, is John O'Connor's recording of Champaign mayor Jerry Schweighart's "Barack Obama is not an American" comment made at the city's West Side Park. We should also recall the *Citizens Watch* video made by Patrick Thompson and Martel Miller, depicting suspect interaction between C-U police officers and African-American residents. Certainly, we'll mention the progressive work of UI journalism professor Jay Rosenstein, including the upcoming documentary about the landmark Vashti McCollum court case, *The Lord is Not on Trial Here Today*. It's unfortunate that the canon made autonomously in the area excluding work produced expressly for commercial, institutional, or network television use is often difficult to find save for collections at the Independent Media Center, That's Rentertainment, public libraries, and so on.

By the same token, the flexibility allowed by today's

low-cost digital tools has ushered in a worldwide deluge of video material. How does one navigate through the noise to find worthwhile material regardless of where it was created, whom it was made by, or what it is about? Although one-off screenings of topical and ethnic material is presented on a regular basis by University of Illinois departments and local organizations like A.W.A.R.E., the Illinois Disciples Foundation, the University YMCA, and the IMC, it is rare to witness aggregate presentations of alternative cinema lasting two or more consecutive days. The most substantial of recent vintage, the Freaky Film Festival from 1997-2000, has finally been succeeded in spirit by two events which have taken place this year.

The IMC Film Festival, a three-day showcase held at the Independent Media Center in Urbana during the first weekend of February, and the New Art Film Festival, which ran for six days in mid-April at the Art Theater in Champaign, provided opportunities to watch hand-picked indie films running the gamut of documentary, narrative, and experimental story-telling, with many projects developed and/or produced right in our own backyard. As a volunteer to the former and a programmer of the latter, I can describe the character of each as "eclectically distinct" from the other although value and inspiration could be drawn from both.

Following up its first edition from a year prior, the IMC Film Fest provided our community with a diverse showcase that enlightened its audience. Some blocks tied into different aspects of the IMC such as opening pieces *Clownin' in Kabul* by Enzo Balestrieri and Stefano Moser and *Salud* by Connie Field, presented by the Gesundheit! Institute, and closing material shown in concert with a People's Potluck including videos by Chicago Indy Media about Fred Hampton, Jr., and G20 protests as well as *Un Poquito de Tanta Verdad* by Jill Friedberg, recounting the people of Oaxaca, Mexico, who reclaimed local radio stations. Other blocks demonstrated a myriad of personal perspectives, such as the dramatic shorts *Celeste Above* by Johnny Robinson and *As Ever*, Stan by Alex Schwarm, the energetic political graffiti documentary *A Series of Exchanges* by Justin Jach, and non-narrative landscape works like *Roswell* by Bill Brown and *The Bay Swimmers* by Jesse Damazo.

IMCFF also grew to include special showings and satellite events which engaged the audience beyond the silver screen. For instance, the first night concluded with a broadcast of WRFU's "The Show" in the stage area featuring monologues by host Ray Morales, slam poetry, and

freestyle rhyme with live percussion. The second night's film highlights included a live multi-instrumental performance of an original score composed by UI graduate student Vin Calianno in synch with the silent German classic, *The Cabinet of Dr. Caligari*, followed by a multi-media performance comprised of found footage projected by Matt HarsH and choice cuts played by DJ Belly.

While programming overlap could be found between IMCFF and the New Art Film Festival, it simply expanded the amount of exposure given to locally-made films. The six-day schedule allowed NAFF room to reprise movies that have already been shown publicly, including the features *Act Your Age* (IMCFF '10) and *Press Start* and the shorts *Prelude* and *The Transient* (both IMCFF '09), as well as titles playing for the first time in C-U. These included the documentary *Hoopeston*, a portrait of the town and its former "Witch School," the twisty thriller *A Certain Point of View*, filmed on the University of Illinois campus, and the low-key feature drama *The Scientist*, self-distributed by Carbondale director Zach LeBeau. NAFF also brought back a hit from last year's IMCFF, the artist documentary *Proceed and Be Bold!* directed by UI alumna Laura Zinger, for all the positive lessons it embodies in regards to self-expression, self-determination, and DIY ethos.

Between IMCFF and NAFF, hundreds of fellow citizens took in dozens of films not already ubiquitous thanks to the Hollywood marketing machine. The programming decisions were also not influenced overtly by C-U's own populist movie phenomenon, Roger Ebert's Film Festival. Passion and intelligence guided the two core teams—Nicole Pion, Katy Vizdal, Brian Dolinar, Laura Fuhrman, and yours truly for IMCFF, and myself and Sanford Hess for NAFF—to formulate what would make for good cinema viewing and great food for thought.

Of course we now ask, "What locally-produced films will we see at these events next year?" Take up your camera in arms and then take advantage of several potential resources—including the IMC, Urbana Public Television, Champaign Government Television, UI-7, Parkland College Television, and the monthly Champaign Movie Makers meetings at Class Act Interactive—to enhance your skills and meet fellow citizens with whom you can collaborate. You can also keep tabs on local activity and viewing opportunities at *C-U Blogfidential* ([www.micro-film-magazine.com/cublog](http://www.micro-film-magazine.com/cublog)). Until then, we can't wait to hear you yell, "Action!"

## Upcoming Events at the Urbana-Champaign Independent Media Center, 202 South Broadway, Downtown Urbana

**August 6-8<sup>th</sup>: "And I Remember" A play starring Karen Vaccaro. Also,**

**8/6—8PM**

**8/7—8PM**

**8/8—7PM**

**8/7—11am-2pm UCIMC Open House! Including projects from the 2010 Indy-Media & Arts Lab**

**8/10—7pm Chulrua Traditional Irish Music: Presented by the Piper's Hut Concert Series**

*Chulrua (pronounced cool-ROO-ah), translates from the Irish as "red back," and was the name and distinguishing feature of the favorite wolfhound belonging to ancient Irish hero Fionn MacCumhaill. It is also the name of an internationally acclaimed trio of some of the most respected and unique exponents of Irish traditional music.*

*Button accordion icon Paddy O'Brien has accumulated a veritable hoard of rare versions of tunes and stories gleaned from more than forty years of patiently seeking out and spending time with older musicians throughout Ireland. A native of County Offaly in the Midlands.*

**8/14—Hottest Steppers Set in Urbana: Workshops and Live Music**

\$10/person at the door

Live Music & DJ @ 9pm

Steppin contest @10:30

*Dress Sharp! CAN'T STEP ??? Come out from Saturday, August 14th, 1pm-3pm or 3 - 5 p.m. for an exclusive lesson with Chessie Smith, a premier Chicago Steppin instructor. In Chicago they call it Stepping, or Chicago Style Stepping, In other parts of the country they call it Jazz dance, The Cakewalk, The Ringshout, The Jitterbug, The Swing, Jazz. Come learn how to dance and raise money to benefit the IMC. \$25 per couple or \$15.00 individual RSVP by August 8, 2010, class space is limited\_217-344-8820 or email: [carolammons\(at\)gmail.com](mailto:carolammons(at)gmail.com)*

**8/20—8PM An Udderbot Recital: Brought to you by OddMusic Urbana-Champaign.**

**9/1—9/29 Exhibit: BAG, a photographic installation by Ellie Brown [www.elliebrown.com](http://www.elliebrown.com)**

**9/11—7:30PM Ash Devine in Concert**