CRITICAL MOMENT

Issue #10, May-June 2005

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Critical Moment is an Ann Arbor-based journal working to provide a forum for education, debate and dialogue around the political issues effecting our communities • an independent media project that aims to support movements for social change by giving voice to those excluded from and misrepresented by the dominant media • a free journal available at community spaces and shops throughout the Southeast Michigan area.

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Upcoming Issues - Calls for Submissions

May/June: Religion & Spirituality
Deadline: May 30, 2005

Religion and spirituality are powerful and influential factors in human affairs throughout the world. They intersect with policies in many areas, including race, gender, and class. How does religion and/or spirituality inform your own political perspective? In what ways are you and your community treated differently because of your religious/spiritual beliefs? Do you reject religion? Why? How has religion and spirituality played a role in political movements in the U.S. and around the world?

Critical Moment encourages our readership to explore the theme of Religion and Spirituality from a wide range of perspectives, including but not limited to fundamentalism, liberation theology, religion and political organizing, religious persecution/justice, religion and sexuality, church and state in the US, the Christian right, Armageddon, spirituality and the left, religious violence, and more.

September/October: No Theme
Deadline: July 31, 2005

Over the past year, each issue of Critical Moment has addressed a given theme. Some of our past themes have included September 11th, Empire, Pop Culture, The War at Home, Palestine, Education, Sex and the Environment. This time around, we would like to try something new. For this upcoming issue Critical Moment is doing away with themes. For those of you who have been itching to write about certain topics but felt constrained by our theme-based format, now is your chance to express your ideas, thoughts and frustrations on any topic that you deem relevant. Critical Moment invites our readers to write anything they want regarding social justice, to express concerns, to engage, to educate, and to entertain through articles, stories, reviews, poetry, etc.

This “No Theme” issue may also be an opportunity for you to re-engage with themes that Critical Moment has already covered. Did you feel that something important was left out of our earlier theme-based issues? If so, help us fill in the gaps and paint a more complete picture of issues we may have already covered.

We encourage those who have something to say to speak up and to promote your ideas: local writers, organizers, professors, students, activists, artists and academics, Critical Moment is your forum to share your thoughts and vision.

The content of Critical Moment consists primarily of works submitted by local writers, artists, and activists. Submissions are not limited to our theme. We welcome news, analysis, commentary, art, short stories, poetry, music, book, and movie reviews, and other forms of expression that fall outside of the suggested theme yet are still reflective of the political nature of Critical Moment.

Suggested length for submissions is 800-1,500 words. Please email text submissions, questions, suggestions for future issue themes, and/or letters to the editorial collective at editors@criticalmoment.org. Art and image submissions should be sent to momentart@umich.edu
UNEQUAL PROTECTION: Civil rights and the environment

By Michelle Lin
Photos by Jenny Lee and Mike Medow

“A response to social and environmental issues at both the national and international levels is the environmental justice movement...it touches upon every sphere of human endeavor. And although we have embarked upon an era of environmental destruction unprecedented in modern times, and although social conditions for many in this country and throughout the world have failed to improve to any significant extent, the environmental justice movement, drawing its strength from both the grassroots and academia, has the potential to change the way we do business in this country and throughout the world profoundly.”

-Bunyan Bryant, University of Michigan professor and pioneer of the environmental justice movement

Growing up in a southern, white suburban community allowed me frequent contact with the outdoors and green spaces. I never outgrew this attachment to the natural world, so when I entered the University of Michigan I was confident in pursuing a degree in environmental science. In the first couple years, I began to more fully embrace my identity as an Asian American, something I hadn’t quite realized as a teenager. I was politicized through learning about the collective struggles of people of color and history of social movements in the United States. At the same time, I felt increasingly marginalized and isolated as a person of color in my environmental program. Why weren’t there more non-white students in my courses? Why weren’t any of my classmates the least bit concerned about the campus climate for students of color? Just as I was ready to abandon any inclination towards environmentalism, I took a class on environmental justice, and found out about a different kind of movement – the Environmental Justice Movement—led by people of color doing environmental work in the context of dismantling multiple forms of oppression. Of course people of color were concerned with the environment, we had always worked on environmental issues, but perhaps more so as community, labor or civil rights issues. In that class, I was able to gain a deeper analysis of why communities of color (and poor whites) have disproportionate exposures to pollution, as well as critique the mainstream environmental movement and traditional methods of environmental protection. More importantly, through the environmental justice lens, I adopted a framework of how humans must relate to each other, to the earth, and to future generations.

Civil rights and environmental protection

The environmental justice narrative usually begins in Warren County, North Carolina. In 1982, over 500 African Americans staged a demonstration against the siting of a polychlorinated biphenyl landfill (PCBs) near a Black community. Though the attempt to block the landfill’s construction failed and the majority of protestors were arrested, this event sparked the birth of the modern Environmental Justice movement across the country. Following this incident, two landmark studies came forth to help quantify the environmental conditions in communities of color and low-income communities. One was conducted by the U.S. Government Accountability Office, which reported that three out of four hazardous waste sites in the southeast region are located in Black communities. The other study, produced by the Commission for Racial Justice of the United Church of Christ, “Toxic Wastes and Race in the United States”, found similar, more comprehensive results at the national level:

• Three out of the five largest commercial hazardous waste landfills in the United States are located in mostly Black or Hispanic (Latino) communities; these landfills account for 40% of the nation's estimated commercial landfill space.
• Cities with large Black populations like St. Louis, Houston, Cleveland, Chicago, Atlanta, [Detroit], and Memphis have the largest numbers of uncontrolled toxic waste sites.
• About half of all Asian/Pacific Islanders and Native Americans live in communities with uncontrolled waste sites.

These studies reinforced the groundswell of grassroots activity in areas appearing to lack political power, bringing visibility to the discriminating pattern of unequal distribution of environmental hazards. Alongside milestone conferences at the University of Michigan, organizing efforts culminated in the 1991 First National People of Color Environmental Leadership Summit, drawing over 650 people. People of color from across
the country came together to share and strategize around environmental problems in their communities, realizing that no racial or ethnic group was immune to the impacts of environmental racism. The Summit pushed the movement to the next level, beyond a strictly anti-toxics angle, to encompass a global movement that connected to issues of public health, poverty, land use, housing, transportation, economic development and globalization. Based on this multi-issue analysis, delegates adopted the 17 Principles of Environmental Justice that provides a guide for building the movement [see next page].

As a response to the growing concern and escalating empirical data, President Clinton signed the Executive Order 12898 (Federal Actions to Address Environmental Justice in Minority Populations and Low-Income Populations) in 1994. The Executive Order mandated all federal agencies to incorporate environmental justice into their policies and programs, and established an advisory council to make recommendations on how to implement the order.

Environmental (in)justice in Detroit

Dubbed Motorcity, Detroit has fed our nation’s dependency on and obsession with automobiles. During its peak, the auto industry gave Detroit a huge economic prosperity and thousands flocked to the city to get a piece of the pie. If anyone had questioned the long-term impact that this mentality of economic and social development would have, few heeded the warning.

Not only did racism play a central role in the history of the city, it also left a legacy of toxic contamination few suburban communities have to live with. Certain communities have been made expendable to maintain the industrial processes needed to uphold the American way of living. In effect, Detroit has become a dumping ground for environmental hazards and societal problems in its post-industrial wake.

Today, Detroit is mostly populated by people of color (including 80% African American, 5% Latino) and faces a multitude of challenges including, high unemployment, poverty, an inadequate school system, and rising health care costs. Clearly, these issues are exacerbated by the poor condition of the city’s land, air and water. Below are some examples of what communities in Detroit are dealing with:

• If you’ve ever driven on I-75 south of downtown Detroit, it’s hard to miss the smell coming off the landscape of industrial stacks and facilities. Residents of the Delray neighborhood, located in the highly industrialized area of southwest Detroit, are neighbors with Marathon Oil, Great Lakes Steel, Detroit Edison, wastewater treatment plants, and a dozen other industrial facilities.

• Recently in Mexicantown, the Detroit Public Schools built Beard Elementary School (renamed Roberto Clemente Learning Academy) on top of a site contaminated with PCBs, lead and arsenic. The community was faced with the unfair choice between fighting for children’s education and a safe environment.

• On the near east side, the Greendale community continues to bear the burden of exposure from the irresponsibility of Canflow Environmental Services, a company that dumped industrial wastewater in the sewage system, which overflowed in residents’ basements and backyards with sludge, chemicals and human waste.

• Southwest Detroit and south Dearborn, an area largely populated by Latino and Arab Americans, is also the site for the proposed Detroit Intermodal Freight Terminal (DIFT) by the Michigan Department of Transportation. This project would eliminate several homes and local businesses to accommodate an expanded facility and over 5,000 more freight trucks into an already burdened area with rail, trucks and industry. Community residents have been organizing and raising concerns about negative impacts to the community, including health concerns from increased air pollution, which has been completely ignored by the state.

• Further east, Master Metals left a legacy of lead contamination and hazardous waste. Soil samples from lawns and nearby property reveal significantly high levels of lead. Studies show that among infants and young children, lead poisoning has been associated with development and behavioral disorders and juvenile delinquency.

• In Hamtramck, possibly one of the most ethnically diverse parts within the city, residents are exposed to the mercury, dioxin and other toxic emissions coming from the Hamtramck Medical Waste Incinerator. Local community members have been vocal in their opposition of the incinerator and are in the process of demanding it to be permanently shut down.

After reviewing the evidence of unequal exposure, one can’t help but feel like whole generations of people are being cheated from the basic right to live in a clean and safe environment. Anecdotes of high asthma rates, cancer, respiratory problems and other illnesses are common in many of these neighborhoods, and the above vignettes are but a few of many environmental problems facing Detroit.

Fortunately, a number of organizations and community members have taken up the fight and continue to build upon the momentum created by past victories of the environmental justice movement in Detroit. One such victory happened in the mid-1990’s when a coalition composed of residents, area block clubs, environmental, and environmental justice organizations successfully shut down the Henry Ford Medical Waste Incinerator.

Critical questions

Environmental justice is about pushing
the limits of our way of thinking, and demands that we change how we operate as a society. It exposes manifestations of racism and oppression in the context of the environment, and challenges the stereotypical notion that people of color and poor people don’t care about the environment. It questions the way we handle environmental problems through a risk-assessment approach, which allows health concerns to fall to the wayside. It pushes us beyond identity politics because the survival of our communities is dependent upon the integrity of the land, air and water.

In Detroit, one of our biggest challenges is to overcome the myth that environmental justice will destroy the economy. Instead, I would argue that the current approach to building our economy is destroying lives. We’ve become so dependent on the auto/manufacturing industry that many of us, along with our politicians, are too willing to compromise our health and quality of life to gain a few employment opportunities from an industry that uses automation to stay ahead in business.

The 1994 executive order was an attempt to institute a system of accountability at the federal level, and not surprisingly, the current Bush administration has been unresponsive to complaints of environmental racism. This necessitates the need to look to the state level, and New York, New Jersey and California have initiated environmental justice policies. To date, Michigan has no legal remedy to address environmental injustice. Launching similar policy goals in Michigan would be one step toward establishing accountability.

As a movement, we need to continue tackling the critical questions that appear before us. The early years of the environmental justice movement were cutting edge because it broadened our understanding of the world and gave communities an effective way to organize and to improve their communities. But like any movement, the environmental justice movement cannot just be about redress and protest politics. Though protesting has its place, we get stuck in becoming victims. In the face of seemingly insurmountable obstacles, power structures, and god-like corporations, our communities are facing their most lethal struggles. For exactly this reason it is all the more critical that we have a vision and build. How are we moving towards the future? For exactly this reason it is all the more critical that we have a vision and build. How are we moving towards the future?

If we do not begin to build a national and international movement of people of color to fight the destruction and taking of our lands and communities, do hereby re-establish our spiritual interdependence to the sacredness of our Mother Earth; to respect and celebrate each of our cultures, languages and beliefs about the natural world and our roles in healing ourselves; to insure environmental justice; to promote economic alternatives which would contribute to the development of environmentally safe livelihoods; and, to secure our political, economic and cultural liberation that has been denied for over 500 years of colonization and oppression, resulting in the poisoning of our communities and land and the genocide of our peoples, do affirm and adopt these Principles of Environmental Justice:

1. Environmental justice affirms the sacredness of Mother Earth, ecological unity and the interdependence of all species, and the right to be free from ecological destruction.

2. Environmental justice demands that public policy be based on mutual respect and justice for all peoples, free from any form of discrimination or bias.

3. Environmental justice mandates the right to ethical, balanced and responsible uses of land and renewable resources in the interest of a sustainable planet for humans and other living things.

4. Environmental justice calls for universal protection from nuclear testing, extraction, production and disposal of toxic/hazardous wastes and poisons and nuclear testing that threaten the fundamental right to clean air, land, water, and food.

5. Environmental justice affirms the fundamental right to political, economic, cultural and environmental self-determination of all peoples.

6. Environmental justice demands the cessation of the production of all toxins, hazardous wastes, and radioactive materials, and that all past and current producers be held strictly accountable to the people for detoxification and the containment at the point of production.

7. Environmental justice demands the right to participate as equal partners at every level of decision-making including needs assessment, planning, implementation, enforcement and evaluation.

8. Environmental justice affirms the right of all workers to a safe and healthy work environment, without being forced to choose between an unsafe livelihood and unemployment. It also affirms the right of those who work at home to be free from environmental hazards.

9. Environmental justice protects the right of victims of environmental injustice to receive full compensation and reparations for damages as well as quality health care.


12. Environmental justice affirms the need for urban and rural ecological policies to clean up and rebuild our cities and rural areas in balance with nature, honoring the cultural integrity of all our communities, and providing fair access for all to the full range of resources.

13. Environmental justice calls for the strict enforcement of principles of informed consent, and a halt to the testing of experimental reproductive and medical procedures and vaccinations on people of color.

14. Environmental justice opposes the destructive operations of multi-national corporations.

15. Environmental justice opposes military occupation, repression and exploitation of lands, peoples and cultures, and other life forms.

16. Environmental justice calls for the education of present and future generations which emphasizes social and environmental issues, based on our experience and an appreciation of our diverse cultural perspectives.

17. Environmental justice requires that we, as individuals, make personal and consumer choices to consume as little of Mother Earth’s resources and to produce as little waste as possible; and make the conscious decision to challenge and reprioritize our lifestyles to insure the health of the natural world for present and future generations.

Michelle Lin lives in Detroit and is involved with various community organizing initiatives. She is currently the Environmental Justice Coordinator at the Arab Community Center for Economic and Social Services (ACCESS). To learn more about the Campaign for State Action on Environmental Justice, contact her at mlbin@accesscommunity.org.
A Fraud on Nature
an interview with Vandana Shiva

Vandana Shiva is a physicist, philosopher, ecofeminist, environmental activist and writer. While holding a PhD in physics, she is most well known for campaigning against the corporate control of the world’s ecosystems; from her work with peasant farmers in India to her activism against exploitative biotechnology. We spoke with Vandana Shiva during her recent visit to East Lansing.

Access to water has been established as a human right in international circles, yet people all over the world—including thousands of people in Detroit—don’t have access to it. In your opinion, how has the mentality of “if you can’t pay for it, you can’t have it” become so prevalent?

That shift has come partly because a bunch of construction firms who have built giant water projects ran to the end of: How many dams can you build? How many canals can you make? And then realized, in a world where the paradigm had become globalization, where the paradigm had become one of privatization—if everything was for sale, surely water should be for sale too. Except that they don’t buy it from nature, and they don’t buy it from communities. It’s for sale after they have grabbed control. And these civil engineering construction firms ended up becoming the water giants, working their way through the World Bank and IMF, using the conditionality of these big financial institutions to force countries to start privatizing their water and to force countries to start commodifying their water. To force citizens from thinking about water as everyone’s right [to thinking about it] as a commodity—a marketable commodity. They also are trying to use the World Trade Organization rules, the General Agreement on Trade and Services, to push that same agenda.

The world economy has become totally undemocratic, [the] rules of WTO [are] being written without anyone’s consent, the World Bank and IMF’s lending patterns [are] totally undemocratic, and now we have, heading the World Bank, the same person [are] totally undemocratic, and now we have, World Bank and IMF’s lending patterns undemocratic, [the] rules of WTO [are] against the mining of groundwater by Coke and Pepsi, who then sell us that same water that they’ve stolen as bottled water for which we pay 12 rupees. But for every bottle, there is a footprint for the destruction of ten-fold that amount in the community from which these cola giants mined their water. Every plant in India where they are mining their water is mining about 1.5 to 2 million liters per day. That kind of extraction cannot be sustained in any ecological condition. So the water table is falling by 100 feet, 100 meters, depending on where it is and how fast they’re mining.

The most dramatic case of this was the village of Plachimada, where the water was not just mined, but it was also polluted. Both the extraction and the water bottling is a very, very polluting industry. As a result of this, women were walking ten miles to get fresh drinking water for their families. Eventually, a woman called Myla Mar got fed up, organized 10 women around her, sat in a protest outside the Coca-Cola plant and the plant was shut down on the order of a High Court ruling based on a petition of a local government, an elected authority. Unfortunately, Coca-Cola has just manipulated its way to undo the High Court decision and order a reversal, and we are in the middle of organizing again.

We honored Myla Mar a few weeks ago at the World Conference on Women and Water, and all she said was, “Tell the world that every time they drink water sold by Coke they are drinking the blood of people somewhere.”

Because that water extraction is [threatening] the right to life of some communities whose water is being stolen.

We’ve now found out about 87 plants of Coke and Pepsi—we have actions around all of them. We are serving notices to the companies everywhere. We have a movement called “Coke/Pepsi Quit India,” like we told the British to quit India. On the 20th of January in every plant, thousands of people located the plants, joined hands for the protection of their water and their water rights. This is going to be a very long-term campaign. If the Cokes and the Pepsi think that just because they can corrupt governments, buy politicians, buy a few bureaucrats, that they can leave people in a water famine, and that women and local communities will do nothing, they’re very, very mistaken. We are going to have hundreds and thousands of Plachimadas all over the world.

Every time local water is privatized, the argument is, “Oh, but the local municipalities are doing too poor.” They are not too poor, they’re made poor by paying these companies exorbitant levels.

So wherever you see privatization, you see theft, you see fraud, you see the creation of an artificial poverty for the public utility. And you see the very people whose water is being stolen being asked to pay ten and fifteen, twenty times more than it would cost to run the system as a public utility on the basis of tax collection. Water privatization is a fraud on nature, it’s a fraud on communities and we are fighting this fraud. We know it might take time, but we know in the long-run, it is the laws of nature and the laws of justice and water democracy that are going to win. The city of Highland Park, Michigan is facing its own difficulties with the water system. Recently, they signed a contract with Coca-Cola to privatize their water. And there are countless other examples of communities that are facing these types of situations. Why do you think it’s important for these communities to be conscious of the struggle internationally?

Because these companies can mine and destroy the water, they cannot be keepers of the water; they cannot be protectors of water. The most important reason is we are connected through water. We are one Earth family, consuming the same water. Seventy percent of the Earth is water; seventy percent of our bodies are water. Someone in Highland Park is seventy percent water, someone in India is seventy percent water—that is what our common humanity is about. Because of our common humanity, we have to defend our rights—for ourselves and for everyone else.

And the reason that someone in Highland Park has to be aware of what the women in Plachimada are doing, what the women of Tehran are resisting, or what the women of Delhi are saying no to in terms of privatization is because we learn more about the greed of these corporations, we learn more about the lies of these corporations, we learn more about our capacity as citizens of the earth to exercise our duties, to protect everyone’s rights, to defend our rights, to have the minimum amount of water to sustain ourselves. These are common rights; they’re not different for the rich or for the poor. They’re not different for the richer part of the world or the poorer part of the world. They are absolutely the same set of rights, and they’re not just for humans. The tree has the same right as the human, the fish has the same right as the human, the earthworm in our soil has the same right as the human to have access to water that the planet gives us. These corporations cannot deny 300 million species and 6 billion people on this planet the right to life by treating water as their property to buy and sell as they please.
There was a time when life on earth was unspoiled,
The whales, dolphins, and birds never had to fight through the oils.
The land was beautiful, as far as the eyes could see, Nature re-produced itself,
distributed everything equally.
The skies were a sparkling blue and showed the stars for miles at night,
Now the Eco-system is struggling, doing its best; trying to get things right.
Where did Nature's Beauty go, because the environment seems so bad,
Is it because of the oil-spills, air-pollution, and new-developments, because they don't seem to be sad.
Maybe Nature is waiting, to take measures into her own hands,
considering she don't like what she smells, hears, and feels; and if that's the case,...
one of us stands a chance.
I love Nature's Beauty, its one of the natural things we as humans have left,
And if we don't treat her right, and take care of her,
She will surely mark us all with death.

Mitchell Owens-Bey has currently been in prison now for 14 years, and although he has served his time, the infamous parole-board system still holds him to complete an Assaultive Offender program that was never recommended for him by the sentencing judge. Since being in prison he has accomplished numerous skills and is studying for a degree in Business Management. He is the author of the anticipated poem book called "The Freedom of the Mind." And countless poems that have been published in prison newspapers. He is scheduled to be released from prison as soon as he finishes the program.

He can be contacted at: M. Owens-Bey #215836, Parr Highway Correctional Facility, 2727 E. Beecher Rd., Adrian, MI 49221
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Coca-Cola: Manufacturing Empire Never Tasted so Toxic

BY ANDREA MARISA SAMULON

Three years ago on April 22, a 24-hour a day vigil began, directly across from Coca-Cola’s factory gates in Plachimada, in the state of Kerala in southern India. Indigenous peoples, farmers, Dalits (formerly untouchables) and women from the areas directly surrounding Coke’s Plachimada bottling factory have tirelessly maintained the vigil since then. But Plachimada is just one of many communities throughout India engaged in a battle to draw attention to the environmental and accompanying social destruction resulting from Coca-Cola’s manufacturing practices throughout the country.

The story of Coca-Cola in India is a story about communities questioning and challenging a transnational corporation’s right to exploit the resources upon which these communities rely—but it is also a story about those communities justly demanding sovereignty over their own natural resources.

The Situation in India

Coca-Cola returned to India in 1993 after a sixteen year ban. In 1977, the company was kicked out of India when they were asked and refused to dissolve 60% of their operations to Indian ownership. In the context of the economic liberalization policies of the 1990’s, the Indian government reversed the ban and gave Coke an invitation to do business again. According to Coca-Cola, their current bottling infrastructure in India includes 27 wholly-owned plants, and another 17 franchise-owned operations. Since 1993, they have invested more than US $1 billion into their operations in India.

Shortly after Coke re-entered the Indian marketplace, allegations surfaced regarding manufacturing practices, product safety, and impacts on communities surrounding their bottling plants. The Center for Science and the Environment, an independent laboratory in New Delhi, found that Coca-Cola contained high levels of pesticides. Coca-Cola’s voracious use of water in their bottling plants, particularly in Kerala, began depleting local groundwater tables and threatened surrounding farming communities. When a dead lizard was found inside a sealed can of Coca-Cola, this became widely publicized throughout India. In response to the multitude of concerns, affected communities and several NGOs in India launched campaigns against Coca-Cola.

In India, there are four main grievances against the Coca-Cola corporation: 1) causing severe water scarcity; 2) contaminating water supplies; 3) distributing toxic sludge from the bottling plants to local farmers under the guise of fertilizer; and 4) selling beverages in the Indian marketplace that contained pesticides, including DDT and malathion, sometimes up to 30 times higher than what is allowed by EU and US standards.

Prompted by widespread allegations that Coca-Cola’s bottling plants were depleting local water supplies, BBC’s Face the Facts reporter John Waite traveled to India to see the plant operations in Kerala first hand. Waite spoke to farmers in the area who showed him the “fertilizer” or sludge that Coca-Cola had been distributing to them. Samples were collected and sent to the UK where they were tested at the University of Exeter labs. Not only did the tests reveal that the sludge had no useful properties as fertilizer, it also showed that the material contained heavy metals. Coca-Cola was distributing toxic waste to farmers in Plachimada and Mehdiganj that contained cadmium and lead.

According to The Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA), a U.S. government agency, cadmium is an extremely toxic metal, with harmful health effects for both acute and chronic exposure. Acute exposure often results in flu-like symptoms, including muscle pain, and can lead to death. Chronic exposure has been linked to cancer of the lung and prostate, kidney failure, pulmonary emphysema and bone disease. In Japan, bone disease was observed in people who were exposed to rice crops that were irrigated with cadmium contaminated water.

Lead is no less serious. Lead poisoning is the number one environmentally induced illness among children, who are particularly vulnerable under the age of six because they are still undergoing rapid neurological and physical transformations. Lead poisoning is known to cause mental
retardation and anemia.

In both of the communities that received the toxic sludge from Coca-Cola, most people depend on farming for their livelihood. Amit Srivastava is a coordinator of the India Resource Center, one of the organizations involved in the International Campaign Against Coca-Cola. He explains that many of the farmers in these communities, including small children and women, use their bare hands in the fields when planting seeds, and adding soil or fertilizer. These people are now at high risk for long-term effects associated with cadmium and lead poisoning.

The struggle against Coca-Cola in India is a primarily grassroots effort, organized and led by the affected communities. Three and a half years ago, when communities started to experience severe water shortages surrounding Coca-Cola bottling plants in Plachimada, in the state of Kerala, they began organizing. In Plachimada, the community started a struggle committee comprised of local people who were being impacted by the water shortages. Soon, 1,500 families had joined. The grassroots organizing on Plachimada has spread to other parts of India, where communities are also affected by Coca-Cola.

Now, the campaign against Coca-Cola in India is an initiative of 4 primary communities with specific demands: 1) Closure of 4 factories in India; 2) Compensation to affected parties (farmers); 3) End to all legal cases put forth by Coke; 4) Ensuring that Coke is responsible for retraining and relocation of workers laid off as a result of plant shutdown.

Numerous tactics are being used by the communities in India, in an attempt to publicize their struggle and get their demands met. Grassroots organizing, lobbying, use of the legal system, and media work have all played important roles in the various victories against Coca-Cola in India. According to Amit Srivastava, it was the community outrage that influenced the December 2003 Kerala High Court ruling against Coca-Cola.

In an unprecedented ruling, the Kerala High Court in December 2003 determined that Coca-Cola was illegally and indiscriminately using water resources around the Plachimada plant for its beverage production, and was ordered to immediately find alternative sources. The court ruled that Coca-Cola could extract only as much water from the common groundwater resource as a farmer owning 34 acres of land could. Following the High Court decision, the state government of Kerala ordered the plant to shut down until June 15, 2004. Both the State's and Court's decision was based in the logic that halting production, which was dependent on the overexploitation of water, would assuage the recently induced drought conditions. In a recent controversial ruling, the Kerala High Court responded to an appeal by Coca-Cola and stated that they could extract 500,000 liters of water per day. This decision is being appealed by the community. The local village council has refused the corporation a renewal of their license to operate since the initial High Court ruling, but according to this new ruling, the local village council has 15 days in which they must reconsider granting a new license to Coca-Cola. The Plachimada Coca-Cola factory is one of the largest in India.

Coca-Cola may shut down their operations in Plachimada or Mehdiganj, and come and go as they please. But these communities do not have the same luxury of being able to find new land from which they can derive a livelihood. For years to come, their bodies may expose the painful physical memory of the toxic sludge that was once distributed to them as fertilizer.

The Campaign Against Coca-Cola

An international campaign against Coca-Cola has been mobilized in response to the corporation's ongoing environmental crimes in India and labor and human rights violations in Colombia. In July of 2003, an international consumer boycott campaign was launched by SinclairTrainal (Colombian Food and Drinks Workers' Union), which represents Coca-Cola workers in its Colombian factories. Coke is accused of complicity in the assassination of 8 SinclairTrainal trade union leaders in Colombia since 1990. The World Social Forum declared July 22nd the International Day of Action against Coca-Cola.

An important strategy of the international campaign is to pressure Coca-Cola to redress the grievances of the communities by calling for a boycott of Coca-Cola products and the revocation of existing contracts, particularly with colleges and universities across the United States and Europe. As a result of the campaign, twelve colleges and universities have already cut their contracts with Coke, including six in the U.S., four in Ireland, one in Italy, and one in Canada. In the U.K., the National Union of Students, the largest student union, which represents over 750 colleges and universities, has just voted to conduct an independent investigation of the allegations against Coca-Cola. If they find merit to the allegations, they will most likely decide to cut the contract with Coca-Cola.

At the University of Michigan

On the University of Michigan campus, a coalition comprised of 20 student groups has been actively demanding that the administration cut its contract with Coca-Cola. The Michigan Student Assembly passed a resolution in February stating that they agreed with all the allegations against Coca-Cola, and stood behind the students organizing against Coca-Cola on campus. The recently created Dispute Review Board is now investigating the allegations and has received a response from Coca-Cola. On April 25, 2005, the Dispute Review Board moderated a public hearing, in which both Coca-Cola and the students who brought the initial complaint along with representatives of the communities in India and Colombia were present.

In February, a public relations representative from Coke's corporate headquarters in Atlanta stood before the Michigan Student Assembly insisting that the allegations against his employer were untrue, and that Coca-Cola was clearly the unfair target of misguided, anti-globalization zealots. Coca-Cola, having attained "most recognized name-brand" status in the world, was the obvious object of scrutiny from activists resisting globalization and corporate control in this post-Seattle era, according to the P.R. representative. Unwilling to address the well-documented crimes of Coca-Cola against the environment in India, not to mention their egregious labor violations in Colombia, this corporate pundit chose to spin the issue like a good public relations official only could; Coca-Cola is the victim, not hundreds of farming communities in India whose livelihoods depend on clean water and healthy soil.

In this age of corporate greenwash, sometimes called corporate environmental responsibility and sustainability, the art of appropriation has been mastered; many corporations pour unspeakable amounts of money to appear as though they are the acme of environmental stewardship, investing bountifully in departments of environmental affairs and sustainability as Coca-Cola has done. Their environmental relations people can travel to prestigious business school's across the country, delivering minimally persuasive talks with Power Point in which they espouse their "vision" for implementing sustainability along their production chains, and this contributes to their ability to operate with impunity on the ground.

So, what does this corporate representative who stood before the Michigan Student Assembly make of the State government of Kerala, High Court of Kerala in India, the BBC, the University of Exeter labs, and other credible sources—all separate entities which have found Coca-Cola guilty of various and severe environmental crimes related to their practices around their bottling plants in India? They, too, must be globophobes in disguise, conspiring to take the corporation down. When faced with facts, like the high court rulings against Coca-Cola, the corporation chooses to paint themselves as a victim of angry "activists", meanwhile dodging the real grievances of the various communities in India whose livelihoods have been destroyed by Coca-Cola's operations.

Conclusion

In India, the concerns of communities are in conflict with Coca-Cola's mendacious operations and public relations style. The Coca-Cola corporations' continued disregard for the repercussions of their behavior has catalyzed a worldwide movement in opposition to it. This movement is formidable and poised to win.

Despite the recent High Court decision, the largest Coca-Cola factory in India still remains shut down. Communities in India have enjoyed numerous victories at the Court and State levels. Village councils are becoming more active, exerting their authority in the face of Coca-Cola to have a say in the decisions that will impact their communities. In India alone, tens of thousands of people are organizing for the right to their land, water, and livelihood.

In the last couple of years, the struggle of Coca-Cola workers in Colombia has been linked to the struggle of communities surrounding the bottling facilities in India, thus adding enormous power to the international movement. Trade unions from Colombia have visited several of the affected communities in India and devised ways of linking the struggle, committing to speak of each others' cause whenever possible. Joining forces has revealed the inextricable links between labor rights, human rights, and environmental justice, and the accompanying power of a global movement to hold Coca-Cola accountable for all of its crimes.

Andrea Samalson is a graduate student in the School of Natural Resources and Environment at the University of Michigan. She is an active participant in the International Campaign to Stop Coca-Cola as well as the Stop Coca-Cola campaign at the University of Michigan.

For more information visit indiaresource.org and www.killercoke.org
Brownstown Township is a place that even many lifelong metro Detroiters couldn't place on the map, but the pace of its development is by any standards quite staggering. For instance the Southeast Michigan Council of Governors (SEMCOG) estimates that during the period April 1, 2000 to July 1, 2004 the population of Brownstown grew from 22,989 to 27,717, an increase of approximately 22%. During this period the number of households increased from 9,008 to 11,374, a still greater percentage increase, reflecting the fact that in southeast Michigan sprawling outpaces population growth. This is a place of convergence. Here is where the Dixie Highway and Telegraph Avenue converge, as sure as Michigan’s history and the modern day. Here lie some of the last remnants of a pre-settlement Detroit landscape, and the frontiers of Metro Detroit’s seemingly endless suburban sprawl. Wayne County’s largest tracts of road-less land are here and they are ripe for development. Farms, Prairies, Woodland, Wetland and open space in general are here and they’re fast being populated. Native occupation can be traced back at least 15,000 years before the Army Core of Engineers came in the late 1800’s and devised plans to convert fertile wetland into fertile farmlands. They cut through this area to create the old military highway, or Telegraph, a vital link between Detroit and Toledo.

Off Telegraph, in what is now Brownstown, and was once named Monguagon Township, is the old Oak Ridge Cemetery established in 1893. Old Cemeteries such as this one are almost the only remaining testament to the original form of the land Downriver. This historic landscape is made up of ancient glacial sand-hills populated by Oak. The largest of the hills in Oak Ridge is about twenty-five feet high. These wonderful forms were all but obliterated as the downriver landscape was scraped to make glass, and to lay beds for paved roads, sewers and basements. The creation of I-75 took a heavy toll as any remaining sand hills were leveled and or carted off for its construction. Now to see this ancient landscape one must be aware of history and look hard at the surroundings. This area was once a final stronghold for the remnants of the great Michigan Tribes. The name Brownstown comes from Adam Brown, the anglicized name of Wyandot Chief Tahounehawiete. Tahounehawiete signed many treaties with the U.S. including the one in 1790 that secured the riverside villages for the Wyandot. Here was the site for the historic gathering of the United Indian Nations Council in 1786 and Confederate Nations Council in 1794. In 1809 the “treaty” of Brownstown was used to surrender Wyandot land to enable construction of the roads linking Detroit with northern Ohio.
A delegation of Wyandot chiefs went to Washington D.C. to speak to the president about their right to their riverside villages of Brownstown and Maguaga. President Thomas Jefferson declared the Wyandot rights to the two villages "...for so long as they should continue to live on them". The congress had second thoughts on those words and reduced it to 50 years. In 1842 the tenure was up for most southern Michigan tribes. The Potawami, Wyandotte and Huron were forcibly removed by the largest remaining area of Lakeplain Prairie in Michigan: the "Fritz property" west of Telegraph, between King and Sibley Roads. Currently the plan is on hold after being rejected by the state DEQ. However this may only be a stay of execution as Biltmore has indicated that they will return with a new plan. Opposing the plan, and advocating for the prairie's preservation are a group of environmental organizations, including the Friends of Sibley Prairie. One alternative that has been proposed to development is to raise an "open space millage" in the township.

When walking through the existing prairie remnants one may easily wonder what's the big deal? This is no Grand Canyon, or Redwood Forest, but it is an intricately subtle and diverse eco-system which slowly changes from week to week. It is a collection of wonderful shifting colors and forms. There are examples for the kind of asset to the human community that the Sibley Prairie could be. Historically, the lakeplain wet prairie was one of a host of ecosystems that formed a transitional landscape at the boundary between the eastern forests and the western prairies. Collectively these formed a system called the oak openings. The area west of Toledo is both ecologically defined by the oak openings, but furthermore has adopted the oak openings as the characteristic that defines it as a place. Surely there are still environmental battles to fight there, but the mindset that an area actually collectively benefits from the preservation and restoration of unique ecological landscapes seems a step beyond the prevailing climate in Brownstown.

Within Detroit, the enclaves of Hamtramck and Highland Park were built entirely on Lakeplain Prairie: open space development need not be the only solution. The alternative is to work with what is there, and find a balance of co-existence. The Sibley Prairie could be seen as an opportunity to create an environment where the human and natural worlds blend. If your back and front yard is prairie think of the benefits! Weeding! Yes this is great work: bending, pulling, digging, seeding and occasionally burning! The wildlife will love you. Bluebirds, Preying Mantis, Blue Heron or Gardner Snake. Remember, hundreds of converged species are present to delight and enlighten! How nice it would be to think that dull suburban Brownstown could become a destination for people to enjoy the Prairie. Only the chronically unimaginative or naive could possibly believe that building yet another metro Detroit sub-division would be a better choice for the people of Brownstown than restoring and preserving this unique Great Lakes landscape.

Frank English is an artist who grew up close to Brownstown and currently lives in Hamtramck.
Steve Panton is an engineer and photographer who lives in Detroit.

Fore more information, contact The Friends of Sibley Prairie: mlafrance@sbcglobal.net

"Lakeplain wet prairies occur on the glacial lake plains of the Great Lakes in southeastern Wisconsin, northeastern Illinois, northern Indiana, southern Michigan, northern Ohio and in southern Ontario, Canada. Michigan's lake plain wet prairies occur along the shoreline of Lake Huron in Saginaw Bay, within the St Clair River Delta and near Lake Erie.

The Lakeplain Prairie Habitat is a globally imperiled natural community with major reductions in acreage in all of the states and provinces mentioned above. In Michigan the size and number of Lakeplain wet prairies have been reduced so that today less than 15 of the original community remains. A total of 14 lakeplain wet prairies have been located in Michigan, ranging in size from 2 to 200 acres and totaling 511 acres."
A Short Synopsis

Since its inception in 1989, the Basel Convention has been ratified by 164 countries, with the notable exception of the United States. The Basel Convention was set up to counter the environmental injustice inherent in the international hazardous waste trade. More than a decade after being enacted, has this convention helped decrease environmental injustice in the hazardous waste trade? This article looks at these questions by analyzing where we have been and where we now stand.

In the late 1970’s enactment of stringent environmental laws, and increasing NIMBYism (NIMBY stands for Not In My Backyard), made it extremely difficult to place hazardous waste sites in western countries, thus creating a market for the trade of toxic waste to countries with fewer environmental regulations. Several incidences in the early 1980’s led various countries around the world to become concerned about the risk the international hazardous waste trade posed to the health and safety of its communities. It was the “Seveso affair” which brought the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD), and thus many industrialized countries, into the concerned picture. Seveso was a chemical plant in Italy that exploded in 1976, leaving topsoil highly contaminated with dioxin to be disposed of. Forty one barrels of the poisonous topsoil was found seven years later, hidden in a barn in northern France. Italy was notorious for its involvement in many well publicized hazardous waste scandals around this time. In 1987 an Italian businessman paid a Nigerian man $100 a month to house 18,000 drums of PCB contaminated waste on his property. It was after these particular types of scandals that Greenpeace began to become involved and were highly successful at calling the world’s attention to the matter.

What opened the eyes of America’s was the notorious case of the Khian Sea ship. The Khian Sea was chartered by the city of Philadelphia to dispose of tons of dioxin laden ash and debris that had been accumulating in the city. Philadelphia officials were between a rock and a hard place. They were being sued by residents who wanted the cancer causing waste removed from their town, but faced increasing waste disposal costs. In 1988 the ship was found disposing of Philadelphia’s waste on a beach in Haiti. The ship’s owners claimed they made a deal to dispose of their cargo with Col. Jean-Claude Paul, a corrupt military strongman. These high profile cases received a great deal of media attention around the world, and framed the hazardous waste trade issue as an environmental justice issue. It was because industrialized countries were dumping their hazardous waste on countries less developed that they that the practice began to be criticized as ‘Environmental Apartheid.’

The Creation of ‘Environmental Apartheid’

“You industrialized countries have been asking us to do many things for the global good—to stop cutting down our forests, to stop using CFCs—now we are asking you to do something for the global good—keep your own waste.”

During these decades the immense pressure resisting the siting of waste facilities, and new environmental regulations, increased the cost of disposal in the US pushing them overseas. Developing countries often lacked the infrastructure and resources to manage this increasing importation of toxic waste and began to see their vulnerability. It was in this climate that the Group of 77 (G-77), a United Nations group made up of developing countries, forced negotiations to create an international treaty to regulate the movement of hazardous wastes. March 22nd 1989 in Basel, Switzerland 118 countries signed The Basel Convention on the Control of Transboundary Movements of Hazardous Wastes and their Disposal. The treaty came into force in 1992, after 20 countries ratified it. The primary statute regulating hazardous waste is what is termed the “Prior Informed Consent” (PIC) principle. This requires written consent from a ‘competent authority’ accepting the hazardous waste. This is a far cry from the total ban on hazardous waste exports that the G-77 and environmental NGO’s, such as Greenpeace, were lobbying for. One of the main reasons for their failure to achieve this goal was the intense lobbying of the US, Australia, Germany, Canada, Japan and the UK. It was clear to developing nation that the PIC was inadequate to protect them from hazardous waste imports. Soon after it’s creation the notorious hazardous waste
HAZARDOUS WASTE IN A LAND FILL.

Enough is Enough

The United Nations Environmental Program estimates OECD countries account for 80 to 90 percent of the total hazardous wastes generated. This fact combined with the reality that many developing countries do not have the institutions and resources to enforce a ban, led the G-77 to call for industrial countries to take responsibility to enforce a ban on exports. As the head of the Indian Delegation put it: “You industrialized countries have been asking us to do many things for the global good – to stop cutting down our forests, to stop using CFCs—now we are asking you to do something for the global good – keep your own waste.”

The Group of 77 was supported by several European countries to gain support for an amendment which calls for a full, non-exemptions, ban on hazardous waste exports from OECD countries to non-OECD countries. “The OECD countries were shocked by the force with which attending developing nations argued for a full ban.” The “Basel ban,” as it’s now called, is considered by many to be “the most significant environmental achievement since the Rio Earth summit in 1992.” Unfortunately, it will not go into legal force until 62 countries ratify the convention with the new amendment included. There have been strong voices arguing against this ban, mainly from industrialized countries, most notably Canada, Australia, and the US. Leaked internal State Department documents showed that the US planned a campaign to undermine the amendment by showing it wasn't environmentally or economically sound.

The United States, Characteristically Stubborn.

A study done by the United Nations Environmental Program shows, “50 percent or more of the wastes generated at the global level originate in the United States.” Clearly a large part of the onus is on the US. Despite this fact, they remain the only OECD country that has yet to ratify the convention. To ratify the treaty Congress needs to approve a bill to do so. There have been several attempts to introduce legislation to Congress to ratify the Basel Convention, but all have so far gone nowhere.

There are several reasons the US has given about why it won’t ratify the treaty. One of the major contentions of the United States is that it’s Resource Conservation and Recovery Act (RCRA) law is comparable to the Basel Convention. But as a Congressional Research Service Report states, “Although [an] existing U.S. law regulates hazardous waste exports, it covers fewer wastes and imposes fewer controls than does the Basel Convention.” Some of the materials listed as hazardous under the ban are deemed non-hazardous recyclables under RCRA. Harvey Alter, a consultant to the Business Recycling Coalition, an independent coalition of companies and trade associations in the United States and Canada, says what is most worrisome to industry is the regulation of ‘recyclables’; “The worlds trade in secondary materials for recycling is huge,” and the Basel ban could definitely hamper that trade. The ban does not allow for trade to a country that does not have environmental standards comparable to the US, in addition it doesn’t distinguish between hazardous waste bound for recycling and hazardous waste bound for disposal. Such obstacles look insurmountable to the US hazardous waste ‘recycling’ industry.

Has the Basel Convention Made Any Difference?

The holes in the Basel Convention have now been exposed long enough that they are becoming ragged. Despite these deficiencies the treaty has helped set a new ethical standard for the international community. Countries are now held to a higher standard and concerned citizens now have a legal framework with which to voice their concern and use to receive retribution. In addition, evidence from OECD shows there has also been a general downward trend of hazardous wastes being exported. However, studies done by Greenpeace suggest these data might not tell the whole story as the trade in ‘recyclables’ has increased. Ultimately, the ‘economic gradient’ will continue to create a market for toxic waste. Until effective enforcement for the convention occurs and adequate environmental standards exist in developing countries, secret deals will continue to be made, putting the citizens of the world at risk.

Kerry Joy Ard’s interest in Environmental Justice began when she worked as a Peace Officer while completing her BS in Biology. This summer she will be presenting on this topic at Oxford University.
Highland Park, MI is a 2.3 square-mile city, completely surrounded by Detroit. Once a vibrant community with tree-lined streets, competitive schools, and even its own state-of-the-art water plant, it is now a shadow of its former self. Many Michigan residents, even those in the surrounding areas, couldn’t point it out on a map—and that’s assuming they even know it exists. Like many cities in the rust belt, Highland Park has seen economic decline since the 1980s, though it has been hit more severely than most. Chrysler Corporation left in 1987, taking with it 70% of the tax base and leading the city into economic ruin. In June 2001, the city was placed under the control of an Engler-appointed financial manager, Ramona Pearson.

In March of this year, in response to continuing criticism from Highland Park community activists, the state asked Pearson to resign. Arthur Blackwell, a former Wayne County Commissioner, will replace her. Though financially this may be a step in the right direction (Blackwell will be receiving $1 a year for his work, where Pearson was paid nearly $10,000 a month), Blackwell is a character surrounded by scandal and is not expected to perform much better than Pearson. Not only did he rack up $27,000 in traveling expenses during his six year stint as Detroit-Wayne County Port Authority, he also used $23,000 of leftover campaign funds while running for mayor of Detroit in 1993 to build a deck on his house. Although many Highland Parkers are happy to see Pearson go, they are not exactly welcoming Blackwell with open arms.

Three weeks before Pearson was officially given orders to leave, she called a special meeting with city residents, where she shared her ideas on how to pull the city out of debt. Pearson called on residents to “change the culture of Highland Park” so that it could once again be a self-governed municipality. Pearson had a range of different ideas. Two of her more interesting statements were calling for SWAT teams to reorganize city affairs, and smart bombs to get rid of abandoned buildings (they would be quicker and more cost effective). The growth of the prison-industrial complex was another of Pearson’s solutions; she proudly stated that the newly expanded juvenile detention center would be providing 100 more jobs for city residents.

The most interesting news, though, involved the multi-national soft drink giant Coca-Cola. Pearson stated that the city had already signed a contract with the company to open up a warehouse and distribution center. She accompanied this statement with the idea of selling city water in order to pay back debt and subsidize water rates. The city water plant is currently operating at 25% capacity; Pearson wants to run it “full speed ahead,” in order to produce revenue for the city. If the financial management team of Highland Park decides to market its “excess” water, Coca-Cola is already conveniently located in the city, ready to bottle, package and sell it at a huge profit.

Pearson knew enough to stay away from the word “privatization” when speaking of city water. This attention to rhetoric was in lieu of protests by Highland Park citizens, brought about when Pearson was looking to negotiate a ten-year water privatization contract with the Rothschild-Wright Group (RWG). After a long struggle between the residents and the financial management team, the contract was officially rejected in June of last year. The proposed no-bid contract (which is illegal in the state of Michigan) with RWG included a bottled water measure, where the company would be able to use water in the city reservoirs for bottled water sales. The memory of the resounding “NO!” of the citizens’ voices seems to have faded quickly in Pearson’s mind, as she matter-of-factly informed the citizens of her interest in selling city water.

Bringing the Coca-Cola company into this already struggling community will not only fail to solve Highland Park’s existing problems but will bring in even bigger ones. Coke is responsible for the murder, torture and kidnapping of labor leaders within its Columbia, South America bottling plants [see killercoke.org for info on Coke’s human rights abuses in Columbia]. Coke has also caused extreme environmental damage in other communities around the world. In at least four states in India—Uttar Pradesh, Maharashtra and Rajasthan—there have been massive popular protests against Coke in response to the devastating crimes the company has committed against the land and its people.

In India, Coke has produced severe water shortages in the areas where it is pumping at high speeds. It has polluted the soil and water around plants, distributed its toxic waste to area farmers as fertilizer and sold beverages contaminated with pesticides. The High Court of Kerala has ruled that Coca-Cola’s high-volume water extraction is illegal, and ordered all pumping to be “temporarily” stopped until the water level rose back to normal. Coca-Cola has since challenged that ruling [see “Coca-Cola: Manufacturing Empire Never Tasted So Toxic,” page 8].

The state of Michigan has been facing many water battles of its own. In Mecosta County, Ice Mountain was granted a permit to pump water out of the ground at high volume to be sold for private profit. Like in India,
this plant has been met with resistance from citizens from all over the state, resulting in an injunction against Ice Mountain to stop pumping. Not surprisingly, the company challenged it, and while the case is being reheard in court, Ice Mountain continues to pump water out of the ground. The residents around the plant have already begun to notice changes in water pressure and have fears of wells running dry. Activists who have fought to stop these abuses have been harassed, intimidated, and searched by the FBI in the name of “fighting terrorism.”

Highland Park residents have been fighting their own front in the water wars. For the past few years, residents have been facing massive utility shut-offs, and currently half of the homes in the city do not have direct access to water. This has destroyed many people’s livelihoods. Not only have some small business owners been forced to shut their doors due to high utility bills, but families have been pulled apart, and some people have even lost their lives.

The water bills have been growing for a number of reasons. With mismanagement of funds and the huge decline in the city tax base, the water department does not have enough money to employ an adequate work force. Infrastructure is not being maintained, leading to pricey water leakages. Also, there are no workers to go out and read people’s water meters, leading to bills based on water “estimates.” The department is taking the total amount of water being used in a neighborhood, and dividing it by the number of paying households on the block. If your block is one of the many with abandoned properties that have not had its water turned off, you will be paying for the city’s neglect. That can add up to hundreds of extra dollars per household per month. Not only does it hit you hard in your pocket, but the absurdity that your family’s home is without water while the sink in the empty structure next door has overflown into the street is enough to drive you mad. In the words of Maureen Taylor, head of the Michigan Welfare Rights Organization: “You can’t make this stuff up.”

To add to these problems, residents have gone months at a time without receiving any water bills, and when they finally arrive, the bills are so astronomically high, they can’t even begin to fathom paying them. Residents have reported going to the water department to try to work out payment plans to settle their bills. When they got there, the workers didn’t seem to know what was going on, and they were sent home without answers and without a plan of action.

Right now, the battle in Highland Park is one of access to city water. If the city officials look to solve this problem by running the water plant “full speed ahead,” bottling and selling off the water, they may very well create a real water shortage. According to the basic principles of supply and demand, water scarcity would actually lead to higher prices, thus creating an even bigger crisis then the current one.

It needs to be understood that the water rates themselves are a symptom of the larger problem of poverty and the structural violence experienced by the people of Highland Park. Privatizing the water, whether it be through a takeover of the plant by Rothchild Wright as proposed in the past, or the bottling and selling of water that is being proposed now, will not solve the economic problems. The motivation of the private sector is that of profit, not the public good. Corporations are accountable to their bottom-line, not the communities within which they operate.

Neither Coca-Cola, nor the appointed financial manager (past or present) are accountable to the citizens of Highland Park. Gouging the earth of its natural resources to sell for a profit is not a sustainable solution—ecologically or economically—for the city to regain its financial independence. Coca-Cola will leave Highland Park when it is no longer profitable for them to be there. When the Chrysler Corporation suddenly relocated, they left the city with high amounts of debt, and went where it would be less expensive to operate. Coca-Cola stands to do the same thing—only this time they will also be leaving with the most fundamental element of life: water. Many local activists are already saying, “If they build it, we will come.” Highland Park’s future depends on this resistance.

Rachel Parsons is a writer/activist/idealistic/dancer/aspiring poet who has recently moved to Detroit after earning her Womyn’s Studies degree from Michigan State University.
Ann Arbor’s historic reputation as an enlightened and tolerant place, a “hip” and trendy city, will continue to attract new residents and urban growth in the next decade. As we, as a community, decide what Ann Arbor’s future is going to look like, two recent policy developments will shape the decisions we make in the next years. It is up to us to determine how our vision of tomorrow’s Ann Arbor will emerge.

Will it continue to be a diverse, multicultural community where arts and ideas flourish? Or will it be transformed into a commodified playground for the wealthy? The first is the recently passed “Measure B”, the mayor’s Greenbelt Initiative for Ann Arbor. Following the national trend of “Smart Growth,” Ann Arbor voters, by approving Measure B, indicated a desire for compact development, building downtown, and building “up” rather than “out”. We expressed our desire to break from traditional suburban design and limit urban sprawl in the interest of preserving open space. The city’s efforts to secure state designation and development grants under the “Cool Cities” Initiative shows a similar intent to strengthen downtown and make it more attractive.

The second is the Bush administration’s 2004 budget, which proposed cuts in the Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD)’s funding for Section 8 vouchers, which impacts 100,000 extremely low income families who will essentially lose their homes. Nationally, these compound the 64 percent cuts to HUD’s budget since 1978, and the loss of about 90,000 affordable housing units annually. While a growing number of developments refuse to accept Section 8 tenants, for local governments, this compounds an already inexorable and dire affordable housing crisis, underscored by the University’s recent decision to essentially eliminate affordable family housing by moving undergraduates into units designated for student families.

In Ann Arbor, deciding to grow “up” rather than “out” means that we, as city dwellers, want to concentrate life in a city center, to live with both the constraints and rewards that residents of other places like Manhattan and San Francisco have come to know. As such, we face a reality check, as certain as the law of gravity: space is limited. When certain things get built, other things are excluded. When space gets built out, the only way you can build is through demolition. Difficult choices must be made. If we build primarily high-end condominiums and lofts, trendy restaurants and cafes, and choose to exclude affordable housing, artist space, community space, and designated spaces to incubate local business and entrepreneurship, we make choices about where low and moderate-income people, artists, community and civic groups, and unique local businesses can go. Unfortunately, those places don’t include Ann Arbor.

For capitalism to flourish, you actually have to do some non-free market things. If we want an economy based on low-wage labor, which we need if we’re going to be able to go to trendy restaurants, we need to think about where we want these workers to live, particularly if we’re not going to pass a living wage ordinance. If we want children to have a chance to get good grades, to grow up in places where they can have home-cooked meals, to have parents present rather than working multiple jobs to pay the rent, if we want to build community on our values, whether they be around families or a broader definition of civic life, we need to ensure that people who work in Ann Arbor can live here. If we want to have an interesting arts district, we need to think about space for artists. If we want civil society where people care about community, we need to set aside space for community groups. And if we want to have something other than Starbucks, perhaps we need to think about local business incubators. And ultimately, we will have the Ann Arbor we want and love—a city where we and other people want to live. That’s what we need with the Cool Cities Initiative.

In The Death and Life of Great American Cities, Jane Jacobs wrote, “The ubiquitous principle is the need for cities for a most intricate and close-grained diversity of uses that give each other constant mutual support, both economically and
socially." A sustainable and socially just city economy is not one where we export our low-income housing need to adjacent cities by generating what other cities call a "jobs-housing" imbalance. To understand what a "jobs-housing" ratio means, one only needs to consider the conditions generated in California's Silicon Valley and other technology corridors, where generating 17 jobs for every one housing unit during the early 1990s created a situation where laborers in San Francisco and San Jose were paying $100-$150 a month for floor space to sleep, 75 people in a warehouse, with one bathroom and no cooking facilities. (When the city found out about it, they were evicted.) That scenario is not altogether foreign to Ann Arbor, where stories of five migrant workers being housed in two-bedroom apartments are not uncommon.

In Ann Arbor, one only needs to walk by the Blake Transit Center at 5 am on a weekday, watch the city's low-wage workforce coming off the buses that bring them in from Ypsilanti and other low-rent centers nearby, and consider the race and class divide that separates these people from the population strolling down Main Street on a Friday afternoon. Is urban apartheid part of our city landscape we are recognizing that they can no longer rely on federal government funds to finance affordable housing. While city officials have told us time and again in public forum that they’re doing their best, those of us who have worked with those most affected by the city’s affordable housing crisis feel that Ann Arbor can do more. While officials are “doing their best,” consider these impacts on local workers:

According to the National Low-Income Housing Coalition’s 2003 statistics, a worker must earn $15.67 at a full-time 40 hour/week job to afford the fair market rent on a 2 bedroom apartment, a family-sized unit, in Ann Arbor. That’s an increase of 4 percent from the previous year. As a result, 46 percent of renters are unable to afford the fair market rent on a 2-bedroom apartment. Minimum wage workers, who earn $5.15 an hour, must work 122 hours a week to afford the median rent on a two-bedroom apartment in Ann Arbor, resulting in 17-hour days even if one works seven days a week.

These figures clearly demonstrate a monetary value. Our elderly and disabled residents are not simply worthless because they no longer produce goods and services valued in our local market economy. Veterans, some of whom live in Ann Arbor’s limited subsidized housing, are not to be exported from our community because we decide that those who can’t work after they have "fought for our freedom" don’t need to live in our privileged community. Let’s think that "workforce housing" is merely discourse, the term typically applies to policies that seek to provide housing targeted for those who earn anywhere from 90 to 120 percent of median income. Considering that the 2003 median income for a family of four in Ann Arbor was $77,700 a year, this bracket of those earning $69,930 to $93,240 a year for a family of four includes skilled professionals, but excludes those in more working-class service sector and clerical jobs, both of which are over-represented in Ann Arbor’s economic structure. (HUD’s statistics assume a nuclear family of four, with two wage-earners. With only one earner, conditions are worse.)

For those who fall through the cracks in Ann Arbor, the prospects for housing or policy change are not good. Recently, residents at the YMCA, the city’s single-room occupancy transitional housing facility for those unable to compete elsewhere in the housing market, went through a period of upheaval and uncertainty when the YMCA decided to stop operating its housing facility.

It is up to us to determine how our vision of tomorrow’s Ann Arbor will emerge. Will it continue to be a diverse, multi-cultural community where arts and ideas flourish? Or will it be transformed into a commodified playground for the wealthy?

The affordable housing issue brings us to the second policy development. As federal funding for Section 8 declines, cities are recognizing that they can no longer rely on federal government funds to finance affordable housing. While city officials have told us time and again in public forum that they’re doing their best, those of us who have worked with those most affected by the city’s affordable housing crisis feel that Ann Arbor can do more. While officials are “doing their best,” consider these impacts on local workers:

According to the National Low-Income Housing Coalition’s 2003 statistics, a worker must earn $15.67 at a full-time 40 hour/week job to afford the fair market rent on a 2 bedroom apartment, a family-sized unit, in Ann Arbor. That’s an increase of 4 percent from the previous year. As a result, 46 percent of renters are unable to afford the fair market rent on a 2-bedroom apartment. Minimum wage workers, who earn $5.15 an hour, must work 122 hours a week to afford the median rent on a two-bedroom apartment in Ann Arbor, resulting in 17-hour days even if one works seven days a week.

These figures clearly demonstrate a monetary value. Our elderly and disabled residents are not simply worthless because they no longer produce goods and services valued in our local market economy. Veterans, some of whom live in Ann Arbor’s limited subsidized housing, are not to be exported from our community because we decide that those who can’t work after they have “fought for our freedom” don’t need to live in our privileged community. Let’s think that “workforce housing” is merely discourse, the term typically applies to policies that seek to provide housing targeted for those who earn anywhere from 90 to 120 percent of median income. Considering that the 2003 median income for a family of four in Ann Arbor was $77,700 a year, this bracket of those earning $69,930 to $93,240 a year for a family of four includes skilled professionals, but excludes those in more working-class service sector and clerical jobs, both of which are over-represented in Ann Arbor’s economic structure. (HUD’s statistics assume a nuclear family of four, with two wage-earners. With only one earner, conditions are worse.)

For those who fall through the cracks in Ann Arbor, the prospects for housing or policy change are not good. Recently, residents at the YMCA, the city’s single-room occupancy transitional housing facility for those unable to compete elsewhere in the housing market, went through a period of upheaval and uncertainty when the YMCA decided to stop operating its housing facility.
After some discussion, the city decided to exercise its right of refusal and purchased the facility. There was some commitment to continue providing transitional housing to single individuals at the site, and recently, the city also decided to perform necessary renovations to the building. In a series of community meetings held at the YMCA, residents told us the city gave them no opportunity to participate in deciding the future of their home. While it seemed to them that the city had good intentions, they felt uncertain, and worried about the loss of transitional housing in Ann Arbor. While they were not planning to live at the YMCA forever, they saw it as an important asset which gave them a chance to get on their feet, live in a city environment with social networks, good access to transportation, and most importantly, the knowledge that the same opportunities would be available to others.

In a series of community meetings we held at the YMCA, residents told us the city gave them no opportunity to participate in deciding the future of their home.

As access to shelter becomes more tenuous, so too becomes the vibrancy of our civic life. Homeless shelters are increasingly less viable for those needing housing of the last resort, as draconian drug testing excludes those who need to self-medicate. The city has already banned panhandling, in a gesture of intolerance with a chilling effect on most street vendors and inhibiting the diversity of the sidewalk as a public space.

We can do something about it. Ann Arbor faces opportunities to employ the same policy actions to maintain the housing options necessary to sustain its diversity:

1) Preserve the Affordable Housing Stock by Maintaining Transitional Housing.

The YMCA has served as a source of transitional housing for low-income people who were ready to move into a semi-stable housing situation, but were not able or ready to live in private housing on their own. For veterans, people moving out of institutional housing, such as mental institutions or the prison system, women leaving abusive situations or shelters, new residents, people receiving General Assistance or Supplemental Security Income, or newly employed workers who have not saved enough for a security deposit, transitional housing is essential to reduce the homeless population and allow those who can move beyond the shelter to take that next step toward move stable living conditions. If Ann Arbor is truly serious about reducing its homeless population, it should make a commitment to providing transitional housing so those who want to stop being homeless have real options.

2) Explore Eminent Domain to Provide Affordable Housing.

Rather than making excuses about private developers’ reluctance to build affordable housing, city officials should explore options for obtaining space for affordable housing space within the city that can be sold, or otherwise provided, to affordable housing developers, or even private developers, for the express purpose of providing housing targeted to low-income residents. A concerted effort should be made to identify land that is not currently in use, and offer to buy parcels from the owners of vacant properties. A number of vacant spaces do exist in the city center, and if Ann Arbor is seriously planning to adhere to the greenbelt initiative and restrict sprawl, it needs a plan to house residents who work in town in the city center, rather than forcing them to commute.

3) Establish More Systematic Mandates for Affordable Housing Set-Aside.

Most developers understand that Ann Arbor would like affordable housing provisions in their developments. Yet, units are not always set aside for affordable housing in new developments, as the Eaton loft project in the Old West Side, which was approved with no affordable housing, amply illustrates. Rather than creating a political game where developers play to see what they can get away with, and the city creates an impression that planning and development are hyper-politicized, why not have a systematic process for determining how much affordable housing will be required from new development so that both developers and city planners have the same understanding of the requirements?

4) Tie All Subsidies, Including Cool Cities Grant Money, to Community Benefits.

These community benefits include, of course, affordable housing, but can also include a unionized workforce, First Source hiring of local residents, community and non-profit space, a contribution to education or affordable housing funds, or anything else community residents feel they want in their community. Subsidies should not be free money for developers, even though they may claim that they cannot build without them. The negotiation of Community Benefits Agreement has worked in numerous communities, and any developer who refuses to sign a contract agreeing to return the subsidy money if it does not follow through on agreed community benefits should not be receiving a subsidy. And lest our proposal smack of socialism, we must remember that all of us, including the poor, pay for those subsidies—it’s our money.

4b) Any bonds to pay for development should be loans that developers must repay.

If the city needs to sell bonds or otherwise raise money to subsidize a development, the private developer, which is often a capital investor financed corporation, must be required to repay the money that the city has provided.

5) Tie Zoning Decisions to Community Benefits.

The single most powerful tool that cities have over development is their right, enshrined in legal precedent (Village of Euclid v. Ambler Realty, 1926) to establish zoning rules. These rules dictate what can or can’t be built on a given site, in a given district. If a developer wants to build something other than what the zoning says, it must obtain a special permit. As Ann Arbor seeks to implement the provisions of the greenbelt initiative, the density of areas near the central downtown district will increase, and zoning changes will be called for to allow for more dense land uses. While numerous groups will demand that these zoning changes occur now so that projects can proceed without excessive review, the city should NOT increase the density zoning designations in these areas without some mechanism to demand that developers provide public benefits, such as affordable housing, in exchange for being able to build at higher density. The simple reason is that allowing developers to build at higher density by increasing the zoning designation (otherwise known as “upzoning” an area) essentially increases their profits. As Ann Arbor’s experience with Pfizer illustrates, the public, we experience costs (traffic, noise, crowding) associated with higher densities—that is the logic to restricting density through zoning. Before we relax those restrictions on density and give developers higher profits, we, the public have a right to demand something in return. Again, it is up to residents to decide what those public benefits should be, but developers should pay for the public goods, like affordable housing, that we need in Ann Arbor.

6) Develop Clear Equitable Development Criteria.

Since all of the aforementioned proposals will meet controversy, it is imperative that we establish criteria for “equitable development”. As Ann Arbor becomes a more popular place for development interests to invest, build, and speculate, we can protect the public interest by establishing a uniform set of criteria which we will use to evaluate all development projects. It only seems reasonable that some of these criteria should heed the impacts that low-income residents will experience with this new development, and mitigate those impacts. We can ask tough questions: What will the new units cost? Who will get to live there? How many affordable units? What will the workforce look like? Who will work at these new jobs? What will they be paid? What rights will they have?

As multi-national corporations like Pfizer arrive to take advantage of Ann Arbor’s highly educated workforce, what will they give back? How much will they contribute to the community’s affordable housing and education fund? Many of us love to complain about the impacts of global capital, but we forget that we are local citizens with one’s right to demand that corporations give back in exchange for the right to be in our communities. Some people worry that Ann Arbor will cease to be a “business-friendly” city. But in southeast Michigan, Ann Arbor, the home of the University of Michigan, will always be “business-friendly”. We can ask for a lot more back before that changes.

A final note. Contrary to popular belief, ordinary citizens cannot do this alone. Ann Arbor’s policy elites—you know who you are—I can’t sit down at a café or restaurant in this town without overhearing someone mention your names—must take some responsibility for making this vision a reality. Specifically, local affordable housing providers need to take a clear stance that they stand firmly behind local policies to augment the city’s affordable housing supply. It means nothing to be an “affordable housing provider” if one is only maintaining one’s current stock of affordable housing while opportunities and actual affordable units disappear, exacerbating the overall housing crisis. While some may read this as illicit “political” activity, those of us who have worked with the people who are affected by the affordable housing crisis feel that it is equally morally unacceptable to claim to be part of the solution while refusing to support the efforts of those seeking to address the crisis on a larger scale.

June Gin is a is a member of the VOICE coalition, an affordable housing advocacy group representing homeless Ann Arbor residents and citizens concerned about Ann Arbor’s housing crisis. She is a doctoral candidate in the School of Natural Resources and Environment at the University of Michigan. You can email her at jgin@umich.edu. All members of the Ann Arbor City Council and Planning Commission have received copies of this letter. Please feel free to refer to it when talking to any of them.
Despoiling the Arctic Refuge

by Macdonald Stainsby

From 1974 to 1977, Justice Thomas RBerger conducted Canada’s Mackenzie Valley Pipeline Inquiry. His final report—“Northern Frontier, Northern Homeland”—recommended prohibiting construction of a pipeline in the Canadian portion of the Porcupine Caribou Herd calving grounds adjoining Alaska’s Arctic National Wildlife Refuge. In 1987, Canada and the United States signed the Agreement of Conservation of the International Porcupine Caribou Herd to protect the calving grounds on both sides of the border.

Berger also recommended a ten-year delay in pipeline construction in the rest of the Mackenzie River valley in order to settle First Nations land claims. Aside from the problems presented by the Canadian federal government’s policies of “extinguishment” of aboriginal rights, this minimum requirement has not been met. Yet, today, there are new pipeline proposals while other older concerns also remain valid. A new pipeline would require access roads, transient workers, and much more development throughout the still mostly pristine valley. The valley is also essential both spiritually and for subsistence to the many Dene people who live there. Development could do massive harm to the environment and is, thus, considered unsustainable by most Dene. It would attract prostitution, drugs, more alcohol and more tourists who do not respect the land properly, all of which would erode the ability of the Dene Nations to be Dene.

In the case of the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge, recently, both houses of the Republican-dominated US Congress have narrowly passed legislation that may allow oil companies to soon begin drilling in the Refuge. Not only is drilling in violation of international agreements that the US has with Canada but it is also a direct act of cultural genocide against the Gwich’in people. The Gwich’in—are also known as the “people of the caribou”—are a Dene nation living on both sides of the border. Seventy-five percent of their diet still comes from subsistence sources and they live on the migration routes of the Porcupine Herd. The Gwich’in are presently able to live with the land in a manner no longer possible in the south. To destroy the Porcupine Herd is not only to destroy a last great herd of mammals that migrate in their tens of thousands—it will also wipe out a way of life.

Returning to the Mackenzie Valley pipeline, the government of the Northwest Territories (GNWT) has, in a mind-boggling move, tasked Imperial Oil with writing the environmental impact assessment as well as conducting the required public consultations. Imperial is also working with the GNWT to open “pipeline readiness offices” in towns across Denendeh or Dene land. Unlike the Berger Inquiry, Imperial Oil is not holding hearings in most of the communities to be affected; public forums are to be held only in Hay River, Inuvik, and Yellowknife. Again, in direct contrast to the Berger Inquiry, the hearings will be conducted in English only and not translated into the many Dene dialects or Inuktitut. During the Berger Inquiry, government grants helped level the playing field against the oil and gas companies by funding independent, community-based social, cultural, and environmental impact assessments. This time around, while 17 communities requested funding, only the Hay River community received a grant and, then, it was a pittance. The largest approved grants for various NGO’s and the like came in at 15% of the requested amount with many request denied completely.

For all of these reasons and more, the “progress” of gas and oil in the north are massive acts of bad faith, direct violations of sovereign First Nations territory and are leading to an environmental and social disaster. These disastrous acts are preventable and benefit petroleum corporations who are not making sufficient profits in Iraq, thanks to the resistance movements. They want to secure these lands almost out of spite, even if genocide is the outcome of this “energy strategy” that amounts to a drop in the empty gas can. However, we have a choice, and history is not written yet—in either Canada or the United States. We can stop this devastation before it begins. The great buffalo herds are gone, but the Porcupine Herd remains. And so does our struggle.

Macdonald Stainsby is a 29 year old writer, student and social justice activist currently living in Montreal, Quebec. He can be reached at mstainsby@resist.ca. The “surviving Canada” website can be accessed at http://independentmedia.ca/survivingcanada

For more information on the Dene and the Mackenzie pipeline struggle please visit http://deneyouthalliance.ca

Peak Oil

by David Chege

A Profile of an Economy in Crisis

Oil is the cornerstone of our energy supply. It is univalved in its combination of extractability, transportability, and energy density. It is the prerequisite for every other form of energy in our economy. It is finite. It is running out. You have to find an oil well before you can drill it and the biggest and best were found a long time ago.

As a geophysicist employed by the Royal Dutch Shell Corporation to map oil fields, M. King Hubbert spent a career learning and exploiting the processes of the Earth’s formation that create and store it’s most precious resource. In a landmark 1949 paper, he defined the basic trends in the acquisition of any finite resource based upon a lifetime’s experience with the subject. His subsequent forecasts of oil production were premised upon the hypothesis that the rate of discovery will follow a curve as the process begins at zero, increases to a maximum, then declines back to zero as the last deposits are found, and that after a delay to develop the necessary infrastructure, the rate of that resource’s extraction will follow a similar curve.

1930 was the year in which oil discovery in the continental US hit its peak; since then the industry has been finding fewer and fewer oil fields to replenish what it has been discovering. Furthermore, since the discovery peak in 1970’s, the rate of new oil discoveries has not matched the rate of natural depletion of the existing fields.

In short, everything that people associate with the 70s economic recession—lines at the gas station, decreasing industrial output, and massive inflation in the financial sectors—was due to conditions predicted and ignored 20 years in advance based upon purely physical analysis, completely devoid of economic or political considerations.

Global oil discovery reached its peak in the 1960s, declining every year since even as consumption has maintained an overall upward trajectory.

We currently use 26 billion barrels per year while we discover only 6 billion to replace that. The gap is growing. We are not finding enough oil for discovery to keep pace with production. The International Energy Administration, using the most conservative information, accepting for instance, the sudden simultaneous doubling of the stated reserves of every OPEC nation in the 1980s, has arrived at a global production peak between 2010 and 2020.

The end of our oil-based economy will be the single most critical event in the long history of human civilization, and each of us will live to see it and be responsible for dealing with it. Human development has been propelled by revolutions in technology powered by revolutions in energy acquisition: the agricultural (solar energy) revolution of a few millennia ago, the industrial (coal/oil) revolution of a few centuries ago, and the recent electrical revolution. The lack of oil will send us reeling back to a pre-industrial economy.

In their totality, these difficulties will require a complete overhaul of our global economy from oil/coal/gas consuming technologies to renewable electricity/ hydrogen technologies. However, a merely theoretical knowledge of new technologies is not enough if the infrastructure is not in place to deliver it to the public. The transition will take time but must be made before the inevitable economic contraction caused by declining oil production renders it impossible. The vise is tightening. Today is not too late.

David Chege is a musician, activist, and concerned world citizen in NYC. Contact at linusmovement@hotmail.com
The Environmental Impact of the Israeli Occupation

by Jad Isaac

It is now difficult to recognize the land that was described by early visitors as “flowing with milk and honey.” Barren hills have replaced once-rolling woodland covered with thickets and forests, and grasslands have turned into deserts. A fetid trickle of sewage now runs where the Jordan River once flowed. The water level in the Dead Sea is so low that it is now divided into two separate seas. In short, the land is degraded, suffering from years of environmental mismanagement and neglect that has only worsened during the past 38 years of Israeli occupation.

Industrial Waste

The Israeli government has constructed at least seven industrial zones in the West Bank. Located mainly on hilltops, these industries produce industrial wastewater and solid waste that often pollute adjacent Palestinian lands.

Information about industries in the Israeli industrial zones—including the amount and types of goods they produce, the labor they employ, and the waste they generate—is not available to Palestinians. The wastewater and solid waste these industries produce, however, provide important clues about the type and extent of industrial activity.

Clear evidence that Israeli factories operating in the Occupied Territories do not follow pollution prevention measures is provided by the Barqan industrial zone, which houses factories producing aluminum, fiberglass, plastic, electroplating, and military items. Industrial wastewater from this zone flows untreated to the nearby valley, damaging agricultural land belonging to the Palestinian villages of Sarta, Kufur Al-Deek, and Burqin, and polluting the groundwater with heavy metals. In the central part of the Gaza Strip, the Israeli settlement of Kfar Darom releases sewage and chemical waste from its industrial plants to the Al-Saqa valley.

Illegal Movement of Hazardous Waste

Despite the fact that Israel is a signatory of the 1992 Basel Convention, which bans the illegal movement of hazardous waste, it transfers such waste, generated inside Israel, to the West Bank. The Palestinian Authority (PA) has discovered several violations:

1. In 1998, Israel illegally dumped several truckloads of toxic and hazardous waste near the eastern border of the Tulkarm municipality and near the residential area of the ‘Azzoun municipality—50 meters from its well for drinking water;
2. An Israeli company, Telbar, moved its medical waste disposal site from Afula inside Israel to a site close to the Jewish settlement of Yaffit in the Jordan valley;
3. A paint factory located in the Israeli settlement of Ganim has dumped its hazardous and toxic wastes in the Palestinian village of Umm Al-Tut.

Moreover, according to a study published by The Center for Development Work in Ramallah, Israeli companies are flooding the

Jewish Settlements

Part of the “Fertile Crescent,” historic Palestine is positioned at the crossroads between Eurasia and Africa. It hosts over 2,500 species of wild plants, 800 of which are rare, and some 140 of which are limited to particular areas; at least 80 species of wild mammals, and 380 species of birds are native to Palestine. This rich biodiversity is supported by tremendous climatic variation within a small area.

Unfortunately, it is now difficult to recognize the land that was described by early visitors as “flowing with milk and honey.” Barren hills have replaced once-rolling woodland covered with thickets and forests, and grasslands have turned into deserts. The land is degraded, suffering from years of environmental mismanagement and neglect that has only worsened during the past 38 years of Israeli occupation.

Relocation of Israeli Industries

Israel has moved many of its polluting industries from Israel to the Occupied Territories. Geshuri Industries, a manufacturer of pesticides and fertilizers originally located in Kfar Saba in Israel, was closed down by Israeli court order in 1982 for pollution violations. In 1987, it relocated to an area adjacent to Tulkarm inside the West Bank, where its waste has damaged citrus trees and polluted the soil. The Dixon industrial gas factory, formerly located in Netanya inside Israel, has also moved into the same area.

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Moreover, according to a study published by The Center for Development Work in Ramallah, Israeli companies are flooding the
Palestinian market with internationally banned pesticides. Their Israeli manufacturers are also using Palestinian land to test new pesticides.

**Military Areas, Bases, and “Nature Reserves”**

Israel has declared 290,970 acres of the West Bank (20.2 percent of its total area), mostly in the Jordan valley, as closed military areas, and has created an additional 29 closed military areas in Gaza (420 acres). Moreover, Israel maintains 71 military bases in the West Bank (totaling some 9,563 acres). Although most of these areas have low agricultural value, they constitute the major grazing areas in the West Bank. Since Palestinian pastoralists are denied access to these areas, the remaining grazing areas suffer from severe overgrazing and are under threat of permanent desertification.

Furthermore, the wildlife and rich biodiversity that characterize these areas are harmed by the use of heavy military vehicles and tanks.

Israel has also created 48 West Bank “nature reserves” (covering 5.68 percent of the West Bank), mostly on the Eastern Slopes and in the Jordan valley. Palestinians question the ecological value of these reserves, which they view as another method used by Israel to deny Palestinians access to their land.

**Deforestation and Uprooting of Trees**

According to a recent study by the PA Ministry of Agriculture, the total area in the West Bank and Gaza officially designated as forest land decreased from 300,736 dunums in 1971 to 231,586 dunums in 1999 (one dunum is 1,000 square meters). More than half of the affected areas are in Gaza, where 95 percent of the forests have disappeared (from 42,000 dunums in 1971 to 2,000 dunums in 1999).

About 80 percent of this deforestation is attributable to the Israeli occupation: to the establishment of military bases (two percent), to settlements (78 percent), and to bypass roads (less than one percent). Local Palestinians are responsible for deforesting 14 percent of the land, while the remaining six percent is privately owned.

**Desertification:**

Approximately 2.18 million dunums (35 percent of the West Bank and Gaza Strip) are natural grazing areas. Only 47 percent of the total grazing area is accessible to Palestinian livestock owners, while the remainder has been confiscated for Israeli settlements, nature reserves and closed military areas. Overuse of the accessible areas has resulted in progressive desertification.

Jad Issac is Director-General of the Applied Research Institute in Jerusalem.

“The Trees Sustain the Lives of People. Stop Uprooting the Trees of Palestine,” reads a poster that is trying to call attention at a world conservation conference, underway here, to how precious olive trees have become a casualty in the Israeli occupation of Palestinian territories.

Thus, Razan Zuayter, a Palestinian living in Jordan who is director of the Arab Group for the Protection of Nature, is seeking help for her people to plant one million trees, in particular olive trees, in lands that were razed by Israeli bulldozers in the Palestinian territories.

She also wants to draw attention to the suffering and economic displacement that olive tree farmers are facing in Palestine as a consequence of losing this traditional source of livelihood over generations.

“The olive tree is known to be planted in Palestine for six thousand years. Now, these old trees are being destroyed in the occupation (by Israel),” she told a session of the World Conservation Congress, organised by the World Conservation Union or IUCN.

“Unfortunately they are not only destroying the trees, but also the history of Palestine,” revealed Zuayter.

The targeting of the economy, and even of the land itself, is an under-reported aspect of the ethnic cleansing of Palestine. The IUCN global congress, which ends on Nov. 25, has brought together 81 states, 114 government agencies, 800 plus non-governmental organisations (NGOs) and some 10,000 scientists and experts from 181 countries.

What petroleum is to Saudi Arabia, olive oil is to Palestine. Olives are a staple crop for the rural Palestinian communities traditionally dependent on agriculture.

Olive groves represent over 40 percent of the cultivated area in the West Bank and Gaza Strip and represent almost 80 percent of the cultivated fruit trees.

Now, however, the ability of many Palestinian communities to support themselves is being seriously threatened.

According to the Catholic humanitarian group Caritas in Jerusalem, in the past four years since the second Intifadah (uprising), the Israeli occupying forces have uprooted almost 400,000 olive trees with a value of over 60 million U.S. dollars.

In all, since the 1967 Six-Day War, Israeli forces have destroyed more than one million Palestinian olive trees, the same group said.

“This systematic attack on the olive groves of Palestine constitutes an immense economic and environmental disaster that promises to impact Palestinian society severely for generations to come,” said a recent Caritas statement.

Olive groves have also been cleared from strategic locations in order to open new lands for Jewish Israeli settlements. In addition, according to the Arab Group for the Protection of Nature, Israeli policies of collective punishment often target entire Palestinian communities and include uprooting trees as a means of reprimand and intimidation.

“These systematic attacks using bulldozers are rising very quickly,” said Zuayter. “The razing of the land by bulldozers is very deep. They take the upper soil - which is the most fertile and they change the whole structure of the land. Besides uprooting trees, they also uproot people and that’s cruel.”

A Caterpillar bulldozer uproots a Palestinian olive tree from stopthewall.org
Why Environmentalism cannot die

BY Adrienne Maree Brown

“Death” is such a harsh term—can we say “transition to a happier place”? Or, how else can I put this... You don’t have to fall out of the tree. Just climb down and join us on the ground. Let’s talk.

If you work on environmental issues, chances are you don’t know me. I represent the other side. The one outside the greenhouse. I’m young, I’m colored, I’m female, I’m urban—and environmentalism isn’t reaching me like it needs to.

So I want to add a few thoughts to the “Death of Environmentalism” discussion: first, an argument for why environmentalism cannot die; second, a snapshot of who the environmental movement is missing; and finally, a few of the practical shifts I see as necessary for making this a worthwhile transition instead of a death whose dramatizing serves no one.

We live in the most frightening of times, the most fearless of times. Our president, the leader of the most prolifigate world power in recent history, opposes environmental regulations at home and multilateralism abroad. The majority of our country’s citizens have been successfully lulled into thinking that the environment will somehow sustain itself. We don’t have good examples of sustainable culture; instead of taking care of our own waste, we dump it on the rest of the world. Rather than encouraging careful resource use, pushing for more innovative and effective products and technologies, and promoting renewable energy, our government goes to war to hoard the natural resources of other sovereign nations.

We see it. The people you aren’t reaching are not blind, we aren’t unmoved. More and more young people are realizing every day that the whole world is paying the price for the way we live, and we are waking up to that reality with shame and with a desire to change it. But we often don’t connect that desire, or the work we do in our own lives, with the environmental movement.

And with good reason. Come with me on a little journey called: I’m young, I’m colored, and I need a job. I need an education to get that job, and then I need that job to pay off the student loans. I gotta figure out some way to get to and from school or work as gas prices go up and public transportation costs go up. I have to hustle all day long, have to hope I don’t get arrested while working for being Arab or black or Latino or Pakistani, have to go home and eat some packaged non-food and then turn and try to love someone when neither of us has access to the condoms and sex education we need to be really safe and empowered in our interactions.

If I’m lucky, I’ll get to take a minute and dull my mind with some substance and watch a couple of hours of television where humans cut open their skin and try to put someone else’s face on, or compete to eat bugs for a million dollars. And at some point I get to sleep in my tiny home with a window that looks into someone else’s window.

At the end of that day, I may not separate the glass from the paper, the plastic from the cans. I may not carry my own water bottle everywhere I go. For a lot of young people right now, the environment is an issue for the privileged or the poor people who are becoming extinct care less about the extinction of owls and oak trees. We sit on buses that pump nasty black smoke into our air, dreaming of owning SUVs. Many of us don’t see real, unfenced trees anymore. We don’t see stars—the blue of our skies is unreal. The natural world is becoming a place to visit or dream of, a privilege for those who can find work outside the cities, or a trap for those in the migrant worker population who lack fair wages and work situations.

Overall, too many young people see the struggles of humans as separate from the struggles for a healthy environment. It isn’t because we have bad intentions—it’s because a generation does not care about the impact of its lifestyle on the environment can be easily manipulated for corporate greed. We are getting played out. And unfortunately, the environmental movement has actually helped enforce that disconnect by seeming to draw divisions between the natural world and its human inhabitants—and by seeming to worry more about the former than the latter.

That is the context for the next stage of environmentalism. You have an oppressed, depressed, furious mass waiting to be mobilized. And sure, some of us eat at McDonald’s and wear leather shoes—but we feel it is possible to demand better from our government and from ourselves for our environment. We feel it is imperative to connect the different survival struggles we are engaged in if we truly hope to sustain a viable movement for change. You will not get far if you try to link hands with us in this struggle, if you try to meet us halfway.

We are in a unique organizing space right now, fresh off the election, understanding that it is imperative to combine electoral organizing with community organizing with issue organizing, in new and unique ways. Environmentalists are doing groundbreaking work in this arena, getting citizens informed and involved around policies and petitions. But the movement has failed to reach the urban masses, and it has fallen prey to the marketing of the right, which casts worrying about the planet as goofy liberalism instead of instinctual self-preservation.

So I offer three transition steps for the leadership of the environmental movement:

1. Change your framework. You have to frame environmental issues in a way that makes sense for us and relates to the issues we care about. But you will have to get closer to us and to the work we’re doing in order to make the appeal for environmentalism. We’re talking about race, about the people of color vote in elections, understanding that it is absolutely necessary. Dramatizing its slow and agonizing death borders on indulgent. Too often, people rush to say something is dying when it’s merely in a period of transition. Be less presumptuous. Shredding an old skin is not death but renewal, less presumptuous. Shedding an old skin is not death but renewal, less presumptuous. Shedding an old skin is not death but renewal, less presumptuous.

2. Be easy and appealing. You need to turn up the heat and the appeal for environmentally friendly products and practices, while putting time and energy into bringing down the prices. It’s not written anywhere that everything recycled has to look used and cost twice as much. Lose that sage color scheme and price your wares to Target. If you aren’t willing to be a little savvy for the survival of the world, then how can you be? Take five minutes and catch up to what appeals to the greatest number. The environmental movement needs to make its home in this real world of ours.

3. Stop the environmental evangelism. I say this as a loving criticism of the people who are on the forefront of this work: you often get so caught up in the sky-is-falling mentality of environmental work that you can only see the urgency of your own issue. That’s not how to approach folks. Fiscally conservative people of color vote in their economic interest, not because someone approaches them on the street apocalyptic about mercury in the water. Mercury in the waters is a completely relevant topic for black folks, but not if we can’t see our faces on and in that movement, and see our interests as clearly part of the platform. You’ve got to talk to folks about the things that will move them—which means you’ve got to identify how your work relates to the issues that matter to other people.

As a young woman of color who doesn’t do environmental work for a living, I believe environmentalism needs to become something that the masses can integrate into how we live our lives. It’s nothing personal. Every issue-based movement needs to think in terms of solidarity and collaboration right now.

How this discussion can move forward into worthwhile projects and actions—that is the question. Stepping back and thinking about a vision for a movement is absolutely necessary. Dramatizing its slow and agonizing death borders on indulgent. Too often, people rush to say something is dying when it’s merely in a period of transition. Be less presumptuous. Shredding an old skin is not death but renewal, and those who follow the life of the planet should grasp that better than anyone else.

Adrienne Maree Brown is a writer and singer living in Brooklyn, N.Y. She is coeditor of the League of Pissed Off Voters’ How to Get Stupid White Men Out of Office: The Anti-Politics, Un-Boring Guide to Power and program director for the League of Young Voters.

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Ann Arbor Human Rights Film Festival

The Washtenaw Rainbow Action Project and the Michigan Theater proudly present the Ann Arbor Human Rights Film Festival. Featuring three selections from the Human Rights Watch Traveling Film Festival.

The festival is a benefit for the Washtenaw Rainbow Action Project and the Michigan Theater. For sponsorship opportunities please contact Jeremy Merklinger, at (734) 754-0467 or jeremy@wrap-up.org.

All films will be shown in the Michigan Theater Screening Room., 603 E. Liberty, Ann Arbor, Michigan.

SCHEDULE
SATURDAY MAY 14, 2005
* 4:00 PM JUVIES
* 5:30 PM PERSONS OF INTEREST
* 7:00 PM SAINTS AND SINNERS
SUNDAY MAY 15, 2005
* 2:00 PM PERSONS OF INTEREST
* 3:30 PM SAINTS AND SINNERS
* 5:00 PM JUVIES

WWW.WRAP-UP.ORG

Still shot from Persons of Interest.
For fourteen years, Detroit Summer has utilized a variety of strategies in the pursuit of its mission to "rebuild, redefine and respirit Detroit from the ground up." Intergenerational political discussions, community gardening, community dinners and events, poetry workshops, mural painting, building an "art park" and other innovative projects have been used as tools for empowering Detroit youth to re-envision Detroit, its past, present and future.

Detroit Summer is an organization in transition. Every summer, the group hosts a fulltime two-month-long intensive program of activities by and for Detroit youth. This summer, the organization is seeking to reorganize its intensive program in order to make it more impactful and transformative for the youth involved. Feeling spread thin by the massive number of projects pursued in past summer intensives, Detroit Summer is this year seeking to decrease the breadth of the program while simultaneously increasing its depth. "It is going to be smaller and more focused and hopefully more meaningful for the people who make up our community," explains Jenny Lee, a Detroit Summer collective member.

The program this year will be built on a "freedom school" model and will focus on environmental justice and media justice issues. Lee continues, "Through field trips and workshops we will explore how the growth of technology has wreaked environmental devastation on our city, while at the same time denying us access to the benefits of that technology, in particular, access to the tools of media production." In addition to hands-on workshops and media projects, Detroit Summer will continue to offer its popular weekly community dinners as well as introducing a new regular open-mic night featuring the work of young Detroit artists.

Detroit Summer is also renewing its commitment to grassroots fundraising as the strategy for supporting its programming. Lee explains, "Having our work be reliant on large grants for the past four years has helped Detroit Summer to grow in some ways. But it has also made us more distant from and less accountable to our root structure: the people who make up our community." This year, "the help of volunteers and individual donations" will become the basis for sustaining the work of Detroit Summer.

Tax-deductible donations to Detroit Summer can be mailed to 4605 Cass Ave, Detroit, MI 48201. Make your check payable to "Detroit Summer." You can also help out by donating equipment, buying food for community dinners or volunteering to cook a community dinner. Detroit Summer is also looking for volunteers with specialized skills in carpentry, computer maintenance, gardening, or other areas. Contact Detroit Summer by email detroitsummer@hotmail.com or call (313) 832-2904.

Back Alley Bikes is a collectively-run community bike shop that has been rebuilding and repairing bikes since 2000. The shop is located in the Cass Corridor Neighborhood Development Corporation complex at 3611 Cass Ave., just north of MLK Blvd. Back Alley Bikes currently offers a weekly Community Drop-In where you can learn from a skilled mechanic how to repair or rebuild your bike. The bike shop also offers community bike shop, email backalleybikes@riseup.net or call Bec at (313) 550-6201.

The youth selected for the Mechanics-In-Training program will be trained in advanced bike mechanics. They will also be expected to become teachers themselves, teaching other youth the art of bicycle maintenance during regular Drop-In and Earn-a-Bike activities. Beyond repairing bikes, they will be expected to learn "all aspects of running the shop, including budgeting, promotion, organizing volunteers and collective decision-making." "By the end of the program," explains Young, "the Mechanics-In-Training will be able to essentially manage the shop on their own."

Back Alley Bikes would like to offer its Mechanics-in-Training a stipend in exchange for their work. To do this however, additional funds need to be raised. To support the Mechanics-In-Training program, mail a tax-deductible donation to Bec Young at 1231 Hubbard 48209 . Make the check payable to "Back Alley Bikes" and write "Mechanics-In-Training" on the memo line. If you want to learn more about how you can support the bike shop, email backalleybikes@riseup.net or call Bec at (313) 550-6201.

Know of an organization that should be featured in the Critical Moment Grassroots Funding Report? You can send proposals to grassrootsfunding@criticalmoment.org. Please include brief descriptions of the organization's mission, history, current projects and funding needs. Please also include a contact person's email address and phone number.
CM, Where are you headed?

To the Critical Moment Collective,

I offer this letter in the spirit of constructive criticism. I certainly look forward to each issue’s release; however, as I look through the back issues, I’m not sure that I understand Critical Moment’s direction and guiding vision. What holds this magazine together and makes it something unique that the progressive community in Southeast Michigan should want to read?

I pulled out my copy of the very first [September 11, 2003] issue to remember the vision laid out on its first page. The focus of that original mission statement was on bringing together activists on campus and the broader community to connect their currently fragmented struggles: “The goal of Critical Moment is to help overcome that isolation by promoting communication and solidarity between various social movements.”

Now that’s obviously a big goal, but as Myles Horton once wrote, we should set our goals high enough that they won’t get in our way for a while, so I say stick with it. Obviously, the most concrete project was always putting out a regular paper. That’s happened consistently, and it’s gotten prettier along the way. However, I’m not sure we’ve come very far toward meeting the broader goal.

I think the original diagnosis of a very fragmented activist community was right on. I find Southeast Michigan’s progressive community particularly disconnected in comparison to other places I’ve lived or visited. CM set itself a very worthy goal of building coalitions and linking movements, and I encourage you to refocus on it.

To do that is, I realize, the big challenge, and I don’t have any brilliant solutions. I do think that there are a couple basic forms of periodicals that most papers fit into, and which model you start with plays an important role in how the paper develops. Most relevant to CM, I think, are what I would call “The Nation” model and the “MetroTimes” model. The Nation seeks to be a national/international journal that documents trends and struggles and puts forward progressive proposals. For the most part, when you find a story about a local struggle, it’s being used as an exemplar of a wider trend. Papers like the MetroTimes, on the other hand, almost always begin with the local, and also tend to be much more journalistic than essay-based.

From my perspective, CM has followed The Nation model too closely, often reading like a collection of essays reflecting the fragmented local activist community, rather than linking it together. Frankly, magazines like Clamor and ColorLines are already doing a good job of filling this niche, putting forward thoughtful collections of essays around a theme of interest to activists. However, I think there’s a lot of room to grow in coverage of movements rooted here—you might find a bit in the MetroTimes, and the Michigan Citizen runs some good stories, but there’s a lot more going on.

I’m all for linking local and global struggles, but I worry that too often in these pages, we start from the global and never quite get grounded in the local. I understand your dilemma in relying on submissions to fill the pages. As an activist, it’s often easiest to write a personalistic account of an event or movement than to do more comparative and critical work. As an academic, it’s often easier to pop out an essay riffing on abstract concepts than to explore their effects on real people’s lives. At their best, journals like CM bridge these styles and present really great work of interest to a wide audience.

Documenting and linking local struggles is hugely important—the only way we’re going to build a grassroots movement to push for a more just world. I thank you all for all the energy you’ve put in already—making this thing go for a year and a half is pretty amazing in itself—and I think it’s a solid foundation for doing very cool work in the future.

In solidarity,

David S. Dobbie
President, GEO, AFT Local 3550
Joint Doctoral Program in Social Work and Sociology
University of Michigan

P.S. And yes, I would be willing to do my part and be a CM beat reporter.

Dear Dave,

Firstly, we’d like to thank you for writing a thoughtful and pointed letter. We wanted to respond to your letter in order to let you know that we share these concerns. They are, in fact, major discussion points at every Critical Moment collective meeting. The main questions we have been asking ourselves are, “How can we encourage more local participation?” “How can we be more accountable to local communities and our local readership?” and “How can we use this paper to support the work of Michigan-based social justice movements?” The Critical Moment editorial collective is committed to doing the hard work of finding answers to those difficult questions.

In this issue you will see that we have worked to become better “grounded in the local” through the resurrection of the Community Calendar [page 26], the first edition of the Grassroots Funding Report [page 24], and an overall greater focus on local issues. We hope that Critical Moment continues to be a project that is increasingly not only interesting to read, but also accountable to the communities we are trying to serve.

The best way for this paper to become what it should be is for those who feel they have a stake in its future to continue to speak up. Write us critical letters, offer suggestions for improvement, submit articles for publication, or join our editorial collective and directly participate in this process. We look forward to your input and participation. Write to editors@criticalmoment.org to find out more about getting involved.

Revisiting “Teacher or Prison Guard”

Aaron Jackson’s letter regarding Matt Erickson’s “Teacher or Prison Guard” [Quality Control, Critical Moment #9] sparked me to write a letter myself in support of a daring exposition.

Although I have since earned a degree from the University of Michigan and will soon attend graduate school, I barely graduated from high school at all. And since leaving high school, I have found myself often bitter about what I think of as wasted years in an educational system that did not work for me.

I found intriguing the idea that perhaps my inability to play the high school education “game” has actually been conducive to my success since after I left high school, Erickson does well with his implication that the status quo educational experience actually damages a student’s natural inquisitiveness.

More importantly, however, I found Erickson’s article succeeded in exploring the consequences of the one-size-fits-all approach to education that has become in America the status quo. Because teachers narrowed their work to keep students calm and to fill their heads with prescribed information meant that I never could get past my own personal and family problems to make room for my own intellectual growth. Other students certainly suffer in other ways, as Erickson outlined.

“Teacher or Prison Guard” points out a reason that school fails many students. Instead of finding ways in which we can engage young people in their educations, we force feed it to them, with the understanding that simply not participating is not an option.

Mr. Jackson seemed to take issue with Matt’s, “data or research into the nature of classroom discipline,” and without justification, challenged Erickson’s skill as a teacher, but he did not seem to address Erickson’s actual ideas. This makes me suspect that Mr. Jackson feels somehow threatened by the ideas themselves.

I am not sure why. Erickson does not call for any specific solution; he only asks us to consider whether the status quo works. Perhaps this is the very thing that threatens Mr. Jackson most of all.

Mike Ward
mfward@gmail.com

Critical Moment welcomes letters and comments from our readers. Please send feedback to editors@criticalmoment.org
May 3 – Tuesday

**Antiwar Demonstration**
12 Noon, Federal Building (E. Liberty post office), Ann Arbor

**Open Mic Night**
8PM, The Planet. 1112 1/2 S. University, Ann Arbor, 734.994.4545

**Poetry for Social Change**
4:30-6:30PM, No-Borders Infoshop. 3535 Cass Ave. Detroit. 313.832.7730. info@idlekids.com

**Free Self-Defense Workshop**
Black Belt Christopher Jackson presents a free self-defense and offense lessons.
6:30PM-9:00PM, No-Borders Infoshop. 3535 Cass Ave. Detroit. 313.832.7730. info@idlekids.com

May 4 – Wednesday

**Cross Gender Caravan**
Young transgender writers tell their stories in fiction, essays and poetry. And along the way, they expand the boundaries of both gender and artistic expression. Your genderscape may never be the same again! 7PM, Shaman Drum Bookstore. 311 S. State St., Ann Arbor.

**Criminal Justice and Prison Reform**
Featuring Ken Wyniemark, an exonerated prisoner from Michigan, and David Moran, Asst. Professor, Wayne State Law School. 7:30-8:30PM, First UU Congregation, 2001 Ann Arbor-Saline Road, Ann Arbor. more info, www.uuao.org

**Adventures in Capitalism (Film Screening)**
8PM, The Planet. 1112 1/2 S. University, Ann Arbor. 734.994.4545

May 5 – Thursday

**Open Page Night**
7pm, The Planet. 1112 1/2 S. University, Ann Arbor. 734.994.4545

**May 6 – Thursday**

**Global Chaos versus Global Cooperation: Working to Make the U.S. a More Responsible Leader**
First Presbyterian Church, 1432 Washenaw, Ann Arbor. S10. includes lunch on Saturday. For more info: Interfaith Council Peace & Justice, 734-663-1870, info@icpj.net, www.icpj.net

**Clothing Change Exchange**
Formerly "Barter Bizarre," a day of barter and exchange. No money may be exchanged, just one item for another, presentations and workshops given addressing social justice, gender, and "fashion". 2PM, No-Borders Infoshop. 3535 Cass Ave. Detroit. 313.832.7730. info@idlekids.com

**May 7 – Saturday**

**Antiwar Demonstration**
12 Noon, corner of Fourth St. and Catherine, Ann Arbor

**Puttting Permaculture into Practice**
Techniques to bring vibrant, sustainable landscapes to life in your own back yard. 2 day workshop. Sunnyside Learning Center, 1801 Avondale Avenue More info, www. SunnysideLearningCenter.com

S. University, Ann Arbor, 734.994.4545. a2planet.com

May 8 – Sunday

**Putting Permaculture into Practice**
Techniques to Bring Vibrant, Sustainable Landscapes to Life in your Own Back Yard. 2 day workshop. Sunnyside Learning Center, 1801 Avondale Avenue More info, www. SunnysideLearningCenter.com

May 9 – Monday

**Open Mic Night**
8PM, The Planet. 1112 1/2 S. University, Ann Arbor, 734.994.4545

**Poetry for Social Change**
4:30-6:30PM, No-Borders Infoshop. 3535 Cass Ave. Detroit. 313.832.7730. info@idlekids.com

May 10 – Tuesday

**Antiwar Demonstration**
12 Noon, Federal Building (E. Liberty post office), Ann Arbor

**Open Mic Night**
8PM, The Planet. 1112 1/2 S. University, Ann Arbor, 734.994.4545

**Poetry for Social Change**
4:30-6:30PM, No-Borders Infoshop. 3535 Cass Ave. Detroit. 313.832.7730. info@idlekids.com

May 11 – Wednesday

**May 12 – Thursday**

**Open Page Night**
7pm, The Planet. 1112 1/2 S. University, Ann Arbor, 734.994.4545

**Poetry for Social Change**
7pm, The Planet. 1112 1/2 S. University, Ann Arbor. 734.994.4545

May 13 – Friday

**Tranny Roadshow 2005**
Multimedia performance art extravaganza: an eclectic group of artists, each one selfidentified as transgender. 8PM. The Trumbullplex, 4210 Trumbull Ave, Detroit, $5.

**Hip Hop Show: Chyl and Elbow City**
9pm, The Planet. 1112 1/2 S. University, Ann Arbor, 734.994.4545

May 14 – Saturday

**Antiwar Demonstration**
12 Noon, corner of Fourth St. and Catherine, Ann Arbor

**Forum on Imperialism**
Sponsored by the Ann Arbor Coalition Against War and the

May 15 – Sunday

**Putting Permaculture into Practice**
Techniques to Bring Vibrant, Sustainable Landscapes to Life in your Own Back Yard. 2 day workshop. Sunnyside Learning Center, 1801 Avondale Avenue More info, www. SunnysideLearningCenter.com

May 16 – Monday

**Antiwar Demonstration**
12 Noon, Federal Building (E. Liberty post office), Ann Arbor

**Open Mic Night**
8PM, The Planet. 1112 1/2 S. University, Ann Arbor, 734.994.4545

**Poetry for Social Change**
4:30-6:30PM, No-Borders Infoshop. 3535 Cass Ave. Detroit. 313.832.7730. info@idlekids.com

May 17 – Tuesday

**Antiwar Demonstration**
12 Noon, Federal Building (E. Liberty post office), Ann Arbor

**Open Mic Night**
8PM, The Planet. 1112 1/2 S. University, Ann Arbor, 734.994.4545

**Poetry for Social Change**
4:30-6:30PM, No-Borders Infoshop. 3535 Cass Ave. Detroit. 313.832.7730. info@idlekids.com

May 18 – Wednesday

**IWW (Industrial Workers of the World) General Meeting**
Any worker interested in joining a revolutionary union is welcome. No-Borders Infoshop. 3535 Cass Ave. Detroit. 313.832.7730. info@idlekids.com

May 19 – Thursday

**Open Page Night**
7pm, The Planet. 1112 1/2 S. University, Ann Arbor. 734.994.4545

May 20 – Saturday

**Street Medic Training**
May 21 – Saturday  
**ANTIWAR DEMONSTRATION**  
12 Noon, corner of Fourth St. and Catherine, Ann Arbor

May 24 – Tuesday  
**ANTIWAR DEMONSTRATION**  
12 Noon, Federal Building (E. Liberty post office), Ann Arbor

Open Mic Night  
8PM, The Planet. 1112 1/2 S. University, Ann Arbor, 734.994.4545

Poetry for Social Change  
4:30-6:30PM, No-Borders Infoshop. 3535 Cass Ave. Detroit. 313.832.7730. info@idlekids.com

June 2 – Thursday  
**Poetry for Social Change**  
4:30-6:30PM, No-Borders Infoshop. 3535 Cass Ave. Detroit. 313.832.7730. info@idlekids.com

June 4 – Saturday  
**ANTIWAR DEMONSTRATION**  
12 Noon, corner of Fourth St. and Catherine, Ann Arbor

June 7 – Tuesday  
**ANTIWAR DEMONSTRATION**  
12 Noon, Federal Building (E. Liberty post office), Ann Arbor

Open Mic Night  
8PM, The Planet. 1112 1/2 S. University, Ann Arbor, 734.994.4545

Poetry for Social Change  
4:30-6:30PM, No-Borders Infoshop. 3535 Cass Ave. Detroit. 313.832.7730. info@idlekids.com

May 26 – Thursday  
**Open Page Night**  
7pm, The Planet. 1112 1/2 S. University, Ann Arbor, 734.994.4545

May 27 – Friday  
**Critical Mass**  
In front of Nickel’s Arcade, 4:30PM, Ann Arbor

May 28 – Saturday  
**ANTIWAR DEMONSTRATION**  
12 Noon, corner of Fourth St. and Catherine, Ann Arbor

June 14 – Tuesday  
**ANTIWAR DEMONSTRATION**  
12 Noon, Federal Building (E. Liberty post office), Ann Arbor

Open Mic Night  
8PM, The Planet. 1112 1/2 S. University, Ann Arbor, 734.994.4545

Poetry for Social Change  
4:30-6:30PM, No-Borders Infoshop. 3535 Cass Ave. Detroit. 313.832.7730. info@idlekids.com

June 18 – Saturday  
**ANTIWAR DEMONSTRATION**  
12 Noon, corner of Fourth St. and Catherine, Ann Arbor

June 21 – Tuesday  
**ANTIWAR DEMONSTRATION**  
12 Noon, Federal Building (E. Liberty post office), Ann Arbor

Open Mic Night  
8PM, The Planet. 1112 1/2 S. University, Ann Arbor, 734.994.4545

Poetry for Social Change  
4:30-6:30PM, No-Borders Infoshop. 3535 Cass Ave. Detroit. 313.832.7730. info@idlekids.com

June 25 – Saturday  
**ANTIWAR DEMONSTRATION**  
12 Noon, corner of Fourth St. and Catherine, Ann Arbor

June 28 – Tuesday  
**ANTIWAR DEMONSTRATION**  
12 Noon, Federal Building (E. Liberty post office), Ann Arbor

Poetry for Social Change  
4:30-6:30PM, No-Borders Infoshop. 3535 Cass Ave. Detroit. 313.832.7730. info@idlekids.com

June 30 – Thursday  
**Open Page Night**  
7pm, The Planet. 1112 1/2 S. University, Ann Arbor, 734.994.4545

June 24 – Friday  
**Critical Mass**  
In front of Nickel’s Arcade, 4:30PM, Ann Arbor

To list your event here, email calendar@criticalmoment.org