The Publici, 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, collective. We prefer, but do not necessarily prefer, but do not necessarily need to be a citizen journalist. We are all experts on the Champaign-Urbana area.

If you or your organization would like to become a sustaining contributor to the Publici, or would like more information, please call 344-7265, or email imc-print@ucimc.org.

EVENTS

NCAAM Dinner
The National Council of African American Men (NCAAM) dinner will be Saturday, February 10 at the Holiday Inn in Urbana. Doors open at 6pm for social hour; dinner will begin at 7pm. Tickets are $25 per person, $250 per table. For more information, or for tickets contact Daryl Yarbate at 363.3333, ext 23.

Black Women’s Achievement Dinner
The Black Woman’s Achievement Dinner is February 9 at the Clarion Hotel from 5 to 9pm. The Cultural Marketplace opens at 5:00, the dinner will be from 6 to 9pm, featuring three categories of awards: five awards for “Forgotten Achievers”; one “Lifetime Achiever” award for a woman fifty or over; and the “Trailblazer Award” for a woman active on campus and in the community. Tickets are $30 per person, or for a real bargain $200 for a table of 8. For ticket information contact a YWCA Board member or call Ann at the YWCA 344.0721.

Adult Education
The Urbana Adult Education Spring Brochure for Community Education Classes has been posted at http://www.cmi.k12.il.us/Urbana/adult/. This session, you can choose from a diverse list of over 100 classes. The site also gives information on a variety of programs available free of charge to the community. The Urbana Adult Education Program is offered through the Urbana School District 116 and provides lifelong learning opportunities to persons 16 years of age and over who reside in Urbana, Champaign, and surrounding communities. Please call 217-384-3530 for more information.

Sustaining Contributors

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Socialist/Forum: An Open Discussion and Action Group, Meets 3rd Saturdays of the month, 3-5 pm, at IMC, 218 W. Main St. (U)

World Harvest International and Gourmet Foods
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586 E. John, Champaign; 384-0977

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David Green and Harriet Burstyn

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http://www.pralinet.net/urban-league/ChampaignPublicLibrary
http://www.champaign.org/whats-happening/index.html

University YMCA
http://www.universityymca.org/Sisters
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For upcoming events in the community check out the following organizations and websites:

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• Become a citizen journalist; write a news story or opinion piece.
• Make a tax-deductible contribution.
• Help distribute the public i around the Champaign-Urbana area.
• Help with fund-raisers.
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Why Do I Care About Convicts?

By Sandra Aften

Why do I care about convicts? Why do I care about our injustice system? "There but for the grace of God go I." Being a recovering addict and having community with similar others, I know so many people who today are therapists, community leaders, librarians, responsible parents, etc., but could have, given just a slightly different circumstance, been convicts.

I also recognize my want and need to be "known." I love living in a community where I will go to a restaurant and be recognized by someone. I love knowing that I can knock on a friend’s door and it will be opened. I love having this paper, and WETF, and my artwork. I love having a partner who values me. These are avenues where I can be heard – where I can be "known."

Convicts are not known. They are forgotten as though they are not human beings, not part of our community. Locking them up, hiding them away, forgetting that they exist is wicked. I offer these letters from Michael Youngren, an inmate with whom I correspond, so that the reader can know, just for a moment, one of the two million people who are imprisoned in the United States right now.

I have sympathy with victims. I have sympathy with convicts. One does not negate the other.

JUNE 26, 2003
Dear Sandra,

... stepping out the door into a light cool rain. Yes, rain. Happens all the time, but I can never be out in it, because other than a shower or a call pass, they cancel yard when it rains.

Sure I’ve had to walk in the rain to a meal or on a health care pass. But this morning’s rain was different. All my focus was drawn to it. I could feel each cool, wet drop hit my exposed head and arms. A few drops on the back of my neck. I slowed my steps to the bare minimum. I felt the air just a bit cooler on my back of my neck. I slowed my steps to the bare minimum. I felt the air just a bit cooler on my back of my neck.

My mind raced over the myriad of things I could be doing other than letter something as simple as rain break my heart. Other things if I were a free man that is. That hurt has set itself in my heart and I’ve carried it all day.

DECEMBER 26, 2003

Yet for the last few weeks I’ve sat in one of the darkest depressions I’ve seen in many years. I’ve lost 10 lbs, I haven’t written a letter, I haven’t spent much time with Jay. Hell I haven’t even masturbated in almost a month. Going to work has just been “get it done” & get back to the cell.

I’m so sorry I’ve cut you out of this time but you are a great deal of comfort in my heart and in my life, Sandra. I know, KNOW, that you are a true friend and love me. I KNOW that you would’ve done anything to remove me from where I sat. But I have a special box in my soul where all of my time, experience, joy, love, etc., with you is kept. The darkness was long before you and has greatly faded because of you sitting with me in it. Somewhere I feel that this something I had to ride out by myself. I feel so much better. I found so many little pieces of Michae. I was a boy, Sandra. I ran, I laughed, I loved. I was naive. I was innocent. I had excited and narrative curiosity.

I wasn’t always bitter, cruel and calculated. So much of what I’ve lived has been so dark that I often lose those pictures of when I was just a place for the blonde hair falling into my eyes, finding a smile for every new discovery, Pedaling my bike to explore a little further beyond my boundaries each time. Listening to my Grandfather’s tales of woe from his childhood. Hiding the odd lady next door, steeping her porch and picking cucumbers from the patch in her back yard. Sneaking kisses with puppy loves.

I was clean and pure and no different than any other boy. I forget that, with all the dirt on my skin in years to come. But today I know – and all the dirt will never come off, Sandra, but it doesn’t matter because all of it, good and bad, it why I can be who I am today… is why I will become the man I will.

You have seen my soul and can love me anyway – so there must be something worth loving, I will not forget anymore.

Are you sure you want the letter – the one to Mom? I don’t want to analyze it, I don’t want to hash it out. I wrote it down. I let it go. I sent it, it’s gone! Though I’m not going to send it to her, I’d send it to you because I trust you. I’d send it to you because there is no one other place on earth I’d be comfortable with it going to.

I’m not saying we never talk of it – I’m just saying we let it be gone for awhile. Let me thicken back up a bit. Because truth be told, Sandra, I’m an asin as I get and my emotions are pretty flimsy where that’s concerned.

DECEMBER 21, 2003

I sat to finish the letter to my Mother. We had a clear thought as to where I was going… but as soon as the first sentence hit the paper from where I’d left off, my head just went somewhere dark and far away. My heart and my soul followed my head and it has taken me weeks to resurface.

I wonder if being so close to the holidays plays a role. I wonder if I just turned a stone that I hadn’t looked under before. I can’t pin it down and to be honest I’m scared to try because I fear venturing back to the place I was when I got lost.

I want to describe my pain. I want to express my sorrow. I want to want my rage. I want to cradle my fears. I want to take you to when I sat for these last few weeks since our visit… since that letter, but I cannot. There aren’t words, but could you have had a hand upon my heart you would have known.

DECEMBER 24, 2003

Christmas isn’t really a big deal to me these days – but you are. You are more to me than all the holidays combined. I hope you are happy, healthy, and in good spirits now and ever. You are a greater part of me each day Sandra.

DECEMBER 26, 2003

Katie, the sweetest threesome I’ve found. The very same leaf inspired me to hope for another place on earth I’d be comfortable with. The very same leaf inspired me to hope for winds to resurface.

The best of it is that I could no longer fit into this place. This place will never hold many things in place. Sometimes I wonder… imagine that if I pulled it and allowed all to scatter, then I wouldn’t have to think or feel or rationalize or organize, etc. I could just stay lost for awhile in the pile of thoughts scattered about in incoherent heaps.

NOVEMBER 1, 2003

I found a leaf on the yard that must have blown in from the grouping of trees just off of the trees where we walked and as we walked along a path with leaves crunching beneath my steps… trying to think of things I wanted to show distaste or anger then there are those who will do their best to antagonize the situation into some form of confrontation for the sheer entertainment value of it.

My steps felt firm. Another threesome with Autumn Moon, Katie, the sweetest threesome I’ve ever had. It had just the beautiful. It tore my heart in its center. The rest of it was brown, gold, and orange and it was beautiful. I tore my heart apart and filled it with hope all at once. Found me sitting in the park with Katie just two years ago.

We were sitting in Rem Park at about 1:00 in the morning. It was dark and quiet and altogether a perfect night. Leaves were falling off of the trees where we walked and as we made love in a cluster of them, I had whispered in her ear, “It’s just me, you, and the Autumn Moon, Katie, the sweetest threesome I’ve ever had.” And we giggled like little kids.

I couldn’t help but wonder despite my efforts not to – what my life would be like today had I made just one different choice. The very same leaf inspired me to hope for another place on earth I’d be comfortable with. The very same leaf inspired me to hope for something I can sense but can’t see enveloping me. My deepest thoughts seem trapped around me. Inside I am oblivious to what I want. Need doesn’t even reside here. This place will never be filled within me. This place will never know contentment.

I’ve once thought that I had grown so great that I could no longer fit into this place. I’d once thought that I had shrunk so small that this place could swallow me whole. I’d once thought that I had condensed this place so neatly that even “want” couldn’t live here. But “want” does live here and I live in “want” and when I am here there is plenty of space for neither of us to be cramped. I’m infinitely bound to “want,” to fill this space even though I know that hollow can’t be held and hollow can’t be filled. How can nothing weigh so much?

With Love,

Michael

Families of those in the “correctional system” – or those who may want to be in contact with inmate can find useful information at www.prisoners.org.

To find information on a specific Illinois inmate or facility you can visit the Illinois Department of Correction web page at www.idoc.state.il.us.
The repeated disregard that white liberals have had for Sharpton and his “serious” political candidacy, cannot be ignored and demands analysis.

As part of the series discussion/forum UNDERSTANDING THE TIMES WE ARE IN, AWARE presents

Global Institutions: What are they good for?

WITH MICHAEL GOLDMAN, PROFESSOR OF SOCIOLOGY, UIC

The World Bank and the International Monetary Fund—the Bretton Woods Institutions—are among the most influential global institutions. Whom do they serve and toward what ends? The World Bank is the leader in promoting “development” in the global South, yet after sixty years of World Bank-style development, countries are paying back more than they have received. How do we understand development, global expertise, and the role of global institutions such as the World Bank, IMF, and WTO, if poverty and global inequality have increased under their authority? How do they work and how social movements around the world are challenging them are the main topics of this presentation.

Professor Goldman’s publications include Privatizing Nature: Political Struggles for the Global Commons (Rutgers/Pluto, 1998) and Imperial Nature: The World Bank and the Making of Green Neoliberalism (Yale, forthcoming). He teaches courses in Global Inequality and Social Change, Transnational Politics, Environmental Sociology, and Urban Sociology.
Moratorium to Abolition: Living without Death in Illinois?

by Daniel Larson

Daniel Larson is a graduate student at the University of Illinois. His interests include the drug war and the prison system of the United States.

On January 20, 2004, Governor Rod Blagojevich ended months of delay by signing into law the remaining section of Illinois’ death penalty reform legislation. The final passage of this legislation, and other bills sponsored by the Illinois Senate, have been clouded in gray. Our pious leaders and lawmakers have found it easier to act as if there is no problem with the current system. The continuing cycle of death in Illinois has been halted for over three years. Over the same period, nine countries around the world have abolished the death penalty.

The paradox of death penalty reform is that execution of such a penal sanction is not a guarantee of permanent security. As the United States is the only country in the world that has staged a moratorium on executions, it is a fitting example of the moral hypocrisy that surrounds capital punishment. Those arguments that continue to propel the debate over the death penalty: national and international support for the death penalty, and greater power to the Illinois Attorney General to overturn Governor Ryan’s mass clemencies on January 23, 2004; yet, this is not an end but a new beginning.

The publication of America without the Death Penalty in 2000 and John Gallaher and his colleagues supported this conclusion through a combination of exhaustive periodical research, historical review of government documents, and extensive interviews that produced a rich mosaic of research. In Illinois, the death penalty has been doled out arbitrarily in the Unitization and the recent lawsuit filed by Illinois Attorney General Lisa Madigan to overturn Governor Ryan’s mass clemencies. Is this opportunity?

What’s it Like on Death Row?

by Al Cunningham

The real hell is in the cells. Why, are we alone with ourselves and our thoughts. I am told when to shirt to shower. I am fed food not worthy of pigs. I am psychologically abused and misused, sometimes beaten, and the while waiting, waiting to be killed. The cell is not large enough to stretch your arms out, yet you are placed in it for years on end. For the lucky ones, if they have a television or a radio, you will at least have these items as a great time-killing device, as something to help you forget that you are here for a killing.

I am overwhelmed by the psychological and physical humiliations of death row. But amidst the daily degradations, the constant harassment, and the perpetual denial of my human rights, the thing I think about the most is the fear. The fear. It is always there, just around the corner. This is a world of violence, hostility, loneliness, and SADNESS... I only hope that I can maintain my sanity and endure.
The Iron Cages of Capitalism (Literally)

by Jeremy Engels

Jeremy Engels is a PhD student in the Department of Speech Communication at the University of Illinois. Interested in language and discourse, he studies state violence, discipline, and dehumanization in early America, and also the rhetoric of contemporary piracy. He can be reached at jengels@uiuc.edu.

IN HIS FAMOUS BOOK The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism, which exposed the psychologies that helped numerous Europeans believe that the accumulation of money (which Saint Paul had called the root of all evil) would lead to spiritual salvation, Max Weber argued that capitalism had become an “iron cage” – one that coerced humans into selling their bodies for wages, slaving in assembly lines, and many other evils. For him, the problem was not so much that humans were exploited, it was that they had no choice in the matter; they were born into a system with certain expectations they could not change. Exactly one hundred years later, we find that Weber was correct, but perhaps not in the way he intended. Today, capitalism is an iron cage, Figurative-ly (and increasingly, with globalization) for most, but also literally for the two million (YES, THAT IS 2 MILLION) Americans locked behind the cold, iron bars of prisons.

On January 22-24, 2004, scholars, activists, and poets from across the nation met at the Lewis Faculty Center at the University of Illinois to discuss, debate, problematize, and confront the very real cages that bar many citizens from leading normal lives. The title of this conference was “Education or Incarceration? Schools and Prisons in a Punishing Democracy,” and it was made necessary by some alarming facts – which are delineated in the sidebar (facing page).

Given these startling facts, it was necessary for scholars and poets to meet with local activists, community members, and formerly incarcerated individuals to make some sense out of the machinery of the prison-industrial-complex. The result was nothing less than inspiring. Though the problem is gargantuan, and there are no easy solutions, there are things that community activists can do that will have a very real impact on the local level. In the spirit of the conference, then, I will do three things in this article. First, following Weber, I will consider the problem of prisons as a structural problem embedded in the social facts of capitalism we must live with every day. Second, I will consider the prison-industrial complex, and the workers a motley crew of various ethnicities. And third, I will discuss local options for critical resistance against this leviathan that clogs so many mothers and fathers, brothers and sisters, sons and daughters. Indeed, this conference made me want to both cry in indignation and slam my fist through a wall in anger. At the same time I also found that what made me so upset could be a rallying cry for change.

TO QUELL THE MODERN HYDRA: PRISONS AND CAPITALISM

One of the most important aspects of capitalism is wage labor. It was not always the case that humans labored for wages: in fact, it was only in the 16th and 17th centuries that wages were offered for work – which occurred when merchants in cities such as London, Boston, and New York discovered the fundamental law for valorizing capital: they could make the most profit for themselves by underpaying workers for their labor. But to turn farmers and peasants into workers was a difficult task, and it required the state to expropriate these peasants, farmers, and Native Americans – meaning that it had to steal their land so that they had no other choice than to labor for a wage. There was massive resistance to the re-structuring of society along capitalist lines, and the most potent, deadly instrument in this shift was state violence. Indeed, the first police system in England was created for two goals: to prevent theft, and to enforce a wage system of labor. And along with the police came prisons, executions, and schools.

To enforce wage labor, capitalists needed new methods of discipline and surveillance. In short, they had to force workers into obeying their commands, and to constantly watch over them to make sure that they were obeying. Those that did not, or would not, were great dangers to the system – and as such, they had to be punished. The state made an example out of rebels by executing them or, after the 1740s in Pennsylvania, by incarcerating them. The idea was to remove the danger while making an example of it: the message being that pirates or workers who resisted the iron cages of capitalism would be brutally murdered.

Thus, there was this peculiar contradiction that developed. Capitalists needed laborers, but at the same time they hated and feared them because they were numerous and had the power to rebel (as was demonstrated repeatably in England and America). One potential way to avoid this was to enslave Africans and Native Americans, thereby raising the profit margin because slaves deserved no pay – indeed, they were not even human. Here, the many margins of the story collapsed into a truly globalized system. Workers were offered substandard wages, just enough to be better off than the jobless; then they were drugged with imported sugar and alcohol from the slave market economy of the Caribbean. Workers, slaves, Indians, all stored on sugar and rum and yet hostile to the emerging capitalist realities, were bullied by emerging police states into accepting their fates.

There was no way to avoid the contradictions of the system, however. Slaves rebelled; crews mutinied; pirates stole slave ships and returned slaves to Africa; farmers rose up against local and national governments. Other methods of discipline were necessary to quell the many-headed monstrous Hydra, which is how capitalists viewed the base of proletarians on which their profit was built. The prison was effective; lock up those who might make trouble. We have seen, since Ronald Reagan's conservative initiative to lock-up all drug users, the perplexing effectiveness of this strategy. The keynote lecturer of the conference, Ruthie Gilmore, professor of African-American studies at Berkeley, made a stinging yet subtle point: why is it that no one protests when it is stated that 2 million Americans are in jail? It is because the prison-industrial-complex has become so embedded in the fabric of our society that we don't even see it anymore. The premature death inflicted by the prison-industrial-complex becomes no big deal. But we can see by looking at its effects on education that Americans should be paying more attention.

ANOTHER ARM OF THE STATE: PRISONS AND SCHOOLS

Christine Clark, a professor of Human Relations from the University of Maryland, made one of the most obvious yet provocative points of the conference: education in America has always been two-tiered. There has been education for the leaders, the managers, the bourgeoisie, and then separate, unequal education for the workers, the wage-laborers, the proletariat. Building on Clark's point, we can add that this is the point where racism enters the picture, because the managers were all white, and the workers a motley crew of various ethnicities. Clark's argument is thus important for the ways we consider prisons and schools. On the one hand, the managers have been educated to rule over workers; they are taught to buy into the American dream of unlimited wealth; they are connected through elite fraternities and sororities to other managers; they are given financial resources to make the American Dream come true. Indeed, we see this in our president, George W. Bush, whose Yale degree in history has taught him very little about past American human rights abuses that might pollute the Dream; and everything about positioning himself so that other elites give him the opportunity to manage workers and common Americans. Elite is...
socialized into a culture of rulers through their schools. On the other hand, workers have learned nothing better than to obey the orders of their schools. Though Michel Foucault argues convincingly that the function of any school is discipline, the types of discipline imposed will be different based on the class of pupils. One function may be very different from another. The writings of Michel Foucault and others have helped workers to enjoy wage-labor: the schedule is routinized with bells and breaks; learning is kept at a basic level of memorization; teachers invoke authority as the ultimate concern of exploitation. Schools became a beacon of hope for the ruling classes. Capitalists hoped that educating workers to accept their lot in life.

As every conference presenter agreed, that we are teaching the working class these days? The answer is suggested by the profound link between schooling and prisons in our post-industrial age. As a third-industrial revolution has led to more automated jobs, and as globalization coups are spread across the landscape, it is now housing for a whole class of workers who are no longer needed, and in their place for criminals; it is now housing for a whole form of discipline endowing the merit of hard work. And they are also conditioned to accept that state violence underlies the whole system of wage-labor. We can see this especially in early 19th Century America. In May 1833, Jacob Abbot, a school principal, argued in his “Description of the Mount Vernon School,” that discipline was the sole function of schooling: “My duty is to take measures to prevent future transgression, and to lead them to do good, as far as I am able.” To prevent future transgression meant corporal punishment: beating a child who misbehaves. In September 1849, an article in The Massachusetts Teacher claimed that: “The punishment given the delinquent before the school, with one or more of his pupils, and the struggle is for the supremacy.” One of the functions of schools, then, as many of the presenters at the conference argued, was to educate workers to accept their lot in life.

Schools became one method whereby the contradictions of capitalism could be mediated. Wage-laborers are necessary for profit, but in order to increase the profit to its maximum, workers have to be assimilated into factory jobs. To this end the transformation between workers from different backgrounds who nevertheless shared the common concern of exploitation. Schools became a beacon of hope for the ruling classes. Capitalists hoped that educating workers to accept their lot in life. They knew that the education of children that were once handled by their parents and by the family would be taken over by the state, and they learned nothing but rebellion, and the lethargy thus became more subtle. Workers were schooled to love work; if they did not, instead choosing to rebel, they were either executed, thrown into jail, or impressed into the military (which enforced slavery and the logistics of capitalist trade). The options were not, and have not been, very good for workers.

What this conference demonstrated is that there is a profound link between schooling and prisons in our post-industrial-complex. It has been estimated that as many as 1-in-4 prisoners of maximum security prisons suffer from psychological illnesses that require treatment, not incarceration. So instead of healing the sick we turn to the prison-industrial-complex to punish the criminal. This is a national problem, and both domestic and international. If we turn to the problem of prison, one can see that there are many U.S. states continue to practice the death penalty. In California, the worst power of resistance is also bright in California, the worst state’s parolee’s hardships are shared by his or her family members. Considering that each prisoner or parolee’s hardships are shared by his or her family members. Considering that each prisoner or parolee’s hardships are shared by his or her family members. Considering that each prisoner or parolee’s hardships are shared by his or her family members. Considering that each prisoner or parolee’s hardships are shared by his or her family members. Considering that each prisoner or parolee’s hardships are shared by his or her family members. Considering that each prisoner or parolee’s hardships are shared by his or her family members. Considering that each prisoner or parolee’s hardships are shared by his or her family members. Considering that each prisoner or parolee’s hardships are shared by his or her family members. Considering that each prisoner or parolee’s hardships are shared by his or her family members. Considering that each prisoner or parolee’s hardships are shared by his or her family members. Considering that each prisoner or parolee’s hardships are shared by his or her family members.

Third, we must establish trust, or what the political scientist Robert Putnam calls “social capital,” in our communities and schools. “Zero tolerance” policies are not a cure, but a cause of imprisonment. Many of the normal behaviors of children that are handled by community members are now handled by cops who have no patience for adolescent behavior. As Rosa Braz point-ed out, we call the cops too much – and often when we call them on someone else they end up arresting us. Doing these things can upset the system. If it taught nothing else, the “Education or Incarceration?” conference taught that even the despair of a monstro-sity, such as the prison-industrial-complex, is hope embodied in activism and coalition building. If we band together and make our voices heard, even those who shut the doors on the iron cages of capitalism cannot afford to ignore them.

The TEETER-TOTTER OF CHANGE: ACTIVIST OPPORTUNITIES

This is indeed a sad state of affairs. Yet one of the most important messages of the conference was hope. As Ruthie Gilmore argued, though the PIC is far-reaching and thus imposing, the very girth of the system means that there are many, many opportunities for activism. One peculiar thing about systems of domination is that they have created, and do create, the very conditions for their destruction. The very egregiousness of the problem we have made it easier for us all. It affects 25 million Americans means that there are multitudes of indignant individuals waiting to protest in ways that can change or alter the system. Protests often seem futile when fighting something so large as the prison-industrial-complex. Yet as Robert Schultz, a prominent member of the Midwest chapter of Amnesty International, argued at the conference, politicians want you to believe that resistance is futile, but it is not – indeed, only through resistance is change possible. Amnesty International has clearly demonstrated the real impact organizations of protest can have here in Illinois by pushing former Governor Ryan to place a moratorium on all death sentences. The community is watching and cares about who is sent to prison.

Change is a teeter-totter, and by applying force at one end, we can shift the balance to a situation that is more equitable for society. Yet there is a movement, more and more people, to make the most of their opportunities, to recall Professor Gilmore’s apt phrasing. Here is where the conference reached its stride, for its final panel, entitled “Practical Utopias,” moderated by Professor of Education Policy Studies James Anderson, respectively reassured three things that we can all do on a local level to fight the prison industrial complex.

First, we must go to our local courthouse and observe trials. As Victor Goode, from Advocates for Basic Legal Equality, Tonya McClary, Ruthie Gilmore, James Anderson, and many local community members stressed, packing a courthouse in support of a defendant demonstrates to judges, juries, and prosecutors that the community is watching and cares about who is sent to prison. Doing this alters the strategies used by prosecu-tors, and the sentences imposed by judges, because they are accountable to the community rearing its beautiful head. In fact, many judges seek harsh punishment for criminals because they think it will get them re-elected. We must show them that this is not the case.

Second, we can begin a cop-watch program, as one local community member stressed. Programs of community policing do not work. Yet we must find a way to make sure they do not racially profile, manufacture evidence, or abuse defendants have been implemented in Berkeley and in Eugene Oregon. Again, it is important to show them that there are better ways to police.

Third, we must establish trust, or what the political scientist Robert Putnam calls “social capital,” in our communities and schools. “Zero tolerance” policies are not a cure, but a cause of imprisonment. Many of the normal behaviors of children that are handled by community members are now handled by cops who have no patience for adolescent behavior. As Rosa Braz pointed out, we call the cops too much – and often when we call them on someone else they end up arresting us. Doing these things can upset the system. If it taught nothing else, the “Education or Incarceration?” conference taught that even the despair of a monstrous system, such as the prison-industrial-complex, is hope embodied in activism and coalition building. If we band together and make our voices heard, even those who shut the doors on the iron cages of capitalism cannot afford to ignore them.

For More Information, Please See:


Police encounter
By Lori Serb

I know a type of discrimination. I know how it feels to be unwanted in a space; to be perceived as not normal. I have felt stares of hate that have burned through my exterior as well as my physical safety threatened. On May 3rd I was involved in an altercation while demonstrating against the invasion of Iraq. How that altercation was handled by Champaign Police and later by the City of Champaign was not only inappropriate, but biased.

Officer Willis ran 15 yards at me from out of my line of sight. At no point did he identify himself as a police officer or give a command to desist behavior. I hit the officer with a fist or baton because I failed to produce my left arm for him. My right arm was jerked up by my head. I was not fighting my attacker back and I repeated over and over that my left arm was pinned under my body and I was trying to get up to give him my left arm. I heard people around me state things like “don’t hurt her!” which was the only thing keeping me calm at that moment. I saw and heard nothing that indicated a police presence; I thought I had been attacked by an extremely heavy, enraged individual who opposed my right to demonstrate against US policy.

When I was finally allowed to lift my torso and surrender my left arm to my attacker, I was cuffed and lifted to my feet to be escorted to a police car. I completely cooperated with the officers, though I was never told I was being arrested. I was never asked for my side of the story. I was told that I had violated a city ordinance: Section 23-21 Resisting/obstructing a peace officer. I had two options plead guilty and pay the $175 ordinance violation fee or fight the ticket in court.

Before any physical act, which could escalate a situation, an officer is supposed to identify him or herself as such and give a command to desist. This gives all involved a chance to comply and cease all action or reflexive behavior. In a non-violent altercation, an officer should be able to break up the situation with verbal instructions without ever touching any of the individuals involved.

I had nine witnesses to my attack. I hired a lawyer. I had friends and community members who were willing to donate various resources including sitting down to discuss the incident with a lieutenant at the station.

These are the things that separated my situation with many people of color who find themselves in the wrong at the wrong time, scared and acting reflexively, or financially unable to fight the injustices done to them.

I had a bench trial. The officers lied on the stand, claiming that I had pulled my arm away from Officer Willis and that I lost my footing. These witnesses to my attack were never called to the stand. I was not targeted. Despite the testimony from four witnesses, Judge Ford ruled against me, admitted that if I had been charged at the state level, the outcome would have been different because more than a preponderance of evidence would have been needed to prove I resisted a peace officer.

My lawyer submitted a post-trial motion to reverse Judge Ford’s decision on the grounds that I was not proven to “knowingly resisted.” That the City did not prove that I knew that the individual addressing me was a peace officer for the City of Champaign (nor was it supported by the facts surrounding the situation) and that the finding that the statement “Police,” whether said once or more than once would not have been sufficient in the situation that presented itself. The court ignored the fact that all officers testified that no other commands or directions were given to me and without directing specific commands to cease and desist, it cannot be said that I “resisted the breaking up of an altercations” when I was never directed by the police to do so. The conclusion reached by the Court that the officer could not do more is not supported by the evidence or reasonable inference drawn there from.

The decision was not reversed and I paid my $175 fine with additional court costs which came to a grand total of $245. After losing a total of five days of work, paying my fees and a lawyer, and experiencing much resistance from clerks both at the Champaign City Police Department in my efforts to obtain a copy of the police report—(they don’t readily offer a Freedom of Information Act form for citizens and discourage information seekers, claiming that only lawyers can obtain copies of police records) it is no mystery to me why someone who is wrongly charged or mistreated by police due to their race, beliefs, or sexual orientation does not fight the corrupt system that is in place.

Human Rights
Iraq, Black Folks, and the Crisis of the White Left
By Erik S. McDuffie

The war in Iraq is a disaster. Close to 400 US troops have been killed since President Bush declared major combat operations over on May 1st, 2003. Roadside bombs regularly kill US service personnel. News reports flay gory scenes of Iraqi police, politicians, clerics, and bystanders killed or maimed by suicide bombers. Much of the Iraqi infrastructure has been laid to ruin. 18-year-old US soldiers with their fingers on the trigger stare nervously at Iraqis protesting for food, unpaid wages, and the right to govern themselves. They seem like the international community, especially in the Arab and Muslim worlds, deploy the US-led war against Iraq. Domestically, the economy is still in shambles. The social safety net for the left millions of people wondering how they are going to pay the bills, cloth their children, and make ends meet.

The war in Iraq is not the only significant crisis: the failure of the white Left to realize that African Americans constitute the vanguard of the progresive anti-war movement. Despite efforts by such groups as Act Now to Stop War and End Racism (A.N.S.W.E.R.), white radicals too often come short of linking the anti-war movement to struggles around affirmative action, the criminal justice system, reparations, and other issues critical to Black people. The American Left has suffered an incalculable set back due to their inability to forge real and sincere connections with Black people and their inability to forge real and sincere connections. The American Left will continue to be a marginal force in the US.

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University of Illinois, more than 330 cases were car-
carried out this past academic year. Several large-lecture clas-
ses no longer have teaching assistant-led recitation sec-
tions that provide undergraduate opportunities to dis-
cuss classroom materials in small settings. This is occur-
rings in the ranks of this country. The creation of food
service, physical plant, clerical, and custodial workers
at American colleges and universities are increasingly filled by food.

As schools trim their bud-
ggestors/look to outsource college services to non-

What they fail to realize is that class in the US has always
preceded movements. But white progres-
sives need to appreciate that the white working-
class in this country has historically been a site of reac-
tion, while the Black working class has been at the fore-
front of progressive change.

The goals of the civil rights movement also need to be
rethought. Large marches have their place. They show
power brokers that people reject the war, and demon-
strations provide anti-war activists with a sense of com-
munity and a financial base in their identity. But the
mobilizing people around large, one-day demonstra-
tions, where throngs of spirited marchers take to the
streets of Washington, DC or New York and then go
home, peace activists need to concentrate more on
building sustained, mass-based, social justice move-
ments. This involves the grunt work of organizing: door
canvassing, distributing leaflets on street cor-
ners, listening to everyday peoples ideas about what
is going on and how to get involved, forming organic ties to
community groups. This means prioritizing anti-racist
struggles and forging ties with communities of color that are on the
front lines in struggles against police
gauges of criminality, higher
industrial complex, and the
indifference of white America.

Perhaps the most egregious problem facing the white
Left is its failure to accept Black leadership. White left-
ists cool support for Rev. Al Sharpton's bid for president
is the clearest example of this tendency. From the war to
health care to education, Al Sharpton has promoted the most
progressive line of the majority of the major Democratic
candidates. When asked to elaborate on the specific
issues they have with Sharpton, they start stammering.
Of all the candidates, only Sharpton seems to have
the courage to stand up to Bush and critique him from the
Left. When Wesley Clark, John Kerry, and even the"dan-
gerous" toasting of a friend of George W. Bush, they do
so mostly from the right. "The war has been
mismaninated," quips Kerry. "We should have worked
closer with our European allies before starting the war.
" Clark often emphasizes. Instead of flocking to Al Sharpton
white Leftists are running in droves to Howard Dean.
and to a lesser extent to Dennis Kucinich. Kucinich, a
former mayor of Cleveland and congressman repre-
senting mostly white voters (who overwhelmingly sup-
sorted the war), has no real political base. What's the
appeal of Howard Dean? As governor of Vermont, a
state that is almost 95% white, Dean embraced a con-
trist, Bill Clinton-like political agenda. His campaign is
generated almost exclusively toward white, urban,
middle-class 20-30-somethings. Sick internet campaigns and
national bus tours that resemble Road Rules" and the
"Real World" have a lot of white folks ecstatic. How
many how many of color do you see at these rallies?
In my view, Sharpton is the only candidate who
could easily shed Bush in a presidential debate and
build a viable, grassroots, diverse progressive political
movement. Sharpton is not without his problems. Over
the years, he's been accused of being egotistical or
opportunist. True, perhaps, but are Dean, Edwards,
Clark, or Kerry any less so? Above all, Dean's inability to
energize Black and Brown voters means he doesn't stand
a chance in Illinois. Instead of supporting another
Walter Mondale-like candidate, the white Left would
be better suited in jumping on board the Sharpton
campaign before it's too late.

We can't place too much of our faith in electoral pol-
ities. The world is facing this country and the
world. It is possible for the white Left to
find common ground with communities of color.
Indeed, there are some white progressives who are sin-
cerely interested in racial justice, but even more
. . . Jackson and who have
recognized that fighting racial injustice is central -
not tangential - to all the major social justice campaigns
in this country and indeed the world. The ball rests not
in Black folk's court but in the white Left's. Communi-
ties of color are going to continue moving forward in
their struggle against all forms of oppression with or
without the white Left.

A Bread and Roses Event: The March Primaries

Socialist Forum, the UICM Center for Media Creat-
ing Group, and the Independent Media Center
(UIUC Chapter) will present a panel on the issues and
candidates in the March primary elections.

Project Goodstart

Back in 1979, Annabelle Anderson came to the
Christian Social Action Forum upset because the
government had eliminated the school breakfast pro-
grams. She had a modest request. Would we agree to
supply the funds for milk and grahams for
White leftists need to ask themselves why a Black per-
son would want to go to war if white war-pornography
attracts kids. Attending a two-hour demonstration
might mean that someone has to take a whole day off from work. For a young
Black mother working a low-paying job at the check-
out counter, losing even a day's wages from work can mean not having enough money to
pay the bills or buy food for that week. In addition, demon-
strations are often surrounded by well-armed, scared
white police in riot gear. Considering that a signific-
ant portion of people in the Black community have crimi-
nal records or have friends, relatives, or neighbors in
prison, why would an African American want to put
himself in a situation where they could be thrown in
jail or violate probation? Above all, the threat of being
brutality, HIV/AIDS, the prison industrial complex, and the
indifference of white America.

The indifference of white America.

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The FTAA as "NAFTA on Steroids"

The FTAA proposes to encircle the entire western hemisphere, from the Arctic Circle to the southernmost tip of South America; it will encompass 800 million people in 34 nations in North, Central, and South America and the Caribbean, covering everybody but Cuba. The FTAA thus amounts to an enlarged version of the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA), which was a point for debate in the 1992 elections and came into effect two years later in 1994. Championed as a crucial step in triggering a new era of globalization, NAFTA was propelled as a crucial step in triggering a massive trade imbalance. In fact, the EPI reports that "growth in imports of 195.3% from Mexico and 61.1% from Canada overwhelms surplus export growth," meaning that we are buying more from our NAFTA partners than we are selling to them. The U.S. economy is thus left with a tremendous NAFTA-fueled international trade deficit in goods and services of almost $40 billion. Given the likelihood that the FTAA will accelerate the trends begun by NAFTA we may expect the FTAA to expand our national trade deficit, thereby further weakening the chances of economic growth and recovery in the U.S.

Furthermore, the FTAA proposes to override local governance, literally creating a supra-national set of rules made by, for, and enforced for the interests of the few. For example, the FTAA’s Multilateral Agreement on Investment (MAI), modeled after NAFTA’s little-known Chapter 11, protects foreign investors by allowing them to bypass and sometimes overturn local environmental and public health laws. Ralph Nader’s Public Citizen explains that the MAIs will allow investor-to-state suits, where corporations sue governments and localities for lost profits. One example is U.S.-based Metalclad Corp., which claimed that environmental zoning laws in one Mexican state were unfairly restrictive and so forced the government to pay $16 million in damages to the corporation. Chapter 11 does more than just enable U.S. companies to pick on poor Mexicaners, however, as the Lennon Group, a Canadian funeral home chain, won $750 million from the U.S. government after a Mississippi court held the chain responsible for malicious and fraudulent business practices. Imagine, a U.S. state court’s findings being overruled by the NAFTA star court! What U.S. law calls fraud, NAFTA calls good business. Such findings foreshadow a world in which the rule of checks-and-balances and representative government are trampled by the rush for profit.

Fortunately, the most recent round of negotiations in Miami in November 2003 slowed the pace of the FTAA. Pressure from Brazil, a country that sees the FTAA as U.S.-annexation and that led the discussion that broke down WTO talks in Cancun two months prior, led to what some call FTAA-la carte. Rather than creating a hemispheric trade bloc by 2005, the Ministerial Conference agreed on a lighter version of the FTAA that includes more bilateral and sub-regional agreements such as CAFTA, the Central American Free Trade Agreement passed in December of 2003. Critics say such actions simply give the U.S. more puppet strings to pull. Indeed, because President Bush has been granted Fast-Track ability to strike agreements without congressional consent, he is able to use NAFTA,

Riot-gear clad police formed human walls blocking intersections and narrowing the path of marchers down to slices of pavement sometimes just two or three people wide. They armed marchers not to linger in groups, then created physical impediments to marching, and then arrested those who broke their command not to linger. In this photograph we see outraged marchers confronting riot-clad police. In preparation for the expected gassing, some marchers in the image wear bandanas.

While the corporate mass media portrayed us as violence-prone malcontents and anarchists, the vast majority of marchers were good-natured people who came to have a little fun while defending democracy. When not being harassed by police, marchers sang, danced, played hacksack, ate sweet freedom’s song: ‘My Country ’Tis of Thee’ and democracy in America, and incorporated communities. The FTAA proposes to encircle the entire western hemisphere, from the Arctic Circle to the southernmost tip of South America; it will encompass 800 million people in 34 nations in North, Central, and South America and the Caribbean, covering everybody but Cuba. The FTAA thus amounts to an enlarged version of the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA), which was a point for debate in the 1992 elections and came into effect two years later in 1994. Championed as a crucial step in triggering a new era of globalization, NAFTA was propelled as a crucial step in triggering a massive trade imbalance. In fact, the EPI reports that "growth in imports of 195.3% from Mexico and 61.1% from Canada overwhelms surplus export growth," meaning that we are buying more from our NAFTA partners than we are selling to them. The U.S. economy is thus left with a tremendous NAFTA-fueled international trade deficit in goods and services of almost $40 billion. Given the likelihood that the FTAA will accelerate the trends begun by NAFTA we may expect the FTAA to expand our national trade deficit, thereby further weakening the chances of economic growth and recovery in the U.S.

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Marching is fun—wear a costume, bring a drum, sing as you go. These marchers drove down from Boston and spent the day in their bio-hazard suits, thus drawing attention to the fact that the FTAA would be a major environmental hazard. While their appropriation of scientific and medical images is creative and powerful, they also confessed that their bio-hazard suits, complete with medical masks, helped them withstand gasings at previous marches, so the costumes were both symbolic and functional.

CAFTA, and other smaller trade agreements to make deals that are sure to be friendly to big investors and harmful to human rights. The official Ministerial Declaration nevertheless announces that it remains committed "to a comprehensive and balanced FTAA that will most effectively foster economic growth, the reduction of poverty, development, and integration through trade liberalization." As we have demonstrated here, such claims are little more than lies.

THE FUTURE OF DEMOCRACY

While the fight against the FTAA is crucial for protecting jobs, wages, and local governance, the recent protests against the FTAA in Miami also demonstrated how the FTAA is leading to the production of a police state where civil liberties are crushed in the name of homeland defense despite widespread outrage over the city's tactics in repressing protestors. Relying on such War Against Terrorism terminology to describe protestors turned those of us exercising our constitutional rights into potential terrorists. In anticipation of our "terrorism," Miami leased fire trucks to use as water cannons. It bought saws, jackhammers, stun guns, bicycles, pepper gas, rubber bullets, and tasers for police who at one point called themselves "RoboCops." Galloping in groups of a hundred and more, police rode giant jackhammers, stun guns, bicycles, pepper gas, rubber bullets, and tasers for police who at one point called themselves "RoboCops." Galloping in groups of a hundred and more, police rode giant horses along the march route, shadowing our peaceful actions with a veritable cavalcade. The city police were reinforced by U.S. Marshals, the Coast Guard, the Federal Protective Service, and forces from surrounding towns. In short, the FTAA meetings enabled Miami to experiment with a wide array of paramilitary techniques, directed at protestors, meant to curtail free speech, and which tramplied on civil liberties.

Nonetheless, the corporate mainstream press portrayed events in Miami yet another struggle between the forces of good (police) and evil (crazed anarchists like us). As we demonstrate below in commentary on photographs we took at the main march in Miami, that narrative is as full of holes as the promises offered by NAFTA and FTAA supporters.

REFERENCES AND RESOURCES:


The Official FTAA site, with links to Ministerial Declarations, is www.ftaa-acla.org; see materials posted by the World Trade Organization at www.wto.org; the World Bank's reports on development are available at www.worldbank.org.

The Future of Democracy? From 9:00 in the morning until late into the night of the main march, the sky above Miami was full of helicopters, some of them military, some of them police, some of them local news teams covering the event. All day long, the numbing buzz of surveillance drones overhead, reminding us that Big Brother was watching. This photograph catches one of the choppers through the tails of a peace-puppet blowing in the sweet breeze. There you have it: the grassroots creativity and hope of the marchers layered against the mechanical dread and military overkill of the police state.
Nobody deserves to win a labor dispute more than locked-out and striking United Food and Commercial Workers (UFCW) members involved in the West Coast struggle that idled thousands of grocery workers. The grim reality is, however, that victory is unlikely and more tragically, many workers will never get their jobs back. Consider the history of the UFCW leadership in struggles where the International Union caved in with little more than a whimper, then allowed scabs to replace most of the valiant union workers.

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Urbana-Champaign IMC turns 3
by Meghan Krausch

On January 19, the Independent Media Center (IMC) turns 3! It’s a time for celebration of our growth and achievements, and a time to look ahead to our goals for the future.

Over the last three years, the IMC has grown from an organization with 100 members in January 2002, to an organization of about 225 members that has outgrown its rental space on Main St. With an annual operating budget of about $20,000, the IMC continues to produce more and more media; IMC projects include a regular radio show (Monday at 3:30 PM on WEFT 90.1 FM), a monthly paper (The Public i), a television program (every second and fourth week of the month), and on Thursday at 10 PM, on UPTV, Insight Cable channel 6), a radio library open to the public, frequent all ages shows, and of course, the website (www.ucimc.org). The IMC, a registered 501(c)(3), is the fiscal sponsor of the global indymedia network and of many individual IMCs and other like-minded organizations.

With all this activity, the major project of 2003 has been the Capital Campaign, the IMC’s initiative to raise $100,000 toward the goal of 2003 has been the Capital Campaign, the IMC’s initiative to raise $100,000 toward the IMC as a community resource. A specific agreement has not yet been worked out, but one proposal is to form a consensus-based governing board made up of 50% Socialist Forum members and 50% IMC members. The station will be complementary to WFFT, as there is enough local content to sustain the station.

In 2004, the IMC will also be focusing on building a new low-power FM radio station. Social Forum received word from the FCC in December that they request for a low-power FM radio permit, submitted in the fall of 2000, has been approved. While the permit is in place, it is always being the Interim Director, the station, WRFU, and its governance with the IMC as a community resource. A specific agreement has not yet been worked out, but one proposal is to form a consensus-based governing board made up of 50% Socialist Forum members and 50% IMC members. The station will be complementary to WFFT, as there is enough local content to sustain the station.

The Public i is a zine? According to another one of the IMC’s fabulous zines, Stolen Sharpie Revolution, “A zine is an Anonymous person for assistance.

Are you hooked yet? Check out the IMC's website (www.ucimc.org) and check out the schedule at the IMC or send an email to meghan@ucimc.org for info on other groups. Most importantly, stop by every once in awhile and check out what your community has been up to.

Zine Review: The East Village Inky by Adam

You’re lucky that you live in the U-C area. The Urbana-Champaign Independent Media Center has one of the Midwest’s largest zine libraries. What exactly is a zine? For one, it is one of the IMC’s fabulous zines, Stolen Sharpie Revolution, “A zine is an independently created publication containing anything you want it to… Zines can be put together by one person or a group of people and they are usually photocopied but can also be printed offset, letter press or mimeographed.”

One of the IMC’s newest zine acquisitions is called The East Village Inky (numbers 17-19). The East Village Inky is the story of a 38-year-old accordian-owning, indie rock lover, hipster (of the Gotham crowd). His 5-year-old daughter and a 2-year-old son who live in a 340 square foot apartment in Brooklyn. Parents, kids lovers, and zine fanatics will absolutely love reading these issues. The goings-on of a family of kids. Follow the three of them as they trudge through the February 15th New York City anti-war march of 100,000 people, and as they make their own DIY costumes out of the recycled goods that can’t be recycled (because Mayor Bloomberg decided to trash the city’s recycling program).

East Village Inky’s are complete with illustrations and photos of the threesomes, Soul Food (reviews of everything from children’s music to coloring books to zines), and updates on this not-so-ordinary family. Each issue is guaranteed to make you laugh at the sheer insanity of being a radical parent of two adorable kids. Of course, if you’re a parent, then you know what it’s like, and it might make you cry!


Grand Reopening of the Open Stage!

The Channing-Murray/IMC Open Stage - It’s all you: Tell that joke; sing that song; bring your string quartet; juggle those chainsaws; read that zine, bring that unicycle; play that bassoon; read your poem; act that scene; break that board in half with your head.

Join Host Darrin Drda and others at 8pm Thursday, February 19th at the Red Herring 1209 W. Oregon Urbana, Illinois.