

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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Bill of Rights

Congress OF THE United States,

*begun and held at the City of New York, on*  
*Wednesday, the fourth of March, one thousand seven hundred and eighty nine.*

**Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion, or prohibiting the free exercise thereof; or abridging the freedom of speech, or of the press; or the right of the people peaceably to assemble, and to petition the Government for a redress of grievances.**  
— The First Amendment to the U.S. Constitution



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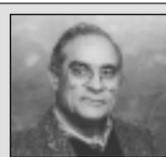
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# A Civil Liberties Case From Champaign

By Daniel McCollum



Dan McCollum was born, raised, and educated in Champaign. He was its mayor from 1987–1999. He is a well-known environmentalist and local historian.

The story of the PEOPLE of the STATE OF ILLINOIS ex rel. VASHTI MCCOLLUM v. BOARD OF EDUCATION OF SCHOOL DISTRICT NO. 71, CHAMPAIGN COUNTY, ILLINOIS, et al (333 US 203, 1948) has largely been forgotten. The action arose as a challenge to a program of religious education classes held in public school buildings on school time. Today, the chief significance of the McCollum Case is that it was the first of a series of cases brought under the First and Fourteenth Amendments to the United States Constitution, where a practice by a local or state governmental body was actually held to be illegal as “an establishment of religion.”

The practice of “released time” religious education in the public schools began in Gary, Indiana, in 1921. Little anticipating the determined challenge which would result in a legal decision of nation-wide significance, local clergy and school officials instituted their released time program of sectarian religious instruction in the public schools of Champaign, Illinois, and the five-year fuse was lit.

## A FAMILY ENBATTLED AND UNDER SEIGE

My connections with this case are more than casual. The plaintiff, Vashti Cromwell McCollum, was my mother. The *causis belli* was James Terry McCollum, my older brother, and my grandfather, Arthur G. Cromwell, was a prominent participant. While I had no active involvement in the official events, either in the trial or the two appeals, my memories as a youngster from the ages of eight to eleven are vivid, reflective, I am sure, of the personal trauma related to negative reactions locally while the case was in the courts. Also several rereadings over the years of my mother’s book, *ONE WOMAN’S FIGHT*, no doubt have helped keep the details reasonably fresh in my mind.

From the time my mother filed suit in June, 1945, well through the trial the following September, the public perception was that the case represented a challenge to religion itself—that God was on trial, rather than whether or not the sectarian religious classes as they were conducted in the public schools of Champaign, Illinois, were legal.

Another factor certainly must have weighed heavily in the public response to the suit. World War II was in its closing months. Already there were cracks developing between the victorious Allies. These international dissensions were signs of what was to become, during the height of the Cold War, an almost hysterical fear of “atheistic communism.”

From my vantage point, it was as if my family was under a constant state of siege for the two and a half years the case was in the courts. I can remember my mother telling my brothers and me at the time, that we had to be especially careful in what we did and how we acted because everyone in town knew who we were and would be watching.

She also told us before the final decision in the case that there were more people for us than against. She, however, had the advantage of frequent travel to such cosmopolitan places as Chicago, New York City, and Boston on matters relating to the case. Away from the close, provincial atmosphere of Champaign-Urbana, she was able to benefit from

a much broader perspective than I, as to the attitudes of thinking people in the rest of the country. Despite her assurances of support for her cause, I retained my doubts.

Just two years after the 1948 Supreme Court decision, I spent a portion of my freshman year in high school in Gainesville, Florida. This was during a most virulent stage of the Cold War, made ever more fearful by the related scourge of McCarthyism. The school day opened with a Bible reading done by students on a rotational basis. Aware of the high degree of religious conformity in that southern city—its almost synonymous equation with good Americanism—I remember my terror each day that my name would be called, forcing me either to conform or to stand on principle. The result of the latter course would almost certainly have led to enduring similar consequences to those I had experienced earlier during the active years of the McCollum Case. To my great relief, I was never called upon. My mother does not recall saying anything to the school authorities, but now I assume they must have known the situation and were careful to avoid a conflict.

## CHANGES IN THE POLITICAL CLIMATE

A more liberal climate came with the mild “thaw” in the Cold War. Among many persons with whom I came into contact during the mid to late 1950s, there was an almost grudging respect for the action my mother had taken. With the growing unrest of the civil rights movement and the Vietnam War, the family connection with the case became a positive distinction.

By the early 1970s, due primarily to the burgeoning University of Illinois, Champaign had become a highly transient city. Most of the new arrivals knew little or nothing of the McCollum Case. Even among the local population, those who had any memory at all of the case tended to confuse it with the later civil liberties cases which involved prayer and Bible reading in the public schools. Elsewhere, where there was no direct connection with the once notorious trial, the case generally was forgotten. Liberals, if they thought about the church-state issue at all, were likely to take the “wall of separation” proposition for granted; fundamentalists, and the religious right in general, were as yet too disorganized politically to successfully challenge the demarcation established by the Supreme Court of what was Caesar’s and what was God’s.

With the election of Richard Nixon in 1968, all of this began to change. The trend was reinforced by the subsequent ascendancy of Ronald Reagan in 1980. Both of these figures were heavily assisted by important support from the religious right. These two presidents, representing the right

wing of the Republican Party, between them, with added help from George H.W. and Bush Jr, have appointed a majority of the justices on the United States Supreme Court. Already, a noticeable change appears to have occurred in the court’s perception of the church-state relationship.

Many civil libertarians, including myself, view this trend away from strict separation as alarming. Without question, my connection with the McCollum Case is an influencing factor. The trial and its aftermath posed difficult times for my family and the thought that it may all have been for naught brings with it a strong sense of personal frustration and futility.

Of much greater importance is the threat to the constitutional principle involved: “Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion or prohibit the free exercise thereof...” This lofty statement of public policy and fundamental law is elemental to the survival of a free society. It is based upon the simple common sense notion that the best way to avoid religious strife, which has caused so much pain and suffering over the centuries, is by maintaining to the maximum extent possible, governmental neutrality in the field of sectarian affairs.

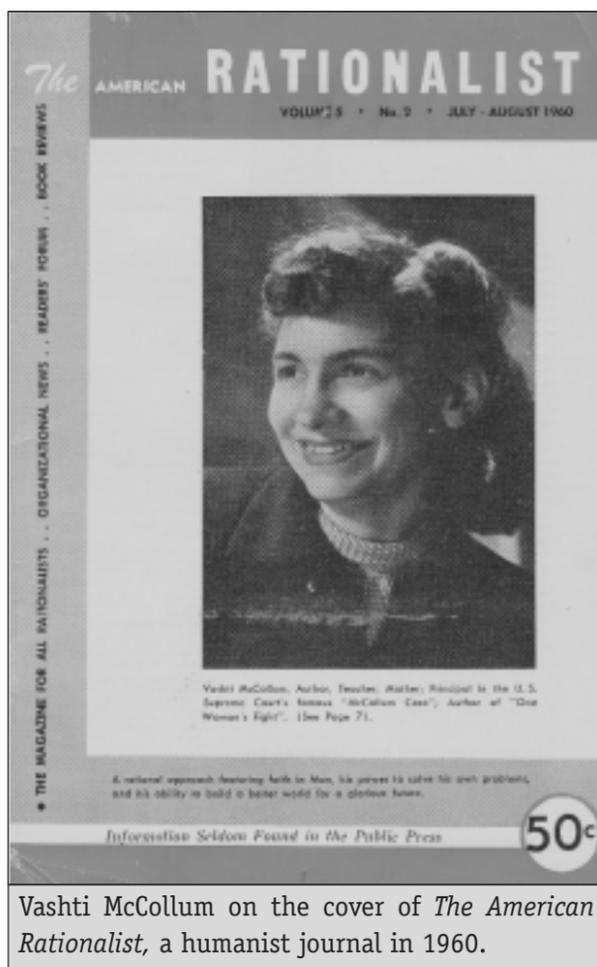
The Founding Fathers had first-hand knowledge of the problems which occurred when there was mingling of church and state. As if European history had not provided examples enough, the were the more immediate examples of religious intolerance as it existed in many of the thirteen states just prior to the adoption of the Constitution.

The majority of our early settlers came from countries where church and state were not separated but were linked or interrelated. Many of them had suffered for their religious beliefs and many of them settled this country in religious communities. Ironically enough, although they were seeking religious freedom for themselves, they did not always want to extend that freedom to others of differing beliefs.

Backed up by the precedents set by Roger Williams and the Virginia Declaration of Rights, James Madison and others felt that the best course was for a definite separation of

church and state, affording the protection of minority rights, religious and otherwise. Accordingly the Bill of Rights was proposed and adopted, establishing definite limitations upon the power of the Federal Government. After the passage of the Fourteenth Amendment, and through Court interpretation, similar limitations were placed on the states. In theory at least, these guarantees of individual liberty stand, irrespective of the majority will at any given time or place.

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Vashti McCollum on the cover of *The American Rationalist*, a humanist journal in 1960.



## A Garden Hills Resident Responds

by Marti Wilkinson

A recent shooting in Garden Hills has generated several news reports and concerns within the community. On July 14, 2007 an article appeared in the News Gazette where it is said that community leaders met with the resident and police to try to find an effective resolution. As a resident of Garden Hills and a member of CU Citizens for Peace and Justice I met with Ms. Davis who lives at 4 Hedge Court and in my conversation with her learned that what really happened is different than what the News-Gazette reported in their latest article.

According to Ms. Davis the officers shot into her home after Torriano Johnson ran into her living room on June 24. The News-Gazette reports that officers opened fire after Johnson shot at them from inside her residence. Ms Davis told me that while Johnson had his gun out he did not discharge the weapon while in her home. Another mistake made by the News-Gazette was in identifying her as the owner of the residence. She is renting the house and according to property records available on the Champaign County website the owner of the house is Jamaal Applewhite who is a student at the University of Illinois.

In an email exchange with CU Citizens for Peace and Justice Mr. Applewhite indicated he was having trouble finding someone to place a bid on the repairs. This contradicts the account in the News-Gazette where community leaders expressed confidence that the repair work was being done. I did ask Ms. Davis about the damage to her belongings and she did tell me that the City of Champaign is providing compensation for her items, yet she is still missing gifts she received for mothers day and her birthday which hold significant personal and sentimental value.

After the police shot into her home Ms. Davis and her family were able to stay in a hotel that DCFS provided for her. When she returned home she found that her refrigerator was unplugged and the place had been ransacked. The food she had bought for the month was completely spoiled and, as a resident of Garden Hills, I applaud the individuals who provided her with assistance in that area.

This article quoted Champaign Police Chief Finney as saying that the police did not shoot into the house and shot at the suspect when the suspect was in view. The window

treatments in this residence make it impossible to see inside the building and the red curtains hanging in her living room have the bullet holes to prove it. Finney also claimed in this article that things would be easier to understand if the community had all of the information. However that is not going to happen as long as police records are suppressed and public access to information is denied. Even the News-Gazette has to now rely on press releases to get what should be information that is available under the Freedom of Information Act.

I absolutely agree with Chief Finney that the police do not have a choice regarding the locations where deadly force is present. However I find it disturbing that innocent bystanders ended up being put in danger in this situation. Since Mr. Johnson did not fire at officers while on Hedge Road there was no deadly force being used to merit shooting into the residence. I do understand that Mr. Johnson did use his gun in parts of Urbana and Champaign prior to being followed into Garden Hills. As a resident of Garden Hills I would like to know what type of protocol is being used in situations where there are innocent bystanders around. Ms. Davis told me that she is grateful that she and the children are alive considering she was sitting in her chair by the window when the first shot entered the building. How would the police department have handled this situation if it had happened in Cherry Hills as opposed to Garden Hills?

Reverend Charles O. Nash Sr. was quoted by the News-Gazette stating a need for the community and the police need to work together on finding a resolution to this issue. I absolutely agree, but I do not consider the Champaign Community Relations Committee to be the most effective advocate in the situation. Right now we are in a situation where police records are not available to the press, the public, and anyone who is a defendant in a criminal case is not allowed to have a copy of their own police report. This suppression of vital information makes it difficult to hold officers accountable for their own actions.

A citizen's review board in Champaign would be better because it functions as advocates for members of the community and it can do so in a way that the Urban League and the NAACP can not.

## Orchard Downs: The Fate of a Community

Lori Serb

Orchard Downs is University-owned 160-acre site of graduate student housing – bordered by Race Street, Kirby Avenue and Windsor Road in Urbana. Chancellor Herman's Strategic Plan for the Urbana campus requires that Orchard Downs be redeveloped over the next few years to include retail stores and retirement services. And although the new development will profoundly affect those the site currently serves, the university administration has taken very little input from them.

Orchard Downs housing's biggest draw currently is that it offers a community environment for families and interna-



Summer picnic at the Downs

tional graduate students. The top countries represented are: China, Korea, India, and the United States. There are 778 units which are generally 85-90% full. While the majority of residents are Graduate students, some of the units are intentionally kept empty to serve as temporary housing for visiting scholars. Orchard Downs offers good services for residents: a free after-school program for 5-12 year olds, community center, study room, free English classes, computer lab access, and playground equipment. Every Saturday morning the Sewing Room offers residents an opportunity to repair clothing and the Lending Storeroom has various household articles such as lamps and kitchen items which are loaned free of charge to be used as long as a student is

involved with the University. Residents can grow their own food on garden plots and take advantage of the frequent MTD service offered. The "Neighborly News" is a weekly newsletter published by the Family Housing Council especially for Orchard Downs residents.

The most controversial aspect of the redevelopment plan is the near 50% reduction of graduate housing units and the subsequent loss of services that would result in forcing many residents to leave. In their place will be high-end retail and residential units for well-to-do seniors.

Both Devonshire Development and Vermilion-Fox-Atkins plan a mixture of retail space and residences. A focal point in both plans is the Osher Lifelong Learning Institute, a center that will provide educational programs and health and wellness activities for adults over age 50. Another element is the lifestyle center, a privately owned space despite its open-air venue structure that squeezes more fancy stores, upscale restaurants, and coffee shops into less space. This structure relies heavily on the financial support of well-to-do consumers.

Devonshire Development and Vermilion-Fox-Atkins presented their designs at a May 2 forum at Beckman Institute and exhibited them May 16 at the Alice Campbell Alumni Center to collect public feedback. While the Administration has offered these meetings for the public's input, little focus has been on the current Orchard Downs residents: the graduate students and their dependents. The meeting locations have been far away from Orchard Downs and scheduled during exam time which made it difficult for current Orchard Downs residents to participate especially if they have children. The Public Input discussions have not addressed the details on the budget or how current renters will be affected despite the demand by the public at these meetings. The university plans to hire a consulting firm to prepare feasibility studies and financial analyses.

Tuition will go up in the fall. Tuition has doubled at UIUC in the past 6 years. Many graduate students are supporting dependants and choose to live in Orchard Downs because they are raising families or taking care of elders and Orchard Downs allows renters to give one-month notice when they have to break their lease. The current rent for a two bedroom unfurnished apartment in Orchard Downs



Orchard Downs Apartments

for students \$605. Many graduate students who have 33% appointments over the 2006-2007 school year earned a minimum monthly gross stipend of \$922.97 a month. That's before taxes and university fees or health insurance.

Seventy-five to 80% of Orchard Downs residents are internationals from more than 70 countries. International students have additional visa restrictions on how many hours they are allowed to work for the University. They cannot work more than a 50% appointment (20 hours a week) This is separate from their PhD work and they cannot legally get paid for any work outside the University. Certain types of visas restrict spouses from being able to earn an income. To add to this stress university departments are not required to even give 30 days advance notice when they offer appointments to graduate students. In some cases they receive notice the day their appointment starts or the day classes begin. Summer appointments are extremely limited.

Chancellor Richard Herman said last month "I want to see (UIUC become) the best public research university in the nation... We need to increase the diversity of our faculty increase the prominence and excellence of our students among other things... it means we need a global presence... a larger national presence..." The financial

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# Stamp Out the Rate Hikes: Stop New Postal Rules from Stifling America's Independent Media

by Bob McChesney

*"Were it left to me to decide whether we should have a government without newspapers, or newspapers without a government, I should not hesitate a moment to prefer the latter."*

—Thomas Jefferson, Jan. 16, 1787

## WHAT'S AT STAKE

Our nation's founders understood the First Amendment would be worth little without a postal system that encouraged broad public participation in America's "marketplace of ideas."

Thomas Jefferson supported this with calls for a postal service that allowed citizens to gain "full information of their affairs," where ideas could "penetrate the whole mass of the people." Along with James Madison, he paved the way for a service that gave smaller political journals a voice. Their solution included low-cost mailing incentives whereby publications could reach as many readers as possible.

Other founders soon came to understand that the press as a political institution needed to be supported through favorable postal rates. President George Washington spoke out for free postage for newspapers through the mail, and Treasury Secretary Alexander Hamilton—no proponent of government deficit—conceded that incentives were necessary to spawn a viable press.

The postal policies that resulted have lasted for more than 200 years, spurring a vibrant political culture in the United States. They have eased the entry of diverse political viewpoints into a national discourse often dominated by the largest media organizations.

Our free press did not happen magically; it was built on the foundation of postal policies that encouraged small publications and dissident ideas to spout and flourish. The postal system is based on policies of public service and democratic values.

## TIME WARNER REWRITES HISTORY. ALL OF THIS COULD CHANGE IN 2007.

In an unprecedented move, the agency that oversees postal rates in the United States has approved a plan that would unravel much of what the founders accomplished. Earlier this year, the Postal Regulatory Commission (PRC) rejected a postal rate increase plan offered by the U.S. Postal Service. Instead they opted to implement a modi-

fied version of an extraordinarily complicated plan submitted by media giant Time Warner.

Although there was a formal review and comment process—to be fair, the PRC did everything by the book—the matter was so complicated and unreported that the general public played no role whatsoever, and publications that could not afford significant lobbying and lawyer fees faced high barriers to effective participation.

Make no mistake about it, this is a *Public Issue*. We all lose if the media system loses numerous small publications due to massive postal rate hikes and if it becomes cost prohibitive for new magazines to be launched in the future. This is not an issue that should be determined exclusively by the owners of magazines, with the biggest owners having the loudest voice.

This year's rate increase was somewhat inevitable, as the postal service struggles to meet its costs. The method of rate hikes was hotly contested. Postal rates for magazines are basically a zero-sum game. Lower rates for some magazines, and others must pick up the cost. The USPS offered a plan to the postal Commission that featured relatively equitable increases for all magazines. Most magazines were budgeting for a 10-12 percent increase. The Time Warner plan proposed higher costs for small publishers and discounts for big publishers. The Time Warner plan is so complex that many publications are still unclear what their rate hikes will be if implemented; those smaller publications that have been able to do the math are finding shocking increases on tap, as high as 25-30 percent.

The Time Warner plan represents another step (albeit a giant step) in the gradual reversal of the Founders' public service principles of supporting democracy through the postal service. It is the latest, largest move towards abandoning these public service priorities and permitting a system that no longer favors low-advertising, political speech—like *In These Times* and *The American Spectator*—over ad-heavy magazines like *People* and *Cosmo*. The practical result of this move is not only the decline of a democratic mission, but a rate shock for small and medium size magazines even as big publishers are getting a break.

## THIS IS A BATTLE FOR THE INTERNET, TOO

It is ironic that America's first and arguably most brilliant media policy is also a crucial policy for keeping the Inter-

net open and vibrant. Much of the material on the web sites people visit that covers public affairs is generated by these print publications. Much of the material bloggers address originates in these print publications.

If these publications are forced to slash their editorial budgets—or even go out of business—to pay the massive postal rate increases brought on by the Time Warner plan, it will shrink the range and quality of material available on the Internet.

There is still no clear business model to support quality journalism online, and these print publications provide the resources to pay for the journalists and writers whose material is available in cyberspace. If the print publications do not exist, these stories do not get written. As our friends at National Review have noted, there would be no National Review Online "without the print-magazine mothership."

## FIGHT BACK: TELL CONGRESS TO ACT

This year's rate hikes culminate a long period in which the subsidy for small publications has been eroding. It is imperative that Congress, which is ultimately responsible, intervene to protect the postal subsidy for small publications that is the foundation for the free press in the United States.

And Congress must intervene quickly to see that the July 15 rate hike does not have the unintended consequence of severely punishing countless small and medium-sized publications, perhaps driving hundreds out of business.

Congress must now step in to protect smaller media from these unfair rate hikes.

The Postal Service should not be forced to use its monopoly power to favor the largest publishers at the expense of smaller ones. We need to return to the enlightened postal policy that has guided our nation so well for the past 215 years.

Demand a formal and open accounting of why more than 200 years of pro-democracy postal policy was abandoned.

*The new postal rates went into effect on July 15<sup>th</sup>. Efforts are now underway to rescind them.*

*This article was previously published on [www.freepress.net](http://www.freepress.net). Full references, as well as up-to-date information are available at this web site.*

# Media-Generated "Scandal" Undermines Democracy in Ecuador

By Mark Weisbrot

*This column was published on July 26, 2007 by the [Guardian.co.uk](http://www.guardian.co.uk)*

In his recent book, *The Assault on Reason*, former Vice-President Al Gore describes how "the potential for manipulating mass opinions and feelings initially discovered by commercial advertisers is now being even more aggressively exploited by a new generation of media Machiavellis." The concentration of broadcast media ownership is indeed a real threat to democracy, as we learned the hard way when more than 70 percent of Americans were convinced, falsely, that Saddam Hussein was involved in the attacks of September 11—thus enabling the launch of a disastrous and unnecessary war in Iraq. The problem is even worse in Latin America, where monopolized TV media is a much larger share of the news that people receive, and is even more shamelessly manipulated for political purposes. In Ecuador, President Rafael Correa, an economist with a Ph.D. from the University of Illinois, was elected last November with a broad mandate for economic reform, pro-growth development policies, and poverty alleviation. One of his government's first acts was to double the monthly stipend for single mothers, the disabled and elderly that

are poor. Although Correa ran without a political party or candidates for the Congress, his mandate was strongly reinforced when the government won a referendum to draw up a new constitution by an even larger margin of 82% percent. As in a number of other countries in the region, which has seen a record economic failure over the last 25



Rafael Correa president-elect of Ecuador

years, voters endorsed the sweeping institutional and political changes they saw as necessary to enfranchise the majority. But on May 21 the opposition TV media launched an assault on President Correa's finance minister, Ricardo Patiño. In a seven minute grainy video clip from a hidden camera, they showed the minister meeting on February 12 with two representatives of a New York investment firm, as well as a former finance minister. Patiño talks about "scaring the markets," in what looks like a plot to manipulate the country's bond market. The clip, taken out of context, was shown repeatedly for days on the TV news, spliced with gratuitous, unrelated images of faceless people counting large amounts of cash. It turns out that the video was authorized by Patiño himself, an odd thing to do if one is meeting to plan a crime. Patiño claims that the purpose of the meeting and the taping of it was to investigate corruption. And indeed the rest of the video—not shown on TV but presented in a transcript published in Ecuador's major newspapers—supports his explanation. In the rest of the meeting, Patiño is probing for information on corrupt activities—including past market manipulations. He allows

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# Venezuela and the Media: Fact and Fiction

By Robert McChesney and Mark Weisbrot

*Robert W. McChesney is Research Professor of Communications at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign. Mark Weisbrot is Co-Director of the Center for Economic and Policy Research, in Washington, DC*

To read and view the U.S. news media, there is an episode of grand tyranny unfolding, one repugnant to all who cherish democratic freedoms. The Venezuelan government under "strongman" Hugo Chavez refused to renew the 20-year broadcast license for RCTV, because that medium had the temerity to be critical of his regime. It is a familiar story.

And in this case it is wrong.

Regrettably, the US media coverage of Venezuela's RCTV controversy says more about the deficiencies of our own news media than it does about Venezuela. It demonstrates again, as with the invasion of Iraq, how our news media are far too willing to carry water for Washington than to ascertain and report the truth of the matter.

Here are some of the facts and some of the context that the media have omitted or buried:

All nations license radio and TV stations because the airwaves can only accommodate a small number of broadcasters, far fewer than the number who would like to have the privilege to broadcast. In democratic nations the license is given for a specific term, subject to renewal. In the United States it is eight years; in Venezuela it is 20 years.

Venezuela is a constitutional republic. Chavez has won landslide victories that would be the envy of almost

any elected leader in the world, in internationally monitored elections.

The vast majority of Venezuela's media are not only in private hands, they are constitutionally protected, uncensored, and dominated by the opposition. RCTV's owners can expand their cable and satellite programming, or take their capital and launch a print empire forthwith. Aggressive unqualified political dissent is alive and well in the Venezuelan mainstream media, in a manner few other democratic nations have ever known, including our own.

The media here report that President Chavez "accuses RCTV of having supported a coup" against him. This is a common means of distorting the news: a fact is reported as accusation, and then attributed to a source that the press has done everything to discredit. In fact, RCTV - along with other broadcast news outlets - played such a leading role in the April 2002 military coup against Venezuela's democratically elected government, that it is often described as "the world's first media coup."

In the prelude to the coup, RCTV helped mobilize people to the streets against the government, and used false reporting to justify the coup. One of their most infamous and effective falsifications was to mix footage of pro-Chavez people firing pistols from an overpass in Caracas with gory scenes of demonstrators being shot and killed. This created the impression that the pro-Chavez gunmen actually shot these people, when in fact the victims were nowhere near them. These falsified but horrifying images were repeated incessantly, and served as a major justification for the coup.

RCTV then banned any pro-government reporting during the coup. When Chavez returned to office, this too was blacked out of the news. Later the same year, RCTV once again made all-day-long appeals to Venezuelans to help topple the government during a crippling national oil strike.

If RCTV were broadcasting in the United States, its license would have been revoked years ago. In fact its owners would likely have been tried for criminal offenses, including treason.

RCTV's broadcast frequency has been turned over to a new national public access channel that promises to provide programming from thousands of independent producers. It is an effort to let millions of Venezuelans who have never had a viable chance to participate in the media do so, without government censorship.

The Bush Administration opposes the Chavez government for reasons that have nothing to do with democracy, or else there would be a long list of governments for us to subvert or overthrow before it would get close to targeting Venezuela. Regrettably, our press coverage has done little to shed light on that subject.

Our news media should learn the lesson of Iraq and regard our own government's claims with the same skepticism they properly apply to foreign leaders. Then Americans might begin to get a more accurate picture of the world, and be able to effectively participate in our foreign policy.

# C-U Food Cooperative Encourages Eating Local

By Jacqueline Hannah and Sarah Dolinar

Food is at the heart of almost everything we do. It's woven into the fabric of our everyday lives. Our decisions about what we eat for dinner impacts the political, environmental, health, and fiscal picture of our global and our local landscape. With all eyes on the issues of global warming and poverty, the Common Ground Food Co-op encourages anyone who is invested in our community to consider a few reasons to get your food locally.



Jesse Ruddell carries a box of fresh produce

What we eat is political. Taking a vested interest in knowing where your food comes from and how it was produced is a political act. Here's a thought from the online community, "100-Mile Diet—Local Eating for Global Change": a typical ingredient in a modern meal has travelled 1,500 miles or more from farm to place. Food doesn't carry itself all those miles. Trucks, airplanes, and freighters are carrying that food from producer to grocery to table, at the expense of the environment.

According to FamilyFarmed.org, a program of Chicago-based Sustain that encourages organic farming and new marketing and business opportunities by connecting local farmers with buyers, growing more food locally also reduces the need for long distance trucking and minimizes the emissions of pollutants that dirty the air and cause global warming.

The Soil Association, an organic standards agency in the United Kingdom, estimates that air freight is the fastest-growing form of food transport, and has the highest climate-change impact per mile. Their recent report states that while air freight accounts for less than 1% of the distance food travels to reach U.K. consumers, it is responsible for 11% of food-transport carbon emissions. (see summary online at <http://100milediet.org/category/the-latest/>)

Eating locally is thinking globally. Supporting local food is a vote for a just and sustainable food system. It is a stone in the eye of Goliaths like Monsanto Corporation, with their genetically modified agriculture.

What you eat effects how food is grown around the world, which effects justice for farm workers. According to a July 2006 article on [bilaterals.org](http://bilaterals.org), tariffs protecting beans and corn, including the white corn Mexicans use for tortillas, are to end in January 2008. That will expose Mexican corn farmers — two-thirds of whom subsist on 12 acres or fewer and 90 percent of whom lack irrigation — to competition with U.S. farmers who are so highly mechanized they can produce a metric ton of corn with a half-hour's labor, according to the U.S. Department of Agriculture.

And the effects are not just on the workers, but on our environment because the growing process affects soil sus-

tainability and bio-diversity

Financially, we know it can be difficult to afford organic or even local food. But consider the positive effects on our own community when you make that choice. For every \$100 you spend locally, at Common Ground, the Urbana farmers' market, or directly from local farms, \$45 is retained in the local community. When you spend the same amount at a chain supermarket, a grand total of \$13 stays in our community. What a loss.

By supporting local food, we ensure that our community remains financially independent of corporations, that farming remains a viable option for current and future community members, and that our community remains unique.

Does it sound difficult to eat only food that is grown within 100 miles of your home? Common Ground has already done a lot of the research for you.

In 2006, Common Ground bought more than \$53,000 worth of food and products from local farms and producers making up 13% of total purchases. With our community and your health in mind, our goal is to raise this number to over 16% of our total purchases in 2007.

Common Ground currently purchases from more than two dozen local produce growers, farms, bread bakers, body care product producers, prepared food producers, apiaries, and artisans. We are constantly adding more and looking for more.

Jon Cherniss, owner of Blue Moon Farms, a certified organic vegetable farm in Urbana, is proud to be one of those producers, "I know how important a role Common Ground plays in local food, and I love being a part of it because of what it stands for—local, organic, sustainable food."

We can help you to make a good decision for our environment and our community. Visit Common Ground at the corner of Springfield and Wright in the Illinois Disciples Foundation, or call 352-3347.



# U.S. Government's Anti-Democratic Media Operations

By Belden Fields

Robert McChesney's and Mike Weisbrot's article on the Venezuelan government's lifting of the license of RCTV and the outcry in the U.S. over its being a violation of the freedom of the press needs to be situated in the context of the U.S. government's own record of using the media to destroy democratic institutions in Latin America.

First, the C.I.A. has covertly "owned, subsidized, or influenced" more than 800 media operations around the world (*NY Times* 12/26/77, 1:37). These included newspapers, magazines, trade publications, journalists working for mainline newspapers and agencies, and news agencies themselves. So people in democratic societies around the world, who thought they were reading legitimate news reports and interpretations, were in fact reading the planted material of the CIA's "Propaganda Assets Inventory."

This is obviously a violation of the right of such a citizenry to have access to legitimate information, and to know the sources of that information, in order to fulfill their civic responsibilities. Among the agencies in Latin America that were covertly owned or infiltrated were Agencia Orbe Latino Americare (a features service), The South Pacific Mail in Santiago, The Caracas Venezuela Daily Journal, and LATIN (a Latin American news agency that was operated by the British news agency, Reuters). Editors Press Service was an agency that placed itself willingly at the disposal of the CIA.



Salvador Allende

Second, the U.S. government has actually used foreign media to help violently overthrow or defeat democratically-elected governments. The two instances that have received the most scrutiny are the violent overthrow of the Allende regime in Chile in 1973 and the electoral defeat of the Sandinistas in Nicaragua in the 1990 election.

## THE C.I.A. AND EL MERCURIO IN CHILE

Up to 1973, the year that the Allende government, which had come to power through constitutional means, was overthrown, the U.S. spent \$4.3 million in covert money to "support and influence" the Chilean mass media (*San Francisco Chronicle*, 12/5/75, 1.) From September 9, 1971 to April 11, 1972, the C.I.A. spent a million dollars on one newspaper, *El Mercurio*. This newspaper was owned by the wealthy businessman, Agustín Edwards. The relationship between Edwards and the U.S. government was so close that the *S.F. Chronicle* reported that Edwards had conferred with top officials of the Nixon Administration on the day that Nixon ordered the C.I.A. to work with elements in the Chilean military, headed by General Pinochet, to make a coup to prevent Allende's election. They did not actually prevent the election, but they did overthrow Allende after the election and instituted a long period of dictatorship, torture, disappearances, and at least one assassination of a former Allende cabinet member on the streets of Washington D.C. Allende himself died in the coup.

Fred Landis, a Ph.D. student at the University of Illinois with dual U.S. and Chilean citizenships wrote a dissertation, *Psychological Warfare and Media Operations in Chile, 1970-1973* (1975), in which he demonstrated how the presentation of stories and photographs in *El Mercurio* followed closely the U.S. Army's Psychological Warfare Manual (he could not obtain a copy of the C.I.A. manual).

I had occasion to talk briefly with a former minister in the Allende government who told me that one of the biggest mistakes of that government was not shutting down *El Mercurio* when they knew it was part of a C.I.A. effort to overthrow the government. But they were concerned that this would give the U.S. and its domestic Chilean accomplices more ammunition to paint the democratic socialist Allende government as repressive and dictatorial.

## THE U.S. GOVERNMENT AND LA PRENSA IN NICARAGUA

There are two differences between the U.S. government's M.O. in Chile and in Nicaragua. In the case of Nicaragua,

the U.S. overtly (except during the time that the Boland Amendment banning aid to the Nicaraguan Contras was in effect—to no real effect because the government illegally and covertly continued doing so leading to the Iran-Contra affair) joined with the military dictatorship in Argentina to put together an armed force of anti-Sandinista Nicaraguans to try to destroy the Nicaraguan government. It attacked mainly key civilian targets like collective farms and health clinics, seldom engaging the stronger government army. C.I.A. agents also attacked Nicaragua's oil storage facilities in the port of Corinto and mined Nicaragua's harbors. In effect, the U.S. was waging open warfare on Nicaragua, and was declared guilty of it by the International Court of Justice that ruled that the U.S. owed reparations to the government of Nicaragua. Placing itself above international law, the U.S. simply refused to recognize the jurisdiction of the court. At the same time, it was BOTH overtly and overtly supporting the anti-Sandinista newspaper, *La Prensa*.

A second difference between the Chilean case and the Nicaraguan one is that by the time of the Nicaraguan operation the U.S. Congress had created the National Endowment for Democracy (NED, created in 1983). While formally being private, it distributes public funds allocated



Augustin Edwards owner of *El Mercurio*, left.

by Congress. One source estimates that between 1984 (the year that the Sandinistas won the first elections after the revolution they led that overthrew the U.S.-backed Somoza dictatorship) and 1990 (the year that the Sandinistas lost the elections after six years of a Contra war that destroyed the economy and killed 30,000 to 40,000 people in a country of 3.5 million), the C.I.A. spent \$28-30 million and the NED spent \$15,850,000 to get rid of the

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## Coca-Cola Kicked Out of University of Illinois

In another landmark victory for student campaigns against Coca-Cola, the company has been kicked out of the University of Illinois at Urbana Champaign. U of I is the third university this summer -- following Smith College in the U.S. and the Banaras Hindu University in India -- to have terminated its beverage contract with Coca-Cola. Coalition Against Coke Contracts (CACC), the group that led the campaign at UIUC, dedicates this victory to the indomitable fighting spirit of communities ravaged by Coke -- from Colombia to India.

Coca-Cola has been the exclusive beverage provider at the University of Illinois since 1997. According to the terms of the contract, only Coke products were sold on campus. Such monopolistic arrangements have been emblematic of the growing corporatization of education. The contract between University of Illinois and Coca-Cola received much criticism from students, faculty, staff and the local community for, among other reasons, the company's labor & human rights abuse and environmental degradation in India, Colombia, Indonesia and Turkey.

In Colombia, for instance, Coca-Cola's union busting efforts in collaboration with the paramilitaries have resulted in the death of eight union leaders since 1989. Similarly, workers in Coke bottling plants in Turkey and Indonesia have been routinely subjected to violence and intimidation upon attempting to unionize. In India, the company is involved in massive extraction and pollution of ground water. The pollution control board of Kerala, India, has found out that Coca-Cola is responsible for dumping toxic waste into the fields and water around its plants. Further, independent investigations of Coca-Cola products in India have been found to include high levels of pesticides.

For the past two years, CACC, a student & community group in Champaign Urbana has forcefully demanded that the University end its business relationship with Coca-Cola in light of the company's egregious records. It has further demanded a public statement from the administration regarding, what has been stated by Chancellor Hermand as "Coca-Cola's recalcitrance" on the afore-mentioned issues. More than 25 local groups joined the coalition, holding numerous dialogs with the administration and organizing public actions. Even as the current contract with Coca-Cola expired on June 30, CACC organized "the last day of contract" action that involved soda-tasting of a range of locally produced beverages.

For the new beverage contract, the University of Illinois has decided to comply with the State's decision to grant pouring rights to Pepsi. CACC has always been vocal about supporting local businesses and vendors over big corporations. The numerous soda-tasting events organized by CACC over the the past year received an overwhelming response. CACC welcomes the University's decision not to do business with Coca-Cola and hopes that the retail stores outside the contract with Pepsi will take into account the choice of campus community and provide locally manufactured beverages.

Earlier this year, the Urbana Champaign campus made a historic decision to put an end to its racist mascot, thanks to a broad-based campus-wide movement. Non-renewal of the contract with Coca-Cola is another step toward creating a progressive campus. CACC hopes that the University administration will take affirmative steps toward making sure that it does not enter into business relationships with corporations that have no respect for human and labor rights. Finally, the inclusion of progressive student groups in long-term decision making would be a positive way of achieving this.



# Post-Cold War U.S. Geo-Strategy in the Middle East

By Niloofar Shambayati

Back in the summer of 2006, while the Israeli army was incessantly bombing Lebanon back to the Stone Age, the U.S. Secretary of State, Condoleezza Rice, comforted us all by calling the death and destruction being inflicted upon Lebanon “the birth pangs of a new Middle East”—a natural process which needs to be endured if life is to renew itself. A more apt metaphor for this and other forces of change in the region would be “a premature Cesarean Section operation” to speed up the delivery of a new Middle East into an American-envisioned Uni-Polar World, under the patriarchal care of Israel. The invasion of Iraq, the bombing of Lebanon, the recent attempt to resuscitate the 2002 Saudi proposal for a peace settlement between Israel and the Palestinians, and the nightmarish but currently unlikely plans for an overt military action against Iran can all be understood better within this paradigm.

This hegemonic ambition and its policy implications have been developed over the past decade-and-a-half by a group of neo-conservative (neo-con) strategists and operatives in the Bush I Administration connected to the American Enterprise Institute (AEI) and to the right-wing of the American Israeli lobby (AIPAC and such). Zbigniew Brzezinski's *Second Chance* details how, as early as March 1992, Richard Perle et al. had arrived at the conclusion that “American global military superiority” must be used “to expand eastward in Europe and be firmly consolidated in the Middle East.” The impetus for this ambition was derived from the illusion that the dismantling of the Soviet Union and the Eastern Block provided the U.S. with a unique opportunity to dominate the entire region for the benefit of American oil companies.

Rashid Khalidi in *Resurrecting Empire* and John Cooley in his 2006 Harvard International article document how the pro-Likud Party lobby used a continuous barrage of faulty claims to convince America of the desirability and feasibility of neutralizing Iraq, Syria, Iran, the Lebanese Hezbollah and the Palestinian nationalists through a series of military assaults. The Bush I and Clinton's Administrations, however, were not sympathetic to this reckless vision and the neo-cons had to bide their time till the Presidency of Bush II to implement their views.

Yet by the year 2000, new forces had already started to raise obstacles against quests for world dominance. Globalization and technological advancements have made the tools of communication and destruction so affordable and accessible that even the smallest militant cells can now paralyze the mightiest world armies. An obvious case in point, of course, is the debacle in Iraq.

From a different direction, formation of regional security, economic and political alliances have created formidable forces against Uni-polarization of the world. The populist bloc in Latin America and the European Union both keep U.S. ambitions at bay in their respective regions. Still more formidable have been the Chinese and Russian joint efforts to control major markets in South Asia, the Middle East, and Africa, and to provide regional security systems independent of the U.S. These alliances offer prospects for partnerships in lieu of client status that the U.S. bestows upon weaker states. Iran, for example, as an observer within the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO), has recently expressed its interest to act as a bridge between SCO and the Persian Gulf States.

The Asian Energy Security Grid (AESG) is another product of such strategy, fueled by the old adage of “he who controls the oil controls the world.” As Chomsky and Achkar discuss in *Perilous Power*, control over the flow of oil and gas from Siberia and the yet to be exploited Central Asian fields to South Asian markets and to China itself, is vital to the economic growth and rise in power of Russia and China. Here again Iran can play a crucial role by providing the AESG with the most rapid and cheapest means of transporting Caspian, Russian, and Central Asian oil and gas to the rest of the world markets, thus bypassing American and European Companies. Within this context, it's easy to understand Russian and Chinese opposition to American efforts to impose severe sanctions on Iran for what it claims to be violations of Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT). Both countries fear that this line of action would eventually lead to a “regime change” in Iran after the Iraqi model.

Here lies America's Iran paradox. Attacking Iran directly or via Israeli bombing of strategic targets is bound to unify the Iranians and will mobilize Iraqi Shiites in S.E. Iraq,

Southern Saudi Arabia, Bahrain, and Lebanon against the U.S. and Israel. It would also send Iran rushing to China and Russia, which is the worst nightmare of Corporate America and its political operatives. Ignoring Iran, and letting it develop nuclear capabilities and to assume a leadership role in the Middle East, is also terrifying to the U.S. and its regional allies.

Over the last twenty-five years, both Democrats and Republicans have been adamant about the taboo of open dialogue with Iran. The Bush administration, however, is most to be blamed for having shut the window of opportunity that had opened after the 9/11 terrorist attacks to start a dialogue with the then reformist Iranian government. President Khatami had gained an impressive electoral victory over the right wing of the Islamic Republic establishment. He had condemned al-Qaeda's terrorist attacks against American targets and had offered Iran's assistance in the aftermath of the tragedy. Iranian paramilitary Quds force, with the cognizance of Pentagon, had aided the U.S.-supported Northern Alliance against the Taliban. Khatami had also suggested a “Dialogue among Civilizations” to replace the neo-cons' “Clash of Civilizations.”

President Bush's response to these conciliatory gestures was to place Iran on an “axis of evil” list along with Iraq and North Korea. The obsession with Iran and Iraq distracted the Administration from fulfilling Bush's promise to “smoke bin Laden out of his lair” in Afghanistan and from pursuing Al-Qaeda and Taliban fugitives into Pakistan. Instead, Washington moved quickly to exploit the euphemistic “war on terror” to bring about a regime change in Iraq in order to place the control over the country's oil resources in the hands of American companies, and to rid Israel of one its staunch enemies in the region. Most Americans failed to see the invasion of Iraq for what it was and gave up their French Fries in favor of Freedom Fries as a rhetorical defiance of the rest of the world—and the rest is history.

Khalidi believes that, although Iraq had become the target of an American “preemptive” strike, the ultimate objective of the U.S. was to bring about a regime change in Iran and to curb its ambition to shape the region's post-Cold War politics in its own favor. Indeed, since the 1990's, Richard Perle has been arguing that the most serious danger to the U.S. and to Israel's interests in the Middle East is posed by Iran and its Shiite “clients.” One wonders then about the rationale behind annihilation of Iran's arch nemesis, the Sunni Iraqi regime. A possible answer lies in the fact that no solid case could have been made in 2002 to justify an attack on Iran while Saddam Hussein had provided the U.S. with ample excuses to rally the Congress and the public against him. The neo-con fantasy projected the image of a free Iraq whose Shiite majority would sever its ties with Iran in gratitude to the U.S. and would either welcome a Hashemite kingship or establish a republican system of government in alliance with the U.S. It was also believed that Iran's position would be weakened even further when Israel destroys Iran's Lebanese protégé, the Hezbollah. In his August 2006 article in *Gush Shalom*, the Israeli pacifist, Uri Avnery, sees the disastrous Israeli bombing of Lebanon as part of this same scheme.

This strategy has obviously failed: Hezbollah has gained more prestige in the Middle East and the Iranian establishment has become a beneficiary of the fall of Saddam Hussein. Seymour Hirsh maintains in “The Redirection,” *The New Yorker*, March 5, 2007, that this “unforeseen” empowerment of Iran has terribly worried America, Israel, Saudi Arabia, and the Gulf States and has created a shift in U.S. policy to coordinate all efforts to weaken Iran's position. The empowerment of Iran, however, was a predictable outcome of the invasion of Iraq, given the shared historical and religious experiences that have bound Iran and Iraq together. Some of the Shiite elites of both countries had spent years in exile in each other's native countries and had developed among themselves familial and political connections. Ayatollah Khomeini, for example, had been forced out of Iran and had spent several years in Iraq while Iraqi Grand Ayatollah Ali al-Sistani was born in Iran. Even the Kurdish Iraqi President and his faction have been enjoying good rapport

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## Join The Urbana-Champaign Independent Media Center: Become The Media!

### We are all journalists!

Come to print meetings Thursdays at 5:30 on the main floor and become part of the *Public i* editorial board. Learn how to write an article, how to conduct an interview, or how to file a Freedom of Information Act request. Send articles to [print@ucimc.org](mailto:print@ucimc.org).

### Get a show on WRFU, Radio Free Urbana, 104.5

Attention All Potential Radio DJs and Radio Interns!

Are you interested in being on the radio?

Do you want to get involved in a community radio station?

Are you interested in getting a show for the summer ONLY?

Are you interested in having a show throughout the year?

Well, come to the next WRFU general meeting which occurs the 1st and 3rd Tuesday of each month in the Family Room of the Independent Media Center located at 202 S. Broadway, Urbana, IL to find out how YOU can get involved.

Members need to be trained for about 2 hours and pay dues (\$20/per person) to be eligible to broadcast on the air. It's simple and it's fun. Become a part of WRFU and take back the media!

Contact [wrfu@ucimc.org](mailto:wrfu@ucimc.org)

### Volunteer for Books To Prisoners!

Come to pack-a-thons held by Books To Prisoners on Saturdays at 1 p.m.

### Repair Your Own Bike!

Come to the Bicycle co-op in the basement of the IMC and learn how to repair your bicycle.



# The End of Nature?

by Darrin Drda



Darrin Drda is a former Champaign resident now working on a master's degree in Philosophy, Cosmology and Consciousness at the California Institute of Integral Studies ([www.ciis.edu](http://www.ciis.edu)) in San Francisco. When not pondering or discussing weird and weighty concepts, he likes to swim, dance, meditate, and play folk-pop music infused with weird and weighty concepts ([www.myspace/darrindrda](http://www.myspace/darrindrda)).

"Wild species enrich the soil, cleanse the water, pollinate most of the flowering plants. They create the very air we breathe. Without these amenities, the remainder of human history would be nasty and brief."—E.O. Wilson

Recently an Urbana friend of mine asked me whether being a grad student in the Bay Area left much time for political activism. After explaining that I consider my whole course of study to be "activist" in nature, I mentioned that the current mass extinction crisis is of deep concern to many of my peers and profs, and the specific focus of a nonprofit group called Species Alliance ([www.speciesalliance.org](http://www.speciesalliance.org)). Noticing that the words "mass extinction" had made my friend's eyes glaze over, I offered a brief explanation, which elicited a nervous chuckle and a dismissive wave of the hand. "Haven't we survived the end of the world a dozen times already?" was the gist of his response. I couldn't help but feel that my progressive friend had just nudged me off the left end of the bench, right into the loony bin. Peering across the information gap, I resolved to write an article for the Public i.

Not that I was offended by my friend's reaction, nor even surprised. In fact, it is understandable that when confronted with news as devastating and depressing as mass extinction, most people express incredulity or denial. In more extreme cases, members of Species Alliance, while striving to raise public awareness of the issue, have been met with anger and hostility, even when preaching to the

socially- and environmentally-conscious choir. It would seem that when the message is truly dire, even the most open-minded among us are inclined to shoot the messenger or bury our heads in the sand. As the bearer of unbearable news, my hope is that instead of putting our collective head in the earth, we are able to wrap our head and heart around it.

## THE NATURE OF THE CRISIS

As part of its education campaign, Species Alliance is currently running newspaper and magazine ads that spell out the basics:

"Unimaginable change is happening to planet Earth. While the human family is preoccupied with ongoing urgent problems—terrorism, poverty, disease, hunger, war—there is a newly emerging threat that makes these and every other crisis humanity has ever faced pale in comparison. Throughout the world, animal and plant species are disappearing at an unprecedented and alarming rate, at least a thousand times faster than normal. This accelerating loss of biodiversity has become so acute that scientists are now calling it a mass extinction event, comparable to the one that wiped out the dinosaurs 65 million years ago. If current trends continue, experts predict that within the next few decades at least half of all the species on Earth will become extinct. The implications are shocking, and difficult to accept. No one knows for sure what the mass extinction will mean for humanity, but it will be catastrophic, with extensive loss of human life. Yet there is still a chance to avert the worst of this crisis—because human activity is driving it, we have the power to stop it."

Though the last sentence is hopeful, it speaks of averting "the worst of the crisis," underscoring the fact that mass extinction is already well underway. Indeed, articles



about the subject began appearing about a decade ago in major media outlets around the world:

- Mammals, Fish, Birds, Amphibians, Reptiles Suffering Major Declines (Worldwatch, May 23, 1998)
- Fastest Mass Extinction in Earth's History (Worldwatch Report, Sept 16, 1998)
- The Sixth Extinction (National Geographic Magazine, February 1999)
- Human Impact Triggers Massive Extinctions (Environment News Service, August 2, 1999)
- UN Paints Grim Global Picture (United Nations Environment Program, September 22, 1999)
- Biodiversity: Vanishing Before Our Eyes (Time Magazine, 2000)
- One Quarter Of All Mammal Species Face Extinction Soon (BBC, September 28, 2000)
- The Current Mass Extinction (Scientific American, October 30, 2000)

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# A Civil Liberties Case From Champaign

By Continued from page 1

## CONTESTING VIEWS OF DEMOCRACY, EDUCATION, AND RIGHTS

Unfortunately, a large percentage, perhaps a majority, of the American public does not understand the Constitution and the essential protections it affords minorities. This failing is well expressed in a letter received by Vashti McCollum during the progress of her case through the courts. The person wrote:

"We are a Democracy and in a Democracy the majority rules. The majority of people believe in religious education so why don't you shut your big mouth you old bag."

What the letter's author failed to realize is that a democracy can only exist where people are free to disagree, where divergent views are respected and, when necessary, protected by the power and authority of the government. Without such guarantees, no individual or group would be secure from either the prejudices and persecution of a settled majority or the occasional and fleeting hysteria of the mob.

Many who were opposed to Mrs. McCollum, either failed to understand the nature of the fight, or deliberately distorted the consequences in the event of her victory. Irrespective of the basis - ignorance or deception - the arguments often sounded the same:

"...what is to be said of our Christian civilization when the Psalms of David and

the story of Jesus are excluded from schools that may teach Karl Marx and the origin of species every day of the year? This Supreme Court ban does not apply to the Communist manifesto: It applies to the Golden rule and the Sermon on the Mount."

The inclusion of Bible study as a part of a survey course in religion would not only be appropriate, but may be essential as the reading of the Communist Manifesto in a course on economic history. Singing of Christmas carols was also mentioned as quite likely falling under the ban of the McCollum Decision. Concerning this, Vashti McCollum wrote:

"Throughout my own public school attendance I enjoyed and looked forward to the annual Christmas carol sing on the last day before Christmas vacation started."

She, as her children, loved to sing Christmas carols; and caroling often occurred in the public schools her children attended. She never objected. She might have been critical of the practice only if it were a part of a religious pageant.

Vashti McCollum, start to finish, was interested only in the elimination of sectarian religious indoctrination in the public schools. The essential difference between education and indoctrination was summed up by Anton J. Carlson, noted physiologist from the University of Chicago. He was sent to Springfield, the state capital, during the

witch-hunting days of the 1950s to appear before a committee of the legislature. The solons were concerned about subversive teaching at institutions of higher learning in Illinois. He was asked, "Do you teach Communism at the University of Chicago?"

The elderly scientist thoughtfully responded, "Yes, we teach about Communism at the University of Chicago...(pause)... we also teach about syphilis, that doesn't mean we recommend it."

It is my feeling that the McCollum Case represents an excellent case study in support of a strict observance of the Bill of Rights, in general, and the prevention of "an establishment of religion," in particular. The intrusion of the religious classes into the Champaign schools was divisive. That was the experience of James Terry McCollum and of his family as well. Other individuals and groups, Jews in particular, also were affected negatively, though most refrained from active protest.

Vashti Cromwell McCollum died on August 30, 2006. She was the last adult prominently associated with the case to pass from the scene. And she was remembered, not only in her home town newspaper, but in the TIMES in New York to the TIMES of Los Angeles. She passed away with the uneasy feeling that the constitutional principle for which she successfully fought was far from secure.



Vashti McCollum around the time of the 1948 Supreme Court decision.



# The End of Nature?

Continued from page 7

- Humans Moving Closer To Extinction, Study Says (Seattle Post-Intelligencer, January 5, 2001)
- World Facing Greatest Extinction Risk Since Dinosaurs Disappeared (BBC, May 8, 2001)
- Scientists Agree World Faces Mass Extinction (CNN, August 23, 2002)
- World's Ecosystems on Verge of Sudden Collapse (Nature, October 12, 2001)
- Earth Faces Sixth Mass Extinction (New Scientist, March 18, 2004)
- British Study Confirms Worldwide Mass Extinction (Science, March 19, 2004)
- One Quarter of Primates Will Be Extinct in 20 Years (London Times, April 7, 2005)
- United Nations: Humans Causing Greatest Mass Extinction in 65 Million Years (Reuters, March 21, 2006)
- Earth Faces Catastrophic Loss of Species (U.K. Independent, July 20, 2006)

The headlines above were culled from among literally hundreds, each posted as a link on the "world wide web's most comprehensive source of information on the current mass extinction ([www.massextinction.net](http://www.massextinction.net))," a site maintained by Species Alliance director David Ulansey. While there exists minor disagreement among

biologists about the number of life forms facing imminent demise, the timeline for extinction and the ultimate effects of rapid and widespread species loss, there is almost unanimous agreement that for the first time ever, the web of life is being radically altered by a single species.

## HUMAN CAUSES: ACTION AND THOUGHT

Just as all life on earth is connected through a vast and intricate network of mutual dependence, so too are the causes of the current crisis intimately intertwined. Global warming, habitat destruction and degradation, deforestation, pollution, introduction of non-native species and over-harvesting all play a part, each in turn caused or at least greatly compounded by rapid, exponential growth in human population and increasing rates of consumption. The human race is effectively "eating" itself out of house and home, and endangering countless other species in the process.

Of course, our destructive behavior as a species stems from underlying psychological patterns and beliefs that are wildly out of synch with Nature. Among these are an adamant individualism, a myopic focus on short-term gain over long-term sustainability and an anthropocentric cosmology in which human beings are seen as the pinnacle of creation, with the freedom to assert "dominion over the fish of the sea, over the birds of the air, and over every living thing that creeps upon the

earth" (Genesis 1:26). The more secular among us have inherited a similarly arrogant philosophical framework in which the whole of the natural world is objectified as essentially lifeless stuff with little or no subjectivity or intrinsic value beyond its usefulness to humans. An emphasis on our own uniqueness and power as a species has clearly eclipsed an awareness of our vulnerability and an appreciation of our interdependence. Hubris has prevailed over humility. Tragically, it would seem that in over 100,000 years of human evolution, homo sapiens has perhaps become more intelligent, but apparently none the wiser.

Our deep-seated cultural attitudes have not only helped bring about the current extinction crisis, but have perpetuated it and will determine our response to it. What seems to be required is not simply a modification of our personal habits but a fundamental shift in our collective conception of the world and our place in it.

## KEEPING THE FAITH

While gathering information for this article, I happened to turn on the television at my parent's house—something I never do in my own TV-free home. To my pleasant surprise, I was confronted by the comforting voice and visage of Bill Moyers, who was interviewing esteemed naturalist Edward O. Wilson. While speaking frankly about the possible "end of nature," Wilson remained optimistic in discussing his latest book, "The Creation: An Appeal to Save

Life on Earth," which is directed mainly at the religious right in an effort to encourage the notion of stewardship of the planet rather than the more traditional Christian attitude of indifference or even contempt for earthly matters. Though largely anthropocentric, Wilson's position was heartening, and his hopefulness infectious.

Clearly, the issue of mass extinction transcends religious persuasion, party politics, and national boundaries. Like global warming and other large-scale crises, it has the power to unite people from all walks of life, from all parts of the globe. Perhaps with an increasing awareness of human impact on the biosphere, we as a species may be able to move toward a more enlightened and compassionate relationship to other species, our only known living companions in the universe. To quote again from the literature of Species Alliance:

"Incredible as it may seem, the decisions we make or fail to make in the next decade will affect the habitability of Earth for millions of years to come. We face humanity's greatest challenge and a unique opportunity: we have one last chance to save the wealth of our planet, not only for ourselves, but for all future generations."

Species Alliance is currently working on a feature-length film about the extinction crisis entitled "Call of Life." An online preview, from which the images on this page were taken, is available at [www.speciesalliance.org](http://www.speciesalliance.org). For more information and links to the articles cited above, visit [www.massextinction.net](http://www.massextinction.net).

# Media-Generated "Scandal" Undermines Democracy in Ecuador

Continued From page 3

the others to present and explain the possibilities in detail, never agreeing to go along with anything—just as one would expect in an investigation of this sort. In fact he states that it would be wrong to manipulate the market. The meeting ends with one of the investors stating that nothing would be done regarding the current debt payment—which was due three days after the videotaped meeting—but that they could think about what to do in the future. But the TV

media's repeated, propagandistic images—playing on people's cynicism from decades of corrupt government—had the most influence. This emboldened the opposition to make more wild allegations of secret deals with foreign banks, and vote to censure Patiño in the Congress—which they did. All of this has been done without anyone presenting evidence that the finance minister was involved in any wrongdoing. If all this seems Orwellian, it is. Ecuador

currently has the most honest government it has ever had—that is why it has had so much support from the beginning. Yet the impression that is coming across in the media—both Ecuadorian and now spilling over into the international press—is one of corruption. Correa remains immensely popular, and he has defended Patiño, who has now taken another cabinet position. The government will survive this assault, and move forward with its agenda. But the

opposition, led by the traditional elite and corrupt politicians, will use this "scandal"—with the help of the media—to undermine the government and the reforms that the voters have chosen.

Mark Weisbrot is Co-Director of the Center for Economic and Policy Research, in Washington, D.C. ([www.cepr.net](http://www.cepr.net)).

# U.S. Government's Anti-Democratic Media Operations

Continued from page 5

Sandinista-controlled government. If we compare the total amount with what it would be if a foreign power had financed elections in the U.S., taking into account the population differential it would come to \$3.1 billion to \$3.4 billion. (S. Brian Willson, 1990, [www.brianwillson.com/awoinicelection.html](http://www.brianwillson.com/awoinicelection.html))

The NED also funded an organization called PRODEMCA (Citizens Committee for the Democratic Forces in Central America). PRODEMCA, which supported the Contras, is reported to have given \$100,000 to *La Prensa* to support the right-wing opposition in the 1984 elections. Between 1987 and 1988, PRODEMCA is reported to have given an additional \$170,000 to *La Prensa*. While many Democrats spoke and voted against the U.S.'s support of the Contras, most Democrats as well as Republi-

cans supported the money funneled through the NED—even though the U.S. was militarily attacking Nicaragua at the time and PRODEMCA was promoting the Contra cause. Imagine if during wartime an enemy was on U.S. soil or supporting an armed insurrection in the United States and was at the same time contributing money to its favored U.S. parties and news media!

Unlike the Allende government in Chile, the Sandinista government did suspend *La Prensa*, but only for a year. Just as the Allende government had foreseen, the liberal "democratic" governments and media in the West, led by those in United States, used the closing down of the paper in a world-wide propaganda campaign to portray the Sandinistas as dictatorial, and the U.S. and the Contras as fighters for democracy and freedom, including

freedom of the press that the U.S. was so badly corrupting all over the world.

Thus, when we read that the government of Venezuela has refused to renew the T.V. license of a powerful media network with close ties to the U.S.—one that played a role in the attempted right-wing coup against the elected government—we should be more than skeptical about the U.S. government's criticism and posturing as the defender of democracy and freedom of the media.

\* In the spirit of full disclosure, I report that I was Landis's thesis adviser. Since the *Public I* is a newspaper, we do not cite all of the sources used in, or relevant to, our articles. Anyone interested in a more complete bibliography of sources on this subject can contact me at [a-fields@uiuc.edu](mailto:a-fields@uiuc.edu)

# ACLU Defends IMC Reporter/Police Chief Responds

As reported in the June/July issue of the *Public I* newspaper, I was kicked out of a press conference held by Champaign Police Chief R.T. Finney on June 8, 2007, the day after three of his officers were shot in West Side Park. I had barely sat down at the press conference before Finney's second-in-command, Troy Daniels, tapped me on the shoulder and asked me to leave. I did not even have the chance to be disorderly or ask a question – although I was planning to make no comment about the shooting. Outside, I was approached by Finney who told me I was not a legitimate member of the press. "I choose who I want to talk to," he told me.

Since March 1, 2007, when I met with Chief Finney and Champaign attorney Trisha Crowley, I have been considered a member of the press in Champaign. This was verified most recently in a letter dated on May 16, 2007, when Champaign police responded to a Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) request I had made.

With the help of the local chapter of the American Civil Liberties Union, I contacted Adam Schwartz, an ACLU attorney in Chicago. He wrote a letter on my behalf that was sent on June 20, 2007. A copy of the letter is next to this article. He cites 30 years of case law based on the First Amendment protecting members of the press from being arbitrarily denied access to press events.

Chief Finney responded in a letter dated July 2, 2007. Finney asks that members of the media follow proper decorum, but makes no mention of how I failed to do so. The Champaign Police Department also told the ACLU's Adam Schwartz that there was no specific policy concerning press conferences.

A month later, after I had left several phone messages, I finally got a call from the Champaign police's spokesperson Rene Dunn. I had only received Finney's letter after it was forwarded to me by the ACLU. Dunn called me within 24 hours of my posting these two letters at the Independent Media Center's web site (ucimc.org).

Dunn confirmed that I was back on the CPD's press list. I asked if she would email me any future press releases, which are sent out to all members of the local mainstream media. Dunn denied my request. "We don't send out press releases to everyone in the country," she said.

I asked if a new policy would be written making it clear that all members of the media have access to press conferences. Dunn said she doesn't handle those matters.

I still do not have an explanation why I was kicked out of the June 8 press conference. Apparently, Finney was simply doing whatever he damned well pleases. His actions are another example of why there is a need for an independent Citizen Police Review Board in Champaign that can begin to bring accountability to the department.

June 20, 2007

Chief Finney  
Champaign Police Department  
82 East University Avenue  
Champaign, IL 61820

Re: Freedom of the press

Dear Chief Finney:

We write on behalf of Brian Dolinar. He advises us of the following: On June 8, 2007, you held a press conference regarding the shooting of three police officers the previous night. Mr. Dolinar is a journalist who covers such issues for the Urbana-Champaign Independent Media Center's Monthly newspaper (the "*Public i*") and its Internet blog (at [www.ucimc.org](http://www.ucimc.org)). He attempted to attend the press conference, in order to obtain information that he would then share with the general public. He was not disruptive. Nonetheless, he was ordered to leave the press conference.

For at least 30 years, it has been clear that "arbitrary or content-based criteria for press pass issuance are prohibited under the first amendment." *Sherrill v. Knight*, 569 F.2d 124, 129 & n.17 (D.C. Cir. 1977) (citations omitted). Thus, for example, a federal appeals court held that the Secret Service cannot withhold press passes from journalists seeking access to the White House, unless the restrictions are "no more arduous than necessary" to achieve "a compelling governmental interest." *Id.* at 298-99. These principles, which are necessary to protect the interests of both journalists and the general public in effective newsgathering, are ingrained in modern First Amendment jurisprudence. See, e.g., *Telemundo v. City of Los Angeles*, 283 F. Supp. 2d 1095 (C.D. Cal. 2003) (granting a preliminary injunction commanding a city to grant a television station equal media access to coverage of a city ceremony); *United Teachers of Dade v. Stierheim*, 213 F. Supp. 2d 1368 (S.D. Fla. 2002) (granting a preliminary injunction commanding a school board to grant a union magazine equal media access to a press room adjacent to school board meetings).

Thus, we respectfully request that you allow Mr. Dolinar to attend future press conferences of the Champaign Police Department and its leaders, on equal terms with other members of the news media. By July 6, 2007, please advise me in writing of your position in this matter.

Finally, this letter comprises a request for documents pursuant to the Illinois Freedom of Information

Act. Specifically, we request all documents that relate to, refer to, or comprise policies and practices of the Champaign Police Department regarding whether and when a journalist may attend a press conference of the Champaign Police Department.

If you have any questions regarding any of the foregoing, please do not hesitate to call me [phone number omitted].

Sincerely,  
Adam Schwartz

July 2, 2007

Adam Schwartz  
c/o The Roger Baldwin  
Foundation of ACLU, Inc.  
Suite 2300  
180 North Michigan Avenue  
Chicago, IL 60601-1287

Re: Freedom of the press

Dear Mr. Schwartz:

All press conferences held by the City of Champaign in a public forum may be attended by any media representative. We ask that all representatives of the media display the proper decorum of behavior for this type of event. In addition, media representatives should have the proper credentials indicating who they represent. The Champaign Police Department does not issue press credentials. Mr. Dolinar needs only to provide press credentials as provided by his organization, Urbana-Champaign Independent Media Center's, *Public I* and/or its Internet blog, and sign in at our front desk to gain future entry to a press conference within the Police Department.

R.T. Finney  
Chief of Police  
City of Champaign

## Orchard Downs: The Fate of a Community

*Continued from page 2*

insecurity and high stress graduate students face affects their work which in turn affects undergraduates, faculty, and departments on the whole and ultimately affects the research status of this public university.

The Orchard Downs Housing Council has petitioned Vice-Chancellor Renee Romano asking that a committee be formed to allow residents and other interested parties the ability to provide input on the development. The committee will consist of 2 Housing Council members, 2 Community Aides, 2 GEO members and 6 residents. An input session for residents with Vice-Chancellor Romano and the Director of Capital Development of Orchard Downs, Fred Coleman, The first

meeting to discuss this committee happened June 14th at Orchard Downs Community Center. Residents and GEO members attended this meeting.

The summer timeline for the redevelopment stipulated that a master developer recommendation be presented to the Chancellor at the end of June. In July the Chancellor was to have his recommendation – which could have been to use one of the plans proposed by one of the developers, portions of both or neither plan – presented to the President and the Board of Trustees. As yet, however, no firm decision has been made. A link to preliminary survey results from *Public Input* submitted can be found online at [\[downs.uiuc.edu\]\(http://www.orchard-downs.uiuc.edu\). It had been anticipated that the master developer would be authorized to proceed with the chosen design in August. It is unclear if the developers will](http://www.orchard-</a></p>
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choose union labor to implement the development



One of several playgrounds



# Every Cook Can Govern: The First U.S. Social Forum

By Alex Bonick



Brian Gaines is a professor in the Department of Political Science and the Institute of Government and Public Affairs at the U of I. He specializes in electoral behavior.

When I mentioned to my friends that I was attending the first United States Social Forum (USSF) in late June, I got one common response—a blank stare. These are people who consider themselves liberal, progressive, radical, leftist or at least politically informed. The few people who had any idea what I was talking about were activists/organizers or had lived outside the U.S.—and even they were more familiar with past World Social Forums (WSF) than the USSF. How could something that Forum organizers were billing as one of the most historic social movement gatherings in U.S. history go this unnoticed? This is a question that probably all USSF attendees are continuing to ask ourselves after the event, for good reasons. But first let's figure out what the USSF is.

## HOW WE GOT HERE

We can start with an event that many people around the world do know—the protest against the World Trade Organization that took place in November 1999. Though post-Seattle mainstream media commonly refer to activists as the “anti-globalization” movement, it is much more accurate to see what happened as an amazing—both for the unexpected size and surprising coalescence of various movements—outpouring of multiple protests over several global issues. How was it that unions, environmentalists, non-profits, NGOs, feminists, teachers, anarchists, indigenous people, immigrants, queers, and churches (and more!) got together—and before anyone had an inkling of what Bush II had in store? Because people recognized a common enemy—neoliberalism—even as it went by different names: welfare “reform,” Iraqi sanctions, attacks on women's and queer rights, NAFTA, dismantling affirmative action, resource wars.

In opposition to the creeping neoliberalism, building from the “Battle in Seattle,” and as an effort to be constructive, the first World Social Forum was held in Brazil in 2001 and attended by 12,000 people—and by 2005 grew to 155,000. The growth of local, regional, national, and continental Social Forums (SF) has been explosive. The WSF was also developed to counter-act some of the negative traditions of the worldwide “Left”: dominance by whites/Westerners/Northerners; uncritical admiration of “left” governments; political party power plays; Ivory-Tower navel-gazing; dogmatic ideologies—and top-down decision-making. Not without continuing debate, the WSF was designed to be an open space for resisters of all kinds (except armed ones) to get together, share victories, defeats, lessons, and strategies—and, hopefully, start to build unified radical democratic power at the grassroots level. Accordingly, the SFs are supposed to be an alternative to mainstream policy, diplomatic, academic, and NGO conferences—the tools here are direct action, civil disobedience, non-violence, popular education, and street theater.

## 1,000 WORKSHOPS IN 400 WORDS

The opening salvo of the USSF was a large, feisty, and youthful march through downtown Atlanta on Wednesday afternoon. The march gave a strong sense of unity to the thousands of attendees who participated, though there were few onlookers on the streets of the state capital. I tried to attend a variety of the 1,000 workshops to get a feel for the current state of grassroots organizing in the U.S. (Here's what I missed—feminisms, anarchism, gentrification, indigenous issues, prisons, youth, unions, global trade, Marxisms, hip-hop, Katrina, political prisoners, non-violence, homelessness.) All the workshops I attended were well-executed and interactive, from Media Justice to Civilian Diplomacy to Kids Rethink New Orleans Schools:

- Economic Transformation: The end of the Cold War has seen new economic models that are neither state-capital-

ist nor state-communist. Instead, we need a pragmatic, democratic economy that practices solidarity, has diversity, and builds healthy communities. One example is Austin Polytech Academy on Chicago's poor, Black west side: a joint effort between local manufacturing companies, unions, and the school to teach shop-floor, management, and ownership skills with the aim to re-grow the manufacturing sector and keep good jobs in the community.

- Black & Latino Alliances: The South L.A. Coalition explained how they formed in the 1980s in response to the crack epidemic, which the Left ignored. A member-driven organization, it moved past its origin as a service provider by developing critiques of capitalism and white supremacy—now as a policy analyst and maker, the Coalition works with Black and Latino people in south L.A. on four protracted issue campaigns: foster care, land use, prison re-entry, and education.
- White Anti-Racist Organizing: White anti-racists are known for intense, fruitless debates about how to get white people to give up racism by talking about it. Instead, the Rural Organizing Project (ROP) talked about organizing on shared self-interest as the solution. During the early 1990s, the ROP saw that the Right was “targeting” white people in Oregon via anti-gay and anti-immigrant ballot measures. In response, they successfully organized dozens of white communities via house meetings and rapid-response teams to see the common thread between fighting xenophobia and homophobia—that people can be united by common values of democracy and human dignity.

## DEMOCRACY—OR DIDDLY-SQUAT?

As for actual decision-making, the USSF stuck to the much-debated WSF principle of providing an open space while avoiding making decisions as a body. This makes sense, as the SF process is young, movements are not unified, and participation multiplies yearly. In practice, avoiding decision-making, or even unified statements, seemed painful to people who breathe, eat, and sleep organizing. The six plenaries—on Katrina, war/militarism/prisons, indigenous voices, immigrant rights, gender/sexuality, and workers' rights—had energetic analyses, diverse panels, and an intensely hopeful vibe. The People's Movement Assembly saw group after hyped group recite two-minute pleas for movement-building.

My most disappointing moment came during the Midwest Break-Out preceding the People's Movement Assembly. In a mostly empty room full of mostly white people representing only a few Midwest organizations, we actually debated whether to move ahead with concrete proposals or focus on first building an inclusionary Midwest movement. All the players were not at the table, and several of the ones there did not seem to care. Whether this was from lack of coalition experience or intentional disinterest in others' struggles, it felt alienating and exclusionary. Furthermore, it felt like nothing had been done since the (heavily academic) Midwest Social Forum a year ago. The USSF rep seemed to do little to aid facilitation.

Calling for unity, applauding slogans, and endlessly deferring decision-making should not replace analysis and strategy—and judging by the overall level of debate, one would think we don't disagree about anything either! Many people—especially those unfamiliar with the SF process (including me)—had hoped for more of the latter and less of the former at the USSF. While the workshops were



Puppets on the march at the U. S. Social Forum in Atlanta

stronger on this point, it should be pointed out that this is the first USSF—we were inventing something brand new, and people were rightfully ecstatic and self-congratulatory that “the movement” got together at all. Many older movement veterans have been waiting for this type of event their whole life. We were just getting to know one another; the real test will be how we use these new comradeships outside the networking bonanza that is the USSF.

One test case could be the USSF media model, which was consciously outside the “star” system of the left (no Chomskys or Sarandons). The Ida B. Wells Media Justice Center was supposed to “create a revolutionary model of media coverage, documentation, first-person storytelling, and community-based newsmaking on location.” But the Poor News Network reports that there was an apparent effort by some to privilege the “real” media (i.e., Pacifica) and ignore the “other” grassroots/participatory media—and an appalling lack of media access and resources for poor and disabled people. On the other hand, while Democracy Now! and NPR were notably absent, dozens of papers and stations in Canada and Latin America broadcast the USSF to the world. A month later, the quantity and quality of Left reporting on the USSF is still (surprisingly?) low. The USSF website is cataloging audio and video footage on their Media Server (<http://media.ussf2007.org>), and the best collection of recent press is at <https://www.ussf2007.org/en/news>. How do we assess all this—flawed model, flawed operations, both—or rookie mistakes?

## OLD LEFT, NEW LEFT—POST-“LEFT”?

The most intriguing workshop I saw was about child [sex] abuse, GenerationFIVE's Transformative Justice 101. Child abuse is so widespread (across race, gender, class) that we are all traumatized because being abused is how we, as children, learn authority and violence. But violence is not just an impulse; it is organized, political, and interpersonal. We are re-victimized when the government co-opts our outrage in a punitive manner—this doesn't solve the problem. We need to be working towards a healing model that addresses abusers' and victims' internalized shame/blame, guarantees survivor safety, and engages the community in abuser accountability. The end result would be community transformation: the prevention of child abuse would allow us to challenge the very conditions that allow it, and other forms of violence, to occur. What would this new community be like?

I wondered if we, the “Left,” don't have a lot of things backwards. How do we talk about our issues? Do we take the time to explain the hurt, pain, and sorrow we organize against? Or do we remain abstract with words like “injustice” and “oppression?” If we know our movement is rooted in ending violence, then shouldn't we say so? Otherwise, who else knows? It's true the language of suffering has been denigrated: the victimized are disbelieved (rape), re-traumatized (Katrina), told to bear it (poverty), or asked to “prove” it (racism). But I don't think we should stop try

*Continued on the next page*

# Every Cook Can Govern: The U.S. Social Forum

Continued from previous page

ing to resuscitate the language of hurt. If anything, it would help build authentic communication, the lack of which helps keeps the “Left” the “small but vocal minority” Left—and not the majority of people (who we believe share our values).

This leads to another point about reaching out and growing—and winning. The “Left” likes to make use of “experts.” The USSF eschewed them.

The holding the USSF in the southern location of Atlanta meant going against the grain of U.S. power and the nonprofit/NGO culture in this country. ... There was a sense from many that the South could not pull something like this off and this resulted in a USSF process deprived of significant support from national, regional, and local organizations in other regions of the country. Until the South “proved” it could mobilize and organize a social forum... was little support and hope from the national level. (my italics)

At the USSF, foundations, philanthropies, and some unions fell into the much-criticized “nonprofit/NGO” category: 501(c)(3) organizations run by experts, unaccountable to members, financially tied to the mainstream—and strategically limited (and thus dis-empowering). Of course, there were plenty of groups who wouldn't fit a pure definition of “grassroots” or “NGO.” But there was the sense that the grassroots should be leading the struggle.

The USSF was brought into being, and attended, mostly by people who get these two points on some level. However, the radicals who showed up were more representative of the organized movement than of the actual people affected by the issues addressed. So do we have a “movement of movements”—or was the USSF an “organization of organizations?” Is the “Left” simply a mixture of relatively-privileged people and full-time paid organizers who get to choose to speak up? Are the “grassroots” simply disenfranchised people who organize for their very survival on spare time from their low-paid jobs? In other words, is the “Left” incompatible with the grassroots? Where, exactly, is the overlap, the synthesis? If you paid attention, the USSF highlighted these challenges and questions. Despite the holistic sense that we are all fighting for healthy communities and against the same enemies, we're learning not just to respect but also work with people—and politics, tactics, and strategies—we may never have seriously considered.

## LOOKING BACK WHILE MOVING FORWARD

If it were as simple as having common goals or enemies, we wouldn't be in the position we are. Our movements



Marchers filling the streets

are still very divided—by demographics, privilege, displacement, violence, misunderstanding, and disrespect. Flashback to U.S. Movement History 101: betrayal after betrayal of people of color by white allies, poor people by unions, lesbians by [straight] feminists. We are living this history, and yet I was still shocked, for a few seconds, by the white woman who first claimed that “there's no Indigenous issues in Ohio,” backtracked to “I meant there are no Indians in Ohio,” and ended up at “well, there are no reservations in Ohio.” One of the most powerful speakers was Jabbar Magruder, a young Black man from Iraq Veterans Against the War: his anger was as directed against the anti-war movement for tokenizing and silencing him as it was against the war itself. None of the problems at the USSF were new to any of us, even if this was the first one.

In the run-up to the USSF, separate Forums were held (the largest were in the Southeast and Southwest) to build authentic grassroots leadership. So not only were the 1,000 USSF workshops run and attended by a majority of people of color, women, and youth, (70-80%, 60%, and over 50%, respectively, according to Project South's Jerome Scott)—but also the logistics for 15,000 attendees (funding, housing, transportation, programming, media, communication, cultural events) were planned and executed by these same people. So, the South—the non-profit, grassroots South—did pull it off after all. And now what? What about the internal politics we all know from experience are there—jockeying for “issue” turf and money, despite the non-501(c)(3) shoestring budget of under a million self-raised dollars? Logistically there were few glaring hitches—but wasn't the whole thing too spread out, too inaccessible, with too little time between workshops?

Debating these nitty-gritty questions—the heated ones that can destroy friendships—is actually what this is all about. If democracy is a process as well as a goal, how do we bring more people on board? Fundraise more effectively? Balance analysis, debate, strategy, and decision-making? Make venues more accessible? Keep it real, keep it grassroots? Here's the real kicker—if the USSF was supposed to build movement power in the South, what did Atlanta's poor majority get out of it—besides tips if they were working at one of the posh hotels we stayed at? Answer: we don't know, we won't know for a while. For organizers, trying to accurately measure our effectiveness is often like turning on the brights in fog. In the end, we do know that the first U.S. Social Forum happened. We know that many people thought it improved on the WSFs—fewer lectures, better logistics, more work getting done. We know that people got together, made new connections, shared ideas, and got really hopeful and excited about the future.

I think this bodes well—as long as we keep in mind Philip Hutchings' (from Oakland's Institute for MultiRacial Justice) organizing principles: emphasize unity while being aware of differences; “blame up”; physical solidarity; agree to disagree; ask “what do you need to survive?”, “how would others perceive ‘X’?”, and “who's doing the shitwork?”—and, perhaps most importantly, people relate to people, not abstract concepts. These are the principles of radical grassroots democracy, the idea that is best summed up in four simple words from C.L.R. James—“every cook can govern.”

# Post-Cold War U.S. Geo-Strategy in the Middle East

Continued from page 6

with Iran as result of the assistance the Quds force had provided them in the 1980's against Saddam Hussein.

As part of this “redirection”—I would prefer the term “refocusing”—the Administration has started to complain about Iran's meddling in Iraqi affairs and accuses its regime of training terrorists and providing ammunitions to the radical Shiites. The U.S. military has arrested hundreds of Iranians in Iraq, many of whom have turned out to be humanitarian and aid workers. According to Paul Street, the U.S. has also placed Special Ops and CIA teams inside Iran as well as stationing two full carrier groups in the Persian Gulf.

The Iraqi government insists that any Iranian involvement in Iraq takes place at its own request and targets only radical Sunni cells and Muqtada al-Sadr's anti-government anti-American guerrilla group. Indeed, the

interest of the Iranian regime is best served if factional fighting and terrorist attacks end, and the governmental and constitutional arrangements that were shaped with the help of the U.S start working. Even Bush admits that any connection between these activities and the high echelons of Iranian government is at best conjectural.

Furthermore, any objectionable and destabilizing impact that Iranians might have had in Iraq and elsewhere is in part the result of the American self-fulfilling prophecy of demonizing the entire Iranian establishment, which has led to the ascendancy of hard-line factions in Iran.

The right wing of the Iranian regime has used America's anti-Iran rhetoric to rally the country behind itself, to isolate the reformists within Iran's multi-layered power structure, and to stifle the movement towards the creation of a civil society, which

could act as a counterbalance to militant elements within the government, and society. The 2005 electoral victory of Ahmadinejad to the presidency against moderate candidates should be viewed within this atmosphere of fear and distrust. In addition, the sharp contrast between the ways U.S. has dealt with Iraq vs. North Korea has strengthened the hands of those who have been arguing in private that the only safeguard against an attack by the U.S. or its regional allies is to continue Iran's nuclear program.

There are some indications that a rift is in the making within the Administration in regards to Iran policy. The recent Iran-U.S. meeting over Iraq might be the first sign of a minor shift in the State Department as to the advisability of destabilizing the Iranian regime. Among the highest ranks in the Administration, only Vice-President Cheney

has kept up his belligerent rhetoric against Iran; the rest are pretty much silent. Given the agendas of the two governments, the best outcome one can hope for realistically is a prolonged “Cold War” between Iran and the U.S. with occasional talks and damage control over Iraq and Afghanistan.

Of course, it remains to be seen how Iran and the U.S. would decide to play their hands in this new “Great Game.” The only certainty is that, at the end, everyone would lose unless this and other political games are played fairly according to a set of new egalitarian rules established by an empowered United Nations whose legitimacy is accepted by all nations.