

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

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

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

**Reader Feedback**

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**Coming Events at UCIMC**

**"Race, the Tea Party, the U. S.'s Hard Shift to the Right"**—The Ubuntu Work Group is organized to forge an intellectual community rooted in the scholar activist identity of the Radical.

Following the dual mission of "Academic Excellence and Social Responsibility," we will engage in projects designed to increase collectivity in and funding of research and instruction, participatory democracy of governance, and generation of activities that will raise consciousness and promote social transformation on campus and in the community. **November 30, 1201 West Nevada Street, Urbana, Illinois, 7–9:30 P.M.**

**Tatsuya Nakatani—performance & workshop:** East Coast-based percussionist Tatsuya Nakatani will offer a solo performance followed by a workshop for improvisers. **Dec 2 2010 7:30pm–9:30pm**

**RUN IMC: Doin' It Live!**—The U of I's Engineering 298 class will be holding an event to raise general awareness of the beauty of the IMC as well as promote local artists, musicians, and citizens. This will be a dual event, the first night will be held Wednesday, December 1st at the Canopy Club in Urbana @ 6 PM. The festival will continue the evening of Friday, December 3rd at the IMC. Dec 3, 6:30pm–Dec 4 2010 2:00am

**Chambana's Got Talent**—An event for youth to showcase their talent while raising funds for the Champaign-Urbana Teen Awareness Group (TAG)! Youth ages 12-18 can register to perform their talent for our panel of local celebrity judges. Families and individuals of all ages are encouraged to attend! December 10, 2010 7:00pm–9:00pm

**"pack the IMC",** Concert A night of live ambiense and rock, this concert will feature the Grandkids, with guest The 7.5 Theory, the First Annuals, and other aucoustic preformances! Tickets will be \$4 (to cover rent cost). December 17, 2010 6:00pm–10:00pm

**Behold Productions Christmas Celebration** Celebrate Christmas with Behold Productions. Music and fun for the whole family. \$10 admission December 18, 2010 6:00pm–11:00pm

**SUSTAINING CONTRIBUTORS**

The *Public i* wishes to express its deep appreciation to the following sustaining contributors for their financial and material support:

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**Students demonstrate at Assembly Hall against "The Chief's Next Dance"**



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## What Kind of "Court" Is City Court?

By Belden Fields



This article was produced from a report by Athena Hollins, an intern for CU Citizens for Peace and Justice (CUCPJ) funded through the Midwest Coalition for Human Rights. For further information, please visit CUCPJ's new website: [cucpj.org](http://cucpj.org)

CITY COURT IS AN UNKNOWN ENTITY to most citizens in Champaign County. When people think of courts, they think of the county or federal courts where one has certain constitutional rights. City Court is something altogether different.

You might wind up in City Court if you have violated a city ordinance and haven't paid the fine in time. If you don't pay the fine by the deadline, or if you decide to challenge the charge, you will appear in City Court either by walking in at a certain date, by being brought there in chains by a sheriff's deputy, or by answering to the court via closed circuit TV from one of the county jails. The latter two options are for people who have ignored their summonses.

Judge Holly Clemons of Champaign County currently hears the cases in City Court. Prosecution is conducted by an attorney in the city's legal office. Both Urbana and Champaign make use of City Court, but Champaign uses it four times more frequently more than does Urbana, normally once a week as opposed to once a month.

### THE RIGHTS OF DEFENDANTS IN CITY COURT

Defendants' rights are very truncated in City Court. The defendant has the right to a trial by jury—if the defendant is able to pay for it. The fee is \$66.25 for a jury of 6, or \$137.50 for a jury of twelve.

The fee is not remunerated even if the defendant is found innocent. Defendants in the City Court also have the right to be represented by an attorney, but again only if they can afford one. No public defenders are provided in these trials.

### CLASS AND RACE

These policies are particularly disturbing when we look at those who wind up in City Court. Most defendants

are there because they could not pay their fines. The fines for the 21 kinds of offences prosecuted in the City Court run up to \$700, with minimums being \$165, \$215, and \$310 depending on the specific offence. In my own court observations, \$350 was a very common amount. In addition, there is the \$750 court expense fee that one must pay to the county if one is found guilty. Until very recently, it was virtually automatic that the only alternative to paying over \$1,000 was to work it off by sitting in the county jail; the meter there would tick \$20 off your "debts" to the city and county per day. That was a bad deal for the county because it crowded the jail and it cost the county far more than \$20 a day to hold and feed the prisoner. So, several months ago the sheriff decided to use monitored home confinement for some of those "debtors." Debtors prison for private debts has been abolished. But it is alive and well for public debt, at least in our area.

Despite the costs of confinement to the county, the city of Champaign still manages to make a good bit of money off of these infractions. In 2009, 60% of the violations were paid directly or by mail, bringing in \$493,365. In addition to that, the city made \$119,073.71 from people found guilty by the court.

In addition to the clear patterns we see regarding the economic class of the people appearing in the court, African Americans are severely overrepresented. In a recent study by Athena Hollins, it was revealed that 87% of those appearing in Champaign's City Court between March and May 2010 were African Americans. Keep in mind that the percentage of African Americans in Champaign is only about 15.

Hollins looked at the three most common charges brought before the court: "Specific Noise Violations," i.e., loud noise that can be heard beyond property lines or residential units, "Vehicular Noise Violations", i.e., mainly noise from car radios, and possession of 10 grams or less of cannabis.

In the first noise category, for which the minimum fine is \$200, 68% of the defendants were African American. In the vehicular noise category, for which the minimum fine is \$165, over 90% were African American. In the cannabis possession category, for which the minimum fine is \$310, 89% were African American. Some of the other offences

that come to City Court, such as public urination and placing trash in another person's trash bin, hit the homeless particularly hard.

Only 39% of the noise violations and 29% of the cannabis violations were paid directly at the city building or by mail. On the other hand, 89% of the citations for underage drinking of alcohol, 92% of delivering alcohol to minors, and 85% of the having beer kegs at a party without a license offences were settled by direct payment or mail. Here we see a racial and class bias at work. The latter offences were those committed largely by university students, the vast majority of whom are white. They or their parents could afford to pay the fines and avoid City Court.

Many in the African American community do not have the financial resources to avoid City Court. Furthermore, the fines and court costs that are extracted from the African American community are extracted from exactly that segment of the population that can least afford to pay. They also wind up disproportionately populating our two county jails.

A major reason for this is the very different ways that the African American and white neighborhoods in Champaign are policed. The very aggressive, militarized, zero-tolerance approach that the police take in the North End, especially with youth who like their music loud and share the same enjoyment from a joint that many white kids do without police intervention, is largely responsible for this bias.

### CONCLUSION

We began this article by asking, "what kind of court is City Court?" What we find is that City Court is tailor-made to take advantage of poor people, and especially African Americans who make up a large percentage of our poor citizens. It is a court in which there is no right to a lawyer and no right to a jury trial; those things must be bought. In other words, City Court is a court where the guarantee of equal protection of the laws embodied in the 14th Amendment of the US Constitution does not apply. City court reflects the spirit of Anatole France's characterization of French capitalist laws in the late 19th Century: "The law, in its majestic equality, forbids the rich as well as the poor to sleep under bridges, to beg in the streets, and to steal bread." And in our City Court, to jail you shall go if

## Iraq Veterans Against the War On Veterans Day

This letter was collaboratively written by Iraq Veterans Against the War and veterans of Operation Iraqi Freedom and Operation Enduring Freedom.

THIS VETERANS DAY, Iraq Veterans Against the War (IVAW) asked Americans to reconsider the meaning of supporting the troops. As a nation, we are dishonoring our veterans by ignoring the real costs of war, and we contend that we can support our troops by ending the wars and bringing our brothers and sisters home. Veterans Day has historically been an occasion for patri-

otic ceremonies giving lip service to veterans, but we cannot let these ceremonies obscure the fact that the war in Iraq is not over. The occupation of Afghanistan is not over. And for many veterans of these wars, the suffering is far from over.

As veterans, we know that the violence documented in the Wikileaks Iraq War Logs traumatizes the people living under occupation. The wars in Iraq and Afghanistan also have been marked by staggering rates of military trauma and suicide among the troops tasked with carrying out these orders. In 2009, 239 Army soldiers killed themselves and 1,713 soldiers survived suicide attempts; 146 soldiers died from high-risk activities, including 74

drug overdoses (these numbers only reflect Army statistics, and do not include suicide rates in the Marine Corps, Navy, and Air Force). A third of returning troops report mental health problems, and 18.5 percent of all returning service members are battling either Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder or depression, according to a study by the Rand Corporation.

IVAW's Operation Recovery campaign, launched on October 7th, seeks to end the cruel and inhumane practice of redeploying troops suffering from PTSD, Military Sexual Trauma, Traumatic Brain Injury, and other mental and physical wounds--a practice that underlies the continued occupations of Iraq and Afghanistan. To bring this reality

home to the U.S. public, Central Illinois IVAW will be hosting a panel discussion about military suicides in early 2011 (more details will be coming soon).

We are demanding justice.

Sincerely,

Iraq Veterans Against the War—Central Illinois Chapter:-

Scott Kimball, U of I student, Veteran of Operation Iraqi Freedom

Dylan O'hearn, U of I student, Veteran of Operation Enduring Freedom

Jacob Crawford, U of I Alum, Veteran of Operation Iraqi Freedom

To learn more or get in touch, please email [Central.Illinois.IVAW@gmail.com](mailto:Central.Illinois.IVAW@gmail.com)



# What Does 2009 Traffic Stop Data Tell Us About Police Behavior In Champaign/Urbana?

By Durl Kruse



THE SIXTH ANNUAL STATE REPORT on Illinois Traffic Stop Statistics was recently released by the Center for Research in Law and Justice of the University of Illinois at Chicago. The statistics provide a window into traffic stop data that helps local communities answer a fundamental question: “Are the number of traffic stops and searches involving motor vehicles operated by members of a racial minority disproportionate to the number of traffic stops involving motor vehicles operated by persons who are not members of a racial minority?”

What does the data tell us about traffic stop behavior of the Champaign, Urbana, and University of Illinois police departments?

To help analyze this, the state assigns an annual “ratio” to each police department. This “ratio” is determined by dividing the percentage of minority stops by the percentage of the minority driving population in a community. In this way, a ratio of 1.00 means local police departments stop Caucasian and minority drivers in proportion to their composition of the driving public. As an example, the 2009 statewide ratio of 1.12 indicates that a minority driver is 12% more likely to be stopped than a Caucasian driver in Illinois.

In contrast, the 2009 ratios for the Champaign, Urbana, and U of I police departments were 1.45, 1.56, and 1.36, respectively. All three local police departments stop minority drivers in significantly greater numbers than their percentage of the driving public. Minority drivers accounted for 43%, 48%, and 38% of the stops in each of the three police jurisdictions respectively while composing only 30%, 31%, and 28% of the driving public.

This is not a new phenomenon. In fact this disparity has been the case for all three police departments since traffic stop statistics were first released in 2004. The last three years, ratios have steadily increased from 1.34, 1.43, 1.45 in Champaign and 1.47, 1.49, 1.56 in Urbana. Urbana’s ratio of 1.56 represents a six-year high, placing it in the top 29% of 970 state law enforcement agencies with the highest ratios. The University police’s ratio has remained fairly constant near 1.36.

A second component of the Illinois Traffic Stops Statistics Study focuses on the percentage of citations issued. This is of particular interest because the officer has clear knowledge of the race of the driver when deciding to write a ticket or give a warning. The citation percentages below

Percent of Citations		
	Caucasian	Minority
Champaign	65%	64%
Urbana	57%	61%
U of I	18%	25%

are six-year averages.

Champaign police appear to ticket Caucasian and minority drivers similarly (65% vs. 64%). But a distinct disparity appears for the Urbana (57% vs. 61%) and U of I (18% vs. 25%) police departments. In fact, in each of the last six years minority drivers were given a higher percentage of citations than their Caucasian counterparts by both departments. It is also misleading to describe the situation in Champaign in strictly equitable terms, for although Caucasian and minority drivers are ticketed relatively equally, minority drivers are still 45% more likely to be pulled over in the first place. It is interesting to note the low percentage of citations given by the U of I police. Evidently drivers on campus are treated differently, with Caucasian drivers being ticketed only 18% of the time.

A final component of the Illinois Traffic Stops Statistics Study reports on consent searches. Although the number of consent searches is small, they are important statistics because they can reveal potential bias in the officer’s decision to request to search a car.

In 2009 Champaign, Urbana, and U of I police requested 22, 17, and 84 searches of stopped drivers respectively. However, each police department requested minority drivers roughly twice as often as Caucasian drivers to consent to a search although the statistics show that contraband was found approximately twice as often in Caucasian vehicles. Also, the 84 consent searches by campus police appears to be inordinately high when compared to Urbana

and Champaign.

Can we now answer the question posed at the beginning of this article? “In our community do police stop minority drivers disproportionately to their composition of the driving public?” The bulk of traffic stop statistics suggest an affirmative answer. The numbers do not tell us why this disparity exists, only that it does. Racial bias must be considered as a possible factor.

To comprehend the economic impact of these traffic stop disparities in our local community, it is helpful to visualize a situation where stop figures are actually equitable and proportional between minority and Caucasian drivers. Adjusting minority driver figures to be proportional to Caucasian driver figures or adjusting Caucasian driver figures to be proportional to minority driver figures can easily do this.

Thus, if minority drivers were stopped proportionally to Caucasian drivers in our community, there would have been 18,311 fewer stops and 10,936 fewer citations of minority drivers over the past six years. At the minimum moving violation rate of \$125, that would have been a savings of \$1,367,000 to minority drivers in Champaign/Urbana. Conversely, if Caucasian drivers were stopped proportionally to minority drivers, there would have been 43,211 more stops and 27,589 more citations of Caucasian drivers over the past six years, or an additional cost of \$3,447,500 to Caucasian drivers in Champaign/Urbana.

The State Traffic Stops Statistics Studies show that for some reason minority and Caucasian drivers in our community are policed differently. With this information in hand, it is now the responsibility of our communities, elected officials, and local police departments to begin answering the question of why?

For more information, the reports for the years 2004 through 2008, as well as a methodological overview of the project are available at the IDOT website: [www.dot.il.gov](http://www.dot.il.gov). The 2009 report is available at: [www.dot.il.gov/traffic-stop/results09.html](http://www.dot.il.gov/traffic-stop/results09.html)

## JUSTICE OR JUST US

By Tracy Vogel



I sit and think, trying to figure it out / What’s going on with our system? What’s this about? / It’s like there is no solution for any of this / The community, the state, it’s not “hit,” just “miss.”

With no special funding, the youth barely have anywhere to go / Boys and Girls Club, youth centers, they’re closing the do’ / I do thank God for our local United Way / Their help is not tomorrow, but right now—today / With all the local charities and generous donations / You’d think we could start with just Champaign, not the nation / Our system is so twisted, who can really win? / They want you to discipline your kids, but then DCFS steps in / So now they are on the streets and out of control / But who’s really to blame with society being so cold / There is nowhere for them to go but on the street / And it’s so dangerous, there’s no telling who they may meet / Drug dealers, gang bangers, even pedophiles / Promising them a brighter tomorrow, making life worthwhile / So the children can have shelter and a simple hot meal / Back in the day, it took a village to raise a child / But now in 2010, no one’s willing to go that extra mile

Then there are some cops that don’t help the situation, drawing guns on our teens, instead of conversation / A young and innocent life taken so violently / -Is this what we teach our kids? No, not me / Now we have to come together to right this wrong / Candlelight marches, one big community strong / Our sweet Kiwane Carrington, your legacy has to remain / We need to change this now, so your murder won’t be in vain

We have these crazy stereotypes blocking the progress / Our young men being stopped/questioned because the way they dress / Community members walk past, afraid to look them in the eye / Skin color doesn’t mean it’s a sin to say “Hi”!

It’s time to end this absurd racial war / Fighting and jumping innocent people. Aren’t we worth more? / Is it really too late to heal Champaign-Urbana? / We hold the answer, but where does that land us? / It’s time to devise a plan of action: where do we begin? / Because if you’re not part of the problem, it’s time to become part of the solution.

### Offer your voice to the Public i

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

The *Public i* is also currently hosting a series of poetry workshops within the Champaign-Urbana community, called Poetry for the People. For more information on our upcoming workshops and open mike poetry slam, please email [the.public.i@gmail.com](mailto:the.public.i@gmail.com) for more information.

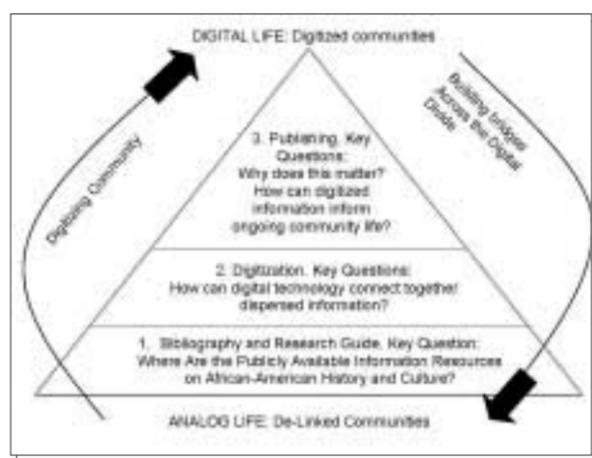
# eBlack Symposium Builds Connections Between Campus and Community

By Noah Lenstra

Noah Lenstra is a graduate student at the Graduate School of Library and Information Science and a co-organizer of the eBlackChampaign-Urbana Symposium

ALTHOUGH WE WERE TOLD “SYMPOSIA” and “conferences” were too academic in nature—the eBlackChampaign-Urbana project team stood by the knowledge that community groups have conferences all the time (Canaan Baptist Church held two in the past year; Glory Center International held one)—and that what was needed was a new strategy, not an abandonment of the idea of symposia. We would encourage other individuals from the University of Illinois to find ways not to abandon the traditional apparatuses of scholarly production and exchange, but rather to find new, experimental ways to make these apparatuses relevant and meaningful both to the scholarly community and to real, historical communities with which activist academics work.

Over 200 people came for part or all of a two-day campus-community Symposium on Friday, November 5 and Saturday, November 6 at the Graduate School of Library and Information Science (GSLIS) on the University of Illinois campus and the Douglass Annex in Douglass Park in North Champaign. The unifying themes of this event were: a) campus engagements in the historical African-American communities of Champaign-Urbana and b) digital technology transforming all aspects of community life (including campus engagements). The event began with Vice Chancellor for Public Engagement Steve Sonka speaking on how engagement at the University of Illinois needs to complete what he called the “knowledge cycle” or observation to documentation to analysis to implementation and back to observation. Speaking from his personal



background in agriculture Sonka explained how this cycle, and the University's involvement in it, completely changed the course of American agriculture, and the world. Sonka was invited to give the opening remarks for this two-day event because one of the goals of the conference organizers (Professor Abdul Alkalimat of African-American Studies/GSLIS and Noah Lenstra, graduate student, GSLIS) is to re-orient the land-grant tradition of the University of Illinois to systematically and sustainably address issues in African-American and low-income communities not only in Champaign-Urbana but across the state of Illinois, in the information age. Sonka's address was followed by two community respondents, District 1 council member Will Kyles and Salem Baptist Church Rev. Zernial Bogan, and one university respondent, Kate Williams, who re-articulated some of Sonka's remarks in terms of some of the issues faced by residents of North Champaign-Urbana. The full audio-video-pictorial-textual record of these remarks, and the entire symposium, is available for free online at [eblackcu.net/portal/schedule](http://eblackcu.net/portal/schedule).

## SERVING CHAMPAIGN-URBANA

The rest of the day Friday was devoted primarily to conversations among dedicated “service” units of the University, such as the Krannert Center for the Performing Arts and Illinois Public Media, and students from multiple depart-



ments involved in research projects focused on local African-Americans, who, in dialogue with the audience, shared what they were doing. They also explored the significance of their individual projects in terms of larger campus-community concerns. After the first morning roundtable on community engagement a member of local group Women of Prestige expressed her surprise at finding out so many different projects work with local youth and said the information was a little overwhelming.

## USING MEDIA TO RECOGNIZE COMMUNITY LEADERS

One way in which the eBlackChampaign-Urbana project has tried to address this issue is through information. Specifically, we released a book entitled *Community Engagement @ Illinois: Connecting Research and Service* (also available at <http://eblackcu.net/portal/schedule>) that features documentation of over 45 different research and service projects emanating out of the University of Illinois, or with heavy involvement of University individuals, that have as a primary audience or subject local African-Americans or the historical African-American community. A copy of this book was given to each of the 103 Difference Makers, community and campus individuals who have gone out of their way to try to make a difference in the lives of local African-Americans, as part of a luncheon and awards ceremony Friday afternoon. The Difference Makers also received a commemorative booklet with biographies and photographs. The project team sometimes is asked why a project dedicated to digital technology would chose to release two books as part of its symposium. We believe in what we call the actual-virtual-actual cycle, in other words actual communities and individuals using the power of digital technology to make actual change in their lives and in the lives of others. As part of this cycle, our digitization work of actual primary source material and our use of open source word processing and photo editing software such as Open Office and GIMP allowed us to release two relatively large print publications on a short deadline that we hope will make actual change in campus-community engagement.

## WORKING TOGETHER TO INTEGRATE DIGITAL AND DAY-TO-DAY LIFE

Saturday the symposium shifted gears—moving from campus to the Douglass Annex for conversations on how existing community agencies and institutions are using digital technology, with the hope being that connections could be made that would benefit all. Representatives of social service agencies such as Community Elements and Neighborhood Services (City of Champaign); educational initiatives such as Parkland's WorkNet Center and Urbana High School; churches including Jericho Missionary Baptist and Church of the Living God, and community groups such as C-U Citizens for Peace and Justice and the National Council of Negro Women talked throughout the day on some of the issues and opportunities they have faced in using digital technology as part of their work.

One theme that emerged was the need to find ways to work together to integrate digital technology into community day-to-day life. Kevin Jackson described some of the e-government tools developed or being developed at the City of Champaign while David Adcock of Urbana Adult Education described the need to provide the most basic, rudimentary computing education to many members of the local community. Later in the day, during the religious institutions roundtable a contentious discussion began about finding ways to create non-denominational means for churches to help each other cross the digital divide. Some thought the first step was

bringing the pastors together and getting them all on board; others felt that those in the different churches already invested in digital technology should find ways to work together. In any case, the eBlackChampaign-Urbana project team believes that these issues need to be discussed more so that everyone can make effective uses of digital technology. One way in which an attempt was made to bring everyone on the same page was by asking everyone to sign a manifesto declaring themselves “Difference Makers” and dedicating themselves to work together to bring everyone online and to ensure everyone can make effective use of existing and developing tools for social change. Over 120 people have signed this manifesto—which can be signed electronically at [eBlackCU.net](http://eBlackCU.net).

## EXPANDING THE CONVERSATION

A follow-up meeting to the Symposium will be held Saturday, January 8, from 9 a.m. to noon, at the Champaign Public Library, Robeson Pavilion Room A & B. However, we encourage community and campus organizations to continue these conversations in their “home-bases.” The project team recognizes that sustainability requires moving these dialogues and actions off the University and into the organizations and groups that keep our community going. One way in which the project team hopes to make this transition is to ask groups to take a copy of the manifesto to whatever groups they are affiliated, discuss it, and bring remarks on these discussions to the follow-up meeting January 8.

## A FINAL THANKS

As an all-volunteer symposium with modest funding from the Office of the Vice Chancellor for Public Engagement and the Office of Equal Opportunity and Access to pay for food, equipment, marketing and space, the eBlackChampaign-Urbana Campus-Community Symposium owes its success to both the campus and community individuals and groups who volunteered to make it a success, including:

1. the Community Informatics Club
2. the Illinois Informatics Club
3. Women of Prestige Champaign County
4. National Council of Negro Women, Champaign County
5. Champaign Park District
6. Salem Baptist Church
7. Graduate School of Library and Information Science
8. and individuals from Parkland College WorkNet Center and Canaan Baptist Church.

**“Race, the Tea Party, the U. S.’s Hard Shift to the Right”**

**November 30, 2010**

Department of African American Studies, 1201 West Nevada Street, Urbana, Illinois, 7–9:30 P.M.

Sponsored by: Ubuntu, Black Radical Work Group in the Department of African American Studies



# An Open Letter to University of Illinois Chief of Police, Barbara O'Connor

November 15, 2010—We write with grave concern about your recent use of the “Illini Alert” text-messaging system on Monday, November 8, 2010 to report the assault in Forbes Hall and to search for the suspect in that incident.

The use of the system in this case was, at best, an over-reaction to the incident, and, at worst, a misuse of police power that smacks of racial profiling. To tell every member of the campus community to call 911 if they see a “black male, salt/pepper hair, 40-50 year old, 5’11, 170, med build” does not increase safety on our campus. On the contrary, through such a sweeping announcement, you have in fact put a considerable part of the campus community at risk, placing under suspicion valued colleagues, coworkers, students, and visitors solely on the basis of their race and gender. Given the local history of racial tensions, which seem to have increased dramatically over the past year, this kind of alert only exacerbates the very distrust that has been so corrosive on campus and in local communities. We believe that the use of electronic media such as text-messaging and e-mail to issue crime alerts has been profoundly counterproductive, with the accumulated effect of generating widespread fear and suspicion that all too often gets expressed through racial divisiveness.

The sexual assault of a student is a deeply serious matter and deserves a swift and thorough response by police and campus authorities. We are as concerned as anyone else on this campus for the safety of our students in the dorms and elsewhere. We also believe that it is important that such incidents be handled in ways that do not inspire panic or rely on racial stereotypes, but rather that educate students, faculty, and staff about the most likely scenarios for sexual assault and other crimes on our campus.

We condemn the use of the mass-alert (text message) system to respond to such incidents. While it may be appropriate to use this technology to respond to rare cases of imminent widespread threat, such as a tornado or a

bomb scare, the text-alert system was completely inappropriate – and, indeed, reckless -- in this case. We are extremely troubled that you could issue such an alert, given the appalling history of racial profiling in this country. We understand that the Clery Act requires the University to give timely warnings of crimes on our campus, but we believe that it is possible to meet that requirement via other available media. We expect you, as the police chief of a leading university, to take considerable care and responsibility when making a decision about when or if race should be mentioned in any communication. At a minimum, we urge you to use every opportunity to inform the public of the dangers of stereotyping and to remind us all of the tremendous contributions made by all racial and ethnic groups in our diverse campus community.

While you may have intended to protect students, faculty, and staff, instead you have done serious damage to the racial climate of our campus and local community. We want you to realize that electronic crime alerts, especially last Monday’s text message, undermine the ongoing and often difficult work that we do in our programs and organizations regarding race, gender, and sexual orientation, along with our daily efforts to make this campus a diverse, safe, and open-minded place to learn and work.

We urge you to immediately revise your policy for issuing such alerts; to apologize to the campus community for this irresponsible use of police power; and to confer in meaningful and sustained ways with those of us who are committed to the pursuit of racial and gender justice and equity on our campus.

Sincerely,

*Executive Committee of the Campus Faculty Association  
Senate Committee on Equal Opportunity and Inclusion  
Students for a United Illinois  
Professor James Barrett, Chair, Department of History*

*Professor Merle L. Bowen, Director, Center for African Studies  
Professor Jorge Chapa, Director, Center on Democracy in a Multiracial Society*

*David W. Chih, Director, Asian American Cultural Center  
Jennifer DeLuna, Assistant Director, La Casa Cultural Latina  
Professor Jennifer Hamer, Faculty Co-Chair, Black Faculty and Academic Professionals Alliance*

*Whitney Hamilton, President, Women of Color  
Professor Dianne Harris, Director, Illinois Program for Research in the Humanities*

*Professor Ronald L. Jackson, II, Head, Department of African American Studies*

*Rory G. James, Director, Bruce D. Nesbitt African American Cultural Center*

*Veronica M. Kann, Assistant Director, La Casa Cultural Latina  
Tony Laing, President, Black Graduate Student Association*

*Professor Isabel Molina, Director, Latina/Latino Studies Program  
Pat Morey, Director, Women’s Resources Center*

*Leslie Morrow, Director, LGBT Resource Center  
Professor Chantal Nadeau, Director, Gender and Women’s Studies Program*

*Professor Lisa Nakamura, Director, Asian American Studies Program  
Ben Rothschild, Undergraduate-Graduate Alliance*

*Stephanie Seawell, Co-President, Graduate Employees Organization  
Professor Siobhan Somerville, Co-Chair, LGBT Advisory Committee*

*Regina Mosley Stevenson, Academic Professional Co-Chair, Black Faculty and Academic Professionals Alliance*

*Katie Walkiewicz, Co-President, Graduate Employees Organization  
Professor Robert Warrior, Director, American Indian Studies Program*

## Connecting Activists and Activism In Brazil

By Denise Alves dos Santos

Brazilian activist Denise Alves dos Santos has degrees in Brazilian language and literature, as well as art therapy. She has worked as a proofreader and a consultant for a global, nonprofit organization, and is constantly involved in finding ways to create and encourage social change in Brazil and the world

*In Brazil, there is no activism.  
In Brazil, there are activist people.*

THE DISTINCTION BETWEEN one and another is that the first is a noun and as such it is supposed to name what activists do. The second is an adjective, and it qualifies the person who consciously acts for change. At least it is supposed to.

The Portuguese language allows each ‘I’, who uses it, to make nouns out of adjectives, and so activists become activism itself when Brazilian ‘I’s use one and another term indistinctly. So, in Brazil there is a situation that may seem strange to those in the United States that, while there are activists, there is no held-in-common tradition of activism.

This phenomenon has been creating an environment where each ‘I’ designs a society such that the action of the individual seems more relevant than individuals acting together. Thus, what could be recognized as the coordination of many for

change ends up being perceived as the initiative of one.

I say “design a society” because I agree with the assertion of society being what people – like you and me – do in language and together with others when languaging.

If there is no coordination of ‘I’s actions, then there is no space in the public domain for activists to compose actions together. There is no activism as a movement in which each ‘I’ desires peculiar changes for the benefit of those who benefit from participating together in the designing of their own society. By this, each ‘I’s desires and needs could be – respectively – attended and satisfied, but currently there is no systemic approach to the problems that call each activist to action.

When a systemic approach to problems is missing, seemingly unrelated problems will not be seen as intimately related. So also, when problems are perceived apart from the system that creates them, one consequence may be that the effort to change something becomes the effort to stop something.

In Brazil, dictatorship was stopped in 1984, and yet, Brazil is still under dictatorship. When the military dictatorship was abolished, the change in government proved more in name only and less in substance or real structural changes. At the time, what was most wanted was the right to vote, and that was achieved.

And yet, is being able to vote the main criterion for distinguishing one system from another in Brazil?

Nowadays, Brazilian ‘I’s use the following terms to refer to that period: “the rebels” and “the movement against dictatorship”. At the time, the ‘I’s moving against dictatorship did not baptize their movement with a word or a phrase to name each ‘I’s doings and wantings.

The lack of having a name that could express what the efforts of the resistant ‘I’s were for left a gap, which was filled by some other ‘I’ who, maybe very intentionally, decided to use terms that do not emphasize the strong potential character of these actions for change or for coordination neither among each ‘I’ nor groups of ‘I’s. Rather, the terms chosen emphasize the character of independent events of the actions. These terms also strongly imply the quality of “opposition” to something, and reinforce the object of opposition as so as to dismiss it. As it turned out, dictatorship’s obligation not to vote became democracy’s obligation to vote on the ‘I’s who are supposed to represent each ‘I’s interest in the executive and legislative systems.

But corporate institutions have been playing an essential role in government decisions currently. Whose obligation is it to vote on a board of directors?

My current formulation is that to state the “againstness” to something is an invitation to unsystematic changes, while “for-

ness” is an invitation to further think of and speak about what things might replace the current undesirable ones. And so, in the process of finding the “how can it be done”, ‘I’s find ways to deal with language and time “in time”. This involves languaging, which I use when I want to talk about organizing ways of thinking and speaking that arise out of the past organizations of ways of thinking and speaking. So by “deal with language,” I mean ‘I’s at least going through a dynamic process of naming, distinguishing, and describing.

My desire here is talk about the last term in the list (“describing”) – but as a noun. I use description when I want to talk about an ‘I’ observer, observing a system, languaging it, and observing the observation when doing it. By contrast, I use explanation to mean an understanding of a description, from which it is assumed the observer contributes nothing to the observation, with a consequence also that description become static.

In my present frame, activism will have been composed in Brazil – under any possible and significant name – when each ‘I’ activist has made each ‘I’s problems clear by descriptions (not explanations) and used the public domain to provoke desired consequences with other ‘I’ activists. I don’t know if this is democracy; I am sure—at this now—that this is part of a democratic society. .



# La Colectiva, the University YMCA, and Growing Immigrant Population in Champaign County

By Aaron Johnson-Ortiz

Aaron Johnson-Ortiz is the Community Engagement Coordinator at the University YMCA and an AmeriCorps member. He can be reached at [aaron@universityymca.org](mailto:aaron@universityymca.org)

THE UNIVERSITY YMCA AND THE UI STUDENT organization La Colectiva are developing new outreach programs that aim to build bridges with the Latino immigrant communities in Champaign County. The two new programs are a mentorship program with Latino high school students, and an immigrant helpline that offers Spanish-English translation and general information about services available locally. Both programs are still in their initial phases of development and will be more fully implemented next semester. But already, the helpline is available on a limited basis, and in December, La Colectiva will lead a workshop with Latino high school students in Urbana about higher education. Next semester, UI students will further the mentorship program and help high school students with college applications and personal statements. Other students (not necessarily affiliated with La Colectiva) will be trained at the beginning of next semester to volunteer for the helpline, making this service fully operational. For more information about the helpline, or to volunteer next semester, email [aaron@universityymca.org](mailto:aaron@universityymca.org). This article intends to provide a brief background to our new programs.

## LA COLECTIVA

Over the past two years, La Colectiva has responded to waves of anti-immigrant legislation across the country, especially in Arizona, as well as several racist incidents on campus. The students organized a series of protests on the University Quad, a trip to a national rally in Washington, phone-a-thons and other events.

On the national level, students advocate for the passage of the DREAM Act, which promises a path to citizenship for undocumented youth who have grown up in the US. At UIUC, the students demand support for undocumented students, both in terms of financial aid as well as safe spaces for open and respectful conversations about undocumented student issues. The University's admissions policy does not require applicants to provide social security numbers, which allows undocumented students to apply. However, they are not eligible for federal aid or student loans, placing a heavy burden on students and their families who are often low-income. Although University representatives have at times been sympathetic to undocumented student concerns, no official policy changes have been made.

La Colectiva also moved its base of operations to the University YMCA from its previous affiliation with UI's La Casa because of what it felt to be the Y's commitment to social justice as well as a growingly inhospitable environment for political activism on campus. Although the Y strives to foster dialogue amongst UI students, faculty, and staff, it is not officially affiliated with the University.

This allows for a more open environment for exercising freedoms of expression and action.

In the midst of all the activism about change on a national level and at the University, students began to recognize a gap between their organizing on campus and the struggles of community members in Champaign County who face similar challenges. The campus-community divide is exacerbated by the fact that most UI Latino students grew up outside of the county, especially in Chicago. In addition, community members tend to be skeptical about student initiatives, as the perennial turnover of student leaders creates an ebb and flow of public engagement and a lack of institutional memory or growth.

## LA COLECTIVA AND THE Y

Last semester, La Colectiva student leaders began conversations with University YMCA staff, expressing a desire to move out of the "campus bubble". The Y's new executive director, Mike Doyle, who previously worked at Champaign County Health Care Consumers and who has a background in community organizing, worked with two La Colectiva students to begin conversations with community leaders who are in some way invested in immigration issues locally. The focus of these exchanges was to begin a community dialogue about immigration and immigrant rights, and to inquire as to what issues most directly affect the immigrant community. Y programs would be developed from these insights, instead of deciding in advance what the issues are and imposing those on the community.

Over the past summer, the students, Jesse Hoyt and Celeste Larkin, conducted about 30 interviews with local activists, religious leaders, engaged academics, community representatives, public officials, and business leaders in Champaign County. At the same time, the Y worked with the Independent Media Center to apply for an AmeriCorps position to continue this work into the academic year and then help build student-community relationships. This is where I came in.

I applied to the AmeriCorps position with a background in immigrant rights organizing in the (other) twin cities of St. Paul and Minneapolis, MN, and community work with Zapatista agricultural and artisan collectives in Chiapas, Mexico. Through my work at the Y since September of this year, I continued the interviews with community members, and looked into several possibilities for responsible and sustainable student engagement. Our two new programs, the high school mentorship program and the helpline, emerged from this process and will continue to adapt to community feedback.

## IMMIGRANT ORGANIZATIONS IN CHAMPAIGN COUNTY

There are already a number of community organizations that work with Latinos and/or immigrants, either exclu-



sively or as one part of their general mission. Most notably are the East Central Illinois Refugee Mutual Assistance Center, the Latino Partnership of Champaign County, the Multicultural Community Center in Rantoul, Cultivadores (also in Rantoul), Champaign County Health Care Consumers, the University of Illinois Extension, the after-school program S.O.A.R. at B. T. Washington, Bilingual and ESL programs in the public schools, Spanish-language news on Radio Free Urbana 104.5 FM, and a number of churches that offer Spanish-language services like St. Mary's Catholic Church. Most of these programs, like the immigrants they serve, are either relatively new (established within the past ten to fifteen years), or have been newly created to address immigration issues. It is the intention of the University Y and La Colectiva to play a collaborative and mutually supportive role with these organizations, as well as strengthen ties between university and community members.

One of the key insights gained from our interviews is the significant growth rate of the Latino population in Champaign County in recent years. While the 2000 Census found that about 8,000 (or 4.1%) Latinos lived in the county, everyone seemed to agree that the 2010 results will show a marked increase. Perhaps the most pressing need at this historical moment is to come to terms with our changing demographic landscape, and to create open – but also safe and empowering – spaces for community dialogue amongst the increasingly heterogeneous communities of Champaign County.

# Students for a United Illinois Hold Counter-Demonstration at Assembly Hall

By Brian Dolinar

ABOUT 100 PEOPLE PROTESTED outside Assembly Hall on October 23, 2010 where for the third year there was a pro-Chief rally organized by those wishing to revive the University of Illinois' racist mascot. This year, protesters were made to stand behind a taped-off area and watched closely by University of Illinois police and Assembly Hall security. There was some confusion among officials over this practice, as one security guard told me that Assembly Hall was private property. When

I asked UIPD Lieut. Skip Frost, he said that it was maintained by the University of Illinois, therefore it was public property, but the decision to tape off protesters had been made by the Assembly Hall management. The creation of such a "free speech zone," which has previously been enforced at recent Democratic and Republican National Conventions, is a serious suspension of the First Amendment and modern method for controlling peaceful protest.

The previous day, about 50 people met outside Swanlund Administration Building to protest the University's failure to put its racist mascot to rest. As the rally took place, Chancellor Bob Easter was seen conducting an interview with a local television station in the parking lot of the building. The protesters moved toward him and chanted, "Chancellor Easter, don't you know? We don't want this minstrel show!" Easter began to walk off after finishing his interview but when the crowd started

chanting "Speak with us!" he turned around and came to address the group. Carlos Rosa, one of the organizers, asked the Chancellor when the band would be made to quit using the "three-and one" song commonly associated with the Chief and still being played at games. The Chancellor assured the group that the administration was doing everything in its power to bring the Chief's era to a close. When someone asked for a time line, Easter failed to provide any dates.



# French Protesters Have It Right: No Need to Raise the Retirement Age

By Mark Weisbrot, from: guardian.co.uk, Wednesday 20 October 2010



THE DEMONSTRATIONS THAT have rocked France this past week highlight some of its differences from the United States. The photo below, for example shows the difference between rioting in baseball-playing versus soccer-playing countries. In the US, we would pick up the tear gas canister and throw it, rather than kick it, back at the police.



More importantly, the French have decided to take to the streets in the millions—including large-scale strikes and work stoppages—to defend hard-won retirement gains. (It must be emphasised, since the media sometimes forgets to make the distinction, that only a tiny percentage of France's demonstrators have engaged in any kind of property damage and even fewer in violence, with all but these few protesting peacefully.) French populist rage is being directed in a positive direction – unlike in the United States where it is most prominently being mobilised to elect political candidates who will do their best to increase the suffering of working—and middle-class citizens.

I have to admit, though, that it was perplexing to watch the French elect Nicolas Sarkozy president in 2007, a man who campaigned on the idea that France had to make its economy more “efficient”, like America's. In reality, he couldn't have picked a worse time to peddle this mumbo-jumbo. The housing bubble was already bursting in the United States and would soon cause not only our own Great Recession, but also drag most of the world economy into the swamp with it. So much for that particular model of economic dynamism.

But Sarkozy had a lot of help from the major media, which was quite enchanted with the American model at the time and helped promote a number of myths that formed part of his campaign. Among these were the idea that French social protections and employment benefits were “unaffordable in a global economy”, and that employers would hire more people if it were easier to fire them, and if taxes were cut for the rich.

Sarkozy has recently abandoned one of his most politically unpopular tax cuts for the rich, but there may be others. But he had also promised not to raise the retirement age for the public pension system. This has contributed to the mass outrage at his current proposal to raise it from 60 to 62, for those taking the reduced benefits, and from 65

to 67, for full benefits. (Under the US social security system, most people opt for the reduced benefit that is available beginning at age 62; full benefits are available, for those born after 1959, at 67.)

Once again, most of the media thinks the French are being unrealistic, and should just get with the programme like everyone else. The argument is that life expectancy is increasing, so we all have to work longer. But this is a bit like reporting half of a baseball score (or soccer, if you prefer). On the other side is the fact that productivity and GDP also increase over time, and so it is indeed possible for the French to choose to spend more years in retirement and pay for it.

France's retirement age was last set in 1983. Since then, GDP per person has increased by 45%. The increase in life expectancy is very small by comparison. The number of workers per retiree declined from 4.4 in 1983 to 3.5 in 2010, but the growth of national income was vastly more than enough to compensate for the demographic changes, including the change in life expectancy.

The situation is similar going forward: the growth in national income over the next 30 or 40 years will be much more than sufficient to pay for the increases in pension costs due to demographic changes, while still allowing future generations to enjoy considerably higher living standards than people today. It is simply a social choice as to how many years people want to live in retirement and how they want to pay for it.

If the French want to keep the retirement age as is, there are plenty of ways to finance future pension costs without necessarily raising the retirement age. One of them, which has support among the French left (and which Sarkozy claims to support at the international level), would be a tax on financial transactions. Such a “speculation tax” could raise billions of dollars of revenue – as it currently does in the UK – while simultaneously discouraging speculative trading in financial assets and derivatives. The French unions and protesters are demanding that the government considers some of these more progressive alternatives.

It is, therefore, perfectly reasonable to expect that as life expectancy increases, workers should be able to spend more of their lives in retirement. And that is what most French citizens expect. They may not have seen all the arithmetic, but they grasp intuitively that as a country grows richer year after year, they should not have to spend more of their lives working.

An increase in the retirement age is a highly regressive cut that will hit working people hardest. Poorer workers have shorter life expectancies and would lose a higher proportion of their retirement years. Workers who have to retire early because of unemployment or other hardships



High school students on strike prepare for police attack

will take a benefit cut as a result of this change. And, of course, this cut would not matter to the richest people in society, who do not rely on the public pension system for most of their retirement income.

France has a lower level of inequality than most Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) countries and is one of only five – out of 30 OECD countries – that saw inequality decrease from the mid 1980s to the mid 2000s. It also had the largest decrease in inequality in the group, although all of it was from the mid 80s to the mid 90s.

France has, until now, resisted at least some of the changes that have rolled the clock back for working people and, especially, low-income citizens in the high-income countries. The European authorities (including the European Commission, European Central Bank and International Monetary Fund) are currently accelerating these regressive changes in the weaker Eurozone economies (such as Greece, Spain and Ireland). All of these institutions and many politicians are trying to use the current economic problems of Europe as a pretext to enact rightwing reforms.

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CGT union blockades the airport in Nice

part of what is generating the protests. Despite the recent electoral weakness of the Socialist party, France has a stronger left than many other countries do, and one that has the ability and willingness to organise mass protest, work stoppages and educational campaigns.

The French are, in effect, fighting for the future of Europe – and it is a good example for others. We can only hope that, here in the United States, we will be able to beat back any proposed cuts to our much less generous social security system, with attacks on benefits looming on the horizon.

## Students Disrupt Board of Trustees Meeting Over Coming Tuition Hike

By Ben Rothschild

ABOUT TWENTY STUDENTS from the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign and Chicago attempted to disrupt a Board of Trustees meeting today over tuition increases and the re-segregation of higher education.

A member of the Urbana-Champaign community spoke on the importance of recruitment of African American students. The number of African Americans in the freshmen class at UIUC was higher in 1967 than in 2010.

Another student addressed the board on diversity and requested that the board freeze tuition. The board is planning another hike at their January meeting.

At the end of the public comment, one student shouted out, “Our concerns haven't been addressed!”

Four security guards rushed toward him.

Two other students spoke up and said “Higher education is being re-segregated!” and “We want to be listened

to!”

Security grabbed them and began to escort them out. Other students joined in and chanted, “Tuition freeze now!” One policeman pushed a student. Police forcefully removed protesters from the building.

Fifty percent of UIUC students graduate in debt.

The Undergraduate-Graduate Alliance is a coalition of student activist groups at UIUC.



# Cinching Our Belts With No Economic Recovery

By Michael Brun



LOUD VOICES FROM the worlds of business and government have called for people to pay a larger share of the costs of their maintenance. These voices call for cutting back on

payments to working people in wages, healthcare, retirement pensions, social security, and welfare. Tax support for education has dropped, and students and their parents are called upon to pay more. Grants for higher education are disappearing. Some of these have been converted to student loans, but even these are much harder to come by. Meanwhile, the cost of public utilities like water and power has risen dramatically, as of course has the cost of health care.

Conservatives scream about job losses when the minimum wage is raised 25 or 50 cents an hour. They should save their breath. The Illinois minimum of \$8.25/hour or the federal minimum of \$7.00/hour doesn't matter much now; by global standards these wages are already way too high and the jobs long gone. Want to see jobs come back? Try minimums somewhere between \$1.00 and \$4.00 an hour.

In a world where business and money can and do go all over, why should any company pay an assembly-line worker more than the \$1 per hour it costs in China or the \$2 per hour it costs in Mexico? But while we are at it, why pay a college-educated engineer, doctor, lawyer, accountant, or teacher more than \$12,000 to \$20,000 per year? Licensing and regulation current-

ly protects professionals from global competition, but that can be changed.

In addition to financial costs, the majority of citizens are being told to give over more of their time; between increases in the retirement age and longer work-weeks without overtime, the very lives of citizens are being sacrificed to production and profit in the name of "progress."

All this amounts to quite a squeeze! It may hit the "working-class" and poor hardest, but it's coming for almost everyone. But how can this be? Both the U.S. and the global economy have grown enormously over the past few generations. In this sense then, there is no problem "affording" wage increases, benefit increases, a stable social security system, and long and secure retirements. If you look at raw wealth and productive capacity, you'd be misled into thinking that every generation should be able to enjoy higher wages, better health care, and still be able to retire earlier than the previous generation. So why are we talking about cutbacks instead of increases all the time?

The answer is simple: markets are fundamental to both the U.S. economy and the global economy. Markets are the main way goods and services, and jobs and payments are distributed. However, markets do not say, "Gee, lets see how much has been produced; Ok, it's a little more than last year, so everyone will get a little more." Instead, in markets it's, "ask not what the economy can do for you; ask what you can do for the economy;" or, what you can do to the economy. Your benefits are directly tied to your power for good or for harm. If

you are powerless, you'll get no cash and no attention.

That's the secret. Technology has rendered much routine labor obsolete, while colonialism left a legacy across the world of extremely unequal wage rates. When placed head to head, those in "the West" who benefited most and first from social and technological revolutions are now the least competitive. The more global and technologically advanced the economy, the less most people will be able to personally contribute. So they will eventually get paid less too. That's how things work in markets. This may be of some comfort, though not much, to people elsewhere who live in poverty under oppressive conditions, and who are now getting the low-paid jobs. It is of much more comfort to owners and entrepreneurs who profit from this competition.

As productive power shifts from Europe, North America, Japan and Korea to countries like China, India, Indonesia, Viet Nam, Egypt, Nigeria and Brazil—and those places with raw material reserves—unions, whether cohesive as in many parts of Europe or fragmented as in the US, lose bargaining power. The ultimate threat, the strike, is defanged. "You want to strike? Well, we were thinking of moving the plant in five years anyway, maybe we'll just do it now." It is worthwhile to note that unions in China, working under conditions more oppressive than here, have recently been able to achieve wage gains of ten to twenty percent a year. That's the advantage of not being priced out of the market right from the start.

Union power combined with political action pushed wages up in the old industrial countries, and that led to an expansion of benefits, pensions, and government-run programs. Another secret is that the confidence and self-respect with which workers once formed unions gave entrepreneurs and property owners the clue that investment in workers can be worthwhile when dealing with socially and technically skilled people who know what they offer.

But the current economic situation deprives many unions here of any power, and with their powerlessness come reduced wages and cutbacks in benefits, pensions, and government programs. Since unions cannot demonstrate how workers here are essential, they cannot persuade or coerce anyone into paying us. Except for technical experts, resource owners and entrepreneurs, we are worth less, a lot less on the market than we have been led to expect. Successful property owners and entrepreneurs, making their money mostly outside this country, don't understand why they should support us with their taxes any more than necessary to avoid the worst of social disruptions.

So when will we bounce back here? When will all budgets be balanced and ordinary people start again to improve their standard of living? I don't seriously expect that to happen until either this country retreats into a drastic form of protectionism, or wage rates, working conditions and benefits become reasonably similar across the globe.

## Jimmy John's Sandwich Workers to Continue to Press for Improved Working Conditions

*Jimmy John's is a franchised sandwich restaurant owned by Jimmy John Liautaud. The restaurant was founded in 1983 and has since grown to over 1000 stores, with many locations in college towns. The company headquarters is located in Champaign, Illinois. This is a press release issued by the Minneapolis General Membership Branch of the IWW.*

MINNEAPOLIS—THE JIMMY JOHN'S WORKERS UNION has filed a 12-page Objection to the October 22 National Labor Review Board (NLRB) election at 10 Minneapolis sandwich shops, outlining a pattern of pervasive and systemic labor rights violations that prevented the possibility of a free and fair vote. The union election, a first in fast food in the US, was as close as they come, with 85 votes in favor of the union, 87 against, and 2 challenged ballots.



Jimmy John's workers picket their workplace

"Franchise owner Mike Mulligan decided to go beyond the pale. His managers asked workers to wear anti-union pins, fired pro-union workers, threatened a mass firing, implemented an illegal wage freeze, tightened policies and retaliated against union members, [...] and pressured workers to vote no. He broke the law repeatedly in order to win, and he just barely won. That's not right. We are calling on the NLRB to set aside the results of this election," said worker and union member Emily Przybylski Przybylsiy.

In response to his employee's union campaign, franchise owner Mike Mulligan hired a third-party anti-union consulting firm, Labor Relations Inc., to prevent employees from winning an NLRB Union election. According to documents obtained from the Department of Labor, Mulligan spent over \$84,500 on an anti-union campaign intended to prevent workers from unionizing.

Tim Louris, of Minneapolis labor firm Miller O'Brien Cummins, is assisting the union pro-bono in navigating the tricky waters of labor law. Union spokespeople say the written objection to the election results will be available to the public within a few days.

While filing with the NLRB to have the election results nullified, the workers also plan to mount a campaign to win their demands without union recognition.

"85 yes votes, in spite of 6 weeks of vicious union-busting, is a mandate for change. There are a thousand ways we can put pressure on Jimmy John's to win our demands for fair wages, sick days, consistent hours, and respect. We're fired up, this fight is just beginning," said Ayo



The Wobblies make some noise outside Jimmy John's

Collins, another worker and union member.

The Jimmy John's Workers Union, open to employees at the company nationwide, is the first fast food union in the nation, and is affiliated with the Industrial Workers of the World labor union. Gaining prominence in recent years for organizing Starbucks workers (www.starbucks-union.org/), the IWW is a global union founded over a century ago for all working people.

For more information: Jimmy John's Workers Union (Industrial Workers of the World; www.iww.org, or www.jimmyjohnsworkers.org) Contact: Emily Przybylski, 414-477-9803.