

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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The Public i

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

Reader Feedback

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

When a Parent Is in Prison

The young people who are featured here are among the 2,400,000 children who have a mother or father in prison.



"When a Parent is in Prison" explores the situation of children who have a parent in prison through their portraits and words.

A documentary project of Mennonite Central Committee U.S. and Eastern Mennonite University's Center for Justice and Peacebuilding

UC Independent Media Center

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Champaign Police Fatally Shoot Unarmed 15 Year-old African American Youth

By Brian Dolinar



CHAMPAIGN POLICE SAY it will take a month for an investigation into the "officer-involved shooting" of Kiwane Carrington, an unarmed 15 year-old African American youth. There has been an outpouring of support for young Kiwane from friends and family. The community anxiously awaits an answer to what happened that rainy afternoon.

On Friday, Oct. 9, 2009, Champaign police responded to a reported burglary on 906 W. Vine St. The first to arrive on the scene was Champaign Police Chief R.T. Finney who confronted two 15 year-olds in the backyard. Classes in the READY program that Kiwane attended were cancelled that day for teacher instruction. Kiwane, whose mother passed away last year from pancreatic cancer, was staying at Debra Thomas' home. He had eaten breakfast there that morning. When he arrived at the house in the afternoon, the door was locked and he had forgotten his key. It was raining outside and the two were looking for shelter.



The press conference at UCIMC

When Chief Finney arrived at approximately 1:20 p.m., he knew only that a neighbor had reported a burglary. Soon after, a witness reportedly heard police yelling out, "Get on the ground. Get on the ground." It had been raining for two days and the ground was wet and muddy. When one of the youth tried to walk away, Finney grabbed him and a struggle ensued.

Another officer appeared on the scene, Daniel Norbits, a 14 year veteran of the force. Although neither of the 15 year-old boys had a weapon, Norbits apparently drew his gun and, according to a press statement released Friday night by Champaign police, it "was discharged resulting in the fatal wounding of one of the subjects." An autopsy showed that the bullet went through Kiwane's left elbow and passed through his heart.

The News-Gazette has reported that Norbits had previously been involved in the case of Greg Brown, a developmentally disabled man who died of a heart attack after he was beaten in an alley by Champaign police back in 2000. Witnesses said they heard Brown calling out for help that night.

Virtually no other information has been provided by the Champaign police about Kiwane's death, saying they do not want to impede the investigation headed by the Illinois State Police. Yet Chief Finney was on the scene and saw everything that happened. Did Norbits follow policy

as practiced by the Champaign Police Department? Is it police policy to pull guns on youth? Or is this just the way that Champaign police treat black youth? Chief Finney must reveal the truth of what occurred that day. To remain silent only fuels suspicion. For Kiwane's family, it adds insult to injury.

Champaign-Urbana Citizens for Peace and Justice (CUCPJ) held a press conference on Monday, October 12, at the Independent Media Center. Present were Kenesha Williams, legal guardian and older sister of Kiwane, Christine Williams, grandmother, his aunt Rhonda Carrington, Debra Thomas, owner of the house where the incident occurred; and Laura Manning, mother of the other youth involved, Aaron Ammons, co-founder of CUCPJ, Terry Townsend, longtime community activist, Seon Williams, owner of The Whip barbershop, and Dr. Evelyn Underwood, President of the Ministerial Alliance.

Behind them was a line of Kiwane's friends holding signs that read, "We want answers." One of the youth stepped up to address the cameras: "All them police are real slick with them badges. Y'all see this on cameras, but you don't see what we see every day. Y'all don't see how they come harass us every day on the block. I get to the point I get harassed by my first name. I come outside, they follow me to the gas station. That's not cool for nobody to live their life. Every boy behind me has been harassed by Champaign's finest."

The story of Kiwane's death at ucimc.org was receiving 1,000 hits per day after the incident. Some of those who knew him left messages. One of them wrote, "God bless you Kiwane and your mother. May both of you rest in peace together."

On Wednesday night, October 14, a large vigil was held at the house where the shooting occurred. Several hundred youth, neighborhood residents, and community members came to pay their respects to the memory of Kiwane. After the vigil, the crowd marched up Prospect Ave., many of the youth spilling into the street. Champaign County Sheriff's deputies were there to direct traffic (Champaign police were nowhere to be seen). The crowd was managed by several members of the Nation of Islam who had come from Chicago and throughout the region to serve as security for the event.

Many filled the congregation hall at New Hope Church of God to hear State Senator and Vice-President of Operation Push, Rev. James Meeks give a rousing speech. Meeks lamented the death of young Kiwane. "This is what it sounds like," he preached, "when blood cries." He insisted that the community seek answers, "Put the police department on notice that we aren't going to accept open season on Negro people." Meeks called for an independent police review board, which Urbana has established but Champaign has refused to accept. "The worst thing in the world," Meeks said, "is to have the police police the police." He also demanded more black officers be hired on the police force.

The second 15 year old involved has been released from juvenile detention. The charge of burglary was dropped, but State's Attorney Julia Rietz has decided to prosecute him for aggravated resisting a police officer, a felony which carries a possible three-year sentence. His next court date is November 12.

A memorial fund has been set up at Busey Bank for anyone who would like to contribute. Donations can be

dropped off at any Busey Bank location or you can call 367-4500.

For video and audio of the press conference at the IMC, as well as up-to-date information, go to ucimc.org.

UCIMC Welcomes AmeriCorps Volunteers



For the coming year, the Independent Media Center will have nine AmeriCorps volunteers working for us. They include (from left to right) Jacob Barton, School for Designing a Society, Nicole Pion, Outreach Coordinator, Katy Vizdal, shows, Meiosha Polk, Property Manager, Carly Nix, News Media Coordinator, Emma Barnes, Bike Project, Brian Duggan, Tech, and Judith Pond, Books to Prisoners (not pictured Kat Lieder, Gesundheit Inst, and Carol Ammons, program coordinator).

The Show with Ray Morales, WRFU 104.5, Friday nights at 10 p.m.



"Hip Hop: The Untold Contributions of Latin@s"

On Nov 6, we will be filming an episode of "The Show" for National Public TV featuring Prof. John Jennings, NYC MC Magnetic & NYC Actor/Producer Victor Cruz. The topic will be "Hip Hop: The Untold Contributions of Latin@s". This event is co-sponsored by the Puerto Rican Student Association & funded by SORF. It will be filmed live at La Casa Cultural Latina.



Power Without Accountability?

By Marti Wilkinson



IN FOLLOWING THE NEWS coverage and comments made regarding the murder of Kiwane Carrington-Williams, I am disturbed to see how many people are quick to jump to the defense of an officer who took the life of a 15 year old boy. Perhaps I've overlooked something, but I have yet to see any reports that Carrington-Williams was holding a weapon. Neither has it been reported that the life of an officer was in danger. This is the second time that this officer has killed someone during a 14 year career. They are painting this kid out to be a thug who was on the way to being a career criminal just because he attended the READY school. He was just a kid and it's my understanding that their brains are still developing even at the age of 15 so it's unreasonable to hold these children to an adult standard. If this situation involved a couple of white kids in Cherry Hills would this have happened? As a mother of a teenager I know that there are times when kids will simply react to a situation instead of thinking first.

Personally, I think Finney is going to defend the actions of Officer Norbits if for no other reason than to save his own skin. After all, if Officer Norbits committed a senseless

murder then our Chief of Police is an accessory to a criminal act. History in this community has shown many times that a badge gives one a free pass to engage in unlawful acts towards the very citizens that police officers have sworn to serve and protect. How many women did Kurt Hjort stalk, harass, and assault before someone finally had the courage to report him? How many people were in grave danger the night that Lisa Staples went out and drove the wrong way on I-72? How many inmates at the County Jail were subject to the unlawful use of tasers by Sgt. Myers at the Champaign County jail before he was charged with a crime? Yet, Hjort, Staples, and Myers are free and able to live their lives without having to bear responsibility for the abuse of public trust and safety they committed. Perhaps I'm naive, but when officers are not held to the standards they are expected to uphold then how can we teach our children and grandchildren to 'respect' the police.

To make a comparison let us look at examples of churches who have leaders that abused their positions. Perhaps the most well known examples involve priests who spent years abusing children and being moved from parish to parish before finally facing criminal charges. How much money has this cost the church in lawsuits alone? Then you have the Rabbis in New Jersey who have

been arrested in connection with money laundering. Some years ago a local minister was caught in a lie when he was having an affair with a member of his congregation who had been to counseling with him - and he married her after divorcing his wife. Just as we have members of the public who defend the police there are church members who refuse to see any wrongdoing on the part of priests, rabbis, and pastors. It's as if we train ourselves to leave our brains at the door or bury our heads in the sand to avoid dealing with the discomfort of these situations.

I was taught that, as human beings, we are as sick as our secrets. I believe that the reason why these situations are allowed to continue is due to the conspiracy of silence that is ingrained into these institutions. We see this when Special Prosecutors and outside police agencies rule in favor of officers. We see this when bishops transfer priests to another parish or when a local church chooses to retain a pastor until he can find another position. We see this in church members and citizens who refuse to believe that a trusted servant is capable of evil. In the case of young Kiwane—his death came not only at the end of an officer's bullet—but as result of the secrecy and silence that has long festered within the police department and poisoned the surrounding community

Unity March Highlights "Don't Care" Attitude Toward the Poor

By Brian Dolinar

DESPITE THE DREARY DAY, about 75 people came out for the sixth annual Unity March on October 3, 2009. The event is a unique coming together of black, brown, and white people from both the campus and the community. This year's march addressed the growing economic crisis, the need for health care and housing for all, and the criminalization of the poor.

The march kicked off from the Champaign city building. The Champaign city council has repeatedly been negligent in protecting its most vulnerable citizens, failing to adequately fund the Township office which provides for the poorest of the poor, refusing to penalize the owners of Gateway Hotel which displaced 200 poor people when it closed, and enforcing its zoning codes to shut down the Safe Haven tent community of homeless men and women.

The march proceeded through downtown Champaign on University Avenue. From the bridge where the historic train tracks pass over University Ave., a banner was hung that quoted Champaign Mayor Jerry Schweighart. When asked at the city council meeting on May 12, 2009 where the homeless were supposed to sleep this winter, the Mayor responded, "I don't care."

Crossing over Wright street to Urbana, marchers passed by Carle Hospital which several years ago was stripped of its non-profit status for turning down treatment to the poor and in some cases sending people to jail for failing to pay their medical debts. The marchers chanted, "What do we want? Health care! When do we want it? Now!" A group of people standing on their front porch joined in the chant.

As we passed by a Subway restaurant, workers came out to see what was happening. When asked, one worker told us he had no health care. He raised his fist in support.

In downtown Urbana, the crowd passed by the downtown jail where Sheriff Dan Walsh also has his office. There have been several deaths in the county jails under Walsh's watch: three suicides within six months in 2004, Quentin Larry died of a drug overdose in 2005, Janet Hahn died of diabetes in 2007, and most recently Toddy Kelly committed suicide on June 25, 2009. Marchers walked around Walsh's jail shouting, "Vote Walsh out!"

The Unity March concluded with a rally at the Champaign County courthouse under the new \$6.8 million clock tower. Father Tom Royer of St. Mary's Catholic Church, where the Safe Haven community now resides, addressed the crowd and expressed the need for us to appreciate the "dignity and equality of each individual." He called for Champaign city officials to sit down with the members of Safe Haven to find a solution to the current lack of affordable housing.

Aaron Ammons, poet and emcee of the Krannert Art Museum's SPEAK Café read a poem he had written for the occasion.

Lastly, the marchers convened for a reception at the Independent Media Center. Some purchased books from the Books To Prisoners book sale taking place the same weekend.



A banner hung during the march reads: "CU: Where will our homeless sleep this winter? Champaign Mayor Schweighart at city council mtg., 5.12.09, 'I don't care.'"

Victory: Chicago Loses Olympic Bid

Social justice activists celebrated a victory on Oct. 2 when the International Olympic Committee (IOC) did not award the 2016 Olympics to Chicago. In a shocking turn of events, the perceived favorite host city, Chicago, was eliminated in the first round. In the May 2009 issue of the Public i, the IMC covered the myriad reasons why Chicago hosting the games would be a disaster.

While activists are cheering their success, it is vitally important for people to remember that the battle is not over. Those concerned about the problems—the police impunity, economic devastation, and gentrification—that the Olympics bring need to organize support and solidarity for the people of Rio de Janeiro. As sports writer Dave Zirin reflected: "If history is any kind of a guide, the pain for Brazil's working people is now on the immediate horizon. It's our duty to do whatever we can to express solidarity with the favelas, the landless peasants, and the workers about to stare down the barrel of 'Olympism.' Our work has just begun."



Youth lead the march past the Police Station



Aaron Ammons reciting his poem

Cycle of Greed

By Aaron Ammons

Gateway through people on the street even though they paid their rent
They won't even let us live in a tent
You can't just look the other way
Your silence gives consent!
These brothers are sleeping in the park
That closes after dusk, or is it dark?
Sometimes it rains and it gets cold at night
This is not the time for a debate about wrong and right
It's time to fight!

Time for everyone to become their own leader
And that's how you become your brother and sister's keeper
It's a slippery slope that gets steeper and increases the tension
I don't know if I'm a socialist, but,
How can we have homeless citizens while crooked trustees
and politicians retire with a pension, show no remorse or repentance?
Hard working grad students get pennies for their assistance because
The cycle of greed is vicious,
The cycle of greed is vicious
The cycle of greed is vicious!
From freecycle, the Bicycle and Common Ground Co-op
From IMC, CU Citizens, iResist to S.T.O.P.
These are some of our outstanding residents
By the way
S.T.O.P. stands for; Students Telling Off the President

They say to rear a child, it takes a village
So we have to address housing, poverty, health care
Race, Class, and Privilege
If not, we sentence our Nation to a variety of things
Amongst them are American dreams that never come true
Festering hatred
Battles between the right and left

And a population that sees death
As sacred.
Do you see now how you can become what you fear
Why we have to prepare everyday of every year, for the inevitable,
Can you live together, build a house, sew some clothes and grow a vegetable or two?
That's called intelligent and it shows respect
Those of us who live check to check
Know we are a bad day away from poverty, too!
At what cost are people working their asses off,
Not for a select few to play tennis and golf,
While other citizens can't get help for a nasty cough!
Where's the trough for the community?
I know I'm responsible to contribute to a public hospital,
What about rich white collar criminals who get immunity?
They consistently avoid prosecution
Juxtapose,
Homeless citizens are jailed if they can't pay fines, court cost and restitution!
ARE YOU KIDDING ME!!
Did they rape, rob, or attempt to kill,
Did they sit on their hands and get rich from expensive medicines that don't heal?
I mean let's keep it real man,
You're arresting me, a homeless citizen
For using somebody's garbage can?
Are you serious, or delirious?
I mean, what are you thinking?
Have you been drinking?
I don't know if you knew,
Cops drink and drive too!
They just have a different view of justice,
They think they're on the inside of a circle of vultures
We must recognize the two different cultures and face it,
It is what is and that's how it stands,
It's the very reason we have to stay united
Because power concedes nothing, without a demand!

Statement From CU Citizens for Peace and Justice

On Friday October 9, 2009, two unarmed 15 year-olds, Kiwane Carrington and another youth, were accosted by Champaign officers—including the Chief of Police—at the place where Kiwane stayed. Kiwane was shot and killed. The other was arrested, at first for burglary (charges since dropped), and then for felony aggravated resisting a peace officer, and was taken to jail.

Something is fundamentally wrong with police procedure where a mistaken assumption about burglary leads to guns drawn, ransacking of a home, and killing of a young person—with the Chief of Police present!

CU Citizens for Peace and Justice Are Calling For:

- Resignation of Champaign Police Chief R. T. Finney
- Dropping of all charges against the arrested youth
- Rewrite the new Use of Force Policies which allows police to shoot to kill to "prevent the arrest from being defeated by resistance or escape"
- Independent Citizen Police Review Board with subpoena power.
- No Tasers!
- Protect our rights of freedom of movement. Police need to stop racial profiling, ID checks, forced "consent" searches, jay walking tickets, and noise violations that have become the common form of harrassment in North Champaign.



A Conference With Mexico City's Youth

By Brady Collins



EARLY LAST MONTH I JOINED over 1,300 UN delegates, NGO workers, and policy makers from around the world who descended on Mexico City to attend the 62nd annual UN Department of Public Information/Non-Governmental Organizations (DPI/NGO) Conference. The title of this year's conference, "Disarm Now!" aptly illustrated the sense of urgency that members of the UN associations feel in promoting peace and development around the world in pursuit of their Millennium Development Goals.

The three-day conference consisted of various workshops and roundtable discussions, each with a different focus related to disarmament and global security. With such a diverse range of actors working toward a similar goal, a lot of time was devoted to finding ways to increase dialogue between the many actors in hopes of creating a more coordinated effort. The Department of Public Information for the UN stressed the importance of a mobilized and informed civil society, citing the ways in which nongovernmental organizations can form a bridge between the UN and the global community.

In recent years, Mexico's negative image has been largely reinforced by international media coverage. From organized drug cartels to the recent H1N1 outbreak, the common perception of Mexico is that it is dirty, drug-ridden, and spiraling out of control. However, the capital is a symbol of its development, and it is not the same metropolis that it was ten years ago. Now, with the flu under control and the drug cartels kept outside the city, the Conference gave Mexico City a chance to dispel false perceptions.

This is only the second time that the DPI/NGO Conference has been held outside UN headquarters in New York City. The Selection of Mexico is even more suitable given that Maria Luisa Chavez, director of NGO Relations for the DPI and chief organizer for the Conference, is a native Mexican. With a turbulent history of violence and political instabil-

ity, Mexico City was given the opportunity to highlight the progress it has made in the last decade, as well as showcasing its rich history and culture to the rest of the world.

The youth participants in the Conference were some of the strongest activists of Mexico City, expressing their support for their home and shining a bright light on the future of the city. In addition to youth volunteers, student journalists from various Mexican Universities and a group of international student journalists, worked together to write a Conference newsletter at the end of each day. This highlighted the proceedings and the lectures, as well as conducting interviews with important panelists. The newsletter was accompanied by social media coverage on Facebook, Twitter, and Flickr, all run by the student journalists.

The Mexican student journalists were without a doubt some of the most informed and motivated students I have ever met. In working and conversing with them I got the profound sense that their unwavering dedication to their home city and international affairs was going to place them in future leadership positions in global development. Given Mexico's history of political strife, they have grown up in an environment which constantly forces them to remain aware of the struggles, and hazards, that await them. Having seen first hand the problems that face their generation in the new century, it appears they are unflinchingly dedicated to solving them.

The UN officials present made a point to emphasize the importance of the students' role at the Conference, and Sec-

retary General Ban Ki-Moon made a particularly powerful gesture. As a gift, the Mexican volunteers prepared for the Secretary General a sculpture of the Conference logo, a green plant sprouting from a grenade in shambles. The sculpture was then presented at the Museo de Arte Moderno, where the Secretary General, along with the students, applied the final piece to the structure. Spectators applauded and snapped pictures as they

raised the last missing leaf and fastened it to the plant, which Mr. Ban Ki-Moon then marked with his signature. He concluded by offering his own gratitude for their participation, while stressing the importance of civic engagement both on campuses and in the community.

"Global development", the phrase frequently used during the Conference workshops, is such a broadly encompassing concept that when said out of context it bears little value. However, as

the panelists and UN delegates described, development is about the limitless work towards progress. An educated and motivated youth is the strongest arm the global community has in building a more stable, secure world. The Conference in Mexico City exemplified this, channeling the voices of students, diplomats, and leaders of civil society into one forum for discussion. The result was a declaration that seeks to build a more solid foundation for the future, and makes a gesture that a united network of youth activism is the best way to achieve this.



Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon at the DPI/NGO Conference

Coup and Human Rights in Honduras: An Issue That Must Not Be Ignored

By Daniel Cruz

Daniel Cruz is an undergraduate student at Stanford University. He was born and raised in Honduras and spent most of his summer in his hometown Tegucigalpa.

IT WAS AN EARLY SUNDAY MORNING and my phone was urgently ringing. I usually do not receive calls so early. The call came with a shocking message: "Coup d'état!" I remember throwing the cell phone with anger, awe and great frustration. I ran toward the TV and saw how years of effort to build and preserve democracy, not only in Honduras, but also all over Latin America, was being dumped like garbage.

After five hundred years of bloody colonial and neo-colonial oppression, in 1982 Hondurans voted to end military rule and to establish democracy; however, Honduras could not escape the effects of the strife next door. With its neighbors caught up in bloody civil wars, the United States stepped into Honduras pouring in millions of dollars in military "aid," building military bases, arming and training elements of the Honduran Army, and abetting in the formation of "Death Squads" like the infamous Battalion 3-16. These squads committed political assassinations, tortured opponents, and "disappeared" hundreds of dissenters (including U.S. citizens) who opposed the Honduran and U.S. governments.

Many Hondurans considered that period one of the darkest in their history. Unfortunately the ghosts have returned. In response to the recent coup, the Honduran people have waged more than 80 days of nonstop resistance, organizing multitudinous demonstrations. In response to these actions of democratic uprising, they have faced violence and repression from the armed forces. A delegation from the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights (IACHR) sent to Honduras concluded that the de facto regime had carried out serious human rights violations. They identified the army and police as being responsible for these acts. The violations

seemed to begin the morning of the coup when an army squad broke into the home of democratically elected President Manuel Zelaya forcing him into exile at gunpoint. That same day troops were deployed to repress demonstrators and suspend civil liberties. At the same time they announced a curfew that would remain in effect for over a month. The IACHR reports that the police and army used disproportionate force against unarmed demonstrators, brutally beating, shooting and killing men, women and children. There have also been wide-scale threats and persecution. The IACHR states that more than thirty-five hundred Hondurans have been arbitrarily detained. Others have been "disappeared," and sexual violence and rape have been used against women active in the resistance movement.

On July 5, Zelaya attempted to return to Honduras, but was frustrated by police and army units who blocked the runway with army trucks. Army snipers fired indiscriminately into a large crowd that had gathered to welcome Zelaya back, killing a young boy, Obed Murillo, and wounding several other demonstrators. Four days later, police arrested Jose David Murillo, the boy's father, as he left a human rights organization where he had reported his son's death. While claiming to have acted to preserve democracy, the de facto regime has seized control of radio and television stations. Private stations, backers of the coup, continue broadcasting sports and cartoons, and omit any report on the coup or pro-Zelaya demonstrations. Reporters and journalists critical of the coup have frequently been attacked, threatened or arrested.

It is an outrage that conservative elements of the U.S. Media have attempted to justify and legitimize the actions of the de facto regime. Right wing pundits have portrayed Zelaya as trying to illegally extend his term in office. This is hardly the case. What was proposed was not a referendum to extend Zelaya's term in office; it was a non-binding referendum intended to let



the people's voice be heard in the November elections regarding the need for constitutional reform. While Latin American nations have been unanimous in condemning the coup, the U.S. response was slow and tepid. Though they eventually did condemn the coup, they did not do so until September, more than two months after the coup. Furthermore, statements and visits from several U.S. representatives in support of the regime have undercut the official position of condemnation. Unfortunately the regime is still stubbornly holding on to power, still abusing human rights, still repressing dissent.

The U.S. could do much more. It could explicitly denounce human rights violations. Punitive actions could be taken against de facto regime leaders. It is time that the U.S. Government admits the role it has played in the past in Honduras and Central America—supporting reactionary regimes, and backing U.S. businesses in exploiting the indigenesness of the people. It is time for reform.



Free Trade & the Economic Crisis in Nicaragua

By Shara Eshenshade



Shara Eshenshade is a native of Urbana. She is currently studying history at Stanford University and is active in the Campus Antiwar Network and United Students Against Sweatshops.

THE GLOBAL ECONOMIC CRISIS that began at the end of 2008 has hit Nicaragua hard. Over a dozen *maquilas*, factories, that import all the primary materials, export all the products, and comprise the primary source of employment in Nicaragua, have already left the country, and tens of thousands have lost their jobs. The very real fear of the flight of investment has caused the previously populist government to turn to supporting labor-abusing companies, either outright or tacitly, by choosing not to enforce the law while companies are increasingly violating workers' rights. This is a shift back into the state's former role under the 16 years of neoliberalism that followed the electoral defeat of the Sandinistas in 1990.

As a United Students Against Sweatshops International intern, I spent the summer in Masaya, Nicaragua with a union federation that organizes with workers of the *maquilas* which primarily produce apparel for American consumers. Yutex, a factory making shirts for Walmart, provides one example of the growing trend among corporations to capitalize on the financial crisis and the government's weakened position by disrespecting labor law in obvious and devastating ways. Workers at Yutex finally formed a union last winter to resist forced overtime, abuse by supervisors, and other oppressive practices of the company. The new union members were laid off by the hundreds and met with a vicious propaganda campaign on the part of management, which accused the union of driving the company out of Nicaragua. "We [the unions] must be flexible with the companies. Because if we continue struggling 100% they will leave and the workers will be left without a job," explains Wilfredo Guerrero, a young union leader at Yutex who was fired and threatened with death by the factory owner. Guerrero tells me, one cannot allow the company to continue its current practices: firing at will, underpaying workers, and refusing to accept unions. He and the union organizers are some of the most committed and fearless activists I have known. However, there is a creeping feeling among labor in the Nicaraguan apparel industry of being stuck with no way out.

The government, organized labor, and big business formed a tripartite commission in response to the crisis. On

March 12, they signed an agreement in which the companies promised to establish and maintain communication with workers, including consulting them in responding to financial difficulties caused by the crisis, and to follow proper legal procedures in cases of company closures (as opposed to fleeing the country without paying workers their due benefits, a common practice in the Free Trade Zones). Labor leaders agreed to have minimum wage negotiations once a year rather than every six months. The labor movement had fought hard for twice-a-year negotiations and the tripartite agreement was a sacrifice decided upon in a top-down manner within the labor organizations, one that workers were extremely upset about. In one labor organizer's words, however, "this was the only thing to do: sign this agreement or else here, there would have been a massive closing of factories, like there was in Honduras. A lot of companies left Honduras and came here. In El Salvador and Guatemala the same thing happened." Nevertheless, the agreement did not stop many signatory companies from leaving the country, often in outright noncompliance with the conditions set by the commission. Nicaragua has among the lowest wages in Central America. Since the crisis, companies have been leaving nearby countries and moving to Nicaragua where they can profit more because the price of labor is lower. This cycle continues as companies facing financial hardship in Nicaragua move to countries in Asia and Africa, where labor is even cheaper.

The union members I got to know have a strong analysis of the way their struggle fits into the global situation. What is happening at Yutex and the many factories with similar cases is only possible within the context of the global race to the bottom, the process of companies constantly chasing the economies with the lowest wages and most vulnerable labor force. Critiquing, actively opposing, and finding alternatives to the free trade policies embodied in agreements that facilitate this disastrous race, such as CAFTA-DR (the Central American Free Trade Agreement implemented in 2006), is part of the Nicaraguan labor movement's work. The free trade system puts Nicaraguans in a vulnerable situation. If companies operating in the country did not all depend upon imports and markets abroad to make money, this crisis would not be hurting them nearly as much. The few companies that do obtain their primary materials from within Nicaragua or from bordering El Salvador have been surviving the crisis far better than the *maquilas* that are at the mercy of fluctuating foreign markets.

A question many have been asking in the US, since the

economic crisis hit is, "why should Main Street pay for Wall Street's actions?" However, we usually aren't thinking about the price of this crisis on a global level. The people of the poorest countries in the world are affected the most. The free trade policies that the United States and international institutions, such as the World Bank, have imposed upon Nicaragua and other impoverished or indebted countries have ensured that the lowest-paid and most abused workers of the world take the greatest hits from a crisis caused by a system these same workers have resisted from the beginning.



This is a typical neighborhood that employees of the maquila live in. The poor living conditions of workers are one of the greatest crimes of the free trade zone system.



The home of one maquila worker.



Union workers at the 30th anniversary conference of the Central Sandinista de Trabajadores, one of the strongest national labor organizations.



A union organizer I lived with leads a workshop with members of a newly formed union from one of the many apparel factories near Masaya.



Workers vote for the new board of directors of the Central Sandinista de Trabajadores, one of the strongest national labor organizations of Nicaragua, at its 30th anniversary conference.

PEOPLE'S COMMUNITY POTLUCK

Sunday, November 1, 6-8 PM, Independent Media Center, 202 South Broadway, Urbana

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



Community Protests "Chief Illiniwek"

By Conar Gillard



Conar Gillard is a Junior in Political Science at the University of Illinois

THE AIR WAS COLD AND THE SKY GREY as students huddled together around the Alma Mater in anticipation of the march to Assembly Hall for the Not Our Mascot Rally on Friday. According to the iResist Web Site, Chief Illiniwek was retired as of March 13, 2007. However, the Registered Student Organization (RSO) and Students for Chief Illiniwek have since been hosting events to further the mascot's tradition

According to a press release from the iResist Coalition, the march would begin at the Alma Mater then weave across campus to arrive at the Assembly Hall to protest the "Next Dance." The release stated that the coalition was comprised of a multitude of groups, such as: Movimiento Estudiantil Chicana/o de Aztlan (MEChA), Red Roots, Latino/a Studies, Campus Antiwar Network, and Students Transforming Oppression and Privilege (STOP).

"It's a stereotypical image of a Native person," Thomas Garza, human resources staff and member of the iResist Coalition, said. "And what does that have to do with Champaign-Urbana?"



The demonstration begins with drumming

Garza said the organization, MEChA, protested last year's rally, but due to the stressful and dangerous nature of the protest, the organization turned to the coalition for some local help.

"If you want to honor people, you honor them by listening to them," Carlos Ramirez-Rosa, junior in LAS and member of MEChA said. "And Natives on this campus, the Natives which the Chief supposedly represents, have all said this is offensive to them."

Rosa said he helped organize the rally. He added that the organization works as an advocate for social justice on behalf of the Latino students at the University. Rosa said the coalition wants to end this dark chapter of University history and that, "they want to move on."

"If the students want to make a costume and go dance at the local VA (Veteran's Association) hall, that's free



"Some 'traditions' should never be honored"



Protesters rally in front of Assembly Hall

speech," Rosa said. "But to use University of Illinois Music, to use University of Illinois logos, and to use University space, they don't have rights to that."

The Peoria Tribe of Indians of Oklahoma is a descendant of the Illiniwek Tribe, also known as the Illini or Illinoi Nations passed a resolution stating that the image portrayed by Chief Illiniwek does not accurately represent or honor the heritage of the Peoria Tribe and is a degrading racial stereotype that reflects negatively upon all American Indian people.

Steven Wyatt, senior in LAS, said he chose to attend the rally because he had been dealing with this issue since he was a freshman at the University.

"It's terrible that something like this is still allowed to go on in our society," Wyatt said, "People have images and ideas of Native stereotypes and don't even realize they are stereotypes."

Wyatt said he would ask students how they would feel if there was a mascot who made fun of their religion and cultural heritage. He felt Natives have been abused in society. Wyatt added, "Their sovereignty is denied to them, [and] they're the oppressed peoples here."

Graduate Student, Emily Henkels, said when she entered the University, she was in support of the Chief, but the retirement of the Mascot and rising racial tension that followed made her look at racism in an entirely new way. She added that members of the Peoria as well as other descendants have repeatedly stated the Chief was offensive. "We want peace, we don't want this symbol dividing our campus any longer," Henkels said.

Mario Munoz, freshman in DGS and member of Students for Chief Illiniwek, said the organization respected the iResist coalition's view on the mascot. He said the University of Illinois uses the Chief as a symbol, and not a mascot. He added that the two words are often thrown around interchangeably and people need to understand the difference. Munoz also said the organization was about honoring the tradition, "that is Chief Illiniwek."

"Once they understand that we respect and honor the Chief, as opposed to mocking him and making him a minstrel show, I think they'll probably get a better idea," Munoz said. "We're not racists, that is not what we are about."

Megan Laley, sophomore in Kinesiology, said she was attending the "Next Dance" event on Friday evening. She added that she thought he was a symbol that people "generally" respected and she felt the event was honoring the Illini.

"People from the Illiniwek tribes are in general not offended by this, it's white people who are," Laley said.

Fawaad Ahmad, sophomore in ECE said he is in support of the Chief. He added that he thought they were not degrading anyone with the use of it. He said he felt having the state as well as the University named after the Illini was an honor.

"I mean it's all for fun, there's the Florida State Seminoles, the Washington Redskins, if they want money, I'm sure Illinois can provide money to them," Ahmad said, "It's not like we're trying intentionally to harm anyone."

Chief Regalia Is Finally Returned To the Oglala Tribal Council

Only one day after the anti-"Chief" rally at Assembly Hall, protesting the Students for Chief Illiniwek's "Next Dance," the News Gazette had a major story buried on A8 of the Sunday newspaper.

In the middle of the page is a headline, "Regalia returned." There is a picture of former "Chief" portrayers and representatives of the Ogalala Lakota College. The caption reads: "Former Chief Illiniwek portrayers and representatives of the Ogalala Lakota College gather outside the Varsity Room at Memorial Stadium on Saturday before the Illinois-Penn State football game in preparation for a transfer of the University of Illinois' Chief regalia to Ogalala Lakota College. A News-Gazette photographer was refused admittance to the ceremony by UI Associate Director of Athletics Dana Brenner, who told the photographer it was a 'private function.'"

This return comes after past statements from Frank Fools Crow disapproving of how the University used the regalia it purchased from him, the Executive Committee of the Ogalala Tribal Council passing a resolution asking the regalia be returned and the subsequent retirement of the "Chief" by the University in 2007.

Friday Forum Fall 2009 Lecture Series: *Beyond 100 Days: Is this the Change We Need?*

October 23: *U.S. Climate Change Policy in the Obama Era: A Progress Report.* Ron Burke, Midwest Climate Campaign Director, Union of Concerned Scientists.

October 30: *Teaching to Save: How the U.S. Can Help Low Income Families.* Min Zhan, Professor of Social Work, University of Illinois.

November 6: *The Recession and Recovery (?) in the State of Illinois,* Fred Giertz, Professor of Economics, University of Illinois.

November 13: *Keeping secrets: Why Covering up Bush-Era Transgressions is Contrary to the Rule of Law.* Colleen Connell, Executive Director, American Civil Liberties Union of Illinois.

December 4: *Ecology of Place and Sustainable Urban Areas.* Brian Deal, Professor of Architecture, University of Illinois.

All lectures are free and open to the public
Latzer Hall at the University YMCA, 1001 South Wright St. Champaign, 12:00 to 1:30. Voice 337-1500

SPEAK CAFE (OPEN MIC/POETRY SET)

Nov. 12, 7-9PM

Theme: "SPEAK 4 YA SELF"

Krannert Art Museum (500 E. Peabody)



The Really, REALLY Free Market Comes to C-U

By Laurel Nobilette

IMAGINE STUMBLING INTO THE PARK to find what looks like a festival, picnic, yard sale, or all of the above. Hungry and low on funds, you ask a kindly merchant, "How much for this food?" They reply, "It's free. Everything here is free." Your heart sinks and you die of shock. "It can't be! Free market capitalism is the greatest thing ever! How could the world turn without it? What about profits?"

The Really Really Free Market, held Saturday October 10th at West Side Park, aimed at a shift from daily life being dictated by the market to life dictated to the market. Adding Really Really as a challenge to the popular notion of free market capitalism, where the only freedom realized is for a small group of people to gain enormous wealth at the expense and by the exploitation of the majority.

At the Really Really Free Market, there were no profits. No money was exchanged, no bartering or haggling. People brought food, skills, and goods for the sharing. The spirit of "Give what you can, take what you need" dominated. A variety of books covered the ground. A delicious spread of food, provided by Food Not Bombs, et. al., was enjoyed by attendees. Clothes were mixed with dinner plates. Some talented young men serenaded the crowd with music, while someone offered free bike repairs. Haircuts and cute dogs abounded. Community was under construction. Relationships were strengthened through celebration and conversation rather than being mediated by money. Motivation to interact was not profit-driven.

A market is not free when individuals are coerced by deprivation to take part in a system that exploits them in order to acquire resources, and when distribution is controlled not by need but by purchasing power. One's ability

to gain purchasing power is also restricted by the same system. The sale of labor is not determined by the laborer, nor does it guarantee that the basic needs of the laborer will be met.

Shifting to a system that, in the words of Karl Polanyi, is built upon redistribution and reciprocity, and the concept of gift economies, is the driving force behind events like the RRFM or Food Not Bombs. In this idealized system, giving freely is a virtue, and generosity is a heavily emphasized social obligation. Communities and the individuals within work to ensure that everyone's individual needs are met, and personalism is more important than personal economic interest. Call it reciprocal altruism, if you will, I call it love.



Participants looking through items



Free food



Music and guitar lessons



The CU Food Not Bombs banner



Announcing the RRFM

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.

GEO Update

By Rich Potter

DESPITE HAVING WORKED for over two months under the terms of an expired contract, the Graduate Employees' Organization (GEO) continues to seek a negotiated agreement over the terms of their new contract with the University of Illinois Board of Trustees. The GEO platform includes a living wage, tuition waiver security, and greater University contributions to and better coverage of health care and child care. Recent bargaining sessions have been unproductive, with all GEO compromise proposals having been rejected.

The administration's bargaining team has claimed that the University cannot afford to provide a \$16,086 living wage and improved benefits, given the current budgetary climate. Actually, the budget has been on the rise. State funding of public higher education has increased by 1.1%. Last year, tuition was increased by \$401 per semester, resulting in revenue growth of 14.5%. Investment income from the

University's endowment rose 5%. Former President Joe White, who collected \$550,000 for his work during the 07-08 academic year, has stated that the endowment has performed better than expected during the recession. Fiscal year (FY) 2009 was among the five most lucrative of the University's 142-year history, representing a 2.6% increase from 2008.

Overall, the campus budget increased \$103 million, or 7%, in FY 2009. However, the percentage of the budget directed to "instruction" rose only 0.8%. At the same time, the Chief Information Officer's budget rose by 10.9% and the Vice Chancellor for Institutional Advancement saw an increase of 12.1%. "Other Administrative Units" recorded an increase of 10.2%.

The GEO advocates for greater access to public higher education for all and stands in solidarity with campus and local laborers. Learn more at uigeo.org

Illinois Disciples Foundation's Social Justice Grant Awardees 2009



- Central Illinois Jobs With Justice • Champaign County Christian Health Center • Champaign County Health Care Consumers • Champaign Urbana Area Project • Champaign Urbana Tenant Union • Channing Murray Foundation & Red Herring Vegetarian Restaurant • Church of the Bretheren's Motherlands Culture Club • Crisis Nursery • East Central Illinois Refugee Mutual Assistance Center • Greater Community AIDS Project • Hope Community Health Center • National Alliance on Mental Illness (Champaign County) • North First Street Association • Partnership Accounts for Individual Development • SmileHealthy • Urbana Champaign Independent Media Center's Books To Prisoners and *Public i* programs • University YMCA • Wesley Evening Food Pantry