

Rec'd

# CHANGE

*Making a Difference  
Today and Tomorrow*

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Premiere Issue  
**THE JUNGLE**  
Revisited

**POEMS**  
by Marion Fischer

**STREET LIFE**  
Gallery

Stuff that  
**MATTERS**

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**Real Change**

is a  
non-profit organization  
and  
is a project of  
The Pike Market Senior  
Center/Downtown  
Food Bank.

Real Change is published the first Monday of each month, and is sold by the poor and homeless of Seattle. Submissions are encouraged and should be mailed to "Real Change," 2129 Second Ave, Seattle, WA 98121. Tel. (206) 441-3247. Fax (206) 728-9108. Articles should be received by the 15th of the month prior to publication. Subscriptions for one year (12 issues) are available for \$35, and help to support Real Change.

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**MISSION STATEMENT**

Organize, educate, and build alliances to find community-based solutions to homelessness and poverty.

**Goals**

- 1.) provide a foundation for grassroots organizing.
- 2.) publish the views of marginalized communities.
- 3.) create direct economic opportunity.
- 4.) build bridges with a broad range of allies in the struggle against poverty.

**Editorial Policy**

Articles appearing in *Real Change* reflect the opinion and perspective of the author. We encourage the submission of journalism, opinion, fiction, poetry and artwork, and hope to create a forum where the many perspectives that exist regarding poverty and homelessness can find expression. The editorial committee reserves the right to edit any material for length and style. Articles considered libelous or which encourage violence, sexism, homophobia, or racism will not be considered for publication.

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cover art by Wes Browning

Real Change  
would like to convey  
its deep gratitude to  
the staff and board  
of the Pike Market  
Senior Center/  
Downtown Food  
Bank,  
Jim Reitz at the  
Archdiocesan  
Housing  
Authority,  
John Reese at the  
Community Action  
Network, all of our  
advisory board  
members, premiere  
issue endorsers,  
and  
everyone else who  
believed in this  
project early on.

You made the near  
impossible a whole  
lot easier.

Thank You!

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# Musings of the Fortunate

BY GEORGE WOODRING

As I awaken, the bright red crystal display on my "fancier than I've ever had before" coffeemaker pierced the darkness of my room, filling my mind with thoughts and memories of days gone by... the days and nights of homelessness.

As writers often do, I have begun my day in the middle of the night. This time it has been as a result of a phone call the previous day from my dear friend Russ, a homeless people's advocate with S.H.A.G., Seattle Homeless Advocacy Group. The new homeless people's newspaper needed contributing writers, and I had been there, so ... up and at 'em!

The fall of '87 was a rotten year for apple pickers (pun intended, but what the hey). The poster on the pole outside the plasma center in downtown Seattle promised abundance beyond belief. But Mother Nature, in her fickleness, postponed the crop. After six weeks camped on the Wenatchee River, and having picked only stolen apples, I made the decision that my years of nomadic homelessness had taken its toll, and I must find a way to get off the road.

Incredibly, a call the next day to a friend and spiritual supporter in Seattle, named Gideon, proved to be the turning of my situation. My name had finally come up on the HUD housing list. After 17 months

of waiting (it was so long that I actually forgot I was waiting) I had an apartment!!

The joy! A chance to rest my weary nerves! Safety! Security! My very own hot water heater! I made it back to Seattle in record time.

After signing all the paperwork, and upon receiving my keys, I felt like I had floated across the street to my new apartment ... I have an address!

I spread my bedroll out on the freshly vacuumed carpet, and placed

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**"I spread my bedroll out on the freshly vacuumed carpet, and placed my bag of daily living essentials into its usual 'pillow position.'"**

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my bag of daily living essentials into its usual "pillow position." These two items were everything I possessed.

Suddenly, I was overwhelmed by the vastness of my small studio apartment. No furniture, no pictures on the walls, even the acoustic sound was strange because there was

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**"It is said that suffering is good for the soul. Well yes... but only to a degree."**

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**"As a nation of such abundance and resourcefulness, let's pull together in a spirit of cooperation and mutual understanding to overcome the homelessness situation in this country, once and for all."**

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nothing to absorb noises. I had practically nothing, yet I now had everything!

The next few years were a very unusual adjustment for me. I still went back to the old camps and sometimes stayed overnight. Through a couple of hard winters a couple of homeless brethren stayed with me at my apartment. We get some real cold winters in Seattle.

I am, needless to say, a very fortunate person. I believe it, am fully aware of the fact, and heartily accept my blessed fate. I am filled with gratitude and life for being one of the lucky ones.

Some people may ask where just such a magnitude of a grateful attitude came from. Well, it is said that suffering is good for the soul. Well yes, I can attest to this timeless truism ... however, it is only to a degree.

As for me, I was saved before that suffering became heartbreaking. To those of you who are beyond the point of heartbreak, I pray you will endure, because I believe things will change with enough faith, hope, and love.

For those readers who have not experienced the dilemma of homelessness, I ask you for a moment to visualize this: You leave your job after a tiring day, and return to

find an empty lot, overgrown with weeds, where your lovely house once stood. What a gut-wrenching feeling! You'll have to make camp in the middle of your lot, and "Pray God I'm not attacked in the middle of the night."

This is the way it feels for much of the homeless population on a daily basis. Please believe me, it's not a pleasant existence. If you would, the next time you see a homeless person, remember your good fortune and please be aware of their despair.

As a society, let's remember that every individual deserves the right to have the opportunity to meet their basic needs: food, shelter, warmth, and security. As a nation of such abundance and resourcefulness, let's pull together in a spirit of cooperation and mutual understanding to overcome the homelessness situation in this country, once and for all. Remember, even what you do as an individual, from the smallest to the greatest, counts.

*This article is dedicated to the memories of Marge Flint and Charles Glen "Blond" Johnson, two of my best friends, who died at separate times in their homeless despair ... but who are together for eternity, with our Lord Jesus Christ, ... in their Heavenly Mansion. John 14:2*



# Good Faith Gone Bad

## Will City Bureaucracy Get in the Way of Helping Homeless?

**N**o one would have believed that bureaucracy could move so fast, but there it was: homeless people displaced from the Jungle were moving into newly available housing within days of the destruction of their Beacon Hill greenbelt encampment.

Due to a eleventh-hour collaboration between the Regional office of HUD, the Low Income Housing Institute (LIHI), the Homestead Organizing Project (HOP), and the City of Seattle, a deal was struck making 2 HUD properties available as housing for some of the displaced homeless, and arranging for the site's renovation and management.

The moment the intense glare of the media dimmed, however, the City of Seattle walked, leaving LIHI holding the bag for more than \$20,000 in renovation expenses, less than 10 percent of the amount spent in the "clean-up" that left so many homeless.

While LIHI says they may try to find the renovation funding elsewhere, the loss of trust in the City will not be so easy to repair.

"We knew we were taking a risk, but thought we could act on good faith," said Michael Agrellas, an organizer for HOP. "It's just too bad the City lacks the leadership and integrity to make good on its promises."

While the media gave City officials a good deal of credit for putting this deal through, that's not how the game was played. The only time the City ever really left the sidelines was to drop the ball, and that was after the crowd went home.

### A Promise Kept

The camp, which became known as "The Jungle," ran along the greenbelt near I-5 for a mile and a half, and was home to well over 100 people who, for one reason or another, opted out of Seattle's homeless shelter system.

Last March, after a fire and complaints from neighbors brought new attention to the long-standing encampment, City officials began discussing the removal of encampment residents and a clean-up of the area. In late-June the first protests of the removal began, heating up what had been a mostly quiet process.

For three weeks, a near-frenzied media fed on the dramatic tale of impoverished resourcefulness versus law and order. As the tragedy unfolded in its inevitable way, it was clear few winners would emerge.

Protesters took the position that the Jungle should be left just where it was, with the addition of fire extinguishers, sani-cans, and dumpsters to meet the City's legitimate concerns. City officials, on the other hand, never budged a millimeter from their basic statement: The jungle is an illegal fire and health hazard and will be destroyed July 18th.

On that Monday, the bulldozers moved in as promised. The 11 protesters that blocked the machinery's path were simply arrested and carried away, allowing the City to proceed.

Barbara Osinski, a lawyer who represents low-income tenants for the Legal Action Center, a program of Catholic Community Services, said she "couldn't stay away." Drawn to the scene by the frank injustice of the removal, she wanted to see what she could do.

Osinski was on the look out for Jungle residents who might need legal representation, or even be interested in more traditional housing, complete with plumbing, electricity, and a mailbox in front.

One group of Jungle residents Osinski found felt a bit blind-sided by the whole process. "It was incredible," said Osinski, "No one from the City, the press, or Homestead had asked these people what they wanted. They remembered one visit, months before, from a Community Service Officer. That was it."

The four had been living in the Jungle for three years, and had developed quite a site in the process. "A number of people I talked to," she said, "said their main goal was to have permanent housing, and no one had helped them with that."

Osinski thought she might be able to help. Of the six people Osinski spoke to that Monday, five are now housed, due in large part to her efforts.

### HUD Weighs In

She returned to her office and picked up the phone. Of all the agencies in Seattle, someone had to be able to house these folks. Her search soon led her to Karen Dawson at DHHS, who told Osinski they had "looked at all the options" and come up empty.

"I told her that 'This is appalling,' and was put on 5-minute hold," said Osinski. Dawson had another call from HUD. She came back to report that HUD was

willing to put up two houses.

The Jungle had come to the attention of Bob Santos, Director of the Seattle-based Regional Office of the Dept. of Housing and Urban Development.

Under the new leadership of HUD Secretary Henry Cisneros, helping the homeless is this long-dormant federal agency's number one goal. Santos, who had seen the Jungle in the paper for weeks, mobilized his staff to respond. They got lucky, and two days later housing was made available.

In reviewing their stock, HUD found two available properties that had been acquired through FHA foreclosure, a house in Tukwila and a duplex in Rainier Valley. According to a representative for Regional Director Santos, HUD has made at least 40 other properties available to non-profit groups on the same terms that were offered here: \$1 a year, with an option to buy.

"The City was not encouraging," said Osinski. "They had no experience in managing this type of property and were not about to get into that position."

Osinski went to work to find a lessee for HUD, who had a list of 5 groups they were willing to work with. None were interested. LIHI

over. Six people had housing who didn't before, and once renovations are completed, there will be room for four more.

### Seattle Bails

But no one knows exactly when these renovations will occur. Despite City official Karen Dawson's assurances to LIHI, prior to the signing of the lease, that \$20,000 was available from City relocation funds and other sources to cover renovation and site management expenses, once the deal was done, the City had a change of heart.

While the house was basically ready for occupancy, one side of the duplex has a bad roof and a good deal of water damage inside as a result. In addition to fixing the roof, work needs to be done on the floor and walls. There will also be additional costs to replace deadbolts, repair windows, and give the place a fresh coat of paint.

Homestead works on a sweat equity basis, with new tenants pitching in to do much of the work themselves. They also have access to a number of skilled volunteers, and receive donated supplies.

Since Homestead projects are self-managed, on-site staff expenses are minimal, paying only for a facilitator

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**"While the media gave City officials a good deal of credit for putting this deal through, that's not how the game was played. The only time the City ever really left the sidelines was to drop the ball, and that was after the crowd went home."**

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wasn't on the list, but had the experience and contacts to pull it off. Osinski thought she might have a match.

According to Osinski, the City recommended LIHI to HUD, and Santos brought all the necessary Department heads together the following day. Almost immediately, papers were signed leasing the properties to LIHI. The Homestead Organizing Project would work with LIHI to renovate and manage the properties. Dawson was pretty sure the city could swing the renovation funds, but, according to Osinski, was not in a position to make promises.

Within two days, the utilities were turned on and the keys turned

who can help run meetings and mediate conflicts among tenants. Clearly, HOP is a group that knows how to stretch a buck.

But at this point no one knows where that buck will come from. Dawson's deal was apparently vetoed by Seattle Dept. of Housing and Human Services housing boss Earl Richardson, who had been on vacation when the agreement went through.

DHHS spokesperson Laura Paskin spoke to Richardson, who put the problem back onto HUD. "This is an interesting situation," said Paskin, "in that HUD is the primary owner of this property. Like any homeowner, HUD is respon-

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# 5

## Easy Steps to a Community Where Everyone Has a Place to Call Home

By NANCY AMIDEI

By now we've all heard the statistics about homelessness, and the news is not good. The details change from year to year, but the trends remain troublingly constant: the number of homeless people in our community continues to grow; more families are homeless; more children are homeless. What can we do as neighbors, as members of our communities, as citizens and voters?

One answer is that we can do nothing and hope the homeless will magically disappear. We've tried that. We already know that when it comes to homelessness, doing nothing doesn't work.

Another answer is that we can build more shelters, donate more blankets and beds, create a new shelter "industry." We've tried that too. It helps, but we shouldn't be fooled — a shelter is not a home. And what homeless people need is a place to call home.

That is the answer we should all be aiming for: a community where everyone has a place to call home. That's not pie in the sky impossible, but in order to achieve it, all of us will have to get more involved than we have been. And the first step requires getting past the feeling that homelessness is too big to tackle. Here's my list of five easy ways to get involved and make a difference.

### 1 JOIN A GROUP

It is always harder to take on big problems by working alone; that's a sure prescription for getting discouraged, feeling lonely, and "burned out." Group efforts have just the opposite effect: we all get energy and power from being part of something bigger than ourselves. Plus, there is the advantage of having access to every one's ideas and capabilities; and whenever someone in a group gets discouraged, there are plenty there to spur them on. Equally important, groups are able to accomplish more, and they have a bigger impact with elected officials (and the media). So, one way to make a difference is by joining a group that is working to end homelessness in our community.

You could join the Seattle-King County Coalition for the Homeless, the Low-Income Housing Coalition, Habitat for Humanity, or the Church Council's Task Force on Homelessness — to name just a few.

### 2 HELP OUT

Anyone can help people with short term needs get back on their feet by supporting temporary shelters. Shelters also provide basic safety for people at a specially vulnerable point in their lives. Another approach is to increase the services people in crisis need — like child care, help finding a job, clean clothes for a job interview, a place to take a shower, a way to see a dentist or get health care, bus fare to go look at apartments.

Whichever you choose, there are several ways to help: by giving your time (volunteer hours), your dollars, your talents and expertise, your compassion, or your votes.

### 3 USE YOUR VOICE

Too often the only ones being heard are those saying "no" to better services, affordable housing, or other forms of help for the homeless. They may be in the minority, but that's not how it seems if they are the only ones speaking up. (At a recent Seattle City Council meeting, most of those who spoke up said they opposed the proposal under discussion. Then one of the Council members asked everyone for their zip codes; it turned out that none of the nay-sayers lived in Seattle; only those few individuals who'd spoken in support were. Suddenly the "minority" became the "majority.") It may seem like a small thing, but it is important to speak up — like when others make nasty comments about those who are homeless, oppose those who provide emergency shelter, or when a neighbor argues against putting transitional housing in the neighborhood.

### 4 USE YOUR VOTE

Few individuals can afford to give a homeless family a house, but every voter — rich or poor — can accomplish the same result by voting in support of more affordable housing. For example, you can call, write, or visit the officials who represent you and say you want them to vote in favor of programs that prevent eviction, expand housing subsidies, or increase the amount of money in the Housing Trust Fund. And all of us can use our votes to elect candidates who are committed to work for more low-income housing. That's especially important in this election year.

### 5 FLEX YOUR ECONOMIC MUSCLES

Anyone who has a personal bank account, or works for a business or an agency with a bank account, has economic leverage. Account-holders can tell the bank you'd like to examine their record under the Community Reinvestment Act (it is a public document) with respect to investing in low-cost housing, rehabilitating low-cost housing, and making loans in low-income neighborhoods. Let them know you intend to compare their record with other banks in the community, and put your bank account in the bank with the best record. Then ask the place where you work, the school you or your children attend, the congregation where you worship, the city or county government where you live, and the social agencies in your neighborhood to do the same. If everyone who is troubled by homelessness agreed to shift their money to the bank with the best CRA record, all the banks would compete to have the best record. — and a lot more money would be invested in housing that someone besides Bill Gates could afford.

Nothing on this list is costly or complicated, and none of it requires a fancy education. All are low-to-nothing in cost, minimal in terms of the time required, but high in potential impact. Moreover, you can do one, a few, or all five to end homelessness. The one thing you can't do is nothing.

*This article is adapted from a speech delivered in March 1994 at the annual press conference of the Seattle King County Coalition for the Homeless. Nancy Amidei teaches at the University of Washington School of Social Work and is Coordinator of the University District/University Partnership for Youth.*



# Gone But Not Forgotten

## Jungle Dismantled But Debate Not Resolved.

*On July 18, 1994, amid much opposition, the City of Seattle tore down the collection of shacks and lean-to's along I-5 that has become known as "The Jungle."*

*During the prologue to the event, despite the generation of much heat, neither the City nor homeless advocates opposed to the eviction were able to publicly acknowledge the other's point of view, much less*

*negotiate any sort of middle-ground.*

*The following three articles, which broadly represent the views of the City, Seattle's service providing community, and those of grassroots homeless activists, can be seen as evidence of the common ground these parties share as well as the differences which continue to divide.*

### Seattle Committed to Helping Homeless:

#### Removal Defended as Necessary and Sensitive.

The illegal encampments on Beacon Hill posed a very serious public safety and illegal health risk both for the people living in the greenbelt and in the surrounding community. Because there was no water, no sewer, no garbage collection, and no electricity for the greenbelt, the conditions created a haven for rats. Rodent-borne diseases, tuberculosis, and hepatitis were significant health risks caused by unsanitary conditions.

Open fire pits were found at most sites. With no water in the greenbelt, firefighters were barely able to control three fires at the encampments earlier this year. The danger from fire as the woods became tinder dry this summer was great.

These conditions required the city to remove unlawful dwellings in the Beacon Hill greenbelt.

The City took extraordinary measures to reach out to the people in the greenbelt. Community Service Officers, City staff, and social service providers combed the hillside for weeks preceding the clean up, urging people living there to take advantage of shelters, drug and alcohol treatment programs, and other services. In addition to this one-on-one effort, the City convened a community meeting as a direct response to a request from homeless activists, service providers, and homeless people living in the greenbelt. City staff and 20 community organizations came to the meeting — all with programs and services to offer. We arranged refreshments, translators, and transportation to and from the site. Despite all this, only two people from the Beacon Hill encampments came to the meeting; both declined services and shelter.

In 1994, the City is spending over \$7 million on emergency programs; homeless shelters, transitional housing, food banks, meal programs, health services, counseling, and job training programs for homeless families and individuals. The City's spending on programs and services for homeless people has increased by 75 percent in just five years, from under \$4 million in 1989 to over \$7 million in 1994.

The City is also involved in long-term solutions to homelessness. The Seattle Conservation Corps provides employment, education, and job training for homeless adults, and the City is committed to developing permanent low-income housing

with support services for people who are homeless.

More than 3,100 units of permanent low-income housing have been developed or preserved since 1987, largely through leveraging of Seattle Housing Levy and other City funding with federal, state, county, and private resources. In fact, an additional 90 units of permanent low-income housing for homeless individuals will become available when the Wintonia apartments open in September.

Behind the scenes City efforts successfully lobbied the federal government to maintain McKinney Act homelessness funding for Seattle and will continue to work for the development of housing for people who are homeless at Sand Point. In addition the City continues to work closely with housing developers,

providers, advocates, and homeless people to jointly develop programs and services that truly help homeless people — affordable housing, jobs, mental health and drug and alcohol services, day care, and health care.

The City responded to the clear health and safety hazards generated by the encampments. Our long-term goal is to respond to the social issues that cause homelessness, but the City cannot act without help from federal, state, and county governments. Critical is support for local initiatives, like a housing levy, from the citizens of Seattle and King County. Equally essential is the need for people who are homeless to make those choices that lead to a stable home environment, and we will continue to urge them to utilize the existing service system.

We welcome Real Change to the City and look forward to continued discussion and lasting solutions to homelessness.

*By Laura Paskin, Department of Housing and Human Services, and Terry Wittman, Citizens Service Bureau.*

**"More than 3,100 units of permanent low-income housing have been developed or preserved since 1987, largely through leveraging of Seattle Housing Levy and other City funding with federal, state, county, and private resources."**

### New Policy on Jungles Needed City Response "Inappropriate and Ineffective"

On July 18, 1994, The City of Seattle, and the state of WA began the physical dismantling of a community some say has been in existence for nearly a decade. It has been an abrupt end for the "Jungle," a series of encampments on the west side of Beacon Hill that has been home to at least 100 people, including many U.S. veterans and Latino immigrants.

Advocates and service providers have been torn over the encampment's removal. All of us believe people ought to have more than a lean-to and an outhouse to call home. All of us understand that the City must respond to public

health and safety concerns of this magnitude. However, we also know that our shelters are full and housing is not affordable. We know that shelters and housing projects can be dangerous places for vulnerable people. We know that few of us have all the resources needed to provide appropriate services to

people with mental illness or to non-English speaking immigrants. We know that shelters and transitional housing facilities are seldom a place for the sense of community, ownership, and independence that the jungle has provided. The people living in the Jungle are not ignorant of the social service system. They simply have not found what they need in that system.

The one thing that advocates and

**"A new policy must acknowledge that as long as there are people without the resources or the desire to access standard housing, the existence of such encampments is inevitable.**

**Simply knocking encampments down only ensures they will appear elsewhere."**



service providers are sure of is that the city's response to encampments, though improved over the last encampment removal, has been inappropriate and ineffective from both a human service perspective and a public health and safety perspective. The current policy is to take no action until a significant number of complaints are filed or a public health crisis arises. If and when this happens, the City begins crisis planning to remove the encampment. Neither the City, the encampment residents, nor the general public are served well by this approach.

City officials knew in April that the Jungle camps had passed a crisis point, yet they did not start working with social service workers until late-May, less than a month before the original evacuation date of June 27. When the city did approach service providers it proved to be too little, too late. The City had few resources to offer. Shelters and transitional housing facilities had little room to offer and few residents of the encampments were interested in what services were available.

The City must create a policy that ensures encampments do not become a danger to those living in them or in neighborhoods around them. To this end, such a policy must include educating encampment residents about public health dangers and risk prevention. A new policy must acknowledge that as long as there are people without the resources or the desire to access standard housing, the existence of such encampments is inevitable. Simply knocking encampments down only ensures they will appear elsewhere. This policy must be at its core a human service as well as a public health policy. It should include a systematic outreach program by professionals who can gain the trust of residents and effectively evaluate their needs over a long period of time. This kind of intervention will not be successful if accompanied by the threat of eviction from one's home. There will, undoubtedly, be encampment residents who do not want anything from service providers or the city. Only a policy that allows as much self-determination as possible will encourage the needed dialogue between the City, human service providers, and encampment residents.

Finally, an effective policy will commit the City to funding services that are relevant to the particular needs of the people in these encampments, including public health education, affordable housing, mental health services, and culturally appropriate services to the large Latino population in these encampments.

*Submitted by the Seattle King County Coalition for the Homeless.*



SEATTLE'S INTREPID "PRESS CORPS" SKEDADDLE AS POLICE GIVE THE TWO MINUTE ARREST WARNING JULY 18TH. PHOTO BY GUERRY HODDERSON.

## Seattle Turns its Back on Poor Criminalizing Poverty is No Solution

**O**n Sunday evening, July 17th, the night before the scheduled demolition of the Jungle campsites, I and about fifteen of my comrades camped overnight at Jose Rizal park. We were the vanguard for more protesters who would join us Monday morning.

A young Native American couple came out of the Jungle, where they live, and asked what was taking place. Astonishingly, they did not know that the very next day bulldozers would be destroying their campsite.

When we explained it to them they became very worried and frightened. Afraid that police would come in the night and arrest them, they returned to their camp to pick up some blankets and stayed with us. The fact that they were not aware of what was about to happen belies the City's claim of thorough outreach to the jungle residents.

The fear this couple had for the police is shared by all people who sleep out at night on Seattle's streets. More and more often SHAG gets reports on how many police officers are abusing their authority. People have been asking for years for a citizen's review board, but the Mayor and City council have turned deaf ears.

Let us take a look at the true reality of how Seattle has been dealing with homelessness. Their consistent solution, rather than dealing with it in a humane fashion, has been to simply make criminals out

of innocent, struggling people.

We saw this when no trespassing signs were put up in the jungle, making it a crime to sleep there. We again see it in the city ordinances making it a crime for poor weary people to sit on public sidewalks. Again we see it when police harass innocent sleepers telling them to move on or be arrested.

No wonder violent crime is running rampant in our city at night; most of the police force is

**"Criminalizing poverty is not a solution and if the Mayor and City Council cannot comprehend this then we the voters need to show them the exit door pronto."**

focused on harriving innocent victims.

Criminalizing poverty is not a solution and if the Mayor and City Council cannot comprehend this then we the voters need to show them the exit door pronto.

The City claims that they moved in on the jungle because of sanitation reasons. I don't believe that for one moment, and neither should you. It would be a relatively simple task to provide sani-cans and to have a centralized garbage container for the residents to use.

Jungle residents would have

cooperated fully. These are not animals, as the city alludes, but thinking, caring, breathing feeling decent human beings. And I'll put them and the rest of my homeless brothers and sisters up against all the bureaucrats and politicians in the world for honesty and integrity any day.

The simple truth is that Seattle's leaders do not want homeless or low-income people living in their city, period. The city will of course deny this, but all the facts point to it.

Attack after attack has been levied on the 98104 district, which consists of Downtown, Pioneer Square, and the International District, and has the heaviest concentration of homeless and low-income people.

Why? Because a large-scale development project is in the works for this entire area. When completed this will bring more tourists who will of course bring more bucks. But in order for this to be successful, the poor have to go, and that is really what it is all about folks: money and greed.

When Norm Rice was first elected Mayor SHAG presented him with a membership hat which he said he would always wear with great honor and pride.

Mr. Mayor, you have turned your back on Seattle's poor population.

NOW TURN IN YOUR HAT!  
'nuff said.

*Blue Lahiff is Director of the Seattle Homeless Advocacy Group (SHAG).*



# Profits from Poverty

## Must affordable housing mean corporate tax breaks?

BY MARC BRESLOW

Poverty continues to rise in the United States, and with it housing conditions for the poor continue to plummet. Although the federal Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) says that a household should not spend more than 30% of its income for rent and utilities, more than four-fifths of poor households who rent do so. An astounding two-thirds of poor renters spend at least half of their incomes for housing costs.

While the crisis in housing affordability has worsened, the federal government, through HUD, has cut its spending on housing programs. But there is one federal program to create new subsidized housing that has grown dramatically: the low-income housing tax credit (LIHTC). The credit now provides part of the financing for 90% or more of low-income construction, accounting by some estimates for as many as 100,000 units a year.

Across the United States hundreds of developers make their livings arranging the complex deals necessary to construct and rehabilitate buildings using the tax credit. While this housing is undoubtedly a boon to the poor, fully half the money goes not to those in need, but to the corporations who profit from investing in such projects, and to the lawyers and other experts who do the arranging.

Meanwhile, the money all comes from the federal budget, at a time when the budget deficit is a primary obstacle to greater spending for all human needs, including housing, health care, education, and job creation. Yet, despite its wastefulness, many progressives support the LIHTC, and make their livings developing housing projects that involve it — because without the credit one cannot build affordable housing today.

### A Drop in the Bucket

All federal and state housing programs combined provide only a pittance relative to the need. Michael Stone, a housing expert at the University of Massachusetts-Boston, estimates that one-third of Americans, or about 30 million households, live in overcrowded or substandard conditions, or are paying more than they can afford.

Providing adequate, affordable housing for all these people would take investments on the order of \$50 billion a year for ten years, said

the Institute for Policy Studies in its *Blueprint for Housing the Nation*. Yet HUD programs, including Community Development Block Grants (CDBG) and the new HOME grants to the states, are now only a few billion a year, while funding for new public housing has been eliminated.<sup>3</sup>

At current spending rates, it would take 100 years to achieve the goal set in the 1990 National Affordable Housing Act of "a decent home and suitable living environment for every American family," according to Chester Hartman, the director of the Poverty and Race Research Council in Washington, DC.

Small wonder, then, that affordable housing advocates try to maximize their use of whatever monies the federal government does make available, even if they come through the back door of the LIHTC. But the credit is only funded at about \$2 billion a year — a trivial amount compared to programs that serve the more affluent. Mortgage interest deductions, for example, cost the government \$47 billion annually. As of 1991, about 80% of the tax benefits from these deductions went to the wealthiest 20% of taxpayers, with the poorest 20% getting only 0.02% of the benefits.

### Worshipping Capitalists

There was a time when the government actually built and owned housing itself, charging low rents to those who could not afford more. Then there were federal programs to directly subsidize the construction costs of projects built by local government agencies or non-profit development corporations.

But with the 1980s bias against public involvement in the economy, such direct spending went out of favor. Instead, the costs are hidden in tax losses. The Internal Revenue Service (IRS) gives huge tax breaks to wealthy investors who are willing to lend funds for housing development.

The Tax Reform Act of 1986, which eliminated certain tax subsidies for inexpensive housing, created the LIHTC. Anyone who invests in housing intended to serve families with incomes below 60% of the median in their local area can get this tax credit, which is then used to reduce income taxes owed on other business ventures. For new housing, the credit may be equal to or greater than the funds invested over a ten-

year period, with lower benefits for rehabbed units.

But since non-profit organizations, including community development corporations, don't make profits or pay income taxes, they cannot directly use such credits. Recent changes in the tax laws also limit the use of credits by individuals. As a result, the LIHTC is mainly of value to corporations who want to shelter their profits from federal income taxes.

Corporations can also treat the housing as an asset that loses its value over time. This "depreciation" is then a deductible expense on their taxes. Between the credit and depreciation, the total tax savings can be as much as one and a half times the money a corporation invests!<sup>6</sup>

Such corporations, however, have no interest of their own in developing low-income housing. So the LIHTC has created strange bedfellows: non-profit, community-oriented developers (and for-profit developers who don't have other business ventures to avoid taxes on) creating partnerships with corporations of every size and variety.

In a process known as "syndication," developers hire lawyers and other consultants to help them sell the tax credits to investors. Since the investors usually know nothing about low-income housing, and may be suspicious of it, this requires

waste in paying all those middlemen: the lawyers, syndicators, accountants and other \$200+/hour types to structure these fantastically complicated deals."

Of every \$1 spent by the government in lost tax revenues, only about 50 cents actually goes to the "hard" costs of buying property and constructing buildings. Of the other 50 cents, about 30 cents is eaten up in profits, at rates of 15% to 18% or more, that investors in these deals demand and are able to get. The remaining 20 cents goes to the "soft" costs of hiring consultants to arrange the deal.

Why is the profit rate so high? Joe Guggenheim, author of a widely-used guidebook on the credits, says there are risks involved for the investors, who can lose their tax benefits if the project fails to house tenants who fall within the income limitations. Guggenheim adds, though, "I don't think it [the profit rate] is a justified number myself."

But Carla Young, the director of SWAP (Stop Wasting Abandoned Property), a non-profit developer in Providence, Rhode Island that recently completed a development using tax credits, believes that the risks are great for investors in affordable housing. "I don't find 16% to 18% [profits] too high," says Young.

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**"Mortgage interest deductions, for example, cost the government \$47 billion annually. As of 1991, about 80% of the tax benefits from these deductions went to the wealthiest 20% of taxpayers, with the poorest 20% getting only 0.02% of the benefits."**

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marketing expertise. Developers also need lots of legal help to write complex contracts that will make the partners feel secure in a relationship that federal law mandates will last 15 years. In the end, developers get the money needed up-front for building construction, and investors get tax breaks for 10 years.

What is wrong with this system? In Chester Hartman's words: "For one, it is unseemly and redistributively unjust to help the poor by helping the rich...Low-income folks, their advocates and technical assistants court these rich investors; are terribly grateful for their 'largesse'; and those at the way upper end of the income scale come off like socially beneficial heroes...Second, there's an unbelievable amount of

### Complexity Without End

The "soft" costs of developing new affordable housing include fees to planners, designers, marketers, developers, syndicators, and lawyers. These costs arise in part because neither the tax credit alone, nor any of the other federal or state programs available, are sufficient to fully fund the capital for most projects. Instead, developers must package together funds from many sources — an average of eight per project for those included in the HUD study.

A 1993 study for HUD of 15 low-income projects developed by non-profits in five cities, found that the average housing unit cost \$104,000 to produce, of which 12.6%, or about \$13,000 per unit,



# HOUSING

went for syndication, developers, and legal/organizational costs. Of the 15 projects, three, all in Washington, DC, used government subsidies but not the tax credit. For these projects the soft costs above averaged about 7.1% of the total.

The LIHTC alone provided only a quarter of the up-front costs for those projects studied. Within this portion, 21% of the money went just to pay syndicators — and that doesn't count profits for the investors.

## On the Other Hand...

But defenders of the tax credit, many of whom are in the business because they care about the housing needs of poor people, cite several arguments on its behalf. First, while transaction costs for LIHTC projects may appear high, the administrative costs of other housing programs can be just as high. Benson Roberts, the director of policy and program development for the Local Initiatives Support Corporation (LISC) says that projects funded by Community Development Block Grants (CDBG) also spend as much as 20% of their money on soft costs.

LISC is the largest non-profit housing syndicator in the country. In 1993 it obtained \$230 million of financing for community development corporations, primarily by finding investors who want tax credits. These deals yielded 5,000 units of low-income housing last year, according to Roberts.

Second, Roberts and Paul Grogan, the President of LISC, believe that having corporate partners improves the development and management of projects: "If a project with only direct subsidies gets in trouble, the owner with no investment at stake will just mail in the keys and walk away. But if a Credit project falters within the first 15 years, investors must rescue the housing or lose a portion of their tax benefits. That kind of performance incentive means that housing will be planned, built and managed to last."

Carla Young, for whose project LISC was the syndicator, agrees, saying that with investors involved each step of development was scrutinized carefully. "This is better than the government handing us money," argues Young. But she admits that arranging the financing — from seven sources — was a tremendous amount of work. "It will be a while before this organization does another tax syndication deal, because of all the complications involved. We are still reeling over this one."

Third, evidence exists that non-profit developers and syndicators charge far less than for-profits to arrange the deals. For the 15 projects in the HUD study, the non-profits retained an average of only 3.9% of the total costs for their expenses, compared with 9.5% by profit-

making developers, as reported in another study.

## Is There An Alternative?

Housing advocates insist that as long as the federal government is unwilling to provide large-scale housing funds through any other program, they must take full advantage of the LIHTC, and lobby for its continuance as a permanent program.

credit pays to investors. Paying for corporate profits rather than for bond interest increases the cost of capital obtained through syndication by about one-third.

Many affordable housing advocates acknowledge that the government's money could be used better. Kari Brenna, head of the National Equity Fund, LISC's syndicating division, says that if the government sold bonds instead of

financing of new homes, whether through tax subsidies or direct grants, is to give low-income households rent subsidies, and allow them to find their own housing. The federal Section 8 program does precisely this, giving tenants "certificates" which they present to landlords.

In the end, the tax credit is supposed to achieve the same result as Section 8, giving poor people rents below market rates. But it is much less efficient in doing so. A 1991 study done for HUD by ICF, Inc. estimated that to achieve one dollar in rent subsidies, the tax credit costs the government \$2.40.

But developers say that rent subsidy programs do not create new housing. They argue that subsidies may instead just heighten housing demand in low-income neighborhoods, allowing landlords to charge more.

## Progressive Dilemmas

For more than 15 years the federal government has been retreating from the war on poverty. Under pressure from conservatives who say poverty programs failed, and from today's intense focus on reducing the budget deficit, funding for rent subsidies, rehabbed housing, and new affordable housing is at terribly inadequate levels.

Yet the answer is not to place our hopes on a tax giveaway program that spends half its money on private profits and administrative costs. For with government funds facing severe limits, every dollar wasted is a dollar that cannot be used to service other human needs. Programs such as the LIHTC help perpetuate a system whereby advocates for housing, health care, and education fight over the scraps that the government leaves us, while the corporations laugh all the way to the bank.

Marc Breslow is an editor at *Dollars & Sense*

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Resources: "Debating the Low-Income Housing Tax Credit," Chester Hartman et. al., *Shelterforce*, Jan/Feb 1992; *Nonprofit Housing: Costs and Funding, Final Report*, Abt Associates for HUD, Nov. 1993; "The Excessive Costs of Creative Finance: Growing Inefficiencies in the Production of Low-Income Housing," Michael Stegman, *Housing Policy Debate*, Fannie Mae, 1991; "The Low-Income Housing Tax Credit: Federal Help for Low Income Housing," Jonathan Klein and Lynn Wehrli, *Boston Bar Journal*, July/Aug 1990.

## Estimated Payments and Benefits for a \$2 Million Corporate Investor

Year	Equity	Tax Savings		
	Payments	Depreciation	Credits	Total
1993		\$21,000		\$21,000
1994	\$60,000	39,000		39,000
1995	60,000	58,000	\$ 2,000	60,000
1996	149,000	68,000	81,000	149,000
1997	301,000	60,000	241,000	301,000
1998	297,000	53,000	244,000	297,000
1999	291,000	47,000	244,000	291,000
2000	286,000	42,000	244,000	286,000
2001	279,000	35,000	244,000	279,000
2002	277,000	33,000	244,000	277,000
2003		32,000	244,000	276,000
2004		31,000	244,000	276,000
2005		30,000	243,000	273,000
2006		30,000	165,000	195,000
2007-10		94,000		94,000
Totals	\$2,000,000	\$673,000	\$2,440,000	\$3,113,000

Source: *The National Equity Fund: 1993 Limited Partnership, Executive Summary*

But there are alternatives to the tax credit that would cost the government far less, such as direct grants to low-income housing developers. Such grants could be financed through raising taxes on corporations and the wealthy, thereby not contributing to the budget deficit at all.

**"But there are alternatives to the tax credit that would cost the government far less, such as direct grants to low-income housing developers."**

Or, even without new taxes, the government could sell bonds to raise the capital for making grants. Long-term U.S. Treasury debt carries interest rates on the order of 6% to 8% today, far lower than the 15% and up profit rates that the tax

providing the LIHTC, "the return on the dollar could be higher." Cushing Dolbeare, director of the National Low Income Housing Coalition, notes that "If you could abolish the tax credit and put the money directly into the HOME program [block grants to the states] you would get more bang more for the buck."

Bob Kuehn, a for-profit low-income housing developer in Boston, believes that direct subsidies can work just as well, but that the problem is political — Congress would rather pass laws creating tax loopholes than directly appropriate money for programs. And, he argues, the direct subsidies from the Urban Development Action Grant (UDAG) program worked well during Jimmy Carter's presidency. It was only the scandals of Samuel Pierce's tenure at HUD under Ronald Reagan that gave UDAG a bad name.<sup>21</sup>

An alternative to government



# Ask Fabio

## Solid Advice from our Resident Hunk Advocate

Yo, Fabio,

I moved out of my apartment on Capitol Hill about two months ago. I cleaned up the place with my girlfriend, did the touch up paint, and basically left the place in better condition than what he gave us. What can we do? He still has \$300 bucks of our money and never returns our calls. We left him a forwarding address and have not heard from him.

Sincerely, Desperada in Seattle

Ciao Bella Desperada,

Most of us assume we are dealing with honest landlords and assume that landlords will return the money promptly. This, of course, is not the case. So we must always take precautions, for no matter how cool, nice, or pierced the manager may seem, they always work for some Gary Philips type who cares more about profits than tenant's rights. It is always a good idea to have witnesses with you when you move out, someone who can tell the judge the state of the apartment when you left.

Landlords have 14 days to mail you either an itemized list of damages or a full refund of your deposit. If they fail to do so, the law clearly states that they forfeit any claim and should give it all back to you. Remember, you are only required to return the place to its

original condition minus normal wear and tear, which means that a landlord may not remodel at your expense.

So, it might be a good idea to write to your landlord, inform him of this, and let him know that if you don't receive your money, you will seek damages in Small Claims Court. You may file in King County Courthouse, Rm. E327. It costs you ten bucks. It is also worth noting that the court may award, at its discretion, up to double the amount (RCW 59.18.280). Hope that was useful. Ciao bella!

Yo, Fabio,

I moved into a building in the U District that's owned by a guy named Drake Sisley. He is always snooping around and coming unannounced. Once I came out of my shower and saw him in my living room. He just said excuse me and let himself out!! I asked him not to do this, but he just ignores

me. I don't know what to do. A friend has encouraged me to get a pit bull. I am seriously thinking about it.

Sincerely, harassed in Seattle.

Querida Harassed,

Everyone knows I am non-

**For Fast Answers,  
Call the Tenants Union  
Hotline,  
723-0500**

## In Memorium

### Margaret Jackson: A Woman of Will

Margaret Jackson died in March of this year after struggling with many health problems, primarily advanced lung disease. The last six weeks of her life was a grueling physical and emotional struggle for Margaret, entailing a revolving door of hospitalization and uncountable amounts of medication. Given her awesome strength of will (which all who knew here were familiar with) she fought hard to overcome what ailed her. But she told me many times in those weeks that she was exhausted from this fight, and that her body might be too embattled to keep it up. She died in her sleep in the hospital early in the morning of March 4, 1994. I remember feeling grateful that she

died in the safety and relative comfort of the hospital, rather than on the street.

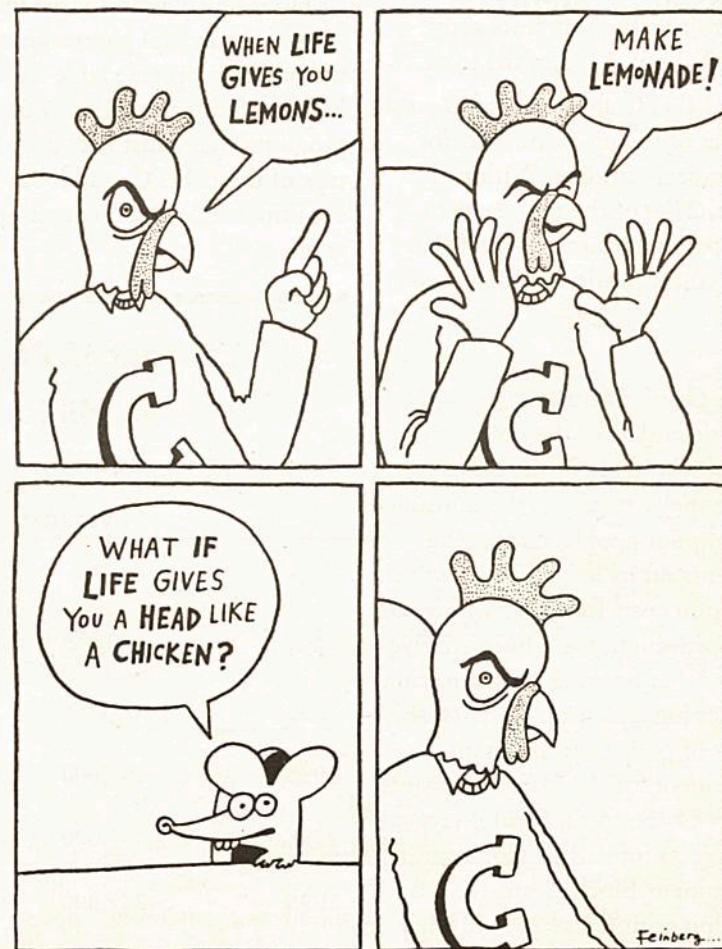
It's hard to imagine someone hating the hospital more than Margaret did. She hated the confinement, the isolation, the dependence, and the ruthless boredom. She also had a difficult time accepting help from people, preferring to take care of herself. She was a fiercely independent woman, and, though that very fierceness was sometimes difficult for me to cope with, it did largely define who she was and why she was so endearing and passionate a woman.

Yes, Margaret could be fiercely combative but also fiercely sweet.

## Chickenface,

by "Sufferin' Seth" Feinberg

"Stumped"



© 1993 Seth Feinberg • P.O. Box 293 • Brookline, MA 02146

violent, por favore no pit bulls!! First mistake was to move into a Drake Sisley building. He is one of the U District's worst landlords. The Landlord Tenant Law (RCW 59.18.150) requires that a landlord give you 48 hours notice of their intent to enter your property. Plus they are supposed to set up a time that is best for you. They also may only enter at reasonable times. There are ways to deal with this type of harassment.

1.) Write to your landlord informing him of your rights. Let him know that the law allows you to sue for a hundred dollars a day, each day he enters without permission

once he has been notified in writing.

2.) Call the Community Service Officers at 684-4790. They are a branch of the polizia that deals with this kind of thing.

3.) Get a cheap Radio Shack alarm. They are loud and inexpensive.

4.) Get a poodle.

Hope that was helpful. Keep in touch.

Letters to Fabio may be sent to: Yo Fabio, c/o Real Change, 2129 Second Ave., Seattle, WA 98121.

## Volunteer

Real Change Won't Happen Without You!

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Writers

Journalists

Cartoonists

Editors

Proofreaders

Photographers

Graphic Artists

Mac Jockies

Office Volunteers

Drivers

Fundraisers

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# It Was a Wonderful Life

**Homeless Documentary Explores Poverty Among the Affluent.**

**T**his moving documentary film about the lives of seven homeless women puts a valuable but carefully selected face on poverty, a topic that, in its more mundane forms, rarely makes for good cinema.

Inspired by a newspaper article about homelessness in Santa Monica, a locale not usually associated with poor people, filmmaker Michèle Ohayon fashions her documentary as a riches to rags study in contrasts, making the statement that none of us are immune from the horror of the streets.

There is something about the cinematic treatment of homelessness, whether for television or the big screen, that is always unsettling. In fictionalized portrayals, liberal idealizations are the norm: the intact nuclear family, with dad de-industrialized out of a job, pridefully squatting in a basement; the wise, white-haired recluse with the well-hidden heart of gold; the genius former lit prof who has long broken with reality. They entertain us and sometimes move us to action, but also leave us feeling that perhaps the reality is not always so neat.

"It Was a Wonderful Life" is not Hollywood. Yet, at the same time, this is politicized ground, and the filmmaker has chosen sides. While the resulting film has great emotional impact and makes its points effectively enough, something still feels amiss.

## Lifestyles of the Poor and Homeless

The Santa Monica setting plays backdrop to jarring fact: well-mannered, middle to upper-middle class women can find themselves on the street. These, we are told, are the hidden homeless, the majority of whom are women.

As they struggle to maintain at least some appearance of their former status, familiar rituals become ordeals of survival: three dollar showers at the Y, lipstick applied in the rear-view mirror, wardrobes chosen from the trunk of a car. Each of the women are survivors; they are engaging and articulate, and mostly removed from whatever "bag lady" stereotypes we may harbor.

Some portraits, too, seem more complete than others. Terry is a woman living in a welfare hotel with her three kids, aged about 4 to 17. Her ex-husband pays no child support, and she's lost her good job to find her skills out of demand, and even "bad" jobs out of reach.

The camera unmistakably captures the fact that this strong, stable, middle-class, black woman is frankly adored by her kids, even as they share two beds in a small room. As she speaks, you know they're going to make it, and as the film concludes you find this family does.

The incredible pathos that runs throughout this film stems in part from the fact that most of these women have fallen from considerable heights, and often cannot reconcile who they are with what they understand by the socially constructed word "homeless."

Josephine, who sleeps in the car she bought on credit and was left destitute by what she describes as "a bad investment," looks and dresses to match her upper-middle class and educated past. She distances herself from her reality by saying, "Homelessness is a state of mind."

Louise, a gaunt 37-year-old who sometimes camps and sometimes lives out of a rented U-Haul, speaks of her situation in the past-tense. "I never really did identify as a homeless person." Both of these women seem utterly alone in the world, yet the filmmaker never explores the root of this isolation.

Marie, who has lived in her car with her dogs for 2 years, seemed the least distanced from other homeless. The resulting insight is devastating. When Santa Monica officials offer the keys to her impounded car in exchange for leaving town she declares, "I'm just considered trash like all the other trash. The people on the street know this, so why should they try?"

## A Polarized Debate

The root problem with this portrait of homelessness among women is this: by taking the formerly affluent as its subject, a kind of sensationalism emerges. These women, despite the filmmakers best intentions, do not strike one as at all typical.

If I wanted to make a film about why women become homeless, I'd focus on poor women, who are far more likely to face this fate. But then, the fact that poor women often become homeless hardly seems surprising enough to warrant a documentary.

This filmmaker wants it both ways: wealthy women who become poor make for surprising and tragic storytelling, but the reality is that poor women are many times more

likely to become the economic victims that she wants to portray.

climate toward the homeless, many advocates feel unable to discuss homelessness in any but purely economic terms. Rising rents plus falling wages equals homelessness. While this is undeniably true, it is but part of an increasingly complex picture.

Homelessness in the nineties has been likened to a Darwinist game of musical chairs, with far more players than places to sit. When the music stops, the fittest get housed. Who

**"Homelessness in the nineties has been likened to a Darwinist game of musical chairs, with far more players than places to sit."**

likely to become the economic victims that she wants to portray.

Have we really come to the point where, in order to have our sympathy, a homeless woman must be a former society lady in perfect mental health?

A debate has arisen among academics, service providers, and advocates regarding the causes of homelessness, polarizing around the issue of personal responsibility. On one side is the argument that "there are three solutions to homelessness: housing, housing, housing." Countering this is an obsession with "personal" causes and finding blame that identifies the root of homelessness as drug and alcohol addiction, mental illness, and personal irresponsibility.

In "Wonderful Life," the causes presented, while all too true, cleave closely to economic orthodoxy: inadequate, unresponsive, and scarce services; chronically unpaid child support; the high cost of re-entering the housing market after having fallen out; the lack of jobs available to women whose skills are defined as unmarketable.

In what is an increasingly hostile



MARIE, IN THE CAR SHE HAS LIVED IN FOR TWO YEARS

does it really help when we only point to the lack of chairs, ignoring the fact that some players are too confused to comprehend the game?

Our view of the problem needs to admit the complexity of our own less than perfect lives. While movies like "It Was A Wonderful Life" will soften the hardest of hearts, and even move some to action, life isn't the movies, and happens mostly in shades of gray.

— Timothy Harris

To order your own copy of "It Was a Wonderful Life" in VHS Home Video format, write: Filmmakers Library, 124 E. 40th, Rm. 901, NY, NY, 10016. Phone: 212-808-4980.



# Street Life Gallery

## A Place of Magic and Healing

From the moment you enter the Street Life Gallery (formerly the Seattle Homeless Art Gallery) you are aware you have come upon a magical place. The usual comment of the first time visitor is, "I never knew such a place existed."

The magic is more than the richly varied art displayed on the walls: dramatic mountain landscapes, affectionate portraits of homeless people, and vivid depictions of Polynesian myths. It's more, too, than the relaxed atmosphere, with music playing on the radio and the coffee brewing.

What you feel is the energy of creation.

The gallery is first and foremost a place that fosters creativity. It is a place that nurtures the individual in the spirit of community. It doesn't matter whether you're a master water colorist or a would-be painter. It doesn't matter if you do "art" or "craft." And it certainly doesn't matter whether you're living on the street, in a shelter, or in an apartment. What does matter is your desire to explore and develop your creativity through art.

The Seattle Homeless Art Gallery opened in July, 1991, thanks to the collaborative efforts of Catholic Community Services (CCS), Noel House (a women's shelter program), the Denny Regrade community, the Sea-town Crier (a now-defunct voice of the homeless newspaper), and the tireless work of Michael Howell (local artist and member of the Homeless Art Committee).

The Gallery is dedicated to providing a comfortable, hassle-free space for homeless and low-income

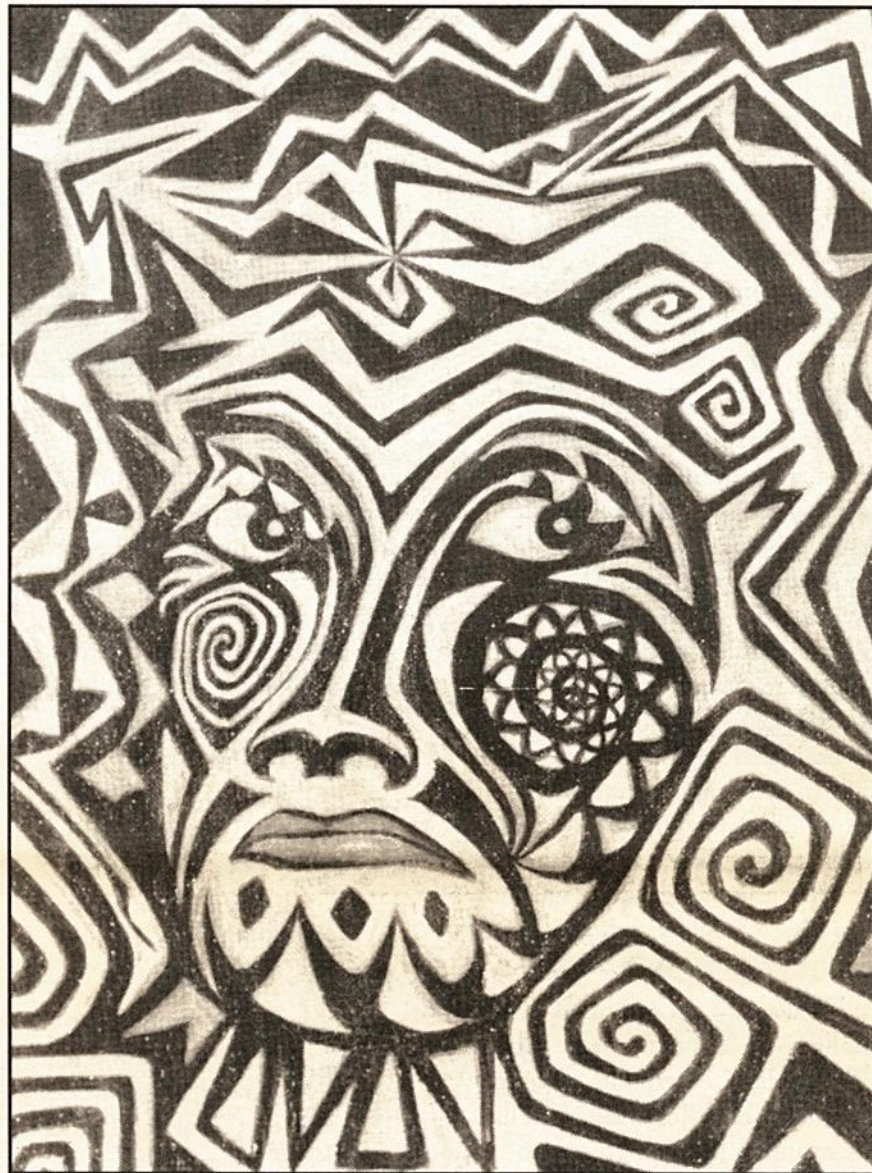
artists to work, display, and sell their art, and share their talents by offering workshops to the community. In addition, the Gallery is able to furnish some free materials and supplies, provided, in part, by donations from the public.

In October, 1993, a part-time Gallery coordinator was hired with a nine-month grant, funded through the City of Seattle. This allowed an increase in the number of hours the Gallery was opened and an expansion of programming that brought the involvement of more community members. The Gallery continues to be staffed and managed by homeless and low-income artists and artisans from the community.

Gallery Coordinator Barbara Brownstein believes that Street Life Gallery is a place with great potential for healing. "The Gallery really speaks to the best aspects of the human spirit: the resiliency of people who have gone through a lot of hard times with their inner strength undiminished. If anything they've grown. Art is a real salvation."

In the four years since its inception, the Gallery has become a viable part of the Belltown Community, breaking down barriers and transforming preconceived biases about what it is to be poor and homeless, till what remains is just the wonder of the creative process that we all possess.

The work that appears here is taken from "Street Life Gallery," a book showcasing the work of ten gallery artists and poets that will be released in Mid-September. For more information about the Street Life Gallery, call 328-5637.



PELE, BY WES BROWNING



UNTITLED, BY MAX CHANDLER



UNTITLED, BY BRUCE VEGAR

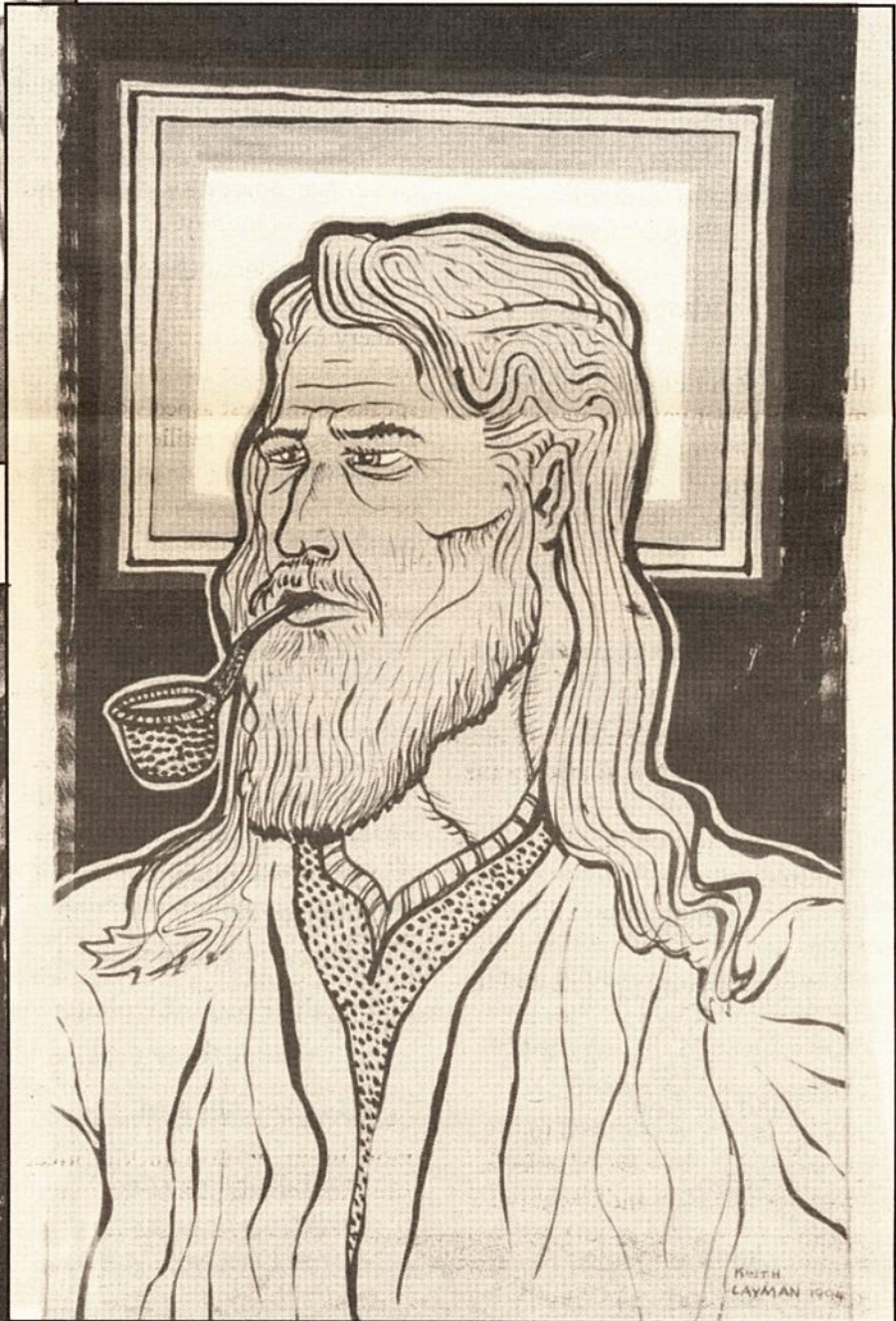




JUMPING OFF TREE, , BY WES BROWNING



WINTER SNOWSCAPE, BY KEITH LAYMAN



MR. JESUS, BY KEITH LAYMAN



# In the Changes

## Poetry by Marion Sue Fischer

**P**reparatory to writing this introduction, I asked Marion Sue Fischer to describe what her poetry is about. We had a long conversation about her history, watching the world turn over the past few decades. At first, she said, she couldn't stand what was going on; then she couldn't even understand it. Finally, she found what she calls a back-door faith, born of desperation. Faith enables her to write compelling poems for the streets, for relationships, to friends, lovers, the land, the city—and for the spirit and absence of spirit in our lives. Her poetry is an attempt to get through to people. However. However. However.

### African Queen, ex-"domestic" Seattle "Street Woman"

I  
WE brought her over  
from Africa,  
In the (intolerable)  
holds of slave ships

(fast-forward)

She is STILL a QUEEN,  
in her jazzy,

Regal  
and colorful  
Rags,

Rolling her  
elegant Luis Vuitton  
Suitcase  
behind her,

"ON  
the  
streets"  
of Seattle,

Mumbling Royal  
Curses  
Jokes  
and blessings,  
to ME,  
Her friend

(...AND, perhaps,  
to her God ...)

Her Power UNDIMINISHED,  
Her Mind  
Departs the Amerikan construct

Which has SO VICIOUSLY  
ABUSED her,

Coming through,  
Beautiful and Strong,

With the heady heat  
Of Another Land.

II  
I tried being  
Her Slave, for a time  
(i felt i owed it to her ... )

Her Imperial Grandness  
Preceding me,  
As i trailed her suitcase  
behind,

OR,

Her arm linked  
In mine,  
for Support  
(She tires easily, now  
in her 70's ... )

BUT,

If there appeared  
Someone she knew,  
She carried  
Her own luggage,

OR,

UNlinked her arm...

Her Beauty matched  
ONLY  
By her Dignity ...

I was honored that Marion asked me to edit her poetry, but confessed that I'd probably edit out her use of capital letters and underlining for what I considered its hysterical emphasis. "Oh," she said laughing, "It used to be almost ALL words in caps when I realized how God has run out of patience with us. I would scream out my window, 'Stop it now, just stop it!' to the noise, the violence, the toxic fumes."

Stern and harsh editor that I am, I realized this method of writing is Marion's own turning over of tables at the Temple. It is a necessary bearing witness to the cosmic exasperation. And so I haven't changed a word, a letter, for this poetry is a door to REALITY.

—Michele Marchand

### CHANGES

the waterfall

in a PARK  
in a City

doesn't change  
With the Seasons;

artificial  
and always spectacular  
CONSTANCY

is boring.

As are all of  
Man's attempts  
at false stability

that Robs us  
of our real  
security

IN  
the  
CHANGES.

### EQUALITY?

The sun shines  
on NO two spots  
... Exactly the same,

Although we say  
it is "NOON"  
in Santa Cruz and Seattle  
at  
the  
Same time;

If one were to Search  
for two blackberries  
EXACTLY the Same  
One would come up short...

HOW,  
then,  
are we to accurately judge  
Another's behavior  
By  
Comparing it with

Our  
Own?

### Dear Michele

My Sister's fence  
Has no Gate

... But a space  
Through which  
i enter.

(Dear Michele, the days here are numberless... )

REMARK: Time is NOT a linear progression...



**LIVED TOO LONG, have I?**

A Garden  
... of Tree STUMPS  
Rocks  
and Swordgrass...

flowers dying  
in the gutter;

or Prisoners in neat  
clean  
rows...

(the BEST of us  
ARE  
Bloody and Bowed,

or/and  
Become UGLY  
... if not *born* so... )

**MY CHURCH**

My church  
is on the  
Streets of Amarika,

Where  
the Healing  
Needs to begin

(the "homeless" are  
Amarika's  
"bitter medicine...")

**SEATTLE, April 1994**

Maneuvering between  
WALLS of cars,  
WALLS of steel and glass

Corridors of  
City...

REMARK: In the Spring, God laughs,  
And it's ALWAYS Spring SOMEWHERE...

**We are CRUCIBLE;**

EARTH is CRUCIBLE.

God says:  
"in Perverse Rebellion  
against ME,

You are DESTROYING  
my BEST WORK:

YOURSELVES!!!!!"

**THE GATEWOOD**

the Gatewood  
is a place where  
Wanderers  
and  
Desperados

Turn in  
their beat-up Suitcases,  
their dusty Road Shoes

... for better or for worse ...

And start collecting  
Plastic Bags  
and  
Thrift Shop Bric-a-Brac

**SEATTLE:  
"INVISIBLE" STREET WOMAN**

People of Seattle  
you don't necessarily  
know who we are;

We are *NOT* all  
unkempt, toothless ladies  
carrying shopping bags;  
We are not *ALL*  
mind-loss women  
of indeterminate age  
conversing with "unseen companions"/  
(Tho' we would *ALL*, wouldn't we, prefer a companion... )  
AND, these, *TOO*, are human beings...

We *MIGHT* be  
the attractive, fashionably dressed, bright-eyed  
thirtyish female.  
Deep in a sense of helplessness,  
Living in a man-made world  
that has engulfed, *OVERWHELMED* her  
in injustice  
... so forgive her, please, for forgetting how to "make  
sense..."

We *MAY* be a  
thin, statuesque Black lady, "pushing" 60,  
attired in a "business suit"  
(complete with flawless hose and black pumps)  
looking like your fourth grade teacher...  
(Perhaps she was... )

We *COULD* be  
the kindly-looking, pastel-hued  
grandmotherly woman  
(she *IS* somebody's grandmother, you know...)  
a worried look on her face,  
coughing from long hours spent on drafty city buses  
because she *MUST* vacate her shelter  
at 7:30 *promptly* every morning,  
not to return til 5:30 every evening...  
(she is searching for her son... )

We *ARE* people who  
shop in your stores,  
pass pleasantries with you, daily,  
enrich the texture of your city.

We "keep up *APPEARANCES*,"  
tho' our lives  
have lost the *COHERENCE*  
the *COHESION*  
you take for granted in your *OWN*

We do the *BEST* we can  
and deserve your respect  
which we *EARN*,  
every *TIME*  
we *SMILE*.

**SOMETHING ELSE**

TO BE IN NEED, *FORTHRIGHTLY*, on EARTH, *WILL FURTHER*: patience!!!



## A U-District Story

Once upon a time, I didn't get along with my parents, so I left home and came on the Ave. Then I got pregnant.

I was homeless on the Ave. until I was about 4 months' pregnant. It was hard to get my welfare set up, and hard to live too.

When I was 4 months' pregnant, I met a guy who became my boyfriend, and moved in with him. It

was hard to live then, too, because we were both in a tiny room and had to share the kitchens and bathrooms.

While we lived there I had re-enrolled in high school while I waited for my baby. I had to quit for three months when I had the baby because I had to wait to get into the daycare there.

Then I went back to school, and

we moved into our apartment on Capitol Hill where I live now, and graduated with my GED, in my class of 1994, and I'm going to Seattle Central Community College in the fall with a scholarship from University District Youth Center (UDYC).

Some of the services and people that helped me when I was on the street were the people at UDYC who helped me get a public health nurse and get on welfare. They also

helped me get back into high school.

UDYC was also a place to get some food and get out of the rain and the cold. I think there should still be more services on the Ave., like getting more volunteers at the shelters so more people could stay there and so they wouldn't get shut down all the time. The Tuesday night shelter just got closed down, so now no one has a place to go on that night.

—name withheld

## Stop The Commons

### SHARE Goodwill Gathering: Sept. 21-25

Preparations for the 5th annual SHARE Goodwill Gathering are presently underway.

The gathering, which will be held at Cascade Park September 21st through the 25th, will feature good food, good music, and good information for and about the homeless, and great fun for all.

Just as the first Goodwill Gathering came about as a result of SHARE's effort to provide a safe haven from police harassment and displacement of the homeless while Seattle hosted the first world-class games of the same name, all subsequent gatherings have been built around a specific theme dealing with the problem of homelessness.

This year is no different. The homeless problem is still with us and growing.

Thus it is, that with the projected Seattle Commons development now in its early planning stages, SHARE joins with others in their concern about the possible dislocation of

business, big and small, the loss of low-cost housing, and the harassment and displacement of homeless presently in the Commons Area, as was the case recently in Beacon Hill.

SHARE has been steadfast in its advocacy for the homeless. It now currently manages 7 shelters and 1 storage facility. It is this experience and credibility that SHARE brings to any negotiating table to ensure that the development of the Seattle Commons does not leave our weakest segment of society out in the cold.

As you can see, SHARE has its work cut out, so, we again invite you to our Goodwill Gathering, so you may SHARE of yourself.

Remember, it's September 21-25, at Cascade Park. If you would like to help SHARE defray the cost of food, music, etc., or if you simply want more information about the Gathering, call the SHARE office at 448-7889.

### GONE BAD, CONT. FROM PAGE 4

sible for the renovation and maintenance of their own property. While there are certain rehabilitation programs, it's all HUD money, so it doesn't make sense for them to apply for their own funding."

Paskin described the hoops LIHI would normally need to negotiate for funding. "We have certain funds available based on the Housing Levy of 1987," said Paskin, "but normal procedure is that people apply based on our funding cycles. Funding development for housing has to go through the submission process." The next cycle is in October.

"If the housing wasn't previously subsidized," said Paskin, "or is in a geographically prohibited area, we may have our hands tied." Paskin was unable to say whether this case merited special consideration.

As things are now, LIHI has several options. They and Homestead could attempt to raise the money themselves, or they could simply not develop the damaged half of the duplex.

In a worst case scenario, the properties would revert back to HUD. The best solution, of course, would be for Richardson, or his superiors, to grease whatever wheels need oiling to make renovation money available in time for winter.

We all love a happy ending, and this fact is hardly lost on the media. And the story of everyone pulling together after the Jungle to at least make *something* right was irresistible. In an odd way, the media made it happen.

"We did in five days what usually takes five months. The media really drove this," said Agrellas. "We had media actually bringing their cameras into our meetings. Everyone wanted to see something good come out of this."

Yet, in the tradition of never letting facts get in the way of a good story, the news dramatically overplayed the City's role in creating this housing. The media script needed the City to make things right, whether they actually did or not.

—Timothy Harris

**Thanks to our Supporters! We couldn't have done it without you.**

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**(206) 723-0767**

**A Big Thank You to our early subscribers: Alan Painter, Linda Weedman, Susan Boyd, Sylvia McGee, Broadview Community United Church of Christ, Youth Care, John Reese, Marilyn Bode, and Cindy Cothorn.**

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Corps**

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Human Services Program.  
a work training program for  
homeless adults**



# ENDORSERS

## Welcome to Real Change! Best wishes from the Fremont Public Association

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in your work to  
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## Congratulations and Best Wishes

*on your first issue!*

From the  
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and  
**Downtown Food Bank**



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## The Atlantic Street Center

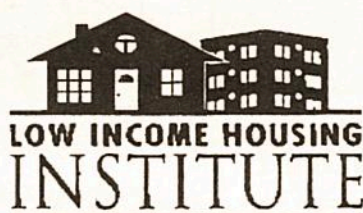
is improving the quality of life for children,  
youth and families in Seattle. As another  
agency striving to do the same, we extend  
our congratulations to

*Real Change*

on your first issue and we wish you much  
success as you sell your newspaper to raise  
funds for  
the homeless!

If you're in need of counseling services or  
supportive assistance, give us a call at 329-2050.  
We are located at 2103 So. Atlantic Street,  
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Low Income Housing Institute (LIHI)  
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(206) 727-0355

**WARM WELCOME TO THE VOICE  
OF  
REAL CHANGE**

**Congressman  
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Paid for by Friends for Jim McDermott,  
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## Homeless Initiatives Pilot Project ...for a "Real Change"

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- YWCA of Seattle-King County, Employment Services
- Employment Security, Homeless Employment Project (HEP)
- City of Seattle, Conservation Corps
- Common Meals Food Service Training

A project of the Seattle-King County Private Industry Council  
For more information, please call (206) 448-0474



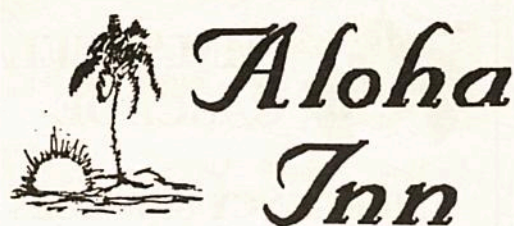
*The Board and Staff of  
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**Real Change**

Health Care for the Homeless of Seattle-King County  
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## ENDORSERS



P.O. BOX 2548, SEATTLE, WASHINGTON 98111

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A program of the Archdiocesan Housing Authority of Catholic  
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### The Seattle Association for the Jewish Disabled Welcomes Real Change

The SAJD provides services for adults with disabilities living on the streets.

For more information about the SAJD's Homeless Outreach program, call Bill Drummond at 461-3240.

### Community Action Network



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**Providing space and resources  
for organizations  
and individuals working for  
social change**



### The Downtown Emergency Service Center Welcomes Real Change!

**Congratulations on  
your first issue**



Congratulations on your inaugural publication  
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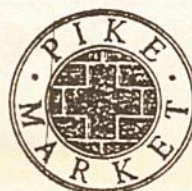
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We need volunteers to help end the problem of homelessness in the Seattle area. Homeless and formerly homeless input is greatly needed for this problem.

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## The Archdiocesan Housing Authority Wishes Real Change The Best of Success.

### University Street Ministries

is an interfaith outreach to street youth living in the University District of Seattle. USM volunteers provide for basic needs of street youth: food, referrals, and support. Volunteers and contributions needed. Call 522-4366. Or please send donations to 4515 16th Ave. NE, 98105

We Welcome a  
Voice for the Homeless.  
May God Bless Your Endeavors.

**Matt Talbot  
New Hope Recovery Fellowship  
119 Yale N.  
343-0948**

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providing affordable housing for  
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1432 Minor Ave.,  
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# ENDORSERS

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We welcome this much  
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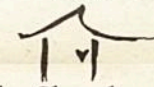
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State Representative  
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**Black Dollar Days Task Force**  
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Working together for  
community empowerment  
323-0534.



**Operation  
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# REAL CHANGE TAKES MORE THAN



PHOTO BY GURRY HODDERSON

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