



Gainesville stands with Palestine

by the Gainesville pod of Jewish Voice for Peace, Gainesville Radical Reproductive Rights Network, and the Gainesville pre-branch of the Party for Socialism and Liberation

The tragic events of Oct. 7 brought international attention to the ongoing genocide and ethnic cleansing of the Palestinian people. Israel's war has spurred mass movement for Palestinian self-determination, in Gainesville and around the world.

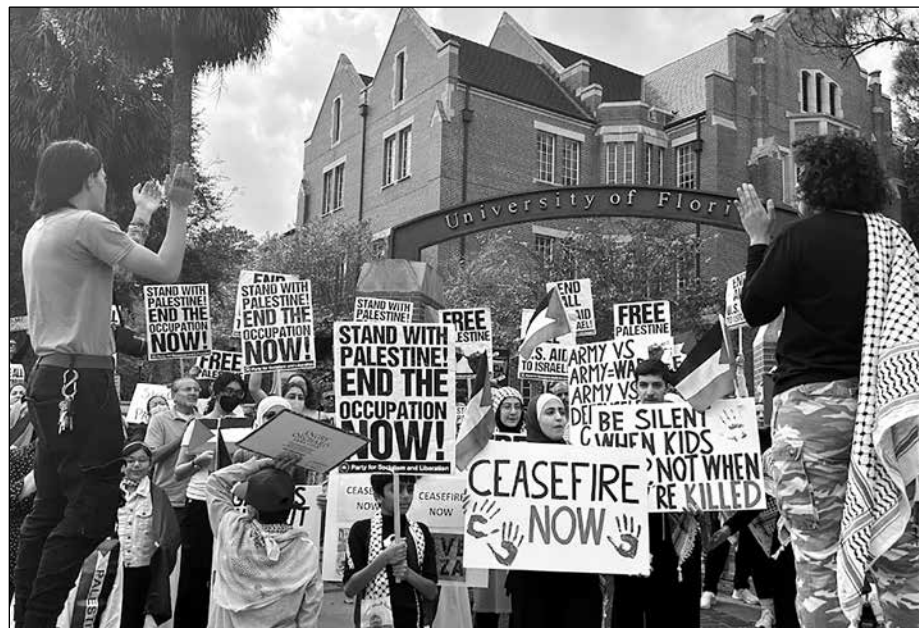
Since October, Gainesville communities have organized over 20 events in solidarity with Palestine, sponsored by local organizations including the University of Florida chapter of Students for Justice in Palestine, Gainesville Solidarity Network, both the UF and newly formed Gainesville pods of Jewish Voice for Peace, Veterans for Peace, Gainesville Radical Reproductive Rights Network, UF Central American Latin Organization, and the Gainesville pre-branch of the Party for Socialism and Liberation.

Israel's army began destroying Gazan neighborhoods, hospitals, refugee camps, and schools shortly after Operation Al-Aqsa Flood on Oct. 7. UF SJP responded, facilitating a large teach-in at UF. As with

many pro-Palestine events, SJP members were forced to defend the teach-in against unjustified charges of anti-Semitism, holding that their work is against Zionism and not Judaism.

On Oct. 15 and 23 PSL Gainesville hosted protests at the corner of SW 13th St and University Ave, where many flew Palestinian flags and banners.

See PALESTINE, p. 19



Protestors at the Dec. 10 rally. Photo courtesy of Jewish Voice for Peace, Gainesville Radical Reproductive Rights Network, and the Gainesville pre-branch of the Party for Socialism and Liberation.

The precipitous decline of Florida Blue Key

How a once-powerful UF leadership honorary society resorted to extracting \$1,000,000+ in tuition money

By Rey Arcenas

It is an open secret that Florida Blue Key controls the student government of the

University of Florida. Over the course of their one hundred year grip on power, they've been associated with petty corruption scandals such as throwing out thousands of copies of newspapers with negative headlines, slashing tires, and pouring sugar in their opponents' gas tanks. Nevertheless, Florida Blue Key celebrates a long list of influential politicians that stretches

decades across political lines: Spessard Holland, Fuller Warren, Bob Graham, Lawton Chiles, Buddy MacKay, and Adam Putnam among others.

Florida Blue Key officially exists as a leadership honorary society at the University of Florida. Founded in 1923, they

See BLUE KEY, p. 24

Local activists work to meet, exceed state reqs in campaign to put abortion rights on 2024 ballot

By Alex Leader and Beth H.
National Women's Liberation, Gainesville

Thank you for helping to put abortion rights on the ballot, Alachua County!

The following organizations and individuals are being recognized to celebrate their leadership, but also to encourage Iguana readers to join up with these organizations in the fight that still lies ahead to place protection for abortion rights in Florida on the November 2024 ballot through a voter ballot initiative. If successful, this voter initiative will win a state constitutional amendment to protect and expand abortion rights.

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Want your article, ad, event or PSA in the next Iguana?
Deadline is Wednesday, Feb. 28
Submit events, content, questions to:
gainesvilleiguana@cox.net

The campaign's petition collection phase led by the state-level organization Floridians Protecting Freedom is DONE. We have exceeded the goal of 891,523 petitions signed by registered Florida voters and verified by Florida county Supervisors of Elections, and we have exceeded the requirement for 14 congressional districts with 8% of registered voters signing petitions (presently we have reached this goal in 17 congressional districts and counting!).

Now the petition language will go in front of the State Supreme Court on February 7. If the ballot language passes successfully through the court, the next phase is voter registration, renewing people's vote-by-mail status, and continuing to organize folks to be aware of this referendum so that they will turn out and vote for it in the November 2024 election.

If you are already working with a local social justice organization, that's right where you need to be. But if you haven't joined up yet with your time and your dues to support these grassroots-based groups, now is the time to do so.

The 2024 Florida legislative session lies ahead of us, as do the next phases of the abortion ballot initiative campaign. And any day now the Florida Supreme Court will rule on the 15-week abortion limit law in Florida. If that law is upheld, a 6-week abortion limitation will go into effect 30 days later. The ballot initiative campaign gives us a chance to move forward, rather than being forced to continually defend our human rights in Florida.

Your time, energy, and dues are needed to build a sustained, organized social justice movement that has the power to go on the offensive to win the things we need.

Alachua County organizations:

There are too many amazing individuals to name in our community, so huge thanks to the hard work put in by members of:

- Alachua County Labor Coalition
- UF College Democrats
- Democratic Women's Club of Alachua County
- the Gainesville Radical Reproductive Rights Network (the GRRR Network)
- League of Women Voters of Alachua County
- National Women's Liberation - Gainesville, FL chapter
- Planned Parenthood of South, East and North Florida
- Santa Fe College Planned Parenthood Generation Action
- Planned Parenthood Generation Action at UF
- Temple Shir Shalom in conjunction with RAC - Florida (Union of Reform Judaism, Religious Action Center)
- Unitarian Universalist Fellowship of Gainesville - Social Justice Committee, and
- UF Young Democratic Socialists of America.

Thank you to Kai Christmas, former organizer for PPSNFL, for laying down the initial organizational framework for petition collection in Gainesville, and to Peggy Bowie for collecting petitions at local farmers' markets every week since the campaign began in May 2023, and to Jim and Patricia Funk for making thousands of petition mailer packets which they distributed to voters at events throughout Alachua County.

Thank you to the almost 20 local businesses that served as petition collection points, and all the unaffiliated volunteers or groups we

See *ACTIVISTS*, p. 8

From the publisher ...

Looking ahead

Entering a new year, there are all sorts of retrospectives produced, and indeed there are a few within these pages. But I want to look ahead at the coming year and its challenges.

I started making a list of the things I see ahead — pivotal important issues. My list included the horrible ongoing armed conflicts, the ever obvious climate dysfunction, and the danger of information technology further aiding those with no regard for truth to create false narratives and bogus information.

Despite all that and more I found myself circling back what seems to me to be the major issue of the year. The election of 2024.

Within all my ideals for the changes that would help society be better: better healthcare, better schools, higher wages, priorities shifted toward diplomacy instead of war making and weaponry, promoting cleaner energy, people in control of their reproductive choices, a stronger labor movement; etc, I am began to think of the over-riding issue before us. It is an issue most of us who support the above list take for granted as we think about preserving progress made over the years or reversing the more recent erosion of those rights and gains. It is the preservation of our democratic system (however flawed) that make it possible for citizens to have a voice and advocate for a better world.

There are two women whose voices have really impressed me as the hearings on the Jan. 6th insurrection unfolded. Republican women: Liz Cheney and Cassidy Hutchinson. They address the fundamental issue we face that impacts all of the above-listed ideals. They have been on the inside and they see preserving the Constitution and our current form of government, flawed as it is, as the number one issue we face in 2024.

There is a very real rise of authoritarians, christo-fascists, and others fed by a anti-New Deal propaganda stream decades long, and incorporating the newer “anti-woke” agenda for which our governor is the poster child. And worse, within our current government are men and women who have ditched their moral compass (if they indeed ever had one) and are falling in line with the MAGA agenda. Exhibit A: the U.S. House of Representatives, where social media clicks and TV time are more important than legislating.

We need a huge voter turnout to reverse the foul tide that has washed up on our shores. Kudos to all who worked so hard to get the right to abortion on the ballot. The State Supreme Court still needs to weigh in and okay it (see pg 2). We need to try and overcome huge money to defeat Senator Rick Scott. Down-ballot races are really big too: City and County Commission, School Board, State Reps, etc. There will be primaries for party candidates in August, to set the field for the November balloting; they will need help, especially in the gerrymandered reality of the political map we have had imposed on us.

Voting, especially for President, is about math, not feeling virtuous. In our system a third party vote is a wasted vote. Saying that the Democrat is not who you want is a vote for their opponent.

Not voting at all because of distaste for the top of the ticket is an abdication of your much more powerful local vote.

Working for candidates multiplies your vote. And if we do not get serious and elect better people, things will not get better.

Meanwhile though, doing good where you live, being good to those around you and to yourself, is important. If the shit hits the fan, we're gonna need each other.

Onward into 2024. 🐢



Joe Courter

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Comments, suggestions, contributions (written or financial) are welcome. To list your event or group, contact us at:

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A message from Senator Bernie Sanders

Solidarity, looking forward in 2024

by Bernie Sanders

The text below was sent out to Bernie supporters via email on Dec. 30.

It goes without saying that the past year was filled with extremely difficult and trying times for our country, and for the entire planet.

The situation in Israel and Gaza is horrific and brutal. Russia's outrageous war and invasion of Ukraine continues. We're trying to protect a woman's right to control her own body. Tens of millions of Americans go about their days without access to the health care or the prescription drugs they need, and 2023 was the hottest year ever recorded.

And oh yes, Donald Trump — who is becoming more right-wing and extremist every day — is the leading Republican candidate for president once again.

In a recent speech, Trump said migrants are "poisoning the blood of our country." He uses language that echoes Adolf Hitler calling his political opponents "vermin" and pledges to "root them out." And in his Christmas messages to America he closed with the hope that his enemies "ROT IN HELL."

Totally deranged stuff.

Yet, at the same time, Trump leads in many of the polls to become the next president.

It is important that we all confront the reality that he has an excellent chance of winning.

So what do we do about it?

How do we rally the American people to make sure Trump is not elected once again?

Do we do that by telling our supporters and people around the country how great Joe Biden and the Democrats are? No.

We do it by being honest with the American people, even when speaking the truth is uncomfortable and painful.

The American people are tired of press releases, photo ops, and tweets. They want an honest discussion of what is going on and leadership that provides answers to the many crises that we face.

They want to understand why we are where we are today, and how we will move to a better place.

And where are we today?

The truth is grim.

We are rapidly moving toward oligarchy as we experience an unprecedented level of income and wealth inequality and growing corporate concentration over our economy.

While billionaires become much richer, sixty percent of our people are living paycheck to paycheck. Our health care, childcare, education and housing systems are failing ordinary Americans and are in need of major reform.

Our political system, dominated by super PACs, is increasingly corrupt, Trump and his right-wing allies are busily attempting to undermine American democracy, and oh ... climate change and the greed of the fossil fuel industry threatens the very existence of our planet.

But it is not all bad news.

In the last year we have seen a major revitalization of the trade union movement as working-class Americans are fighting back against unprecedented corporate greed. They are organizing unions at the grassroots level, going out on strikes — **and winning major victories.**

Further, in the past few years, President Biden and those of us who have worked with him have passed some significant pieces of legislation.

The \$1.9 trillion American Rescue Plan helped revive our economy far faster than anyone could have imagined as we dealt with the worst public health crisis and economic downturn in 100 years.



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We have made record-breaking investments in rebuilding our crumbling infrastructure, in broadband and in renewable energy.

We have finally begun to take on the greed of the pharmaceutical industry, and we are rebuilding American manufacturing.

And let's not forget, Joe Biden was the first president ever to walk a picket line in support of striking workers.

Good stuff. But is it enough?

Absolutely not.

Far more needs to be done. And as progressives, it's important we lay out an agenda the American people would be eager to vote FOR — not just someone to vote AGAINST.

And what is that agenda? It is an agenda that acknowledges the pain, stress and despair that the majority of our people are experiencing, and provides a path forward to improve their lives.

It is an agenda that boldly confronts the wealth and power of the 1% and demands that the rich start paying their fair share of taxes.

It is an agenda that uses artificial intelligence to benefit all people, not just the owners of large corporations, and protects everyday people from massive exploitation.

It is an agenda that ends starvation wages in America, makes it easier for workers to join unions and provides equal pay for equal work.

It is an agenda that makes health care a human right and substantially lowers the outrageously high cost of prescription drugs in this country.

It is an agenda that will make it possible for all working class young people to gain a college education without going into debt, and will radically improve our dysfunctional childcare system.

It is an agenda that will create millions of good-paying jobs as we lead the world in combating climate change and transforming our energy system away from fossil fuels.

It is an agenda that will take on the systemic racism that prevails throughout our country and fundamentally reform our broken and racist criminal justice system.

It is an agenda that cuts military spending, prevents war and supports diplomacy and international cooperation.

It is an agenda that will lead to comprehensive immigration reform and a path towards citizenship for the undocumented.

Now, it goes without saying that this is not the agenda of the Democratic Establishment and their wealthy campaign funders. You know that. I know that. So, what do we do? As Progressives, what should our political strategy be in 2024?

First, we work in coalition with all those who understand that we must do everything possible to defeat Donald Trump and his extreme right-wing Republican Party, not just because he is "worse," but because nothing less than the future of our democracy is at stake in this election.

Second, we aggressively educate and organize at the grass-roots level around our progressive agenda. The American people are deeply unhappy with the economic and political status quo. They want change, real change. That means we must roll up our sleeves and do the hard work of reaching new people.

That means we must have uncomfortable conversations and invite people to join us, even if they don't agree with us on

everything. We must inspire people to get involved. That is what our progressive agenda has to be about.

Third, we must make it clear to the president and his administration that we expect his second term to be far more progressive than his first. He must, in no uncertain terms, take on the greed of the billionaire class whose actions are causing irreparable damage to our country, and he must wage his campaign on progressive principles.

Sisters and brothers, we have come a long way since our first presidential campaign in 2016, but the truth is that we still have an incredible amount of work ahead of us.

Will the path forward be easy? Of course not. But this is not a time for despair or cynicism, it is a time to stand up and fight for the country we know we can become.

In solidarity,
Bernie Sanders

Bernard Sanders is an American politician and activist who is the senior U.S. senator from Vermont. He is the longest serving independent member of Congress in U.S. history. 🐸



‘Unity in education: A resolve for equality’

by Tina Certain, District 1 Alachua County School Board Member

As we begin this new year, I stand before you, not just as a school board member but as a member of our community, with a resolute spirit to foster unity and optimism for our educational future.

The legacy of Martin Luther King Jr. reminds us of the ongoing fight for equality. In our schools, we face disparities that persist—segregated systems and unequal opportunities. It’s time to ensure that a student’s zip code or race never dictates their access to quality education.

Every child in Alachua County deserves an excellent education, regardless of where they live or their background. Public education was designed as an equalizer, yet persistent underfunding and diverting funds to private institutions challenge this ideal. The recent approval of universal vouchers also threatens to drain our public schools further.

We cannot afford to ignore the warning signs of inequity and inefficient financial operations. Inaction only perpetuates the divide. Our commitment must be united and resolute. It’s time to set aside past divi-

sions and collaboratively address the challenges ahead.

The strength of our community comes from its diversity and inclusiveness. Listening to and understanding every voice is key to addressing the needs of our students effectively. We need to unite and advocate for policies that ensure every school, regardless of its location or demographics, has the resources necessary for academic excellence.

This year, let’s honor Dr. King’s vision by actively working to dismantle educational barriers related to zip codes and racial backgrounds. Our mission must be clear: to create an environment where every student, no matter their circumstances, has the opportunity to thrive.

To meet these high standards, exceptional leadership is essential. The role of the superintendent is central in driving our schools towards these high ideals. Therefore, I have urged my colleagues to undertake a national search for a superintendent. This is a crucial and bold step towards ensuring that our students receive the best educational leadership available. We need a leader who will bring innovative perspectives and effective strategies to our district,

aligning with our unwavering commitment to providing the best for every student in Alachua County. This action is not just a choice but a necessary step in fulfilling our promise to our students and community.

Achieving our goals requires leadership that is innovative and effective. Therefore, a national search for a superintendent must be a part of our broader effort. However, our focus extends beyond leadership appointments. It encompasses comprehensive policy reforms, community engagement, and a relentless pursuit of resources and opportunities that elevate the educational experience for every student in Alachua County.

As we move forward into 2024, let’s channel our efforts into creating a future where our educational system is a beacon of equality and excellence. This must be our commitment, our resolve, and our promise to every student we serve.

You can share your feedback and concerns during regular school board meetings which are held the 1st and 3rd Tuesday of each month at 6pm at the District office (620 E University Ave). You can also email the Board at boardmembers@gm.sbac.edu. 🐝



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And the good news is ...

Abortion-rights amendment one step closer to the Florida ballot

But must get Supreme Court approval

Now that the group behind the abortion rights amendment has enough signatures to appear on the November ballot, it's preparing to defend its ballot language

in front of the Florida Supreme Court next month. GOP Attorney General has criticized the ballot initiative because the word "viability" is ambiguous

Condensed from an article by Jackie Llanos in the Florida Phoenix on Jan. 5. See full article at tinyurl.com/Iguana1825

Happy new year: A bunch of minimum wage increases just took effect:

The boosts in pay stands to disproportionately benefit Black and Hispanic workers and women

Workers across the country are kicking off the new year with bigger paychecks, thanks to minimum wage increases that took effect yesterday in 22 states and 43 cities and counties, according to a report from the National Employment Law Project.

Six of those states now have a minimum

wage that reaches or surpasses \$15. The increases should disproportionately benefit Black, Hispanic, and female workers who make up more than half of the workers receiving pay bumps, according to an analysis from the Economic Policy Institute. The raises follow the decade-long "Fight For \$15" movement, which has helped push

more than a dozen states to adopt a path to a \$15 or higher minimum wage—more than double the federal minimum wage of \$7.25, which has been in effect since 2009.

Condensed from an article by Julianne McShane in Mother Jones on Jan. 2. See full article at tinyurl.com/Iguana1785.

In 2023, organized labor became core to the climate movement

In the clean energy transition, labor unions and the climate movement are finding they're stronger together

2023 was marked by symbiosis between the labor and climate movements. Workers across industries and geographies loudly declared that a world in which their safety and well-being are disregarded is even more dangerous to them and to others in a time of energy transition and climate crisis.

After decades of hesitancy, several major unions recognized an urgent need to organize those who will do the hard work of decarbonizing the nation's economy. It doesn't hurt that public sympathy, and policy, has grown friendlier toward them. As a result, calls for a just transition rattled union halls and corporate offices as orga-

nized labor enjoyed one of its most active years in recent memory and environmental organizations, long uncertain about where unions stood, found new allies.

Condensed from an article by Katie Myers in Grist on Dec. 20. See full article at tinyurl.com/Iguana1784.

The Insulin Shift

Thanks to Democrats and the American Rescue Plan, insulin prices are going way down for everyone

Insulin prices have pushed downward repeatedly. CNN notes all three major insulin manufacturers are offering at least some of their products to patients for \$35 a month, mostly through dropping list

prices between 70 and 78 percent, which represents a real loss to these companies. The changes were announced last spring but went into effect with the turn of the calendar.

Condensed from an article by David Dayen in The American Prospect on Jan. 3. See full article at tinyurl.com/Iguana1786

University of Florida graduate assistants celebrate approval of historic raise

Negotiations lasted almost a year; graduate assistants will receive back pay from October 1

After months of bargaining, UF Graduate Assistants United saw the fruits of its labor after the university Board of Trustees approved Article 10 of GAU's collective bargaining agreement.

Article 10 states that graduate assistants on nine-month appointments will be paid \$19,200, while those on 12-month appointments will receive a minimum of \$25,600.

The changes were meant to go into effect Oct. 1, but graduate assistants couldn't

receive any additional money until the Board of Trustees voted.

Now that it was approved, they will receive back pay to make up for the time it took to get the changes ratified.

The goal is to reach an agreement that guarantees a living wage of \$34,000.

Condensed from an article by Delia Rose Sauer in the The Independent Florida Alligator on Jan. 7. See full article at tinyurl.com/Iguana1783.



The Gainesville Free Grocery Store

is a mutual aid project hosted by the Civic Media Center. We aim to provide healthy and accessible food to our community and to support food justice in the greater Gainesville area.

For more info:

Facebook: [freegrocerystore](https://www.facebook.com/freegrocerystore)

Web: www.facebook.com/GNVFGS

Email: fgsgnv@gmail.com

Leave message at: 352-388-1586

Recommended blogs / web sites

freetheocklawahariver.com

Free the Ocklawaha River! Remove the dam! The web site offers information on six ways you can help including signing petitions, public comment, and contacting appropriate folks with relevant information.

972mag.com

Not much remains of the joint Palestinian-Israeli peace movement after the Hamas atrocities of 10/7 and Israel's backlash, but compassionate and articulate voices — independent journalists from Israel-Palestine — still tell their truths. 🐘

Beau of the Fifth Column

Beau is a YouTube journalist based in NW Florida.

He posts multiple short pieces every day covering foreign policy, education, security, politics, and human rights. He can be ironic, dead serious, a bit whimsical, and/or analytical. He also produces longer form videos.

Check him out at:

youtube.com/@BeauoftheFifthColumn



democracynow.org

or listen at:

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From ACTIVISTS, p. 2

missed that provided leadership and worked their hearts out on this campaign.

And thank you to the Gainesville Iguana for consistently promoting this campaign.

Alachua County hubs: Thank you to these folks who ran centralized hub operations to sort and mail tens of thousands of petitions from Alachua County to the Floridians Protecting Freedom petition collection office in Sarasota:

- Gaby Gross, Riley Moon, Bryn Taylor, Roni Militello, and Mari-ah McGovern with the Civic Media Center,
- Jenn Hartz with Studio T/M Pottery and Clay,
- Bobby Mermer, coordinator for the Alachua County Labor Coalition, and
- Shayna Rich with the League of Women Voters of Alachua County.

For more information on what comes next, check out "Florida clears hurdle to vote on abortion amendment. What's next?" at <https://gainesvilleiguana.org/2024/articles/florida-clears-hurdle-to-vote-on-abortion-amendment-whats-next/> 🐘

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Editors' picks: News that didn't fit

2023 Roundup: 13 must-read Florida stories

Journalists salute their hard-working peers who told the critical stories of the past year

by the Marjorie Team | The Marjorie | Dec. 20 | tinyurl.com/Iguana1788

A 'major win' for PEN America, publishers, and parents in book ban lawsuit

Lawsuit challenging school's removal of books heading to jury trial.

by Jennie McKeon | WUWF | Jan. 10 | tinyurl.com/Iguana1779

As migrants flee, Florida GOP pushes to ease child labor laws to deal with shortage of workers

If Republicans have their way, 16- and 17-year-olds may soon be working the overnight shift at McDonald's

by Charles Jay | Daily Kos | Dec. 18 | tinyurl.com/Iguana1780

Cassidy Hutchinson and Ken Burns on the Jan. 6 capitol riots and history

If Trump 'is elected as the next president ... we are one step closer to operating under a dictatorship.'

Conversation between Ken Burns and Cassidy Hutchinson on YouTube | Jan. 5 | tinyurl.com/Iguana1782

DeSantis, university system dispute free speech lawsuits brought by UF students

They're trying to fend off lawsuits from pro-Palestinian student groups that allege First Amendment violations

by News Service of Florida | WUFT | Jan. 2 | tinyurl.com/Iguana1792

Essential stories corporate media refused to cover in 2023: A rundown from TruthOut

Trust in media is at an all-time low, in part because of corporate outlets' failure to cover what's really going on

by Peter Handel | Truthout | Jan. 5 | tinyurl.com/Iguana1882

FL Dems won't have a vote in presidential primary in '24; what about voters in other states?

Challengers says they were unfairly shut out of the process of getting on the primary ballot

by Mitch Perry | Florida Phoenix | Dec. 11 | tinyurl.com/Iguana1883

Florida politicians may unleash the next generation of payday lenders

Payday loan-sharking is available via phone app; advocates say the EWA industry preys on low-income workers

by Jason Garcia | Seeking Rents | Jan. 3 | tinyurl.com/Iguana1888

In 2024, more censorship and bans:

Florida, Texas removing large batches of books from public schools

by Diane Rado | Florida Phoenix | Dec. 21 | tinyurl.com/Iguana1885

Magical thinking about Biden may not save us from another Trump presidency

What if it's not enough to "merely be the alternative to Donald Trump?"

by Jeff Cohen and Norman Solomon | Common Dreams | Jan. 11 | tinyurl.com/Iguana1823

New Florida Black History Museum taking public input on content and programs

Will the state's past be accurate?

by Mitch Perry | Florida Phoenix | Dec. 8 | tinyurl.com/Iguana1886

Using artificial intelligence to smear political opponents targeted in Florida Senate

AI-generated content threatens the integrity of elections by facilitating fabricated information

by Mitch Perry | Florida Phoenix | Dec. 15 | tinyurl.com/Iguana1790

When idiot savants do climate economics

How an elite clique of math-addled economists hijacked climate policy

by Christopher Ketcham | The Intercept | Oct. 29 | tinyurl.com/Iguana1789

Why people still fall for fake news about climate change

It was the hottest year on Earth in 125,000 years, and #climatescam is taking off

by Mitch Perry | Grist | tinyurl.com/Iguana1781

You could soon be fined for calling someone racist in Florida

Florida Republicans introduced a bill to silence accusations of discrimination

by Tori Otten | The New Republic | Jan. 8 | tinyurl.com/Iguana1791 🦎



Israel's use of AI in Gaza War morally unacceptable

As I was getting ready for this issue, I'd been thinking about how war-making has gotten more devastating, even as the reasons wars happen remain largely the same. This article showed me it is even worse than I'd been thinking. Yikes. Technical genius and our tax dollars at work.

-Joe Courter

Op-ed from Utrecht University

The IDF's military-technological superiority in the Gaza War should not in any way be mistaken for a moral superiority.

That is what Dr. Marijn Hoijtink and Robin Vanderborght, scholars of International Relations at the University of Antwerp, argue in an op-ed in the Flemish daily newspaper *De Standaard*. In their piece, Hoijtink and Vanderborght reflect on Israel's use of autonomous targeting software and heavy bombing in Gaza in response to Hamas' October 7 attacks.

Recent independent research shows that Israeli airstrikes and ground attacks constitute war crimes. UN experts describe them as "clear violations of international humanitarian law," and speak of a "genocide in the making." Others continue to defend Israel's attacks on Gaza, but as Hoijtink and Vanderborght argue, their arguments lack merit.

One commonly cited argument is that Israel's response is an act of self-defense.

While the applicability of this right in Gaza—deemed occupied territory by many—is heavily debated, it is certain that Israel must always consider the principles of proportionality and military necessity. The exceptionally high number of civilian casualties and the level of destruction in Gaza since October 7 demonstrate that Israel's exercise of this right — applicable or not — is disproportionate.

A second argument that is often invoked is a moral one. Unlike Hamas, Israel claims to make efforts to protect civilians by issuing warnings in advance of attacks. Additionally, Israel emphasizes the use of "smart" precision weapons, employing artificial intelligence (AI) to swiftly and efficiently identify and neutralize Hamas targets, minimizing harm to innocent civilians. According to Hoijtink and Vanderborght, this argumentation confuses the IDF's technological superiority with moral superiority.

COLLATERAL DAMAGE

Hoijtink and Vanderborght deem the high-tech discourse behind the argumentation of a moral war problematic. Israel's violations in Gaza specifically show that AI technology and widespread automation lead to *more* attacks and, consequently, more civilian casualties—despite claims of precision. Moreover, the technologies experimented with by the Israeli military

in Gaza exceed moral boundaries.

Israel's military-technological superiority is undeniable. It is well-known that the nation has a lucrative arms industry that profits from the "battlefield-tested" trademark of the products it produces. The Israeli occupation of Palestinian territories has a clear technological dimension, utilizing biometric and surveillance technologies extensively to control and restrict Palestinian civilians.

In recent years, like other major military powers such as Russia, China, and the US, Israel has increasingly focused on integrating AI into its military operations. In 2021, Israel claimed it was conducting its first "AI war" during military operations against Hamas.

An Israeli officer declared in early November to The Jerusalem Post that the Israeli military uses AI to "quickly and accurately identify targets" in Gaza. Given the significant number of bombardments on Gaza in recent weeks—over 15,000 according to the latest figures—it is evident that AI-driven and automated software is behind these attacks.

For long, academic research has pointed to the fallibility of such technology in identifying and attacking targets, especially in complex operational contexts

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like Gaza. Now, as AI is widely deployed in Gaza, we clearly see the consequences of these new ‘AI wars,’ as they result in the ability to carry out many more attacks in a shorter timeframe. In the first week after the October 7 attacks, Israel dropped as many ‘precision bombs’ as the United States did throughout the entire 2019 campaign in Afghanistan.

Even if one were to assume that AI enables Israel to target with more precision—a claim experts doubt—this does not outweigh the additional civilian casualties resulting from the increased number of attacks.

HUMAN CONTROL

The international community has been debating the use of AI for critical military decisions, such as target selection. While there is no international consensus on regulating military AI, the necessity of a form of ‘meaningful’ human control in critical attack situations is a broadly accepted moral norm.

Israel’s use of AI in Gaza crosses this moral boundary. If over 15,000 targets are eliminated in a matter of weeks, questions arise about how ‘meaningful’ human control can be maintained. Do human supervisors have enough time to thoroughly verify whether targets are correctly identified and selected? Do they have the time to analyze whether the number of civilian casualties is proportionate to the expected military gain—as prescribed by international humanitarian law?

These are concrete assessments that must be made by human supervisors, not by an algorithm primarily used to expedite and streamline the targeting process.

Many questions about the applications and consequences of AI in contemporary warfare remain unanswered. Still, it is clear that in the past weeks, new steps have been taken that were previously considered morally unacceptable by a significant portion of the international community.

The maintained illusion of a precise and moral war obscures both the reality in Gaza and Israel’s responsibility for it. The only way to prevent more civilian casualties is through a permanent ceasefire, followed by the development of a political solution. The use of AI-driven precision weapons is a slippery slope that will only lead to more innocent victims and more destruction – not only in Gaza but also in the wars to come.

This op-ed was originally published by the podcast “Intimacies of Remote Warfare” on Dec. 12. See more at intimacies-of-remote-warfare.nl.

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The symphony of our democracy

The League of Women Voters promotes and protects women's voices needed to maintain representative balance

By Stefanie Gadalean

The grand experiment of American democracy can be compared to that of a symphony: they both rely on a harmony of diverse melodies to uplift the full potential of their respective masterpieces. Each citizen's contribution to the democratic orchestra, akin to an instrumental note, plays a crucial role in creating representative governance. Comparable to how a diverse ensemble is needed to achieve true harmony, our nation thrives off the cooperation of multiple perspectives to achieve a country for the people and by the people.

In the ongoing pursuit of creating a more perfect union, let us recognize the undeniable need for women to not only participate in government but lead. With the representation of women in the United States democracy only beginning a little more than a century ago, the League of Women Voters has promoted and protected the voices of women needed to maintain a representative balance of tones in the symphony that is the American government.

In light of this election year, the League of Women Voters is coming to the University of Florida. The university is a hub for the leaders of tomorrow, thus it is vital for highlighting civic participation to bolster a community that values engagement in local, state, and federal issues.

The environment of an educational institution fosters a caliber of critical thinking crucial to democratic engagement and the understanding of political issues. One of the League's many missions on campus is to emphasize the reality that no one is immune to the cascading impacts of voting.

Every single person at the University of Florida is affected by what is on the ballot, making it imperative that each student votes not only for themselves, but votes for the future generations of University of Florida students. The League's value of civic engagement and the utilization of its platform to educate and inform voters promotes the symphony of American voices to create a nation they are proud to call home.

The League of Women Voters is a non-partisan political organization founded with the ratification of the 19th Amendment dedicated to ensure women's right to participate and be represented in American democracy. The League adamantly maintains its non-partisan ideology by supporting a wide range of political policy issues, providing voter information, and advocating for civic engagement.

A few of the issues the League supports include healthcare policy reform — specifically the expansion of Medicaid and reproductive justice — natural resource preservation, immigration reform, social policy reform, and educational policy supporting teachers and students.

The League has also supplied the American public with ample voting resources with their creation of VOTE411.org: a catch-all website that provides non-biased

information about voting registration, voting locations, ballot initiatives, and much more. For the past 104 years, the League has used its influential platform to create a nation that values informed civic participation by holding candidate debates, candidate forums, and its "Making Democracy Work" campaign.

Being the president and founder of the University of Florida's chapter of the League of Women Voters holds unparalleled significance in my life.

As a first-generation American woman, I believe most of us come from somewhere less free, and defending democracy by supporting ALL citizens' participation in the democratic system is critical to the American Dream.

The immense joy I feel knowing I am upholding a part of the American experiment women only a few generations before dreamt of is what fuels my passion to be a part of the League. The League and its mission makes me increasingly proud to live in a country where I am utilizing my voice to instigate the change I want to see, and I am even more proud to be gifted the opportunity to ensure women in future generations will maintain their right to democratic participation.

Our nation is changed by the individuals who use their voices to advocate for what they feel is important. These voices are given to them through a pen and a ballot. Let us never neglect that although voting is a right in our country, the right for women to cast their ballots was earned by generations of steadfast activism.

Voting gives a voice to opinions, to struggles, and to stories. Vote as if your future depends on it—because it does! If you are upset, frustrated, or even enraged by the trajectory of our nation, remember that decisions are made by those who show up.

So, my friends, vote in the presidential primary election on March 19, the state primary on August 20, and the general election on November 5.

Visit VOTE411 to learn more about your specific polling place and what is on your ballot. UF's League meets on January 30, if you are interested in attending, reach out to uflwvpresident@gmail.com. Democracy is on the ballot this year—VOTE! 🐾

Women's History Month Brunch, March 9

The Democratic Women's Club of Alachua County will be holding the 9th annual Women's History Month Brunch on Saturday, March 9, from 10 am-12 noon. The speakers will be Pat McCullough, the campaign manager for Jacksonville Mayor Donna Deegan, and other well-known Democrats.

We have invited and hope to have Debbie Mucarsel-Powell, Florida State Senator from Miami-Dade County and candidate challenging Senator Rick Scott, as our keynote speaker.

Brunch will be held at the Best Western Gateway Grand in Gainesville.

Sponsorships and candidate tables are available. Cost will be \$75 per person or \$525 for an 8-person table. Reservations must be made by March 4.

Seating is limited. Contact Treasurer Dee Williams(ddw@eastpassage.us) for reservations and more information. 🐾

Biden is our only hope for stopping Trump

by John Chambers

I continue to be disgusted by spoiled, entitled people. The ONLY foil we have to defeat Donald Trump is the Democratic candidate, yet I continue to hear "I won't vote for that war monger." This from people who have lived their entire lives in the relative luxury of the United States. Never been in a situation they couldn't get out of or find forgiveness for.

If you think violence is bad now, just let the MAGA Republicans take charge. There's a reason that all the right-wing, racist, antisemitic groups support Trump. The Heritage Foundation is compiling lists of people who will be loyal to Trump, not the Constitution. He will fill the Justice Department with loyalists who will support his plan for revenge. Social Security? What do you think will happen if Republicans gain any more control? Disabled, poor, old? Republicans don't support any sort of money that they don't get some sort of return on.

You can't be serious. I'm almost ready to just throw up my hands. In many ways spoiled, entitled people who have never had to suffer consequences for their decisions deserve to have to live under fascism. The people in the world who are just hanging on will suffer from this totalitarian asshole also. He wants to withdraw from NATO. He doesn't support our allies. He seems to like any dictator or strong man. He is trying to destroy the rule of law as we speak.

Taken from a Jan. 4 Facebook post by John Chambers. Chambers is a Viet Nam combat veteran and was a supporter of the Gainesville Eight. He was interviewed by the Samuel Proctor Oral history project in 2023 (tinyurl.com/Iguana1777). 🦎

10th Annual Veterans for Peace Scholarships

Gainesville Veterans for Peace Chapter 14 announces its tenth annual college Peace Scholarships.



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The deadline for the scholarship application is April 15, 2024

Peace Scholarship recipients will be announced at the Gainesville VFP Peace Poetry Awards Ceremony in May. Questions: contact Paul Ortiz at: ortizprof@gmail.com or 831-334-0131.

The full announcement and instructions for applying may be found on our web site, at <http://www.vfpgainesville.org/>

Gainesville Veterans for Peace Chapter 14 announces its 10th annual college Peace Scholarships for 2024. We are awarding 3 scholarships of \$1,500 each for high school seniors, college students or adults learning trades with a commitment and leadership in activities involving: community organizing peace & social justice, and/or nonviolence

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2023 in review: Big strikes, bigger gains

by Jenny Brown

This is a condensed version of an article in the Dec. 15 issue of Labor Notes.

Strikes and threats of strikes extracted contracts ranging from good to excellent from employers across the country this year. Half a million U.S. workers walked out—machinists, teachers, baristas, nurses, hotel housekeepers, and auto workers—with much of the motion coming from unions led by reformers.

The year started out with a squeaker of an election victory that turned out to be momentous. In late 2022, the Members United slate swept most top offices at the Auto Workers (UAW) on a platform of “No Concessions, No Corruption, No Tiers.” March saw a presidential runoff pitting the old guard incumbent against an obscure Kokomo, Indiana, electrician and union rep named Shawn Fain. Among 140,000 votes cast, Fain won by a few hundred.

“Our job now is to put the members back in the driver’s seat, regain the trust of the rank and file, and put the companies on notice,” he said then. “We are ending give-back unionism and company control in the UAW.”

Nine months later, the union’s Stand-Up Strike has notched sweeping victories against the Big 3, auto workers in non-union plants are hustling to join, public opinion of striking workers is at a several-decade high, and Fain is nearly a household name.

STRIKE THREAT WORKED

But the 150,000 Big 3 Auto Workers weren’t even the biggest workgroup to win thanks to new, more militant leadership. The 340,000 Teamsters at UPS notched their biggest contract gains ever by mounting a strike threat that reverberated through truck barns and warehouses across the country. Managers huddled nervously as UPSers marched into work together, galvanized by breakfast meetings and practice pickets.

The union’s new leaders, President Sean O’Brien and Secretary-Treasurer Fred Zuckerman, gave detailed reports on negotiations and bargained down to the wire, while the reform caucus that backed their 2022 election, Teamsters for a Democratic Union, spearheaded a program of shop-floor organizing and pickets. It was a winning combination that netted big wage gains and eliminated a second tier of drivers and a forced sixth workday.

DEEP REFORM ROOTS

The change in direction in both the Teamsters and the UAW has roots in reform caucuses who long argued for a struggle, not cuddle, approach to the companies.

In the Teamsters, the groundwork was laid in 1989 when the federal government threatened to take over the union due to corruption. Teamsters for a Democratic Union argued against government control. Instead, they said that democracy in the union—member control—would be the force that would end corruption. In a consent agreement, the union switched to one-member one-vote elections for top leaders, replacing the easily controlled elections held at conventions.

TDU-backed leaders won in 1991, lost in 1998, and won again in 2022, leading to a reinvigorated union, shop-floor mobilization, and the believable strike threat that extracted huge gains from UPS this year.

A similar process, on a compressed timeline, happened at

the Auto Workers. In 2019, then-president Gary Jones was removed from office and later pleaded guilty to embezzling union funds. He and his predecessor, Dennis Williams, were convicted and sent to prison along with a dozen others. A new reform caucus, Unite All Workers for Democracy, followed the TDU model, arguing with the feds that the answer to corruption was member control.

STRIKES DOUBLE

It wasn’t just Teamsters and the UAW, though. The half-million U.S. workers who struck in 2023 doubled the strike number for 2022, which in turn nearly doubled the 2021 number, according to Johnnie Kallas of the Cornell Labor Action Tracker.

Polling showed an uptick in union popularity to levels not seen since the 1960s. Strikes were popular, too: 78 percent supported the auto workers, and 76 percent the actors and writers.

The year started off with a victory for 7,000 New York nurses who struck and won strong language to enforce safer staffing levels. Their hospitals now pay big penalties if they don’t keep enough nurses on the floor. Their victory inspired 1,700 nurses in New Jersey, members of the Steelworkers (USW), who have been on strike since August.

In June, 6,000 Machinists at Spirit AeroSystems in Wichita hit the bricks, rejecting an offer their union pushed. They were objecting to 60- and 70-hour weeks. They won their weekends back.

HOLLYWOOD THE BIGGEST

The biggest strike of the year was by 160,000 actors in SAG-AFTRA who walked out in July, following 11,000 screenwriters (WGA) to the strike line. Hollywood sputtered to a halt as familiar faces made cameos in TV news reports from the picket line. They stayed out for four months. Writers won gains on pay, staffing, and sharing the bonanza from streaming.

In October a coalition of unions including the SEIU struck West Coast health care giant Kaiser Permanente—75,000 people struck across four states, mostly in California. They won a 21 percent raise.

In Los Angeles schools, support staff in Service Employees Local 99 walked out and teachers followed: 65,000 in two unions striking together. Reformers run the teachers union in L.A.

The award for most strikes surely goes to Los Angeles this year. In addition to the schools and the actors and writers, 15,000 UNITE HERE members have been on rolling short strikes at 62 hotels. Out-of-control housing prices mean hotel workers are commuting two hours each way, or living in their cars during the week.

DEFENSE AGAINST TECH

Self-defense against changing tech was a recurring theme. At UPS, the new contract abolishes driver-facing surveillance cameras and forms a tech committee to approve changes. Actors and writers beat back the AI-assisted theft of their work.

Automakers have been using the transition to electric vehicles (EVs) to undermine wages. Before the strike, union battery plant workers, who face dirty work and hazardous conditions, occupied a lower-paid tier. With the new contract, union workers at GM’s joint-venture battery plant Ultium Cells saw their top hourly rate rise from \$20 to \$32.

UNION 'YES, PLEASE!'

Often union organizers are told that striking is scary—a topic to downplay. But the opposite is proving to be the case: a powerful strike is a great recruiting tool.

Since the Stand-Up Strike, hundreds of workers at non-union auto plants have been contacting the UAW to organize. At the Chattanooga, Tennessee, Volkswagen plant, workers signed 1,000 cards in a week.

Workers across the economy have been clamoring to organize. The United Electrical Workers (UE) have scored a series of blowout votes to unionize among graduate workers—adding 14,000 members. At Northwestern, Johns Hopkins, and the University of Chicago, they won by more than 90 percent. At the University of Minnesota they won by 97 percent, in a unit that had voted down union efforts in 2005 and 2012; wages and health care were the top issues.

The Steelworkers won an important southern manufacturing victory in May at Blue Bird Bus, where 1,400 workers build buses near Macon, Georgia. And at Kumho Tire in Macon, 300 Steelworkers who build tires signed a first contract, after a bruising three-year campaign for union recognition and a two-year contract fight.

Starbucks Workers United continued a steady drumbeat of election wins, organizing 360 stores in two years. The company has used illegal tactics throughout the campaign, like firing union supporters and excluding union stores from credit-card tipping. Courts found Starbucks guilty of hundreds of violations, and ordered it to reinstate dozens of fired workers and stop punishing union stores. Still, the company has stalled negotiations and not a single store has a contract yet.

Workers at Trader Joe's, organizing with the independent Trader Joe's United, have voted union at stores in Massachusetts, Kentucky, Minnesota, and California. The company has delayed in negotiations and is now trying to decertify the union at the Hadley, Massachusetts, store that was the first to unionize.

Amazon has refused even to start negotiations with its union workers, using a combination of illegal repression, appeals, and delay against the 7,000 workers at JFK8 in Staten Island who voted to join the Amazon Labor Union in 2022.

Meanwhile Amazon delivery drivers in Palmdale, California, who joined the Teamsters have been on an unfair labor practice strike for six months, ever since Amazon illegally terminated them by cancelling its contract with their nominal employer BTS—a legal action designed to protect Amazon from accountability.

All this organizing is creating pressure to strengthen labor law, and the Democrat-dominated NLRB has been cranking out favorable rulings. Stericycle takes aim at company rules that chill organizing. Under the Cemex decision, if an employer commits an unfair labor practice so egregious that it would necessitate another union election, the employer will automatically have to recognize the union (assuming the union filed with majority support). That would have helped in the Kumho Tire drive, where a revote added years of delays.

Biden's NLRB General Counsel Jennifer Abruzzo is clearly trying to enforce the law; fired Starbucks workers, for example, have been able to get their jobs back. But deep-pocketed companies are still getting away with a strategy that Kallas at Cornell called "litigate litigate litigate, delay delay delay."

A VITAL CYCLE

A theme this year is that reform movements led to bolder contract demands, which led to winning contract campaigns and strikes, which are giving workers hope in new organizing.

Inspired by good examples, the renovating spirit is sparking to life in more and more unions. There's already a sizable reform pole in the 1.2 million-member Food and Commercial Workers (UFCW) centered in the union's biggest local. Rail Machinist reformers look set to finally win a challenged election in the 7,500-member District Lodge 19, which represents rail mechanics all over the country. A new caucus, CREW, has emerged in the Theatrical and Stage Employees (IATSE). And potential new organizing in the auto sector could change the country.

It all adds up to an exciting prospect as we enter 2024.

Jenny Brown is an assistant editor at Labor Notes, an organizer in the women's liberation movement, and the author of several books on feminism, reproductive rights, and labor.

Labor Notes staff contributed reporting to this article all year. Read the complete version of this article at tinyurl.com/Iguana1793



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Don't dump the dump!

by Richard Hamann, Environmental Law researcher

I support the permit modification that would allow Florence Recycling to fill space on the existing footprint of Construction and Demolition Debris Disposal Facility to a higher elevation than is currently authorized.

The Florence family has operated this facility for many years with no adverse effects on the environment or the surrounding community. As someone who has lived on property adjacent to the SE corner of the landfill site since 1983, I can make that statement based on personal observation.

I am very familiar with the regulatory process and environmental issues, having taught and researched environmental law at the University of Florida for 35 years, served as the Chair of the Environmental and Land Use Law Section of The Florida Bar, and served on the boards of several environmental organizations, including Florida Defenders of the Environment and the Florida Wildlife Federation.

When I first acquired my homestead, the site of the Florence Landfill was a pit from which sand had been extracted and into which the owners had begun to dispose of trash. My neighbors and I lobbied to put an end to that. The property was then sold to someone who began to operate a C&D landfill but was unable to follow the rules and soon faced enforcement action. When Paul Florence proposed to take over the site, we met with him and devised a plan whereby C&D material that had been taken directly to the landfill by roofers, builders or in roll off containers, would be taken instead to a transfer station. At that site it would

be off-loaded onto a concrete floor, screened for inappropriate materials or materials that could be recycled, and then loaded into Florence's own trucks for transport to the landfill.

Some additional material is taken directly to the landfill from demolition sites. The crew at the landfill does another search as the material is deposited there. In response to the concerns of the community, the landfill is only operated during the week and for limited hours (i.e., 8:30-4:30, Monday-Friday). This system has worked well. I have watched the Florence workers as they remove potentially hazardous materials and household trash from the waste stream. If anything can be recycled, they pull it out for that purpose. I have great confidence in the integrity of the operation.

I also know how important it is for the community. Every day there is a constant stream of trucks and trailers from roofers and builders bringing waste materials to the transfer station. Their other option is haul that material across the City of Gainesville to the western side of Alachua County. What an enormous waste of time and fuel that would be. It only makes sense to get more capacity to provide this essential service out of the same landfill footprint.

Florence Recycling has also been a great asset to the community in other ways. For years a property close to the landfill had been used as an illegal dump site by its owners. A huge quantity of trash had accumulated on the site. A couple hoped to build their own homestead on the property but could not until the trash and the enormous liens imposed by the county had been removed. Paul Florence came in with heavy equipment, trucks and roll off containers to help the community clean up the site. He did that at no charge and accepted all the waste in the landfill. Similar assistance has been provided for the cleanup of conservation lands by Alachua Conservation Trust for ultimate inclusion in Paynes Prairie State Preserve. There are numerous other examples of community service by the Florence family.

A few members of our community are opposed to the permit modification. Most of them are relatively new arrivals. All of us directly adjacent to the landfill are supportive. Unfortunately, these individuals have secured funding from the Sierra Club to contest issuance of the permit for a vertical expansion. In response, the Florence family has had to hire expert witnesses and attorneys of their own, at great expense. It is a colossal waste of time and money that could be used instead for beneficial community projects.

For those interested in the details, all the legal pleadings can be reviewed on the website of the Florida Division of Administrative Hearings, Case No. 23-4067. 🐾

Richard Hamann has been a SE Gainesville resident since 1983. 🐾



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At a press conference on Jan. 3, Southeast Gainesville residents and supporters from the local NAACP and Sierra Club showed their interest in permanently closing the Florence Construction and Demolition Debris Landfill. Photo courtesy of Suzmiché Morris.

‘Dump the Dump!’

Southeast Gainesville residents continue to demand

by Suzmiché Morris

At a Jan. 3 press conference organized outside the Alachua County Administration Building, a coalition of southeast Gainesville residents was joined by supporters from the local NAACP and Sierra Club chapters to encourage their neighbors from the Kincaid Loop/Boulware Springs neighborhood to continue their struggle to permanently close the Florence Construction and Demolition Debris Landfill. Residents have organized around public health and environmental concerns regarding land use and the quality of the community’s groundwater and air. The landfill is within 400 feet of the working-class neighborhoods with their many homes, churches, farms, nature parks, and schools.

Community mobilization around the issue intensified in November 2022 when Southeast Landholdings (Florence Landfill) re-submitted its application to expand the landfill’s height from 35 feet to 70 feet above the natural grade of the property. A group of neighbors are preparing for a hearing before the Division of Administrative Hearings (DOAH) to challenge the state of Florida’s Department of Environmental Protection’s (FDEP) notice of permit approving the landfill to double in height.

Last fall, it appeared the Alachua County Commission was likely to vote to permanently close the landfill when the County Special Use Permit (SUP) expires on Jan. 22. However, on December 6, the landfill’s owners issued a notice to the County that they would be exercising a state-granted legislative extension (FL 252.363) that could grant the landfill an additional four to six years of operations eliminating the county quasi-judicial hearing. Yet many residents contend that keeping the landfill open would diverge from the recently-adopted environmental justice and social equity amendments that were formally added to the County’s Comprehensive Plan at a General Board meeting on December 12.

At the County’s General Board meeting on December 12, 2023, resident stakeholders simultaneously congratulated the Board on the adoption of the long-awaited environmental justice and social equity amendments as it pertains to land use and

zoning decisions, and hand delivered a letter to each County Commission Board member specifying instances according to FL 252.363 where the legislative extension does not restrict County authority over a permit. One of the instances is when a permit is inconsistent with a County ordinance. Organizers argue that the legislative extension is not in compliance with the newly-adopted environmental justice and social equity ordinances.

Significant opposition in the neighborhood concerning the operation of the landfill is measurable. Currently, fifty Kincaid Loop/Boulware Springs neighbors have signed onto the letter to the County Commissioners urging the County to oppose the legislative extension and to not strip power from County seats and resident stakeholders. The landfill borders a neighborhood that is situated within a U.S. Census tract where the median individual income is \$14,077 (\$26,638 for households), 35 percent of residents are living below the federal poverty line (including 46 percent of children), and 40 percent are 19 or younger (22 percent are nine or younger).

“This dump is just feet away from people’s homes and farms, and across the street from Gainesville’s Historic Boulware Springs Nature Park and the Alachua County Sweetwater Preserve,” says Brackin Camp, a Boulware Springs Neighborhood resident. “The Board of County Commissioners must use their local power to stop the private owners of the dump from their shady dealings to go to any length to continue their operation at the expense of the health of the nearby neighbors.”

Organizers point towards a public presentation that the Alachua County staff made on July 11, indicating that the County has the capacity to dispose of more than twenty additional years of construction and demolition debris if the Florence landfill ceased operations in 2024. Organizers have encouraged the landfill owners and the County to focus more on expanding recycling markets because no landfill should be so close to people’s homes, schools, churches, farms, nature parks, and preserves.

See DUMP, p. 18

From DUMP, p. 17

In an effort to meet zero waste goals, the County has discussed offering incentives and grants to attract more recycling markets to the area.

Neighbors argue a new landfill would never be permitted in this location today, therefore it shouldn't be allowed to double in height either. The original 1994 SUP conditions limited the operation to five years with the purpose to contribute to the closure of the site: "The site's location is inconsistent with the urban residential character and the Estate Residential land use designation of the area. By allowing filling to close and reclaim the site, this Special Use Permit helps to further Comprehensive Plan policy 1.3.2, which states that "residential development should be free from the influence and encroachment of incompatible land uses."

In a 1998 letter from Robert Norton, Alachua County Growth Management Senior Environmental Planner addressed to the FDEP Solid Waste Supervisor Mary Nogus, P.E. Norton expressed concern over the potential of a permit modification:

"Alachua County has permitted C&D waste disposal at this site, which is in a primarily residential area as a special use, to facilitate restoring the natural grade of the property."



**REUSE
REDUCE
RECYCLE**

When the site was operated as Feagles Fill Dirt, large volumes of soil were removed leaving the property unusable for other purposes. The Board of County Commissioners made it clear through its denial of owner requested SUP modifications that would prolong the life of the landfill, that the intent and purpose of the current SUP is to close the site and prepare it for reclamation.

Indeed, the staff report for the zoning application (ZOS 7-94) condition 7c. states "No site modification shall result in any net increase of fillable volume on site." The Alachua County Environmental Protection Department is concerned that the prospect of 'high rising' the landfill is not compatible use in a residential neighborhood and is contrary to the intent and conditions of the permit."

The Kincaid Loop/Boulware Springs neighborhood has minimally changed since 1999. How and why did the encroachment of this prolonged incompatible land use get overlooked in this southeast neighborhood? Why is a landfill slated to close in 1999 still operating in 2024? The initial SUP limited the height of the landfill to two feet above the natural grade of the property, currently the landfill stands at 35 ft, and now they intend to go to 70 ft.

Alachua County staff will be scheduling an upcoming public meeting to provide opportunity for residents and the landfill owners to articulate their respective positions. To be informed on the date of that hearing and to support the local campaign to close the landfill, please visit <https://bit.ly/CloseTheDumpNow> or contact dumpledump32641@gmail.com.

Suzmiché Morris has been a SE Gainesville resident since 2003. 🐾

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From PALESTINE, p. 1

On Oct. 25, Gainesville Solidarity Network, UF Arab Students' Association, Islam On Campus-UF, UF JVP, and UF SJP joined a nationwide school walk-out for Palestine. Despite Governor Ron Desantis ordering Florida university SJP chapters' deactivation to silence Palestinian voices and UF President Ben Sasse similarly disregarding Palestinian students and employees, the crowd of 300 marched across campus.

Professors addressed the crowd as people called for Palestinians' right of return. Later, the Civic Media Center showed the documentary "5 Broken Cameras" by a West Bank journalist documenting the resistance of settler expansion into his hometown. As October ended, Superette Wine + Provisions hosted a Gainesville Solidarity Network support dinner for the struggle.

As Gaza's food, water, and electricity were being cut off, organizers announced a Nov. 4 National March on Washington. Dozens traveled overnight from Gainesville to the capital. UF SJP, Gainesville Solidarity Network, PSL Gainesville, and the UF chapter of Young Democratic Socialists of America joined up to 300,000 in attendance.

That day, JVP Gainesville, VFP, Florida Prisoner Solidarity, and others coordinated a vigil at Bo Diddley Plaza, where 150 protesters gathered for Jewish and Islamic grief rituals. They marched and shut down University Avenue and Main Street traffic.

On Nov. 16, after JVP Gainesville led public comments to the City Commission in support of a ceasefire resolution, PSL Gainesville, Gainesville Solidarity Network, UF SJP, JVP Gainesville, GRRR!, and FPS coalesced for a Stand with Palestine rally.

Almost 150 people chanted in the cold and rain. Speakers asserted that companies like Lockheed Martin, Raytheon, and Boeing profiting from the killing of Palestinians made the U.S. complicit in genocide. According to the U.S. Campaign for Palestinian Rights, Gainesville taxpayers contribute nearly \$2 million yearly to this "aid," \$2 million that is stripped from Gainesville communities in desperate need of healthcare and housing.

Leading up to Thanksgiving, Gainesville Solidarity Network hosted a "Rave 4 Palestine" fundraiser on Nov. 18. PSL Gainesville, UF SJP, CALOR, and JVP Gainesville, hosted local library teach-ins

on Nov. 19 and 21. During the temporary "ceasefire" from Nov. 24-30, in which Israeli forces continued bombing and incarcerating Palestinians, UF SJP led protesters to Congresswoman Kat Cammack's office, denouncing her support of occupation and demanding her support of ceasefire. Officials ignored pleas and the temporary "ceasefire" ended with November.

With over 20,000 Palestinians dead at the start of December, a new organization called the Liberation Collective launched with an artful event at the Hippodrome Theatre, joined remotely by Michigan Congresswoman Rashida Tlaib. This coalition will unite Gainesville's grassroots liberation movements, with an immediate focus on fighting for a Free Palestine.

Following a pinkwashing teach-in from UF Queer Liberation Front and others on the 4th, on Dec. 7, residents returned to the City Commission demanding a ceasefire resolution, following other U.S. cities.

The Commission argued that the letter they directed Mayor Ward to pen to President Biden at the last meeting sufficed; in it, Ward thanked Biden for his efforts to bring peace to Israel and Palestine. At this time, the Biden administration was circumventing Congress to approve a \$106 million sale of tank ammunition to Israel.

Dec. 10 saw four groups stage another protest. The Islamic Community Center of Gainesville Imam, Ismaeel Malik, addressed over 100 people waving flags and signs and led prayers.

Forums, at the Gainesville Quakers Meetinghouse, How Bazar, and online, centered on Gaza's history, settler-colonialism, and anti-Zionism and anti-Semitism, with discussion from educators and activists Ilana Bakal, Paul Ortiz, Malini Schueller, and Gwendolyn Zoharah Simmons.

Over the holidays, JVP Gainesville caroled for ceasefire downtown and PSL Gainesville flyeried outside of department stores to spread awareness of the Boycott, Divestment, Sanctions (BDS) Movement, with dozens showing support and eagerly agreeing to participate.

In January, PSL Gainesville screened "The Wanted 18," a 2014 documentary about Beit Sahour resistance during the First Intifada, and led discussion on further connecting Gainesville to national efforts.

On Jan. 9, as San Francisco became the largest U.S. city to pass a ceasefire resolution, the Alachua County Commission delayed a vote, asking JVP Gainesville to garner additional support

for a ceasefire resolution that would be Florida's first.

With the new semester underway, the March on Washington for Gaza on the 13th, and MLK weekend ahead of them, activists planned several more January events. CALOR, the UF Mexican-American Student Association, the UF Dominican Student Association, Chispas UF, and UF SJP hosted a Jan. 10 photography fundraiser for the Palestinian Children's Relief Fund at UF's Plaza of the Americas.

Liberation Collective's cycles of actions, on the second and fourth Tuesday of every month, are set to begin on January 23.

VFP holds Peace Picket Tuesdays from 4:30-5:30pm weekly at the corner of NW 42rd St and NW 16th Ave.

In the face of state repression and anti-Arab bigotry by public institutions, the movement for a free Palestine in Gainesville has not been deterred, but rather, has experienced exponential growth since Oct. 7.

Actions will continue until the war ends and Palestine is free.

Even in a small city like Gainesville, we see that organizing turns local efforts into global impact. We are united by a profound, sincere love and the belief that all life is sacred.

If you are inspired by the events described in this article, please consider joining a local organization that represents your values and moves you to take action against genocide.

The groups that have organized for a ceasefire, an end to occupation and genocide, and for Palestinian self-determination are continuing their work. Actions are generally promoted on Instagram and through mailing lists.

Please refer to the Iguana Directory, follow groups on social media, and visit their websites to sign up for email updates surrounding upcoming events. 🐢

"Never think that war, no matter how necessary, nor how justified, is not a crime."

— Ernest Hemingway, 1946



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The Alachua County Crisis Center is currently recruiting volunteers to answer our local crisis hotline, as well as the National Suicide Prevention Lifeline.

The Alachua County Crisis Center provides free and confidential crisis response services to Gainesville and the surrounding community, almost all of which are provided by highly trained volunteers.

Volunteering with the Crisis Center is a great way to support our community and those in need, while also learning valuable communication skills you can use for the rest of your life.

Training starts on Saturday, Jan. 27, and takes over 60 hours during the course of eight weeks.

Volunteers learn crisis intervention and suicide prevention skills, which prepares them to answer phones on the National Suicide Prevention Hotline (988) and our local crisis hotline.

The training is free and is conducted entirely online.

The first step to getting involved in training is to submit the online application.

If you have questions about training, or if you would like to invite us to speak at a meeting of an organization, please contact our training coordinator Kevin Sosa at (352) 264-6781 or ksosa@alachuacounty.us.

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New Exhibit at A. Quinn Jones Museum

'City of Hope: Resurrection City and the 1968 Poor People's Campaign'

by Voleer Thomas, correspondent, Gainesville Guardian

A museum exhibit that captures the essence of the historic Poor People's March on Washington, D.C., in 1968 has come to Gainesville.

The exhibit, billed as the "City of Hope: Resurrection City and the 1968 Poor People's Campaign," will run through the summer at the A. Quinn Jones Museum and Cultural Center at 1013 NW Seventh Ave.

"What I like about it is the historical photos traced when a diversity of people came together for the Poor People's Campaign," said Carol Richardson, cultural affairs manager for the city of Gainesville. "This particular march was a grassroots march to bring economic justice to everyone in the U.S."

The exhibit will be open to the public from 1 to 5 p.m. on Tuesdays, Wednesdays and Thursdays or by appointment.

"They're going to get a snapshot into historical issues in 1968 that are still happening today," Richardson said. "Great strides have been made but we still have a long way to go."

There also will be a showcase of past local activists who made strides in 1968, she said.

"We wanted to recognize that there were people in the community doing the same thing," Richardson said. "I would like people to see there was unity for a cause. This museum wants to show solidarity and that together we can achieve a lot more."

Other events associated with the exhibit include:

- A lecture about the history of the 1968 Poor People's Campaign at 6:30 p.m. Jan. 18 by Paul Ortiz, director of the University of Florida's Samuel Proctor Oral History Program
- UF professor emerita Gwendolyn Zoharah Simmons at 6:30 p.m. Feb. 15, will share her firsthand experience as a civil rights organizer in the 1960s and attendance at the 1968 Poor People's Campaign March
- A discussion exploring the historical context and contemporary implications of Black individuals and communities advocating for better health that will be led by Alyssa Cole, an assistant professor of African American Studies at UF, at 6:30 p.m. on March 21
- A workshop at 10 a.m. March 28, hosted by Emma Shaw Crane, Ph.D., titled "Research Justice: A Workshop on Collaboration"
- A music and cultural event featuring work of artists, musicians and writers who came out of the 1968 Poor People's Campaign movement at 6:30 p.m. on April 18

"It (Poor People's Campaign) was (Dr. Martin Luther) King's last effort to abolish poverty in the U.S.," Ortiz said. "He was a genius and forced Americans to talk about what they don't want to talk about."

Ortiz referenced King's speech during the Memphis Sanitation Workers' Strike—the night before his assassination on April 4,

1968, at the Lorraine Motel in Memphis—and how King did not agree with the U.S. involvement in the Vietnam War.

The efforts of the Rev. Dr. William Barber, one of the co-leaders of this generation's Poor People's Campaign, is continuing the fight to address poverty, Ortiz said.

"I will be using King's book, 'Where Do We Go from Here: Chaos or Community?' as a starting point to think about the connection between the past and the present," Ortiz said. "We have seen a renaissance of this kind of activism with the labor movement, affordable housing rights, immigration rights and the Black Lives Matter movement."

Simmons said she was representing the National Council of Negro Women when she attended the 1968 Poor People's Campaign March.

She remembers King speaking in her hometown of Memphis in April 1968 to address sanitation workers who were on strike due to a fatal tragedy.

According to the Martin Luther King Jr. Research and Education Institute at Stanford University, on Feb. 1, 1968, two Memphis garbage collectors, Echol Cole and Robert Walker, were crushed to death by a malfunctioning truck.

Eleven days later, frustrated by the city's response to the latest event in a long pattern of neglect and abuse of its Black employees, 1,300 Black men from the Memphis Department of Public Works went on strike.

"It was an amazing event and it was undercut by the assassination of Dr. King," Simmons said. "It was his last major program. One of the amazing things about it was, King expanded his organizing skills and began focusing on the issue of poverty." 🐾



History and the people who make it: Scott Camil (Part 3)



This month, we continue highlighting a Gainesville activist, veteran, honored hero, and friend of SPOHP, Scott Camil. Scott is a member of the Gainesville Eight: the group of seven Vietnam War veterans and one civilian who were caught in a conspiracy by the FBI, who attempted to frame them for terroristic threats.

In this 2005 interview with John Aversono (A), Camil (C) shares about his upbringing, his time in the Marine Corps from training to combat, and how he became an antiwar activist. Be advised that there is profanity and graphic descriptions of war.

Transcript edited by Donovan Carter.

A: Once you got back to the States, what did you do?

C: I reported back to Camp Lejeune, to India Battery, 3rd Battalion, 10th Marines. I became a platoon sergeant, [a] senior NCO. My job is to wake people up, make sure the barracks are cleaned, get them their chow, have them at morning formation, make sure everybody is here, find what they are supposed to do for the day and get them off to do that.

I went to nuclear, biological and chemical warfare school. We went on a med-cruise to the Middle East, Greece, Turkey, Spain, Malta, Sardinia, Germany and played war games with different countries and spent liberty, got souvenirs, got laid and got drunk. It was an enormous experience for me because they did not like Americans anywhere we went.

I also taught for the 10th Marine regiment riot control. We were on standby all the time to go to demonstrations.

In the service, all the news you get is letters from your family and what you read in the Marine Corps newspaper, really the Navy Sea Tiger. You don't get any outside news, anything contrary to U.S. policy.

When you are in the Marine Corps and are stateside, you are really thinking about going home for the weekend and getting laid. Friday you get off and you have to be back by Monday morning.

But all the time we are getting put on standby and we can't go home because some asshole demonstrators are having a demonstration in Washington. Not only were these people un-American, but they were fucking with my weekends. So I didn't like them.

The rules are when we go into a city we're not the judge, not the jury. Our job is to protect lives and property. We are not authorized to kill people, only to shoot to wound. I am hardcore, two years of combat, what's this shoot to wound shit? I shoot people in the head.

So on standby, I say look, if one person throws a rock or a bottle at us, I want everybody to empty one magazine into the crowd. My commanding officer found out and I was removed from that duty. At the time, I meant it. Fuck these people, they are un-American, they are communist sympathizers, they don't like our country. They're going to fuck with my weekend, we'll teach them.

A: What made you do a complete 180 by changing your support for the war to against it?

C: Number one, I have direct knowledge of what Vietnam really is, and I read the newspaper and they aren't saying the truth. I listen to radio and TV, they don't say the truth. But I'm thinking the people in charge have access to secret information, you have to trust your government. There must be a reason. You shouldn't question that. So I didn't think about it. Then I started learning things that blew me away. Howard Zinn's book, "The People's History," opened my eyes so much, seeing a different side.

All these things started coming together in my brain. I graduated from Miami-Dade and transferred up here to the University of Florida, and I read [in] the Alligator that Jane Fonda was coming to speak. I wanted to see what a movie star looked like. She struck a chord — basically she said that we are lucky to live in a democracy. A democracy cannot function if the people are not concerned.

War was being carried out in the people's name and the people's money, and they weren't being told the truth. It was the duty of every patriotic Vietnam veteran to make the truth known. Without truth, it is just symbolic democracy, you're pulling the lever, but it doesn't mean anything. I believed that the public had the right to

know the truth. I also wanted recognition for my sacrifices. When I was growing up, you go to war, you have medals and big parades, everybody is thankful and you're a hero. That didn't happen to me. I got two Purple Hearts, I was wounded, I killed lots of people — where was my thanks?

I agreed to participate in a forum called the Winter Soldier Investigation. I met people from the Vietnam Veterans Against the War, an organization based in the northeast, and after three days of testimony, they said let's make this a national organization. I go testify in January, January 31 and February 1 and 2 [1971]. We drew up the constitution, the bylaws and divided the country into twenty-eight parts. I had the southeast United States and went to work against the war.

A: When you came to my class, you talked about how the FBI tried to kill you. Could you explain that?

C: We start demonstrations. We had the Winter Soldier hearing. And all of a sudden I'm in trouble. In January of 1972 I was arrested for kidnapping. I was put in jail, I had no bond and I was facing the death penalty. I spent ten days in jail and a lawyer comes, Larry Turner. I got bonded out. In February I got arrested for sale and possession of marijuana. Then in June, I got indicted by the Grand Jury. In a six-month period I had three busts.

The kidnapping charges were thrown out. The jury found me not guilty of the drug charges. The jury found us not guilty on the Gainesville Eight charges.

A cab driver taking the prosecutor to the airport and the FBI guy, after the trial, heard the FBI guy and the prosecutor talking about "we're going to get Camil." Federal agents come into town and shoot me. I'm charged with sale and possession of marijuana, and sale and possession of cocaine, assaulting federal agents [and] resisting arrest with violence. I survived the shooting. Not only did the jury find me not guilty, but they recommended the agents be indicted for attempted murder. Nothing happened to them.

A: Does it upset you to see the same thing as Vietnam happening again in Iraq?

C: It upsets me more than I can say. I'm a counselor for the G.I. Rights Hotline. I take a lot of calls. We believe that people being enlisted into the military have a right to informed consent, to know everything.

They don't know when they join, that

once their contract is over they can be kept in against their will.

They don't tell you about stop-loss. They are not going to tell you about the downside of the military. They are going to tell you about all the pay, money for college and all these benefits. You will be able to see the world and drive a tank, shoot a machine gun. They are not going to tell you what it is like to see your buddy lying there, bleeding to death.

They are not going to tell you what it is like to come home without legs or arms. They are not going to tell you what it is like to listen to people screaming because they are burning to death, because you just torched their fucking place.

They are not going to tell you that they changed the rules and [won't] give you the things they promised you.

People have a right to know what they are getting themselves into.

A: What advice would you have for someone who just graduated high school, and wanted to join the Army or Marines, and go fight in Iraq?

C: I'd want to know why. If their [reason] was weapons of mass destruction or 9/11, then I would explain how Iraq had nothing to do with 9/11. If they talked about wanting a job, there are other kinds of jobs. I would recommend you go to college or junior college and get an education first. That's really, really important.

I might talk about who is over there fighting, it's the poor kids. Why is it that those guys went over there without the body armor, the armored vehicles they needed? Why is it that there was no fucking plan?

You can get everything out of life that you

really need without having to do that.

I am really not against the military, [it] made me grow up. Military benefits put me through college. But, you have a right to know the truth about it, and the way politicians use the military — illegally from my point of view.

Once you go to war, you are not going to be you anymore. The person who comes back is going to be different and you are never going to be able to not have these ugly pictures in your brain. There are such a large amount of guys that have psychological problems from war.

As a parent I tell my kids, solve your problems like an adult. [War] is organized murder. And we are going to beat you into submission. We are going to kill your husbands and your fathers and your sons, until you do what we say.

A: With your time in Vietnam, have you suffered a lot of post traumatic stress?

C: Oh, for sure. I have bad nightmares, obtrusive thoughts. And I have worked on them for a long time. The talks that I give are really hard to give. But I do it because I think that is the only way people are going to learn, from direct experience.

When people see the pain in me when I give my talks, I think that reaches something in them that they don't get out of a book. A lot of people have what is called survivor guilt. Why did I live and other people die? I feel that I was allowed to live and it is my job [to] make sure people understand what is going on in war. I owe that to the future.

A: Any projects you are working on?

C: I am very involved in electoral politics. I am on the executive committee of the

Sierra Club. I am a very strong environmentalist. War causes more environmental destruction than just about anything.

But to me, all parents have in common [that] they want their children to have it better than they had. And they want to leave the world better than they found it. We have to protect the land, and the air and the water if we want life to continue.

We fight in the Sierra Club, as environmentalists, against the people trying to destroy the fucking environment. All they care about is money and it is incredible to me the shortsightedness of Americans. We're really bad. The environment is very important to me.

I am a counselor for the G.I. Rights Hotline. In the military, I would have wanted someone to call and help me. To me, it is not really about the war, or the military. It is about, this person is in a jam and if I was in their shoes I would want somebody to help me. They need to know what their rights are. So I am very involved in that kind of stuff. I just focus on what I am best at. And I am best in the environment, peace and justice, civil rights, anti-war and electoral politics.

For the full interview, see tinyurl.com/Iguana1734.

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From BLUE KEY, p. 1

organized Homecoming activities and what would eventually become Gator Growl, one of the country's largest student-run pep rallies.

Unofficially, FBK operates as a shell for a political machine that controls and extracts money from UF's student government.

After wrongfully smearing one of their opponents, Charles Grapski, as a child molester in 1995, he successfully sued FBK for defamation. When I interviewed Grapski, he stated plainly, "It's a secret society hiding under a semi-legitimate guise of a leadership honorary. But everybody knows—it's not a very good secret, especially because my lawsuit proved forever that, in fact, they are such. They are the System."

Over the course of his trial, numerous witnesses and insiders confirmed FBK's illicit activities. In an affidavit, an FBK member admitted, "I am aware that FBK substantially participates in the election of Florida Student Government officers through the operation of the FBK group system."

The FBK group system emerged over the course of the twentieth century. In the group system, Greek houses split into fluid factions, or groups, that competed for power within FBK. The alignments of each house within a group often changed from year to year, allowing for limited competition within their relative monopoly of power.

After Grapski's successful lawsuit and the loss of the student body presidency in 2004, Florida Blue Key reorganized its political machine into a more stable arrangement: the System. Rather than the fluid (and unstable) alignment of Greek houses into groups, houses divided into three rigid blocs — political, social, or third bloc — represented by bloc leaders.

Additionally, they incorporated non-Greeks into the political machine with representatives from multicultural organizations (called "the communities") to maintain the appearance of racial diversity within an otherwise white-dominated power structure.

Bloc leaders and representatives of the communities meet behind closed doors to negotiate the spoils of student government. The communities typically receive the vice presidency and treasurer position while specific houses "own" agencies such as Theta Chi controlling Student Government Productions or Alpha Epsilon Pi controlling ACCENT Speakers. After negotiating

internally, the System presents a unified front during election season, defeating their opponents by coercing votes from Greek life to ensure a steady bloc vote.

This post-2004 reorganization of the System ensured electoral domination; since then, the System has lost only one student government presidential election. However, the internal results have been disastrous. The rigid and deal-driven bloc system removed the already limited meritocracy and competition that existed within FBK's group system, leading to a death spiral of nepotism.

In former decades, the FBK-run Gator Growl pep rally commanded national respect.

In 2002, attendance was 60,000. Nepotism and a decline in leadership quality, however, led to attendance shrinking to 26,000 by 2011.

In the early 2010s, FBK insiders admitted they were bleeding money: "Blue Key has degenerated because it has become a business and it wants more members. Gator Growl loses hundreds of thousands of dollars every year, and Blue Key is on its way to going bankrupt."

What was this prestigious leadership honorary society's solution to losing money from running its own event poorly? Extracting student tuition dollars to bail itself out.

In 2011 Student Government Productions "stepped in" and offered to pay \$71,000 dollars from student tuition funds for Gator Growl artists. Since then, SGP has been paying hundreds of thousands of dollars every year for an event produced by Florida Blue Key.

The money sent by SGP to FBK cannot be publicly scrutinized. When submitting public record requests concerning contracts of Gator Growl artists, UF simply responds, "You need to reach out to the President of Florida Blue Key ... Florida Blue Key handles Gator Growl and Homecoming, not Student Government."

Even when not indirectly extracting tuition dollars via SGP, FBK takes money directly from UF's student government to subsidize Gator Growl. For example, in 2005, FBK received \$140,000 in tuition funds to lower the cost of Gator Growl tickets. Compiling publicly available statements and news articles, the amount of money taken by FBK from student tuition dollars amounts to \$1,271,000 in the last two decades.

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This count is likely an underestimate because, starting in 2018, FBK stopped commenting publicly on how much money it received from student tuition to subsidize Gator Growl.

Even after extracting over a million dollars of student tuition money, FBK's fortunes have not reversed.

In 2022, attendance dropped to 7,000. FBK's publicly available tax records also paint a sobering picture; in two of the last six fiscal years, they've been net negative on income from Homecoming/Gator Growl.

In the fiscal year ending June 2020 their

net income from Homecoming/Gator Growl was -\$103,277 and in the fiscal year ending June 2019 it was -\$16,244.


Despite taking hundreds of thousands of dollars in student tuition money every year, FBK still struggles to make any money from Homecoming/Gator Growl and, in fact, sometimes *loses money*!

Florida Blue Key controls UF's student government and has developed a sophisticated political machine to perpetuate its control. Nevertheless, the internal corruption and nepotistic practices that characterize FBK's reorganization of its political machine post-2004 has also led to an internal financial degeneration.

To stay afloat, it has resorted to leveraging its control over student government to extract hundreds of thousands of dollars in student tuition money for its events. The System is not merely dying, but actively on life support.

As Grapski told me, "Instead of teaching the future leaders of America and Florida who could actually bring about reforms to the country and the state, we are teaching corruption at the University of Florida and condoning it."

Rey Arcenas is a 3rd year UF History and Women's Studies student and a recipient of the Florida Academic Top Scholar award. ✨



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The Civic Media Center is a reading room, a library of the non-corporate press, and community space.

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Gainesville area events

WEEK OF JANUARY 14-20

- Mon 1/15 **MLK Day March**, noon, from Bo Diddley Downtown Plaza to MLK Ctr on Waldo Rd; tinyurl.com/Iguana1811
- Wed 1/17 **Afro-Futurism Week** opens at UF College of Arts, 8am thru 1/25 9 pm, multiple events & venues, free; tinyurl.com/Iguana1795
- Wed 1/17 **"The Jewish Imperial Imagination"** discussion, 5pm, UF Smathers Library East (1523 Union Rd), free; tinyurl.com/Iguana1796
- Wed 1/17 **Food Not Bombs** meets, 5:45pm every other Wednesday, Civic Media Ctr; civicmediacenter.org
- Thu 1/18 **"The Guyana-Venezuela Border Controversy"** lecture, 4-5:30pm, UF Grinter Hall 404, free; tinyurl.com/Iguana1797
- Thu 1/18 **"Neptune Frost"** Afro-futuristic sci-fi-punk musical movie, 6-9:30pm, UF Innovate (Hub, 747 SW 2nd Ave), free; tinyurl.com/Iguana1800
- Thu 1/18 **"City of Hope 1968 Poor People's Campaign"** talk by Dr Paul Ortiz, 6:30-8pm, A. Quinn Jones Ctr (1013 NW 7th Ave), free, exhibitions every Friday through April; tinyurl.com/Iguana1799 & pg 21
- Thu 1/18 **An Evening with The Imbeciles** musical fundraiser, 7-8:30pm, Blackadder Brewing (618 NW 6th St); tinyurl.com/Iguana1812
- Thu 1/18 **Basement Sessions** 3 bands + 1 DJ, 7pm, Hipp Basement (25 SE 2nd Pl), \$8-15 slide; visitgainesville.com/event/basement-sessions
- Fri 1/19 **Fla Springs Institute Art Exhibit**, 6-9pm, (18645 Main St, High Springs), \$5 donation requested; tinyurl.com/Iguana1801
- Fri 1/19 **Sunshine Music & Arts Fest** w/ arts, crafts, live music, food trucks, 6:30-11pm, 1st Magnitude (1220 SE Veitch St), free; facebook.com/FirstMagnitudeBrewing
- Fri 1/19 **"Little Women,"** 8pm, runs through Feb 4, Acrosstown Rep, (3501 SW 2nd Ave), \$25 [\$5 preview 1/18, 8pm]; acrosstown.org/2024-01-little-women
- Sat 1/20 **Guided Nature Meditation Walk**, 9am, Turkey Creek Preserve (6300 NW 93rd Ave, Alachua), \$10-15; tinyurl.com/Iguana1802
- Sat 1/20 **Gvl Free Store**, 2-5pm, Civic Media Ctr (433 S. Main St); civicmediacenter.org
- Sat 1/20 **Goth Dance Party**, 3 bands, 8pm-midnight, Civic Media Ctr (433 S. Main St); civicmediacenter.org

WEEK OF JANUARY 11-27

- Sun 1/21 **Eric Estling**, of River Phoenix Ctr for Peacebuilding, speaks to Sunday Assembly, 11am, Pride Ctr (Springhill, 3850 NW 83rd St), free; tinyurl.com/Iguana1813
- Wed 1/24 **Climate Action: Rally to Tally**, 8am-4pm, Sierra Club lobbying day; carpooling, tinyurl.com/Iguana1903
- Thu 1/25 **UF's 9th annual Climate Communications Summit**, 2-5PM, UF REitz Union Auditorium, FREE; tinyurl.com/Iguana1814

- Thu 1/25 **Meet & Greet** community organization confab for 2024, 6PM, Cotton Club Museum & Cultural Ctr (837 SE 7th Ave); my.lwv.org/florida/alachua/event/meet-greet
- Thu 1/25 **Nat'l Women's Liberation** meets, 6:30-8:30PM, Curia on the Drag (2029 NW 6th St); womensliberation.org
- Fri 1/26 **"Barracoon" talk by Dr. Ibram X. Kendi**, 7 pm, Lincoln Middle School (1001 SE 12th St), \$25 (includes "Barracoon" book) (\$30 w/ 1 child); mathesonmuseum.org/events
- Fri 1/26 **ArtWalk**, 7 pm, on last Fridays at venues around town; artwalkgainesville.com & pg 5
- Fri 1/26 **"Take 5" 10-Minute Play Festival**, 7:30 pm, Santa Fe College Fine Arts Auditorium (3000 NW 83rd St), \$15 (\$9 for seniors, students, military, kids; for SFC students); tinyurl.com/iguana1803
- Fri 1/26 **"Next to Normal"** Tony-winning musical opens, runs through 2/25, 8PM, The Hipp (25 SE 2nd Pl), \$55; thehipp.org/next-to-normal/
- Sat 1/27 **Sunshine State Book Festival**, 10am-5pm (& 1/28), Hilton UF Conf. Ctr (1714 SW 34th St), free; see pg 20 & sunshinestatebookfestival.com

WEEK OF JANUARY 28-FEB 3

- Sun 1/28 **Bluegrass, Old-Time, & Traditional Jam**, 2-5pm at Civic Media Ctr (433 S Main St), donation requested; civicmediacenter.org
- Sun 1/28 **Woolly Mammoth Market**, 2-6pm at The Woolly (20 N Main St), art, clothing, etc; facebook.com/TheWoolly
- Tue 1/30 **Oral History Open House**, 3-5pm, UF Pugh Hall O'Neill Reading Room, free; oral.history.ufl.edu
- Wed 1/31 **"Fighting Hatred in the Heartland"** talk by Prof. Samuel Freedman 4pm, Smathers Library, free; tinyurl.com/Iguana1804
- Thu, 2/1 **Twisted Pine** bluegrass plus, UF Phillips Ctr Upstage (3201 Hull Rd), 7pm (\$50) & 9pm (\$35) (UF students \$12 both); tinyurl.com/Iguana1815 & pg 20
- Fri 2/2 **10th Pints & Predators festival** w/ live birds & wildlife, 1st Magnitude (1220 SE Veitch St), 10am-3pm; facebook.com/FirstMagnitudeBrewing & pg 21
- Fri 2/2 **Alfredo Rodriguez Trio** jazz, UF Phillips Ctr Upstage (3201 Hull Rd), 7pm (\$50) & 9pm (\$35) (UF students \$12 both); tinyurl.com/Iguana1816 & pg 20
- Sat 2/3 **Food Community Tour**, Working Food (219 NW 10th Ave), 10am-12:30pm, \$35; tinyurl.com/Iguana1805

Over 1,600 COVID-19 deaths per week in the US last month, according to the CDC. Get (re-)vaxed, mask up, and be careful out there!

WEEK OF FEBRUARY 4-10

- Thu 2/8 **CMC Benefit**, 7pm, Pine Hill Haints, Cooper, others at The OX (920 NW 2nd St), \$10-20 slide; civicmediacenter.org & pg 8
- Thu 2/8 **The String Queens** cross-genre trio, UF Phillips Ctr Upstage (3201 Hull Rd), 7pm (\$50) & 9pm (\$35) (UF students \$12 both); tinyurl.com/Iguana1817 & pg 20
- Sat 2/10 **Guided Nature Meditation Walk**, 9am, Tusawilla Preserve, (211 SE Tusawilla Rd, Micanopy), \$10-15; tinyurl.com/Iguana1806
- Sat 2/10 **Love in the Swamp** ballet, UF Phillips Ctr (3201 Hull Rd), 7:30pm (\$27-55 reserved seating); tinyurl.com/Iguana1818 & pg 20

WEEK OF FEBRUARY 11-17

- Sun 2/11 **The Pagoda**, author talk on St. Augustine lesbian community center, 4pm, Matheson Museum (513 E Univ Ave), free with registration; mathesonmuseum.org/events
- Mon 2/12 **Fla Free Speech Forum**, 11:30am, hear Gina Duncan of Equality Florida at Cone Park Branch Library (2801 E Univ Ave), free (unless you pre-order lunch); floridafreespeech.org & pg 27
- Thu 2/15 **Palatka Bluegrass Festival**, noon-9:30pm, also 2/16-17, 380 Boys Ranch Rd, Palatka, \$45/day; evansmediasource.com/events/ & pg 20
- Thu 2/15 **Race & College Football** talk, 4pm, UF Smathers Library East 100 (1523 Union Rd), free; tinyurl.com/Iguana1807
- Thu 2/15 **"Mobilizing Communities: 1968"** talk by Dr. Zoharah Simmons, 6:30-8pm, A. Quinn Jones Ctr (1013 NW 7th Ave), free, tinyurl.com/Iguana1808 & pg 21
- Thu 2/15 **Jane Monheit** jazz, UF Phillips Ctr Upstage (3201 Hull Rd), 7pm (\$50) & 9pm (\$35) (UF students \$12 both); tinyurl.com/Iguana1819
- Fri 2/16 **Six One Five Collective** pop, UF Phillips Ctr Upstage (3201 Hull Rd), 7pm (\$50) & 9pm (\$35) (UF students \$12 both); tinyurl.com/Iguana1820 & pg 20
- Sat 2/17 **Gvl Free Store**, 2-5pm, Civic Media Ctr (433 S. Main St); civicmediacenter.org

OTHER EVENT LISTINGS

Please support Gainesville live music venues, they all have calendars:

- Boca Backyard, Cypress & Grove, First Magnitude, Heartwood Soundstage, Loosey's, One Love Café, Satchels, the Wooly, Wormhole, etc.
- See visitgainesville.com/events for a weekly event list, updated Thursdays; also try 352arts.org; and don't forget civicmediacenter.org

Support live music, theater, and festivals! Get out into nature! Leave the freakin' house and have fun!

WEEK OF FEBRUARY 18-24

- Sun 2/18 **Sunday Assembly** speaker tba, 11am, Pride Ctr (Springhill, 3850 NW 83rd St), free; sagainesville.weebly.com
- Mon 2/19 **Democratic Women's Club meets**, 11:30am, B'Nai Israel (3830 NW 16th Blvd), \$15; tinyurl.com/Iguana1809
- Mon 2/19 **Scene Queens** burlesque/drag (18+ only; IDs checked), 7pm, The Hipp Basement (25 SE 2nd Pl), \$15; thehipp.org
- Sun 2/24 **"Crossing the Suwanee in Early 1800s,"** talk on Fla history, 4pm, Matheson Museum (513 E Univ Ave), free with registration; mathesonmuseum.org/events

WEEK OF FEBRUARY 25-MARCH 2 (+1)

- Sun 2/25 **Bluegrass, Old-Time, & Traditional Jam**, 2-5pm at Civic Media Ctr (433 S Main St), donation requested; civicmediacenter.org
- Tue 2/27 **Ladysmith Black Mambazo**, 7:30pm, UF Phillips Ctr (3201 Hull Rd), (\$25-45; UF students \$12); tinyurl.com/Iguana1821 & pg 20
- Fri 3/1 **Survivors of Violence Art Exhibit Deadline**, 5 pm, for works for April exhibit at Harn: 352-262-7748, tinyurl.com/Iguana1810
- Fri 3/1 **"Misery,"** 8pm, runs through 3/17, Acrosstown Rep. (3501 SW 2nd Ave), \$25?; acrosstown.org/2023-2024-season
- Sat 3/2 **Old Wave Dance Party**, 9pm, The Wooly (20 N Main St), \$5 21+, \$10 under 21; tinyurl.com/Iguana1822
- Sun 3/3 **"My Withered Legs and Other Essays,"** author talk & queer/crip/climate book launch, 2pm, Matheson Museum (513 E Univ Ave), free with registration; mathesonmuseum.org/events

RECURRING EVENTS

- Monday Farmers Market**, 4-7pm: Cypress & Grove
- Tuesday Peace Picket**, 4:30-5:30: NW42nd St & NW 16th Ave.
- Wednesday Farmers Market**, 4-7pm: Bo Diddly Plaza
- Thursday Farmers Market**, 4-7pm: Heartwood Soundstage
- Thursday evening Poetry Jam**, 8pm at CMC

Free Speech Forum

featuring Gina Duncan from Equality Florida

"LGBTQ Dynamics in Society and the Role of DE&I"

A discussion of LGBTQ rights and protections in society and in the workplace, the impacts of recent anti-LGBTQ legislation, and the pivotal role of DE&I initiatives preserving an inclusive society.

Monday, Feb. 12, 11:30am-1pm
Cone Park Library
2801 E. University Ave., Gainesville

Iguana Directory

Call 352-378-5655 or email gainesvilleiguana@cox.net with updates and additions

Readers: If there is inaccurate information here, let us know. If you are connected to an organization listed here, please check and update your listing so others can be accurately informed. Readers should confirm times of meetings with individual organizations.

Alachua Audubon Society's mission is to foster appreciation and knowledge of birds and other native wildlife, to protect and restore wildlife populations and their habitats, and to promote sustainable use of natural resources.

We offer free birding field trips open to all, college internships, birding for kids, conservation activism, volunteer opportunities. AlachuaAudubon.org | facebook.com/AlachuaAudubon/

Alachua Conservation Trust, Inc. has been protecting North Central Florida's natural, scenic, historic and recreational resources for over 25 years. 352-373-1078 | AlachuaConservationTrust.org

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Spotlight on ...



The Marjorie

The Marjorie is Florida's independent reporting outlet dedicated to the critical intersection of social justice and the environment. Their mission is to report on Florida's deeper human story, recognizing that the crises we face are not simple scenarios with straightforward solutions. They embrace the gray area, with all of its messy nuance and complex history. They are not a breaking news organization; they specialize in telling in-depth stories about Florida's environment that consider human values as well as important historical cultural contexts. Find out more at themarjorie.org.



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Alachua County Greens is part of a worldwide movement built out of interrelated pillars that support its politics: the peace, civil rights, environmental and labor movements. Meetings are the 1st Sunday of the month @4pm.; for location contact 352-871-1995 | alachuagreens@gmail.com | GainesvilleGreens.webs.com

Alachua County Labor Coalition organizes to support local labor and advance the Medicare for All and A Living Wage campaigns. Meets monthly on the 4th Tuesday at 6pm: on Zoom. 352-375-2832 | info@laborcoalition.org | LaborCoalition.org

Alachua County Organization for Rural Needs Clinic is a not-for-profit in Brooker providing low-cost, high-quality dental care for people with and without health insurance to Alachua, Bradford and Union County residents. The Clinic fulfills its mission with the help of volunteers. 352-485-2772 | acornclinic.org

American Civil Liberties Union has no Alachua County chapter. For info on forming a new chapter, or for ACLU info, contact the Northeast Chapter at firstcoastaclu@gmail.com | northeastflorida.aclufl.org

Alachua NAACP – With 2+ million activists across the country, we work to ensure the political, educational, social, and economic equality of rights of all people and to eliminate racial hatred and discrimination. Everyone invited to join. [Facebook.com/alachuaNAACP](https://facebook.com/alachuaNAACP) | NAACPacb.org

American Promise Association is a cross-partisan, citizen-powered endeavor to amend the US Constitution to ensure We The People – not big money, corporations, unions, or wealthy special interests – govern the United States of America. americanpromise.net

Avian Research and Conservation Institute is a non-profit research group working to stimulate conservation action to save threatened bird species in the southeast. 352-514-5606 | arcinst.org

Black Graduate Student Organization helps UF Black graduate and professional students foster meaningful and lasting relationships that aid in academic achievement and success. bgsoatuf@gmail.com | [facebook: UF BGSO](https://facebook.com/BGSO)

Central Florida Democratic Socialists of America is a chapter of DSA focusing on local social and political activism issues to better our community. Meetings are the 4th Monday of the month on Zoom. centralfldsa@gmail.com | facebook.com/NCFFloridaDSA

Citizens Climate Lobby builds awareness and lobbies for sensible climate policies. 352-214-1778 | btancig@gmail.com | citizensclimatelobby.org/chapters/FL_Gainesville | facebook.com/CitizensClimateLobbyGainesvilleFL

Civic Media Center is an alternative reading room and library of the non-corporate press, and a resource and space for organizing.

433 S Main St., Gainesville | 352-373-0010 | civicmediacenter.org | coordinators@civicmediacenter.org

The Climate Reality Project Gainesville Area Chapter is the local chapter of an international nonprofit group dedicated to accelerating urgent action globally on the climate crisis. Join the chapter (see website) for news, action alerts, meeting alerts. ClimateRealityProjectgnv@gmail.com | facebook.com/GlobalClimateEducation | ClimateRealityProjectGNV.wordpress.com | ClimateRealityProject.org

Coalition of Hispanics Integrating Spanish Speakers through Advocacy and Service is a UF student-run group focusing on immigrant rights and immigrant advocacy. chispasuf@gmail.com | chispasuf.com | facebook.com/chispasUF

Code Pink: Women for Peace is a women-led grassroots peace /social justice movement utilizing creative protest, non-violent direct action and community involvement. [Facebook.com/CodePINKgainesville](https://facebook.com/CodePINKgainesville) | CodePink4Peace.org

Community Spring is a local organization to help people get a step up on re-entering society after incarceration with financial and housing assistance as a means of overcoming structural poverty. 352-363-1259 or info@csgnv.org

Community Weatherization Coalition's mission is to help their neighbors save energy and water and reduce utility bills by engaging volunteers, building community, and learning together. info@communityweatherization.org | 352-450-4965 | communityweatherization.org

Conservation Trust for Florida, Inc. is a Gainesville non-profit land trust working to protect Florida's rural landscapes, wildlife corridors and natural areas. 352-376-4770 | info@conserveflorida.org | conserveflorida.org

Current Problems cleans up waterways across north Florida, removing over 1,000,000 pounds of trash (& recycling/reusing 63% of it) since 1993, and finding ways to reduce pollution sources; volunteers welcome. 352-222-6727 | currentproblems.org

Democratic Party of Alachua County meets monthly on the second Wednesday at 6pm: on Zoom. 352-373-1730 | alachuadems.org

Divest Gainesville advocates divesting City financial assets from fossil fuel industries and educating on racial justice and climate change. youngersn@outlook.com | facebook.com/DivestGainesville

Divest UF is a student-run organization and a loose collective of Gators seeking to divest the university from fossil fuels, the prison industry, and arms and surveillance companies. Divestuf.org | facebook.com/DivestUF

Edible Plant Project is a volunteer-run, non-profit Gainesville collective aiming to create

positive alternatives to the unsustainable food system in this county. facebook.com/groups/edibleplantproject

Families Against Mandatory Minimums works to reform Florida's sentencing laws and restore fairness to Florida's criminal justice system. PO Box 142933, Gainesville, 32614 | gnewburn@famm.org | 352-682-2542 | FAMM.org

Final Friends, run by volunteers, helps families learn how to accomplish legal home funeral care as an alternative to a commercial funeral home. 352-374-4478 | FinalFriends.org@gmail.com | FinalFriends.org

Florida Coalition for Peace and Justice provides space for meetings, workshops, and educational activities that promote peace, human rights, social justice awareness, conflict resolution, self-empowerment and environmental awareness. 352-603-3680 | florida4peace.org

Florida School of Traditional Midwifery is a clearinghouse for information, activities, educational programs regarding midwifery. 352-338-0766 | info@MidWiferySchool.org | midwiferyschool.org

Florida Defenders of the Environment works to protect freshwater resources, conserve public lands, provide quality environmental education. 352-475-1119 | FloridaDefenders@gmail.com | FlaDefenders.org

Florida Prisoner Solidarity is a carceral abolitionist collective with members inside and outside of prisons. Efforts focus on incarcerated individuals' needs and their care networks. P.O. Box 358439, Gainesville, FL 32635 | 850-895-1505 | FLPrisonerSolidarity@gmail.com | facebook.com/FLAbolition | FLPrisonerSolidarity.org

Floridians Protecting Freedom is a campaign of allied organizations and concerned citizens working together to protect Floridians' access to abortion as reproductive health care and to defend the right to bodily autonomy. Contact Laura at 617-767-6664 or go to floridiansprotectingfreedom.com.

Gainesville Area AIDS Project, a program of Pride Community Center of North Central Florida, provides toiletries, household cleaners, hot meals, frozen food at no cost to people living with HIV/AIDS. 352-377-8915 | info@GAAPonline.org | [Facebook.com/GAAPonline](https://facebook.com/GAAPonline) | gainesvillepride.org

Gainesville Area Chapter of Climate Reality Project addresses the climate crisis for future generations. The chapter mobilizes people to become powerful activists and push for aggressive climate action. The hope is to transform society and to change the world. climaterealityprojectgnv@gmail.com | @climaterealityprojectgnv | climaterealityprojectgnv.wordpress.com

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Gainesville Citizens for Alternatives to Death Penalty works to abolish the death penalty. Join vigils when Florida has an execution. 352-378-1690 | mark1343@juno.com | www.fadp.org

Gainesville for All The Gainesville Sun's GNV4ALL initiative is an effort to identify and address problems related to inequities and racial injustice in our community. See Facebook for online activities. GNV4ALL@gmail.com | facebook.com/GNV4ALL

Gainesville Interfaith Alliance for Immigrant Justice organizes faith communities to work together for immigrant justice. Meetings are the second Monday of the month on Zoom. Richard@371-6772 | Gainesvilleiaij@gmail.com | gainesvilleiaij.blogspot.com

Gainesville National Organization for Women focuses on reproductive rights, ending sex discrimination, constitutional equality, promoting diversity, ending racism, economic justice, stopping violence against women, lesbian rights including marriage equality. Contact Lisa@352-450-1912 for meeting info | info@gainesvilleNOW.org | facebook.com/gainesvilleNOW

Gainesville Quakers have a 350-year tradition of working peacefully for social justice. Silent, unprogrammed worship Sundays at 11, followed by potluck. Visitors welcome. 702 NW 38th St., Gainesville | 352-372-1070 | GainesvilleQuakers.org | facebook.com/GainesvilleQuakers

Gainesville Residents United educates, advocates, negotiates, and litigates issues of community concern – currently the State takeover of Gainesville Regional Utilities. www.GRUnited.org

Gainesville Roller Rebels, a women's Flat Track roller derby team, needs skaters and volunteer assistance. join@gainesvillerollerrebels.com | gainesvillerollerrebels.com

Gainesville Stamp Club, established in the 1960's, is open to all interested in philately. Auction held every meeting. Advanced level program occasionally. Under 18 must be accompanied by adult. First and third Tuesdays starting at 7:30pm; no meetings in December/holidays. For meeting locations and info. call 352-371-1991 | Stamps4Laffs@yahoo.com

Graduate Assistants United union represents UF grad assistants by fighting for improved working conditions, community involvement and academic freedom. 352-575-0366 | organizing@ufgau.org | UFGau.org

Grow Radio, a non-profit podcast station, provides opportunities for the community to create/manage engaging, educational, locally-generated programming promoting music, visual arts, humanities for enrichment of the community. 352-219-0145 | Bryson66@gmail.com | growradio.org

Ichetucknee Alliance focuses on ensuring the restoration, preservation and protection of ecosystems along the 5.5-mile length of the Ichetucknee River, including associated springs. Meetings are on the 4th Tuesday every other month via Zoom. 386-454-0415 | ichetuckneealliance@gmail.com | ichetuckneealliance.org

Industrial Workers of the World (IWW) Gainesville General Membership Branch Union represents all workers, regardless of industry, trade, job, employment status. gainesvilleiww@gmail.com | iww.org

Institute for Tropical Ecology and Conservation is an academic nonprofit that provides undergraduate field courses in tropical marine and terrestrial ecology, hosts biology-based study abroad programs, provides a venue for researchers, conducts conservation and community service programs. 352-367-9128 | itec1@itec-edu.org | itec-edu.org

Jewish Voice For Peace in Gainesville was inspired by the JVP actions nationwide calling for ceasefire in Gaza. JVP envisions a world where all people live in freedom, justice, equality and dignity. jewishvoiceforpeace.org/resource/our-vision | Instagram: @jvp_gnv | jvpgnvpod@gmail.com

League of Women Voters of Alachua County Nonpartisan grassroots political group of women and men who fight to improve our system of government and impact public policies such as fairness in districting, voting and elections, through citizen education and advocacy. info@lww-alachua.org | LWValachua.org

Madres Sin Fronteras (Mothers Without Borders) is a local grassroots immigrant-led organization working to protect the rights of immigrants' families in our community and to ensure all are treated with dignity and respect msfgainesville@gmail.com | facebook.com/MSFGainesville

MindFreedom North Florida is a human rights group for psychiatric survivors and mental health consumers, working to educate the public about harmful psychiatric practices and about humane alternatives to those harmful practices. 352-328-2511 | facebook: MindFreedom Florida

Moms Demand Action for Gun Sense in America is a grassroots organization working to end gun violence by electing gun sense candidates, advocating for policies that save lives, educating parents on responsible gun storage. Alachua County events listed at momsdemandaction.org/events

Move to Amend, Gainesville is an organization dedicated to amending the US Constitution to establish that money is not speech, and that only human beings have constitutional rights. Contact Alachua County Green Party for information. Facebook.com/MoveToAmendGainesvilleFL

National Alliance on Mental Illness | Gainesville offers support, education and advocacy for families and loved ones of persons with mental illness and/or brain disorders. 352-320-0457 (information) | 352-335-7770 (helpline) | namigainesville.org

National Committee to Preserve Social Security and Medicare works to preserve these threatened programs for senior citizens and families. Local volunteers needed. Marion.Co.FL.1590@gmail.com | ncpssm.org

National Lawyers Guild consists of lawyers, law students, legal workers and jailhouse lawyers who use the law to advance social justice, support progressive social movements. gainesvillenlg@gmail.com | nlg.org

National Women's Liberation is a feminist group for women who want to fight back against male supremacy and win more freedoms for women. Inequalities between women and men are political problems requiring a collective solution. 352-575-0495 | nwl@womensliberation.org | womensliberation.org

North Central Florida Association for Women In Science is an advocacy organization championing the interest of women in science, technology, engineering and math (STEM) across all disciplines and employment sectors. ncfawis@gmail.com | leanin.org/circles/ncfawis

Occupy Gainesville is about engaging local people in grassroots, participatory democracy, diversity and dialogue; we stand in solidarity with the Occupy Wall Street Movement and the rest of the people peacefully occupying public space across this county and the world. Facebook.com/occupygainesville

Our Santa Fe River is a non-profit composed of concerned citizens working to protect the waters and lands supporting the aquifer, springs and rivers within the watershed of the Santa Fe River. 386-243-0322 | oursantaferiver.org

Paynes Prairie Chapter, Florida Native Plant Society promotes the preservation, conservation and restoration of the native plants and native plant communities of Florida. paynesprairie.fnpschapters.org | facebook.com/profile.php?id=100064434411932

PFLAG Gainesville is a local chapter of Parents and Families of Lesbians and Gays, the nation's foremost family-based organization committed to the civil rights of lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender people. 352-340-3770 | info@pflaggainesville.org | pflaggainesville.org

Planned Parenthood Clinic at Gainesville Health Center is a full-service health center for reproductive and sexual health care needs. Offering pregnancy testing and options counseling. 914 NW 13th St., Gnv. | 352-377-0881 | plannedparenthood.org (enter Gainesville FL in "find a health center" box)

Prairie Creek Conservation Cemetery

promotes natural burial practices that conserve land and reunite people with the environment. 352-317-7307 | info@prairiecreekconservationcemetery.org | prairiecreekconservationcemetery.org

Pride Community Center of North Central Florida

has resources for the LGBT+ community, open Sat. 2-4pm: and by appt. 3131 NW 13th St., Suite 62, Gnv | 352-377-8915 | pccncf@gainesvillepride.org | GainesvillePride.org

Repurpose Project, a nonprofit junk shop/ community center, diverting useful resources from landfill and redirecting items to the public for art and education, inspiring creativity, and rethinking what we throw away. Help protect the planet and buy used. Check website for hours. 1920 NE 23rd Ave, Gnv | 352-363-8902 | info@RepurposeProject.org | repurposeproject.org

River Phoenix Center for Peace-building

provides solution-based innovative ways to resolve conflicts, and offers related services such as mediation, communication skill building and restorative justice. 352-234-6595 | info@centerforpeacebuilding.org | centerforpeacebuilding.org

Rural Women's Health Project is a local health education organization that develops materials promoting health justice for migrant and rural women. Robin or Fran @ 352-372-1095 | info@rwhp.org | www.rwhp.org

Samuel Proctor Oral History Program

focuses on story-telling, social justice research, social movement studies, oral history workshops. oral.history.ufl.edu

Sister City Program of Gainesville links Gainesville with sister cities in Russia, Israel and Palestine, Iraq, Haiti. 352-376-8600 | Steve@gnvsistercities.org | gnvsistercities.org

Stand By Our Plan informs the public on critical differences between the Comprehensive Plan and Plum Creek's proposal, which we do not support. Alachua County's Comprehensive Plan is the best blueprint for future growth in the county's unincorporated areas; it protects valuable wetlands. StandByOurPlan@gmail.com | StandByOurPlan.org

Student Animal Alliance is a UF-based group whose purpose is to educate and bring fellow animal lovers together to better the lives of the animals around us. StudentAnimalAllianceUFL@gmail.com | facebook.com/SAAatUF | instagram@studentanimalallianceUF

Student/Farmworker Alliance is a network of youth organizing with farmworkers to eliminate sweatshop conditions and modern-day slavery in the fields. billy@sfalliance.org or brett@sfalliance.org | facebook.com/sfalliance

Sunday Assembly Gainesville is a secular congregation celebrating life with talk, music, sing-along, discussion, fellowship.

Meets the 3rd Sunday of the month. SundayAssembly32601@gmail.com | SAGainesville.weebly.com

Suwannee-St. Johns Group Sierra Club

is a local group within the nation's largest and most influential grassroots environmental organization, representing 14 North Central Florida counties. ssjsierra@gmail.com | sierraclub.org/florida/suwannee-stjohns | 561-707-4565

The Majorie is Florida's independent reporting outlet dedicated to the critical intersection of social justice and the environment. themajorie.org

The Party for Socialism and Liberation - Gainesville

pre-branch exists to carry out the struggle for Socialism inside the U.S. | Linktr.ee/psl_gainesville | psl_gainesville@proton.me | pslweb.org/join

UF Black Student Union strives to create, cultivate, and challenge all minority Gators to be better citizens of the Gator Nation. Facebook.com/groups/BlackStudentUnionUF

UF College Democrats is the official voice of the Democratic party on UF campus. 407-580-4543 | president@ufdemocrats.org | facebook: UF College Democrats | UFcollegedems.org

UF Pride Student Union is an LGBT+ group open to queer folk of all sorts, including students, non-students, faculty and staff, that educates and provides a safe space for those of marginalized sexualities and gender identities. UFPridesu@gmail.com | facebook.com/ufpsu | plaza.ufl.edu/jsoto19/PSU

UF Students for Justice in Palestine: In stark recognition of the failure of modern society to produce a just and reasonable solution to the Palestine-Israel conflict, Students for Justice in Palestine promote public awareness and activism in our community. We promote international law, human rights, and justice for all affected by this conflict. We welcome a diverse membership from all faiths and nationalities who believe in the attainability of peace. sjpuflorida@gmail.com

UF Young Democratic Socialists of America

is a student-run socialist organization dedicated to organizing students to fight for the needs of workers and students while building the capacity to fight radical and structural changes. Weekly meetings. ufydsa21@gmail.com | facebook.com/ufydsa

United Faculty of Florida, UF chapter is run by and for faculty, and represents over 1600 faculty and professionals at UF. Its origins lie in efforts by faculty to protect academic freedom, defend civil liberties, end racial discrimination at UF. 352-519-4130 | officemanager@uff-uf.org | www.UFF-UF.org

United Nations Association - Gainesville

Chapter works to heighten citizen awareness/ knowledge of global problems and the UN's efforts to deal with them. facebook.com/UNAUSAGainesvilleFICChapter | UNA-

USAGainesvillefl.org

United Way Information & Referral

is a human-staffed computer database for resources and organizations in Alachua County. 352-332-4636 or simply 211 | UW211help@gmail.com | unitedwayncfl.org

University of Florida HealthStreet

is a community engagement program that employs community outreach practices to reduce disparities in healthcare and research. Free services include medical and social service referrals, health screenings, Narcan Nasal Spray Kits, clothing/toiletry items, health education, events, support groups. 352-294-4880 or healthstreet.program.ufl.edu/

UF Un-PAC is a non-partisan organization working to reform our democracy and get big money/lobbying out of politics. Our Youth Power Campaign works to make UF work better for students to participate in/understand our democratic system, including demands such as voter registration at Freshman Preview, classes cancelled on election days, more transparency on how our tuition money is spent on lobbying and political influence. Go to: un-pac.org, @un_pac_uflorida, or email un.pac.uf@gmail.

Veterans for Peace Gainesville Chapter

is an anti-war organization that raises awareness of the detriments of militarism and war, as well as seeking peaceful and effective alternatives. 352-375-2563 | Facebook.com/VFPchapter14 | vfpgainesville.org

WGOT-LP 100.1 FM is a community low-power radio station operating as part of the Civic Media Center. info@wgot.org | www.wgot.org

Women in Science and Engineering (WISE)

at UF aims to foster the success of women, non-binary folks, other underrepresented genders in science and engineering. People of all genders are welcome. uf.wise@gmail.com | Facebook.com/UFWiSE | wise.group.ufl.edu/about-wise

Women's International League for Peace and Freedom

has been promoting peace since 1915. Donate or join the at-large Jane Addams Branch. Local info: juned@stevellittler.com | wilpfus.org

Women's March Florida - Gainesville/ Ocala Chapter

is a grassroots progressive mobilization network inspired and created by the women who brought about the Women's March on Washington. facebook.com/wmflgnv

World Socialist Party of the United States

welcomes anyone wanting to know more about Marxian socialism and our efforts to transform the dog-eat-dog – Devil take the hindmost world that's been created by capitalism, into a democratically arranged world society of equality. wspus.org. 🐸

Roller Rebels looking for tenants to support practice space



by Polly Cline
(AKA Sic O.
Spellcheck)

Ask anyone who's lived in Gainesville for ten or fifteen years — a lot has changed.

One element of Gainesville that's remained constant since 2007: the Gainesville Roller Rebels (GRR), Gainesville's local, not-for-profit, skater- and volunteer-run roller derby league.

Since roller derby's mid-aughts revival, GRR has brought athleticism, empowerment, and inclusion to the Gainesville community. After our 2023 season, we're stronger than ever with 27 new league members, sponsorships from a number of local businesses, and standing room only games.

Despite all of this success, one struggle has remained constant for GRR — the difficulties of finding skating spaces in Gainesville to practice and host games. Prior to 2020, GRR practiced at the Fairgrounds, but lost access when the Army Reserve took over the property. GRR also practiced at Broward Recreation on the University of Florida campus until it was replaced with student housing.

Though GRR is able to host games at the Martin Luther King Jr. Multipurpose Center, a 19,000 square foot, air-conditioned facility, the city requires us to lay Masonite flooring before every game, a labor-intensive process that makes it impractical for regular practice sessions. Other leagues across the country practice directly on gym floors, as roller skates cause no more damage to wood floors than basketball shoes.

After two years of searching, we at last found what we thought was a permanent home at the Gainesville Bridge, a community center run by the Vineyard Church. For the first time in a long time, we were not just tolerated, but welcomed.

After years of asking and attending community meetings and being told by the city and county that we couldn't be accommodated, or provided options that ended up being dead ends, we at last had a place that would not only rent to us but would let us lay a semi-permanent track and even surprise us with beautiful shelving to keep our gear organized.

In 2023, GRR grew, and it's in no small part



Photo of the Gainesville Roller Rebels courtesy of Vermillion Visions.

due to having a consistent and welcoming home and community to call our own.

Now, that home is once again under threat. Last year, the Bridge lost the overarching support of the Vineyard Church due to the Bridge's inclusion of the LGBTQ+ community. Without additional income sources, they can only stay in business until the end of January 2024.

The Bridge is more than just GRR's practice space. As a multipurpose community center, they run weekly food banks, host summer camps and after-school events for kids, and rent space to local businesses.

Located at 1100 SE 17 Dr, the Bridge has a large gymnasium, a large grass field, and indoor rooms available for short- or long-term rentals. It would be an excellent fit for fitness professionals, sports teams, artists, and small businesses such as massage therapy, acupuncture, etc. If your business is looking for space, the Bridge could be your new home. Please contact Mike Raburn at mike@gnvbridge.org if you're interested in renting space at the Bridge.

GRR will do everything we can to help the Bridge, but the continued existence of our league should not hinge on the lack of available skating spaces in Gainesville. We're nothing if not scrappy, but we need your help. We need options to ensure the security of our league.

We practice 2-3x per week from January to October. For a roller derby practice, we need at least 98 x 65 feet of covered, open space (roughly the size of two basketball courts) on a hard surface suitable for skating. Do you own a business or know of an additional

space where GRR could host practices? Contact board@gainesvillerollerrebels.com if you can help. 🐾

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