

# The Voice



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## The Afro-Colombian Struggle for Land & Justice

By Marino Córdoba, With Introduction by Meridith Kruse

*U.S. military aid is undermining human rights in Colombia. Right-wing paramilitaries work with the U.S.-backed Colombian military to target leaders of Afro-Colombian, union, human rights, indigenous, and women's groups. Fumigation of coca fields with poisonous chemicals causes internal displacement, medical problems, and destruction of subsistence crops while the U.S. State Department reports that coca production has increased 25% from 2000 to 2001. Lacking a focus on eliminating the root causes of the 38-year civil war, U.S. taxpayers continue to fund a Colombian military that systematically violates human rights to further the interests of the international economic elite.*



*Recent developments do not bode well for the protection of human rights in Colombia. On August 13<sup>th</sup>, Colombian President Alvaro Uribe declared a "state of domestic commotion," giving the government the right to create a new tax to pay for a massive military build-up, restrict movement, make arrests without warrants, and control television and radio. Uribe promises to arm 100,000 civilians and U.S. President George W. Bush pledges more military aid and expanded fumigation in upcoming months. Several weeks ago U.S. officials asked Uribe to shield U.S. military trainers in Colombia from prosecution by the International Criminal Court.*

*In the face of all this we have people like Marino Córdoba. I met Marino at AGAPE house, an inclusive, multi-cultural, anti racist campus ministry engaged in the struggle for justice in Chicago. Marino's life stands as an inspiration to those struggling for life, dignity, and peace in Colombia. When I asked Marino what he thought of the newly elected Colombian President he reminded me that Uribe was in charge of Riosucio in 1997 when the death squads, working with the American-backed Colombian military, committed massacres against his people. Please read Marino's article below and attend his talk at the Illinois Disciples Foundation's Annual Peace with Justice Fall Dinner on Saturday November 9<sup>th</sup>. Proceeds from the dinner will be used to sustain the IDF's peace with justice work and Marino will be given a honorarium to support the Afro-Colombian struggle for land and justice.*

Colombia has 40 million people – 26% of them of African descent, mostly in the Pacific region. Since the period of slavery, we have shared that area with indigenous Native Americans.

Fifty years ago, a law was passed that people willing to invest in that area could settle there. People began buying small land holdings from Blacks, peasants and indigenous people and turning them into big



Marino Córdoba

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## The Illinois Disciples Foundation

The Illinois Disciples Foundation (IDF) was envisioned in 1905 and chartered in 1916. The IDF is a regional unit of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) in the United States and Canada. It is located at the Urbana-Champaign campus of the University of Illinois.

## The IDF Mission Statement

The Illinois Disciples Foundation is nurturing and clarifying the understanding of its purpose and mission as exigencies arise and opportunities offer. The Illinois Disciples Foundation is informed by its historical experience, the liberating streams of consciousness within the Judeo-Christian tradition, and the vision of a just, peaceable, and ecologically sustaining realm. The Illinois Disciples Foundation is a pioneering campus ministry with the mission priority of "Peace with Justice." This means that the Illinois Disciples Foundation is a ministry of, for, and by a people committed to an ecumenical mission of:

- denouncing violence;
- working for justice and compassion;
- speaking truth to power;
- standing in solidarity with those struggling for justice, peace, and the integrity of creation, and caring for and affirming the gifts of all people, with special regard to those oppressed or disenfranchised on the basis of race, gender, sexual orientation, class, age, national origin, cultural identity, spirituality or religious affiliation, physical or mental ability, HIV antibody status, marital status, family structure, socioeconomic status, educational status, or other distinctions.

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### IDF Programs

Activist Forum Speaker Series  
Common Ground Food Co-Op  
Progressive Resource/Action Cooperative  
Uprising  
Women's Direct Action Collective

### IDF Staff

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# The Activist Forum Speaker Series

The Activist Forum Speaker Series brings in several long-term activists each year to reflect on their social justice work. The presentation is autobiographical in nature, providing insight into the issues that each activist has worked on. It provides a source of inspiration and experience for people who are currently active in social justice work, or those who are looking to become involved. Announcements of Activist Forum speakers will be posted on the IDF's listserve. If you would like to be added to this list please e-mail us at [idf@prairienet.org](mailto:idf@prairienet.org).

## The Activist Forum Presents Mike Doyle and Kathy Sims: "Power concedes nothing without a demand"

By Julia Schaschwary and Jen Tayabji

Since the New Year, the IDF has organized two events in the Activist Forum series. The Activist Forum series featured Mike Doyle in February and Kathy Sims in June. Both these individuals embody the IDF mission of peace with social justice through their life-long commitments to activism.

Mike Doyle is the Executive Director and founder of the Public Interest Fund of Illinois (PIFI). PIFI is a work-giving organization. Doyle also co-founded Champaign County Health Care Consumers (CCHCC). This 25-year old organization uses education, advocacy, and community organizing to work for health care for all. CCHCC has received national recognition for its longevity and effectiveness.

Kathy Sims is the director for the Center for Women in Transition (CWIT). Based in Champaign, this organization provides safe and supportive housing for women and children transitioning out of homelessness. One of the unique things about CWIT is that there is no time limit on the length of stay and is highly successful in improving the lives of women and children.

Both Doyle and Sims do their work at the grassroots, in-the-trenches level. Doyle has grounded his work in the three principles of direct action organizing: 1) make concrete changes in people's lives; 2) give people a sense of their own power; and 3) change the relations of power in the community. Doyle said in his presentation, "You have to give people a reason to get home from work after a long day and then go out again to a meeting. My experience has been that people need to see and participate in movement and real change. That usu-

ally happens close to home, in your neighborhood or in your city or in your county." Doyle described some of the many organizing campaigns he has participated in. He said, "You can get the powerful to make changes, but they won't do it on their own. You have to create the situation where the changes can happen."

Sims also described running to resistance to change. She described the basic necessities that many people need, such as housing, child care, affordable health care, training and education, a living wage, and sometimes substance abuse treatment. "There is a whole package of necessities here," she said, "and it takes time and energy to build them into a person's life. But too many programs out there expect clients to put it all together in six weeks. That just will not happen, but try convincing the people who run those programs that they need to do away with time limits. It's crazy." But Sims' record of success at CWIT has built broad support in the community, and CWIT is recognized as a model for helping and empowering women.

Kathy Sims and Mike Doyle truly epitomize the struggle for peace with social justice. Their commitments to activism have empowered not only those they helped, but also those who attended the Activist Forum Series. Their life stories emphasized the commitment to struggle for social justice, on all issues, that is essential to our foundation.

Julia Schaschwary was a Campus Ministry Associate at IDF in 2001-02. Jen Tayabji is the Administrative Assistant at IDF. Both have been involved in IDF programs for several years.

# The Role of Religion in the Israel/Palestine Conflict

By David Green

While the modern and century-old crisis in the Middle East is not now and never has been an essentially religious one, I would suggest that its resolution lies partly and significantly in an ecumenical movement for peace with justice in the region in general and in Israel/Palestine in particular. By ecumenical, I mean of course to include Muslims, Christians, and Jews.

Given recent history, it is understandable that the conflict between Israelis and Palestinians has been increasingly explained in terms of religious fundamentalism, or with an increased emphasis on the religious labels that apply to the participants. But in spite of the importance of Muslim, Jewish, and Christian histories, beliefs, and identities in understanding the Middle East, I think one is mistaken to describe the problem of Israel/Palestine in *primarily* religious terms—that is, in terms of religious motivations for political actions. Zionism was conceived in the 19<sup>th</sup> century as a secular and romantic movement of Jewish nationalism, and the post-1948 Palestinian national liberation movement incorporated ideologies that ranged from traditional to liberal to Marxist.

As such, the evolution of this conflict can be better understood regionally in the secular terms of nationalism, colonialism, land, race, and capitalism. In its international context, and specifically regarding U.S. involvement in the region and its one-sided support for Israel, the conflict must also be understood in relation to the Cold War and the current (but really 20-year-old) “war on terrorism.” The phenomenon of Christian fundamentalist support for Israel in the U.S. is of great interest, but clearly is not a significant factor in our foreign policy, which is driven by the strategic role of Israel as an American client state in an unstable region with abundant oil resources.

Similarly, Jewish-American identity has increasingly incorporated an assumed support for the Jewish state that has little to do with specific beliefs or practices in any of the three major movements of Judaism. The result of an evolving process begun after World War II, this identification did not begin to assume its current fervent nature until after the 1967 Arab-Israeli war. Support for Israel among Jewish-Americans was initially rooted in a combination of ethnic pride and obligation, the icing on the cake of Jewish upward mobility in American economic and social life. Such support was initially consistent with liberal Jewish-American support for the primary social justice movements of that era, Civil Rights and anti-Vietnam War.

Beginning with the 1967 Six Day War and the resulting occupation, Jewish-Americans (especially members of Jewish institutions) have drifted increasingly rightward, especially regarding foreign policy issues. But while the imperial vision of “Greater Israel” has religious dimensions (although ascribed to by only a minority of settlers themselves), its most powerful supporters within the Israeli government and among Jewish-American leaders at best employ the secular pieties of Judeo-Christian civilization to dignify the calculations of “real politick” that promote both Israeli expansion and American hegemony in the region.

In response to this, peace activists of religious or secular persuasions are challenged to prove that rational political analysis and nonviolent activism can counter the cynicism that is inherent in both religious fundamentalism and political ideology; and nurture the hopes of those who persist in believing that “the arc of history is long, but bends toward justice.”

David Green lives is a member of AWARE, the Anti-War, Anti-Racism Effort and Not in My Name, a national network of Jewish people committed to peace.



The IDF Invites You to:  
**“The Occupation Is Killing Us All”**  
**A Discussion with Palestinian Activist Osama Saba**  
Statement of Support to Be Read By David Green of “Not in My Name”  
**Monday, September 23<sup>rd</sup> at 7pm at IDF**  
For more information call (217) 352-8721



# Voices in the Wilderness Continues the Struggle to End Economic Sanctions and Stop Another U.S. War on Iraq

## Updates Provided By the Staff of Voices in the Wilderness

On Tuesday February 12<sup>th</sup> Kathy Kelly of Voices in the Wilderness visited the Progressive Resource/Action Cooperative, a program of IDF, to speak out against the US/UN Sanctions on Iraq. Since that time Voices has continued their campaign to end sanctions and stop the next U.S. war.

In early April 2002 Kathy Kelly and Jeff Guntzel left Chicago for Israel/Palestine. They remained in that region until April 25. They returned from the Jenin camp with ample evidence that the Israeli Government ordered Israeli Occupying Forces to commit crimes against humanity by attacking and destroying a civilian neighborhood in the Jenin refugee camp. From May 24<sup>th</sup> through May 30<sup>th</sup>, 2002, Voices held a Compassion Iraq Coalition Peace Walk to Baghdad. Sixteen Americans journeyed to Iraq to participate in the seven-day walk across the desert to dramatize the need for the US and the international community to "go the extra mile" in averting the all-out war that is being planned by the Bush Administration. On June 17, 2002, Voices held a press conference to announce Bert Sacks' noncompliance with the \$10,000 fine imposed on him by OFAC for bringing medicine and food into Iraq. He is instead raising \$10,000 for medicine to be sent to Iraq.

From August 3<sup>rd</sup> through September 11<sup>th</sup>, Voices in the Wilderness sponsored their second 40-day fast entitled "Break Ranks – Build Bridges" in New York City, staging the events across the street from the US Mission to the UN. Fasters encouraged the member states of the UN to "break ranks" with the US in its insistence on endless sanctions for Iraq as well as to oppose any new US-led military onslaught against Iraq. On September 12, 2002, Voices joined Pax Christi New York to begin the "Mirror of Truth" Bus Tour. The caravan left from New York City on a three-month trip to visit weapons sites and speak along the East Coast. It will end at the gates of the School of the Americas during SOA Watch's annual vigil and protest in Ft. Benning, GA in November. Tour organizers will encourage audiences to examine the hypocrisy of condemning terrorist attacks on our nation while unabashedly funding and deploying weaponry around the world.

*It is time to look into the mirror.*

### **Organizations and Resources for Non-violent Solutions in the Middle East**

#### **Not In My Name**

Formed as a gathering of Jews concerned about the Middle East, now gaining momentum as a national network.  
PMB 206, 2859 Central St., Evanston, IL 60201;  
312-409-4845; [www.nimn.org](http://www.nimn.org)

#### **Al-Awda, The Palestine Right to Return Coalition**

An association of grassroots activists and organizational representatives whose objective is to educate the international community to fulfill its legal and moral obligations vis-à-vis the Palestinian people.  
P.O. Box 401, Hummelstown, PA 17036.  
[www.al-awda.org/committees.htm](http://www.al-awda.org/committees.htm)

#### **Gush Shalom**

Part of the Israeli peace movement, that have played a leading role in determining the moral and political agenda of the peace forces in Israel as well as breaking the so called "national consensus" based on misinformation.  
[www.gush-shalom.org](http://www.gush-shalom.org)

#### **AMPAL**

An organization of Americans and Palestinians For Peace  
[www.muscanet.com/~ampal/](http://www.muscanet.com/~ampal/)

#### **Yesh Gvul**

An organization that supports Israeli conscientious objectors. "Refusnik" Ram Rahat Goodman, who spoke in Champaign-Urbana several months ago, is part of this group.  
[www.seruv.org](http://www.seruv.org)

#### **Voices in the Wilderness**

A Campaign to End US/UN Economic Sanctions on Iraq  
1400 W. Carmen Ave., Chicago, IL 60640  
1-773-784-8065  
[www.vitw.org](http://www.vitw.org)

#### **September 11<sup>th</sup> Families for Peaceful Tomorrows**

They are a advocacy organization founded by family members of Sept. 11<sup>th</sup> victims. Its mission is to seek effective nonviolent responses to terrorism.  
[www.peacefultomorrow.org](http://www.peacefultomorrow.org)

# Moving Towards Change: PRC Continues Work Against "Chief"

By Karin Lange



*Anti-"Chief" protesters hold banner in front of the UI Union at a PRC rally*

Last May, the school year ended on a positive note for anti-"Chief" activists when two major organizations passed resolutions or made statements against having "Chief Illiniwek" as the mascot and symbol of the UI. Both the Illinois Student Government and the Chancellor's Committee on Diversity claimed that the "Chief" contributed to racism on campus and went against any goal of a multicultural education. The PRC had a speaker at the Board meeting, held a picket outside, and marched to the Chancellor's Office to show the UI Administration that we need change. However, even with these bold statements, the Board of Trustees made no response. *And so we continue the fight.*

The Progressive Resource/Action Cooperative (PRC), an IDF program, has been fighting for the elimination of the "Chief" for over a decade, and we are still going strong. The PRC was active over the summer and is in full swing for the fall. During the summer, members spent time handing out a "Dis-Orientation" leaflet to incoming students during UI Orientation. This leaflet aimed to introduce students to the conflicts and racism at the UI that the administration doesn't talk about. The PRC also had a speaker at the Board of Trustees (BOT) meeting in Springfield demand a vote to eliminate the "Chief." As new students began to move in this Fall, the PRC wrote messages in chalk near the dorms and participated in an activist orientation workshop.

As expected, the BOT did **NOT** vote over the summer, which means the UI is entering yet another year with a racist and stereotypical depiction of Native Americans. The University is not any closer to that part of its mission statement reading "...remaining a leader in the creation and synthesis of knowledge for the benefit of current and future generations..." In fact, the UI is behind the times as more and more schools are changing their race-based mascots to ones that do not dehumanize.

The PRC plans to keep pressuring the Board until the "Chief" is eliminated. We will not tolerate continued delays on such a matter of social justice and will be working hard this coming semester to educate, organize, and protest against "Chief Illiniwek" on campus.

Highlights of PRC Plans for this fall:

- General PRC Meetings -- every Wed. at 7:30pm, at IDF
- Anti-"Chief" Protest -- Sept. 19, 12noon, UI Quad
- Columbus Day Action -- October 14
- Protest around BOT Meeting in November
- Dorm Talks, Organizing, Fundraisers, and More!



For more information about this struggle for social justice, visit the PRC website at [www.prairienet.org/prc](http://www.prairienet.org/prc), email the PRC to join the mailing list or if you have questions about the organization at [prc@prairienet.org](mailto:prc@prairienet.org), or call the IDF at 352-8721.



Karin Lange is one of the PRC coordinators and a student at the UI. She has been with IDF for several years.

# WDAC Celebrates 1 Year as an IDF Program with Continued Activism

By Janna McGregor and Jen Tayabji

The organizers of the Women's Direct Action Collective are looking forward to celebrating our 2nd year as an IDF program by actively recruiting new members, continuing our on-going evaluation of WDAC's internal processes, and planning for future events. WDAC is a women's and transgendered persons' collective dedicated to a mission of ending domestic violence, sexual violence, sexual harassment, racism, homophobia, class-based injustices, denial of reproductive freedom, inadequate access to safe and affordable health care, and discrimination against disabled persons. We formed 2.5 years ago out of a collective of activists organizing Take Back the Night.

WDAC is feeling energized after a very successful 2002 Take Back the Night 2002! "Last April's Take Back the Night was such a success because we were able to use what we've learned through past organizing," WDAC member Sang Lee commented. Take Back the Night is an international annual event that protests violence against women and the institutions that allow such violence to thrive in our society. After the enthusiastic response to last year's Take Back the Night, WDAC is extremely excited to begin planning for Take Back the Night 2003, hoping to use the planning to involve newer activists.

WDAC sees this Fall as a great opportunity to reach out to the new students through increasing awareness on issues and ultimately helping people join the movement. In addition, we want to continue expanding our outreach to the local community. Ruxandra Costescu, a member of WDAC said, "Although there are tangible differences between campus and community, it is important to realize that there is a common thread among all women, due to ever-present institutionalized sexism." Our outreach efforts will ensure that we have plenty of energy to organize future events, as well as to expand the movement by educating newer activists and utilizing the skills of more experienced activists. WDAC is also planning to network with other organizations so that ally organizations can support each other.

WDAC meets biweekly on Tuesdays at 7pm at IDF. The semester gets into full swing on September 17th when WDAC will be hosting its fall semester Introductory Meeting at 7pm at IDF! The meetings are open to women and transgendered persons only.

For information on how to get involved on the Women's Direct Action Collective, or for updates on upcoming events, email [tbtn@prairienet.org](mailto:tbtn@prairienet.org) or call 352-8721.



Janna McGregor is the Volunteer Coordinator at Rape Crisis Services. Jen Tayabji works at IDF. Both have been involved with WDAC since its inception.



# Uprising: An Interview with Jim Holiman

By Meridith Kruse

*Recently, I had the opportunity to interview Jim Holiman, campus minister at the Illinois Disciples Foundation from 1963 through 2000. Over the summer a group of us participated in the IDF “Uprising” series entitled “The Collapse of Christendom” and read Volumes I and II of “The History of Christianity” by Justo Gonzalez. At meetings Jim led a discussion about Christianity from a historical and sociological approach, situating the IDF within a legacy of left-wing Christianity. I learned a lot during these sessions and came away full of questions. I’ve transcribed Jim’s responses to some of my inquiries, which provide insight into Jim’s past, the legacy and future of the IDF, and challenges facing those of us working for peace with justice from a left-wing perspective.*

**MK:** How important do you think it is that the IDF continue affiliation with left-wing Christianity and that those working for peace with justice at IDF see their work within the context of this legacy?

**JH:** Well, it is always important to understand your theological legacy, because if you don’t study it and know it well you may find yourself engaged in something purporting to be prophetic social justice work when in fact it is not. It may be some kind of reformist agenda with a capitalist purpose. For example, if you look into the 1930s you’ll see some “social justice advocates” who were really committed to a fascist agenda and saw their work from the perspective of Germany’s National Socialist Ideology; they even helped Hitler’s Brown Shirts study how the US solved “the Indian problem.” So it’s important to know your theological tradition.

Western Christianity has been the “sacred canopy” spread over our way of life. Christianity as a “religion” started under Emperor Constantine in 321 CE. It is entangled from its very beginning with imperial state politics. And unfortunately, that triumphal mode is the dominant stance of the various Christianities in the Western World, especially in the USA. The result has been horrendous in a number of centuries: pogroms against Jews, Muslims, Native Americans, Blacks, Germans, and Japanese. And as we saw during Hitler’s Third Reich, repression is not limited to ethnicity; it also has ideological, political, and economic rootage. A recent outbreak of violence in which I was active witness and engaged in, was resisting was the US government persecution of Central American refugees fleeing violence in their homeland. The National Sanctuary Movement drew upon the left-wing or Radical Christian traditions, engaged in civil resistance under international law to stop US deportation of political refugees back into the violence from which they had fled; we also developed resistance to US intervention in Central American states and its support for regimes committed to genocide. The struggle covered twelve years; there were massive displacements of people, death squad action against refugees and sanctuary workers, arrests, and long drawn-out trials that threatened to break down our morale and resources, and many sanctuary workers experienced withdrawal of support and fellowship in their local communities, including congregations and denominations. Without the challenge and the support of the Radical or left-wing community in the Sanctuary Movement, engaged in the praxis of social justice ministry, we would not have survived the violent pressures brought against us.

Yes. It’s important that IDF stand and remain upstanding in the left-wing tradition. The terms “radical” and “left wing” were applied to us by Roman Catholics, Calvinists, and Lutherans during the 1500s because “the Anabaptists” (another name given us by our opponents) refused to give allegiance to any authority (secular or religious) save the Jesus of Nazareth Movement. The allegiance to Jesus of Nazareth is the left-wing’s main characteristic. Of course, the Movement predates the Reformation, Constantinian Christianity, and the so-called “apostolic ancestors.” Its roots are in the identity of Jesus of Nazareth, the first century CE Jewish pro-



phetic voice of the peace with justice social order that he called “the kingdom of God.” The Movement continues right down to the present day, although, as you might expect, it functions on the margins of Western societies. Yes, I think it is important for the folk of the IDF to understand the story of left-wing Christianity, what it stands up for, and what people working out of its legacy may expect. It is not a reformist or a traditionalist orientation; those orientations may look either pragmatic or progressive, but in fact have agendas perpetrating systematic violence and the continuation of social disorder. An example would be the racist “Chief Illiniwek,” a revered social symbol for many. But in fact, it represents the power fantasies of European colonial ambition and White Anglo-Saxon Protestantism and the spirit of capitalism in the United States. Another example, in many Christian denominations it is difficult for women to seek ordination, and where it is possible, to find a parish which accepts a woman as its pastor. This is the result not only of present-day sexism, but of patriarchy and traditional “apostolic” values. Such tradition perpetuates social violence, sanctifying it with an alleged “divine orders of ministry.” Left-wing praxis stands in resistance to these power fantasies of social injustice.

**MK:** How would you characterize mainstream Christianity today, and what effect does the left-wing have there?

**JH:** The left-wing is marginal at best. Its voice is certainly not the dominant one that people hear and accept as “the Christian point of view.” In fact there is no “Christian point of view.” There are lots of Christians. I like to think of the different congregations in Champaign-Urbana in the same way I think about gasoline stations in Champaign-Urbana. Whatever octane you want you will find. So what’s important is what kind of octane you want, and then you go out and shop for it, and you will find it, and you will be well-served. “Consumer Christianity.”

Left-wing Christianity has few, if any, congregational filling stations in Champaign-Urbana. Its constituency is limited to people of faith and conscience who volunteer themselves for the praxis of

social justice work: helping the victims of social disorder and working for the redistribution of wealth and power on the basis of systemic justice, human compassion, and God’s faithfulness. This activity clearly bothers mainstream Christianity. Guardians of the mainstream faithfulness will attempt to denigrate social justice ministry as not central to Christian spirituality, especially in the proclamation of the Word of God and Eucharistic celebration. At such times you confront them with the proclamation of Jesus of

Nazareth (e.g. Luke 4:18-19, or his “Sermon on the Mount”) and his prayer “Thy will be done on earth...” Yes, they may play their “authority card” or engage in linguistic dissimulation and pretend astonishment that someone might

take Jesus at his word. But occasionally, a conversation takes place, and a new basis for more constructive work is created. But in these situations people of faith and conscience must be upstanding to the nihilation therapies that ecclesial bureaucracies apply to left-wing church units like IDF. And this is another reason why Radicals need to know their legacy, inside and out.

Now in this age of pluralism and political correctness, it may be assumed that a particular theological legacy and praxis will exclude perspectives that are non-Christian or disbelieving. I’ve certainly run into that over the years. But for the left-wing, “correct” belief of the “truth claims” of prepositional belief (e.g. the five pillars of Bill Bright’s Campus Crusade) are not central. For the left-wing what is central is to “bring good news to the poor, release its prisoners and recovery of sight to the blind, to set at liberty the oppressed and to announce that time is now” (Luke 4:18-19). In my experience in this work, people from religious or non-religious backgrounds, from theological to non-theological perspectives, are able to work together on social justice from a radical perspective. “Radical” means “rooted,” “to the roots.” When the focus is on getting to the root of social violence, e.g. war, people of faith and conscience work together. A living example of what occurred during father Bush’s “War in the Gulf.” A coalition called the “Committee Against the War in the Gulf,” pulled together by the PRC here at IDF organized one of the most significant mass protests in Illinois against that war. The coalition included dozens of secular organizations, all sectors of the religious community, and

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**“Left-wing praxis stands in resistance to these power fantasies of social injustice.”**

## Upcoming Events at IDF

Sept 23rd at 7pm- Lecture by Osama Saba  
"The Occupation is Killing Us All"

Oct. 10th at 7pm- "Telling the Real Story: Eder Sanchez Speaks Out  
About the Impact of US Policy in Colombia"

Nov. 9th- IDF Fall Dinner with keynote speaker Marino Córdoba,  
doors open at 5:30pm

### CCHCC Director & IDF Board Member Claudia Lennhoff Receives Nation's Highest Award for Community Health Leadership By Brooke Anderson

Champaign County Health Care Consumers' (CCHCC) Executive Director and IDF Board Member Claudia Lennhoff has been selected to receive the nation's most prestigious health leadership award for her work with the Health Care Consumers.

The Robert Wood Johnson Foundation's Community Health Leadership Program award is given to 10 outstanding community health leaders who overcome daunting odds to expand access to health care and social services to underserved populations and communities. Lennhoff and nine others will be honored in a September 24th ceremony at the National Press Club in Washington, DC.

"This is a real honor and tribute to the work of the Health Care Consumers," said Lennhoff. "There is a significant financial award that comes with this recognition. With this award, the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation's Community Health Leadership Program is making a real investment in the Champaign County Health Care Consumers so that we can continue or work. We are very honored and pleased."

Lennhoff was selected from a field of 463 nominees for this year's honor. "This year's leaders have ingeniously created health care programs that are successfully addressing the most complicated

and formidable health issues facing people in our country today," says Catherine Dunham, director of the RWJ Community Health Leadership Program. CHLP is a program of the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation, the largest private philanthropy dedicated to improving health and health care for Americans.

Lennhoff is being recognized for her leadership in grassroots community organizing efforts that have led to the creation of the Champaign County Public Health Department, the new Child Dental Access Program, and the Champaign County Community Health Partnership, as well as new efforts to address problems of medical debt affecting low-income Champaign County residents and the many and varied other activities of the Champaign County Health Care Consumers under her leadership.

Lennhoff often works one-on-one with consumers to fill gaps within the health care system. "Everyone deserves quality health care," Lennhoff says. "Money shouldn't get in the way of someone getting the health care they need, when they need it. I know that sounds naive, but I think it is wrong to put a price on someone's life, which is what we do as a society when we allow the health care system to deny access to health care for financial reasons."

Brooke Anderson is an organizer at Champaign County Health Care Consumers, working on many things such as the Women's Health Task Force. She is on the IDF Board, a member of WDAC, and also the co-coordinator of PRC.

# Wal-Mart Picket Set for Sept. 21

By Ruth Wyman

What does the nation's largest corporation have in common with the most sued retailer in the country? It's the same company. That's right: Always in Court, Always Wal-Mart.

You might think that a corporation at the top of the Fortune 500 list would be leading the way as a model workplace. Not so with Wal-Mart – currently one of the worst examples of a hostile work environment. Wal-Mart faces an appalling volume of allegations of sex discrimination in pay, promotion, and compensation; of wage abuses, violation of child labor laws and the Americans with Disabilities Act; contraception exclusion in employee insurance plans and discrimination on the basis of sexual orientation.

The list of Wal-Mart's workplace offenses is long. The National Organization for Women (NOW) has attempted to communicate with Wal-Mart regarding these concerns, but thus far, the company has been unresponsive. The problems with Wal-Mart have led NOW, the country's leading women's rights group, to name the company a Merchant of Shame in its Women-Friendly Workplace Campaign. NOW's previous Women-Friendly Workplace campaigns spurred Smith Barney, Mitsubishi Motors, and other leading corporations to work toward creating truly women-friendly and family-friendly workplaces. Perhaps Wal-Mart will look at this as a golden opportunity to also do the right thing.

Seventy-two percent of Wal-Mart's hourly workers are women, but only one-third of managers and supervisors are women. Current and former employees in California are suing Wal-Mart for sex discrimination in pay, promotion, and compensation. If it is granted class-action status, this will be the country's largest sex discrimination suit against a private employer. In Washington, former Wal-Mart employees have joined with employees from at least 12 other states to sue the company for not paying overtime. Wal-Mart is accused of locking workers in the store for hours, without pay, until managers had completed checks of every department. Workers say they complied because of threats that they would be fired.

This country's top employers, including Wal-Mart, need to get the picture that women-friendly workplaces aren't just good businesses, they're good *for* business. With all the lip-service they give to being the friendly store, it's a shame that philosophy doesn't trickle down to Wal-Mart employees.

The women and men who work for Wal-Mart deserve an employer that respects their rights. Consumers across the country need to be able to spend their dollars with a clear conscience. Wal-Mart doesn't afford us this option. Being the only store in a small town may bring Wal-Mart business, but it's not going to keep the company at the top of the Fortune 500 list. Profiting from worker abuse will surely cost them the business of conscientious and concerned consumers.

For these reasons, Champaign County NOW is organizing a Rally to Protest Wal-Mart in front of the Champaign Wal-Mart off of North Prospect on Saturday September 21 at 10:00 am and welcomes concerned consumers to join us. For more information or to help out, contact: [rewyman@hotmail.com](mailto:rewyman@hotmail.com) or call (217) 367-5643.



Ruth Wyman is a UIUC Law student, a member of the City Council, and President of the Champaign County National Organization for Women.

# Progress and Promise: The Graduate Employees' Organization

by Jeff Scott

When members of the Graduate Employees' Organization IFT/AFT (GEO) voted over a year ago to take a path of escalated direct action to secure the rights of graduate employees, many in the organization were nervous at what would lie at the end of the road. "I was excited to see that our membership stepped up to the plate," said Rosemary Braun, GEO Co-President, "but none of us knew whether walk-outs and sit-ins would mobilize people or turn them off." The University administration's response to a two-day strike and a sit-in left little doubt as to the efficacy of these actions. University officials have finally agreed to allow some graduate employees to vote in an upcoming union representation election.

In addition to conducting research and serving in clerical and advisory roles, graduate employees teach one-third of all undergraduate classes and half of all first-year classes. Their efforts in these capacities are paramount to the educational quality at the University of Illinois. Nonetheless, historically the desire of graduate employees to organize has been met with fierce resistance by the University administration. Since 1994, members of the GEO have been working to achieve union recognition through legal and legislative avenues, as well as grassroots organizing and demonstrations. But the UI administration thought they had effectively stymied the campaign after 7 years and nearly a million dollars of taxpayers' money spent in an effort to deny graduate employees the right to choose a union. They were proven wrong.

The upcoming election will permit Graduate Assistants (GAs) and Teaching Assistants (TAs) to vote either for or against the establishment of a union. If these employees vote in favor of unionizing, the UI administration would be obligated to meet with the elected representatives of graduate employees and negotiate over healthcare benefits and working conditions.

With a employee base of over 2,000 GAs and TAs, the GEO would become one of the largest grad



unions in the nation. More importantly, graduate employees at UIUC would have the political means to improve benefits and working conditions. It is a well-known fact that the University of Illinois has worked hard in recent years to corporatize the operations of the University at the expense of education. Year by year, introductory class sizes grow, as does the workload required of TAs. This trend has been heightened by the recent budget cuts. While administrator salaries were substantially raised, those carrying out the mission of the university received terminal contracts, pay freezes and cuts, and even larger class sizes!

The GEO has had broad community support from campus trade unions and social justice organizations such as the Illinois Disciples Foundation, the Interfaith Committee for Worker Justice, and the Champaign County Health Care Consumers. With a democratic voice and collective power, graduate employees can become a strong component of the larger movement to democratize the university and put people before power.

For more information on GEO, visit their website at [www.shout.net/~geo](http://www.shout.net/~geo).

Jeff Scott is a member of GEO and a Graduate Assistant in the UI School of Social Work.

# PIFI Succeeds as an Alternative Workplace-Giving Organization in Illinois

By Jen Tayabji

*The Public Interest Fund of Illinois (PIFI) is a workplace-giving organization founded in 1991. The goal is to help provide funding for community and advocacy organizations in Illinois. In many ways, PIFI is a coalition of its member organizations. The IDF joined PIFI as a member organization three years ago.*

The Public Interest Fund of Illinois is kicking off its Fall campaign on Sept 18, 2002. There are many exciting things to look out for! PIFI and member organizations, like IDF, are flooding the airwaves with service announcements to promote PIFI and the Dear Colleague letter-writing campaign is underway to encourage community members to support social justice-oriented organizations. PIFI has an exciting new web-site that launched this month. The Chicago Office for PIFI has moved to a newer and larger office in downtown.

The discussion of a merger is underway! For some time, PIFI and the Illinois Women's Funding Federation have bounced around the idea of merging into one organization to help reduce overhead costs and gain a wider audience. PIFI and IWFF have started working on a timeline with a possible merger occurring during fall '03 or '04. PIFI and IWFF members met in Chicago in August with a publicist, who works with non-profits, to discuss the possible tasks involved in creating a successful merger.

IDF, in addition to working on the PIFI Fall campaign, has opened itself up to payroll deductions through PIFI. Overall, PIFI has been extremely busy working to help fund activist organizations like IDF and we at IDF have been working hard in our role as a member organization. You too can donate to IDF through PIFI by doing payroll deductions. Your support will help IDF financially to further our mission of peace with justice.

For more information, you can call the IDF office at (217) 352-8721. For the new PIFI website, go to [www.pifi.org](http://www.pifi.org).

Jen Tayabji is the Administrative Assistant at IDF and has been involved with IDF programs for over 3 years.



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The IDF could not do the work that we do without the support of our donors. We would like to thank individual donors who have contributed in the past year.

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thousands of people from various walks of life in Champaign County.

At the personal level, there are elements within the left-wing tradition with which I am not able to embrace, at least not yet, e.g. "passive" non-resistance. But that has not interfered with my

participation in the community of faith and conscience. I have been embraced by it. My foibles and oddities are tolerated. And I find I can speak and will be heard, having some influence in the community. And I certainly participate in its activities even though I may not agree with person X standing next to me. The purity and/or the propositional correctness of our ideology/theological belief are not the central issues. What matters is doing what is shown to be necessary: justice, compassion, and persistent faithful work.

**MK:** My last question, I've oftentimes heard you refer to "The Religious Problem," what is this, and does it exist?

**JH:** There is a religious problem and it exists in people's minds and in their hearts, which makes it very real, indeed. The religious problem stems from the social construct that spirituality has to do with some cosmic abstraction or an internal reality within human specie-being, and (I hate to use the word "religion because it is so easily misunderstood as advocating some particular octane rating) that God is located in some other worldly realm, e.g. "heaven" or "cosmic universal." It is my view that religion, whatever the octane, is a social construction, under the direction of some priestly order of spiritual guru, that allegedly builds and maintains a mediating connection (two-way, of course) between here and now and some other realm. As the Hebrew prophet Jeremiah points out, the strength of this system has to do with the trappings of authority, viz. the priests of the gurus can intone: "Peace! Peace!" when there is no peace. Or, more contemporary with us is the wise saying: "God is in her heaven; all is right with the world." Sorry, I just do not think it is possible for human specie being to construct a religious mechanism that enables it,

individually or collectively, to lift itself up and off life's reality by such bootstraps.

Nevertheless, Constantinian Christianity has accommodated itself to "bootstrap religion." You can see it work when the government, regardless of who occupies the White House or the Congress, calls upon the denominations to lead the nation in prayer for success in whatever enterprise the regime plans to undertake, e.g. the "War Against Terrorism." And the government makes this call to the churches as if

it were their solemn duty to offer such prayers. And even as individuals, who, because of their religious affiliation, are expected to participate as true patriots in spying, even repressing, the legal rights of others who may fit the same religious profile as themselves, e.g. the Catch-22 in which U.S. citizens of the Muslim faith now find themselves. Herein lies the religious problem.

The "religious problem" exists whenever spirituality is reduced to some otherworldly realm (a cosmic universal or a psychic interior space), which is under the control of guardians of a "divine mandate" or "orders of creation." Those who, like Dietrich Bonhoeffer, call for a "religionless Christianity," or who set themselves against the religious problem, should expect to suffer social nihilation therapies: "prophets are not without honor, except in their own country." As a pastor once told me when I was crying in my own milk: "It goes with the territory."

But as one who does not give uncritical loyalty to authority, secular or religious, but chose some time ago to give allegiance to the Jesus of Nazareth Movement, the community with which I stand, it is not possible to accommodate every pragmatic whim of secular and religious authorities. Yes, the "religious problem" exists, but it exists only within our hearts and minds, hearts and minds for which the secular powers and religious princes battle to win over to their purposes. If these social forces do not intend to help liberate and heal victims of systematic violence, if they do not work for a more humane and fair distribution of wealth and power, then the left-wing engages them in non-violent direct action resistance in the spirit of the Jesus of Nazareth Movement on its way going up to Jerusalem.

Meridith Kruse is the Executive Director of IDF. Jim Holiman is the Campus Minister Emeritus at IDF.

**The Afro-Colombian Struggle for Land & Justice  
continued from p. 1**

ranches for cattle and tourists. Private enterprises began exploiting natural resources. Many who lived there were forced into poverty in city slums.

In 1991, Colombia adopted a new Constitution. Blacks were not represented in that Constituent Assembly, but we asked the indigenous representatives to take up the defense of our culture and our land rights. They won some recognition of our rights that were small, but important.

In 1993, a law was passed that said that the Black population should delineate the areas where it had lived and apply for titles. The law also said that the government must recognize the Black population's rights and devote money to social spending in consultation with the communities.

The community organizations met resistance from those who had been exploiting natural resources in our region such as gold and wood. Communities demanded title to the land. Since then we've experienced assassinations and expulsion by military groups paid by political and business interests.

My organization won the first collective titles in that region. Seven days later, at 5:00 AM on Dec. 13<sup>th</sup>, 1996, paramilitary groups arrived in my town, Riosucio, intent on murdering the leaders and their families. Many were taken from their beds and paraded naked through the streets. Anyone who resisted was killed. The shouts woke me up. I ran to take refuge in the swamp along with many others.

At 8:00 AM, army helicopters started patrolling. The paramilitaries radioed the pilots to attack the swamp, claiming the people were guerrillas. The army attacked us with bombs and rifles, killing many people. Those who survived stayed in the water for three days

until hunger and desperation forced us out. Some of us sneaked through the town and reached a rural community across the river. I recuperated there, and then fled to Bogotá, where I live today.

Two months later, in February 1997, the paramilitaries and army attacked the rural communities in the region and massacred an unknown number of people. More than 20,000 people left the area. Not a single person remained. Today, some are living in Panama, Ecuador, Venezuela, and many are in the big cities.

People who survived the attacks from the Pacific region of Colombia organized the Association of Displaced Afro-Colombians (AFRODES) to fight for our territory. AFRODES helps orient families arriving in the cities. We also work for our return to our home. I head the organization in Bogotá, which began in 1999, and have had two assassination attempts on my life. We have requested assistance from the national government, but they say they don't have the economic resources.

Last year, the U.S. government gave Colombia \$1.3 billion for "Plan Colombia"- 80% goes for arms. Those arms are being used to attack peasants. They are spraying the croplands with pesticides prohibited in the U.S. and destroying what they grow for subsistence. Chemicals get into the rivers, which causes health problems for people and livestock.

We need the solidarity of organizations internationally who, like us, fight for justice, because our voices are not heard in our country.

Marino Córdoba will be the keynote speaker at the IDF Fall Dinner on November 9, 2002.

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