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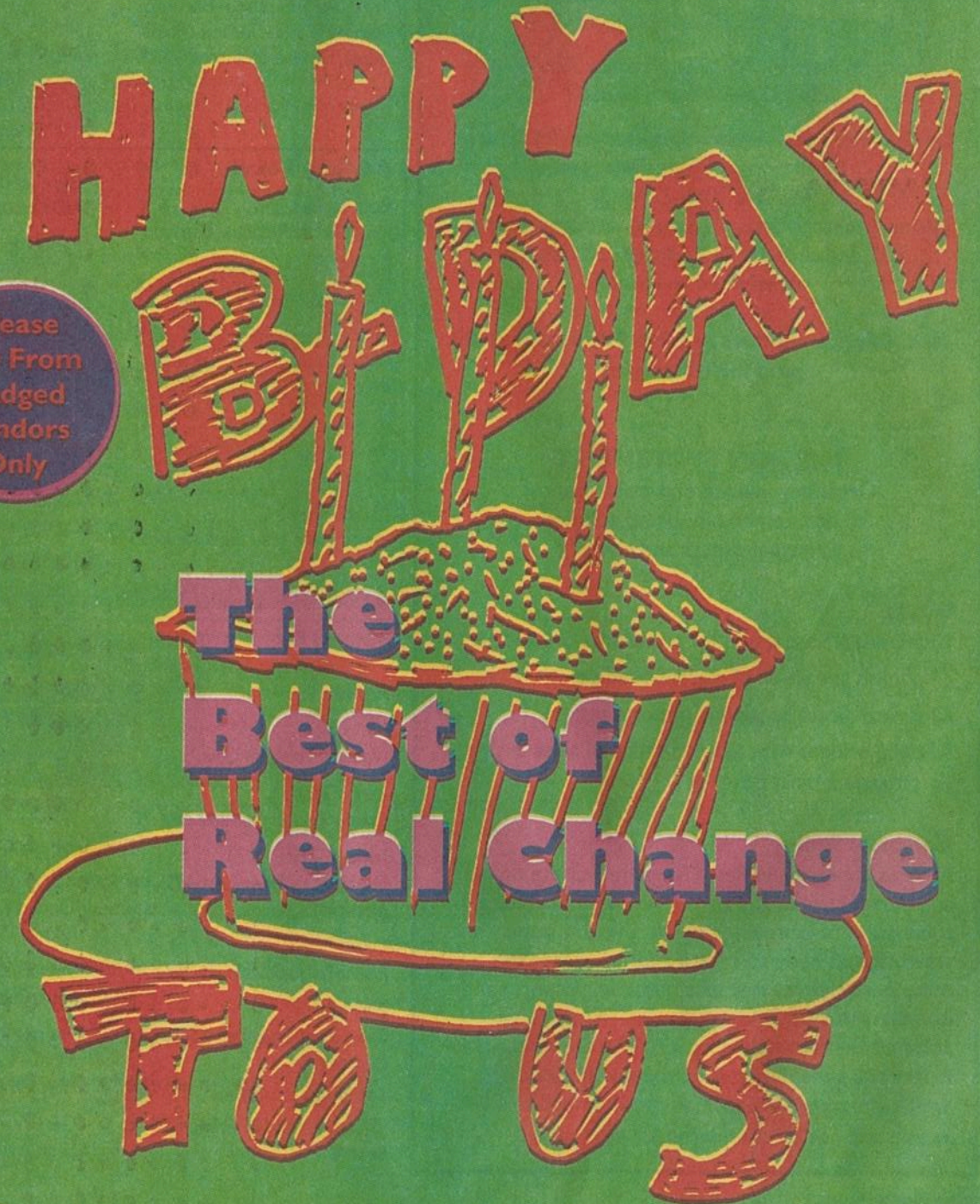
Real CHANGE

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Puget Sound's Homeless Newspaper

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Real CHANGE

is a Washington State
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Real Change is published the first and fifteenth 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.

Tacoma Office: 1417 S. G St., Tacoma, WA 98405, (253) 572-4247 or 572-6582

On the Web at <http://www.speakeasy.org/realchange>

Email rchange@speakeasy.org

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Annual subscriptions (24 Issues) are available for \$35, and support *Real Change*. All material copyrighted to author.

Real Change vendors receive 70¢ of the \$1.00 paid for this paper.

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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1.) Vendors must be sober while they represent Real Change to the public. Drug or alcohol use while selling the paper is not allowed.

2.) Vendors must wear their Real Change Badge in a clearly visible manner while they sell the paper.

3.) Abusive language or threatening behavior of any form is not acceptable. You represent Real Change, and reflect upon all of us while you sell the paper.

4.) The Real Change Badge, and the papers you buy, cannot be loaned or given to another vendor.

5.) Do not fight other vendors or panhandlers over turf. Either agree to share space, or find somewhere else to go.

Any of these actions will result in an immediate two week suspension as a vendor. Repeated suspensions will result in permanent termination of all rights to sell Real Change or be involved as a member.

Suspensions and terminations by staff may be appealed to elected vendor representatives, but are in effect until overturned.

Don't be fooled!
The only legitimate use of the Real Change Badge is to sell the Real Change newspaper. Vendors may not solicit funds or sell free papers, such as The Stranger or the Employment Paper, using this Badge. If you see this occur, please call 441-3247 with the badge number.

MAILBAG

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To the Editor:

Thanks for printing the great column by Anitra Freeman in your September issue. She describes her experiences after Fred Hyde gave her a call and hooked her up with a ride to the apple orchards in Mattawa to march with the workers there who were demonstrating to support their demands for higher wages, better working conditions, and affiliation with the United Farm Workers.

I was with the same delegation, organized by Freedom Socialist Party and Radical Women. We're glad Anitra appreciated the sun screen, the food, and the hat we provided. She did a first-rate job of describing the feeling of the day as the diverse group or supporters from all over the state marched and sang in solidarity with the Mattawa workers. She gives a graphic description of the conditions these Mexicano workers face every day when she details the lack of a central sewage system.

Anitra and all your readers could help even more. On Labor Day, when 100 workers struck the Auvil Fruit Company to protest workers being disciplined for bruising apples and for

Vendor of the Month



Michelle Childress, Tacoma Real Change

From California and most recently Las Vegas, Michelle lived with family in Seattle, but that didn't work out. She came to Tacoma to stand on her own, but didn't have a place to stay. She stayed in shelters and worked, but it wasn't paying because she didn't have much education. She worked for a temp agency, but it was hard taking the bus out to the docks at the Port of Tacoma.

"Maurice Swift introduced me to *Real Change*, and by selling it I've kept myself healthy and properly fed with a place to live. Now I've enrolled in school to become an LPN. I want to take care of myself, the way I'd like. I spent my life running, now I see I have a future. I'm glad *Real Change* is here to help me get myself together."

As vendor of the month, Michelle wins \$25 in cash. Congratulations.

having their bonuses withheld until the end of the season, they faced twenty-four police cars from two counties and the Washington State Patrol, who descended on the strikers' picket line with *guns drawn* to escort scabs into the fields and to scare the workers out of unionizing.

Call the police agencies and tell them to knock it off: Grant County Sheriff: (509) 754-2011; Kittitas County Sheriff: (509) 962-7525; Washington State Highway Patrol: (360) 753-6540.

Janet Sutherland,
Seattle

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Still No Apologies

Real CHANGE \$5

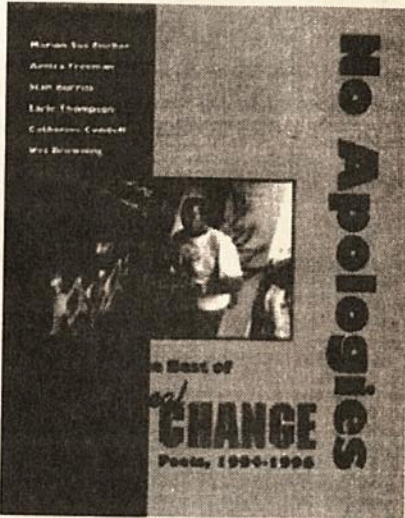
Seattle's homeless newspaper has released its first poetry anthology, entitled "No Apologies, Best of Real Change Poets 1994-1996."

The 36-page chapbook features the work of six homeless and formerly homeless poets who have been regular contributors to the paper.

"I've never claimed to be an expert on modern poetry, but this is the Real Thing with a capital RT. It's not grad students sympathizing with (or slumming among) down-and-outers, it's down-and-outers talking for themselves, with pride, anger, humor, wistfulness, nostalgia, and not a speck of malaise."

Clark Humphrey, *The Stranger*

Proceeds from the sales of "No Apologies" benefit Real Change. The chapbook is available through Real Change for \$5.00. Stop by our Belltown office or mail us a check at 2129 2nd Ave., Seattle, WA 98121. Also available at: Elliot Bay, Left Bank, Fremont Pl. Books, The Globe Cafe, Queen Anne Ave. Books, Speakeasy Cafe, Bailey Coy Books, Red & Black Books, Vandewater Books, and the Penny University.



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- Civic Organizations

Help Us to Destroy the Myths

A joint project of Real Change and the Homeless Women's Network. \$25 honorarium and one week's notice requested. Call 441-3247 for more information.

The Vision Continues

RC is Three Years Old and Growing Fast

With this issue, *Real Change* celebrates three years of being a voice for the very poor. It hasn't been an easy road, but we're here to stay and very proud of what we've done. To celebrate, we are reprinting some of our best material ever. We hope you enjoy it.

We also have another thing to celebrate: last month, representatives from thirty-one newspapers met in Seattle to found the North American Street Newspaper Association (NASNA), an organization dedicated to creating an effective poor people's press and supporting self-help and anti-poverty activism.

The conference was hosted by *Real Change* and the National Coalition for the Homeless. *Real Change* Director Timothy Harris was elected to Chair the new organization.

NASNA will support North America's growing anti-poverty movement by offering technical assistance to street newspapers, many of which, like *Real Change*, are activist papers that provide self-help opportunities to the poor and homeless. The organization will also promote new start-ups in other cities. Our goal is to have a street newspaper in every major city in North America by the year 2000.

During the conference's keynote speech, Seattle activist and author Walt Crowley called the conference "historic," and a step forward for social justice and the

independent media. He noted that the challenge of the streetpaper movement is to "bridge the gap" to create understanding between those who are poor and those who are not.

As the articles in this issue illustrate, this has always been the core vision of our publication: to create understanding and support activism for social change.

As always, we need your help to make the vision work. *Real Change* and its Homeless Empowerment Project have a very ambitious agenda over the next year.

We will continue to improve the quality of our publication. While we are one of the best streetpapers in North America, we think we can still be a lot better. We're looking to do more hard local news and to feature more writing that comes directly from the poor.

Our Homeless Empowerment Project, which encompasses the Homeless Speakers Bureau, StreetWrites, and the Street Life Art Gallery, is creating

direct empowerment among the poor and homeless. Each of these projects will grow over the next year.

And, certainly not least of all, we are providing leadership to a growing North American movement of projects much like our own. While this aspect of *Real Change* is invisible at the local level, it may be our most important work.

Without the moral and financial support of our readers, *Real Change* could never have accomplished any of this. We thank you for the last three years, and hope you will continue to support *Real Change* by every means you are able.

North American Street Newspaper Association Mission Statement (Adopted 9/13/97, at the Seattle conference.)

The mission of the North American Street Newspaper Association (NASNA) is to support a street newspaper movement that creates and upholds journalistic and ethical standards while promoting self-help and empowerment among people living in poverty.

Goals:

- 1.) Improve the quality and stability of existing papers by creating a mutually supportive network to share resources and skills.
- 2.) Support the development of street newspapers by offering technical assistance, with a variety of models.
- 3.) Build public awareness of the streetpaper movement and its member publications.
- 4.) Promote, support, and build a more unified movement to combat poverty in North America through free speech.
- 5.) Organize an annual conference to offer skills workshops, provide networking opportunities, and create strategies for the growth of the streetpaper movement.

NASNA recognizes that without the work of the vendors who sell our papers, many of our papers would not exist. We support fair and equitable treatment for all streetpaper vendors.

"NASNA's goal is to have a street newspaper in every major city in North America by the year 2000."

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Strength in Unity

Street Newspaper Movement Must Not Be Its Own Enemy

The following is the text of Real Change Director Timothy Harris' speech at the founding conference of the North American Street Newspaper Association, held in Seattle on Sept. 11-14, 1997.

I'm supposed to talk about visions of the streetpaper movement here, and I'm going to do that, but I'd also like to talk about divisions within the streetpaper movement. I'd like to give some of these divisions a name, and talk about whether they are healthy or hurtful to our movement as a whole.

Our movement was first noticed in 1989, when *Street News* began publication in New York City. During that time, I was living in Boston, editing *Street Magazine* (you can see that already the proliferation of publications with the word Street in their name was beginning to be a problem). Our *Street* was an alternative newspaper with an irregular publication schedule and a barebones budget. By that point we had started giving it to homeless people to sell for a dollar.

Street News, founded by rock musician Hutchinson Persons, was then getting lots and lots of major national media as an innovative new way to help the homeless.

We in Boston were not impressed. It was a rag, full of filler and right-wing rants about individual responsibility. Persons actually had new staffers read *Atlas Shrugged*, the popular book by right-wing-libertarian philosopher Ayn Rand. *Atlas Shrugged* was about how liberals and socialists were undermining the strength of our nation; a nation built by heroic visionary capitalists who were not ashamed of their greed.

To make matters worse, Persons and his business partner, Wendy Coltun, a ballerina, were paying themselves about \$45,000 each as start-up salaries, which, in 1989, struck us as excessive to say the least.

My friend Jon and I had just been evicted from a rathole in Alston-Brighton for non-payment of rent, and had moved to better circumstances, but were living on a

diet of potatoes, shoplifted cheese, food bank groceries, and the occasional charity items from Carolyn Frimpter, who married me a few years later despite all evidence of chronic financial instability.

Persons was then talking about franchising *Street News* to other cities, including Boston, and we wrote an editorial declaring war on the invaders.

We couldn't understand why the media was all over *Street News* and couldn't care less about us. In hindsight, the reasons were simple. Our paper was subversive; theirs supported, and was supported by, corporate values. Their circulation was huge. They claimed a million a month in their first year. We were printing 10 and 15 thousand at a time. Theirs put business first and social activism at a very distant second. I, on the other hand, was once told by a loan officer that he liked our *Street Magazine*, but would not give us any money because he had, in his own words, "never met anyone less interested in making a profit."

In any case, *Street News*, which I am happy to say no longer bears any resemblance to the original, was undeniably the catalyst for a movement. In 1991 and '92, several new projects started, all, so far as I know, without talking to each other. *Street Sheet* started in San Francisco. *StreetWise* started in Chicago. *Spare Change* began in Boston, and the *Big Issue* started in London.

Each of these took the basic notion pioneered by *Street News* and modified it to their own ends. Some were more grassroots and activist, and others more social servicey and entrepreneurial. Our present streetpaper movement, of well over 100 papers around the world, has in just 5 years grown from these seeds. And, inevitably this movement has retained the tension, and the antagonism, between entrepreneurialism and activism that was present between papers like *Street News* and *Street Magazine* in 1989.

Fortunately, the North American newspaper movement has few papers that could be considered outright exploitative of

the poor, and I don't mind saying who they are, or were: *The Outrider* and *Outreach Connection* in Toronto were disasters. They were full of rightwing politics, and often contemptuous of the poor and homeless. They have both ceased publication but have given street newspapers a bad name that will haunt any effort in Toronto for years to come. The *Grapevine* in Phoenix, not to be confused with the *Grapevine* in Cleveland, has also folded. The Phoenix paper was another profit-oriented venture that was also full of right-wing wacko rants, but with a weird Masonic twist.

In my opinion, these papers, which promote ideologies that are openly hostile to the poor and serve only the interests of their owners, do not belong in our movement.

With these unfortunate examples more or less out of the way, we are left with a tension between papers with a liberal entrepreneurial vision and papers who have a more radical, grassroots activist vision. I firmly believe there is room in our movement for both of these visions, and that we can learn from each other. Furthermore, I think there is much more to be lost than gained from fighting over who has the purest vision, or pointing fingers at which of us is the biggest sellout.

The driving idea behind the liberal entrepreneurial vision is that job creation is primary, and that streetpapers should strive for large circulations to increase employment opportunities. These papers also see themselves as a vehicle for social service delivery, like job training, housing search, and drug and alcohol treatment. While this may be more of a top down vision than some of us are comfortable with, and less of an activist vision than some of us would like to see, they are a positive force for the poor and should be supported.

I only get really annoyed when the statement is made, and this has actually been said, that entrepreneurial street newspapers will end homelessness by creating employment for the poor. This is,

of course, self-congratulatory crap, and is a great example of what is wrong with liberalism: it elevates what is essentially an individual solution to being the answer to a structural problem. Individual hard work is not, and never will be, the answer to institutionalized inequality.

There are, on the other hand, numerous activist streetpapers who see their role as a voice of the poor as being their primary mission. These papers are interested in being "of" the poor rather than "for" the poor. They are, at their cores, activist projects that are in this to create social change. These papers tend to have smaller circulations than the more entrepreneurial papers. They tend to have less staff, less money, less equipment, and often, less visibility in the movement. Yet, in my opinion, they are the papers that do and should define our movement.

I believe that these different types of papers should not be seen as being at opposite poles, one labeled "corporate" and the other "radical." I think we are all, at bottom, about the same thing, trying to create social change while we make an immediate difference in the lives of individual people that sell our papers. We have differences of opinion about the most

effective way to do that. We are allies who sometimes disagree about tactics.

There is a phrase I really like that is often used to describe what is wrong with the sectarian left: "The Narcissism of Insignificant Differences." That is when we take the relatively small differences that divide us and blow them up into huge barriers that keep us from talking. This, I believe, is always destructive. We need to be able to have our differences without villainizing each other.

My own preference is for a grassroots streetpaper movement, where our newspapers promote activism, build leadership from among the poor, and help create the institutional basis for a broader poor people's movement. At the same time, we need to reach people. We do need to be concerned with readability. We do need to

"If we can learn from each other, and find strength in our differences, we are on the brink of creating a movement capable of changing history."

be concerned with circulation, and we do need to be effective as small businesses.

I think the streetpaper movement is, at most, in its early adolescence, and that we have much growth and maturing ahead of us before we achieve our political potential. I see ourselves as being an increasingly important component of a broader poor people's movement. We are an important tool for nurturing that movement into its historic role.

We do not need to waste our energy at this point in trashing each other over our differences. We are not going to change anyone's mind by disrespecting them. I think there is a human tendency to define ourselves by what we are not, and to hold the other at arms length. It is more creative, and useful, I think, to define ourselves by what we are, and by what we hope to become. This is all we need to be concerned with.

In conclusion, our enemies are those who exploit and denigrate the poor, and are not those who create opportunity for self-help and educate the public to be a part of the solution. We can, and if we are to build a strong movement, must, *respectfully* disagree over tactics without turning our allies into our enemies.

I think that if we can learn from each other, and find strength in our differences, we are on the brink of creating a movement capable of changing history. I'm proud to be a part of that movement and proud to be here in this room with all of you. Thank you. ☐



VISIONS OF THE STREETPAPER MOVEMENT PANEL: (LEFT TO RIGHT) ERIC CIMON (JOURNAL L'ITINERAIRE, MONTREAL), TIMOTHY HARRIS (REAL CHANGE), INDIO (STREET NEWS, NEW YORK), JUDD LOFCHIE (STREETWISE, CHICAGO), DONALD WHITEHEAD (STREET VIBES, CINCINNATI), LINDA LARSON (SPARE CHANGE, BOSTON).
PHOTO BY J. HEATH, STREET VIBES

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

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?

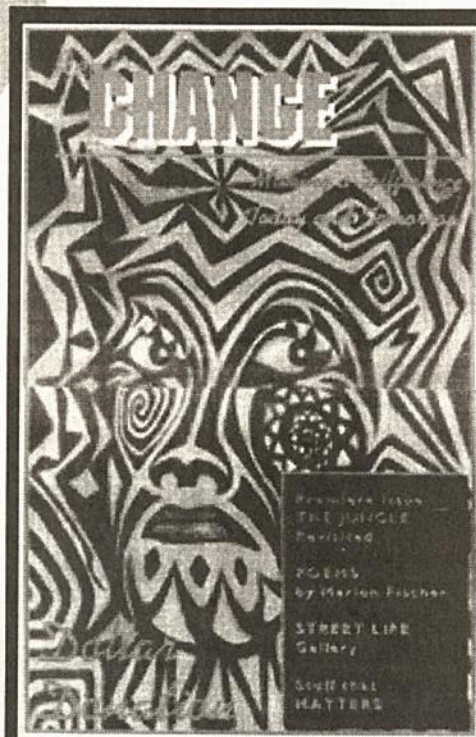
One answer is that we can do nothing and hope the homeless will magically disappear. We've tried that. We already know that when it comes to homelessness, doing nothing doesn't work.

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



AUGUST, 1994

everyone's ideas and capabilities, and when 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 provide more of the services that 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 (dedicated to 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.

—By Nancy Amidei. 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.

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from *The Healing of America*

All proceeds received by Ms. Williamson will be donated to local volunteer organizations through the Points of Light Foundation.

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Down to Skin

My Life as a Stripper and Why I Got Out

BY RAINEE MAURER,
VENDOR # 1251

I am a smart, attractive woman with a body good enough to make a lot of money as a stripper (topless or nude dancer). For six years, off and on, I danced to support myself, and quickly became addicted to the lifestyle that comes with making \$200 to \$400 average per night.

I had been married for 3 1/2 years when I "decided" to try dancing. My husband traveled for a living, so I started when he was on a 2-week road trip. My first night, wearing a bikini and not having to strip more than twice in an 8 hour shift, I made \$268.00. I was hooked.

My husband and I had been living beyond our means, and although I had a college degree, my income up to that point had been about that much per week. By the time my husband came home from his 3 week road trip, I had saved over \$2000. Believe me, that affected his decision to let me keep dancing. At first, it was great and we got caught up on our bills. Then we created more bills until I had no choice but to continue to dance in order to pay them.

Self-Hatred

My life changed drastically. I didn't tell friends and family what I was doing because I was so ashamed. I began to feel worse and worse about myself. The more I was told how beautiful I was, the uglier I felt. I found flaws physically. Things that never bothered me before became important. My thighs were heavy, I should consider liposuction.

I quit realizing my wonderful personality traits which make me a beautiful person (kindness, generosity, sensitivity) and thought that if my body wasn't perfect what good was I? I became shallow and superficial. I quit laughing, lost my wonderful sense of humor which is so much a part of ME.

After 3 1/2 years clean, I began to smoke marijuana heavily again. It helped me escape those negative feelings I had about myself which were a direct result of dancing, being treated as an object and a piece of meat. Also, my husband, who got real dependent on the money I was making, put me down a lot for my weaknesses, like smoking pot and compromising myself for money.

I just couldn't be good enough to please him any more. Life was no longer simple. Dancing made me hate men, and I resented my husband for constantly spending so much that I was trapped into the job.

I began going to Las Vegas for 2 to 3 weeks at a time because the dancing there was even more lucrative. We lied to our friends and families about the real reason for my travels.

A Rotten Job

The nude dancing industry in Washington State is exploitative to women in many ways. First of all, while it is rumored that a girl can make \$500-600 a night, as a six-year veteran dancer, let me tell you why these numbers are inflated.

First of all, the clubs charge the dancers to work. For the De ja vu chain, it's \$80 to \$120 per night just to walk in through the door and rent floor space in their club. As a dancer, you are an independent contractor, with an \$80 license purchased from

"A girl will spend half her shift or more making the money to pay the house. If she isn't really pretty, really nasty, and a born hustler, she won't make much in this business."

the State of Washington. The house rent is a set fee and differs from house to house.

The dancer at these clubs also has to pay \$2 for every couch dance they perform, and the customer is charged \$12 or \$22 for a couch dance. Obviously, the nastier and more provocative the dance, the more



dances in a row she will entice the customer into buying.

The dancer is under a lot of pressure to just make back the house fee, let alone money to take home at the end of her shift. Laws governing the clubs and activities not allowed during the dance (such as touching, fondling, and exposing oneself) are broken about as regularly as the 55 mph speed limit.

A girl will spend half her shift or more making the money to pay the house. If she isn't really pretty, really nasty, and a born hustler, she won't make much in this business.

As a dancer, I was under enormous stress and pressure, scrambling to make money and knowing the vice cops are always in the clubs waiting to bust the girls for the illegal dances that clubs perpetuate.

When vice cops make arrests and write tickets, the target is the individual dancer, not the clubs. All the blame for the corruption in the business is on the dancer, not the industry as a whole.

Struggling Up

On one of my trips to LA, I met a guy who would be a catalyst for me to change my life. We fell in love and we're still together. I left my husband and gradually phased out of dancing.

My new friend said, "I can't believe how low your self-esteem is, you are a wonderful person." By this time, I had told my parents my life was off-track, that I was filing for divorce, and also that I was earning big money in Vegas as a topless dancer. Also, by this time my drug use had escalated to harder drugs, and I was miserable.

My 89 year old grandfather came to the rescue. He sent my boyfriend and I plane tickets to move away from Vegas and come to Spokane, WA to live with him. He knew of my problems, but as retired minister, he felt the Lord could help me get my life back on track.

My boyfriend and I lived in Grandpa's home for 9 months, got clean, went to church, studied the Bible. We didn't save any money, though, because we were caretakers for my grandpa's house and exchanged caring for him and his home for room and board.

We had a few slips with the drugs, and we weren't miraculously healed by the

October

Lord, but our lives were 100 times better and I didn't have any desire to return to the dancing lifestyle.

Grandpa got sick and was forced to move from his house. Overnight my boyfriend and I found ourselves homeless. My family judged us very harshly because of the couple of times we slipped with the drugs, we had been honest about it and thought we'd be forgiven by their good 'Christian' attitudes.

Grandpa forgave us, however, he couldn't help us anymore because his daughter and son-in-law never liked us or wanted our success, they simply wanted us to disappear. They have complete power of attorney and control over my grandpa's wishes and affairs. After all, he's real old.

I call them judgmental, self-righteous, condescending, hypocritical "Christians." Their lives are ruled by fear and not love (opposite of Grandpa). Nonetheless, I learned much from living with that wonderful man. I felt good about myself and my accomplishments.

We moved to Seattle and began to sell the "Real Change Homeless Newspaper." We don't make a lot of money, but we survive, often day to day. Once you're homeless, it's so hard to get a real job, you don't have a permanent address or phone number. I don't have anything I can put down on a resume since 1989.

Believe me, I still look good enough to be dancer again. I could do it, and get us into an apartment within a week!

The temptation is there, constantly, as we struggle day to day to earn our motel rent for that night. I haven't danced for over

2 years now, and I am not willing to give up all that I've gained. I know I couldn't just do it for a month to get financially "caught up." Caught up is what I would be, in that whole vicious hellish cycle again.

I thank God for the "Real Change Paper," and I can smile at myself in the mirror. ☺

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Hopping Freights

A Practical Guide for the Uncommon Adventurer

BY SALLY JOHNSON

You can catch a train in the yards down below Dravus Street and 15th NW. To get in a box car, run alongside the train, grab hold of the latch on the door, throw your leg up, and when your foot hits, roll toward the center of the car.

Start out with a car just sitting in the yards and get the feel of it. The next step is to play with the slow moving trains that run through town under the viaduct real late at night.

The latch is about a foot long, grab it tight with both hands. You are pulling up with both arms when you throw that foot up. When you're running next to a train the box car floor is about shoulder height. It takes some momentum to throw your foot up that high.

Don't try to hop on a train with a pack on your back, toss your pack in first, then throw yourself in.

You can jump off a slow moving train if you hit the ground running. Myself, I prefer waiting for the train to stop.

The Boot to the Head Factor

If there seem to be trains passing through, look for a tunnel or curves where they'd have to slow down and grab any train you can. You're better off going back than waiting, not knowing how long it will be till one comes going the direction you were planning on going. It's a bird in the hand kind of thing.

If at all possible catch the train from the yards. That way you avoid the risk of someone being in the car already and applying a boot to your head when you try to get in.

Stay away from the coupling where the cars hook together. Never climb over the coupling.

If a train is sitting in the yards don't crawl under it rather than walk around. Instead, find a car with both doors open and hop up into the car and out the other side.

Look for a box car with both the doors open and wedge something in the doorway to keep the door from slamming shut. If you are in a box car and the door/doors slam shut, you can tap and yoo-hoo your heart out, but the most likely scenario is that your boxcar will end up sidetracked somewhere with a hundred other box cars and will sit there for months before they pick it back up.

Kids, Don't Try This at Home

Freight hopping is not an exact science. You don't always get to where you thought you were going and you might end up in Nevada instead of

California or worse. Find someone who knows what they're doing.

When I used to go, we would hop off in Vancouver, WA, and take the bus into Portland because the yard bulls in Portland would split your head open. This is not a good thing to learn the hard way.

Also the rules change, yards that were OK get tougher and yards that were bad news mellow. So, if you can, hook up with someone who is riding now and not someone who used to ride.

Learning to Count

If someone's working in the yards, and they tell you the train on track three is heading south, count the tracks from east to west. The first one is "A," the second one is "B," then one, two, three. Track number three is actually the fifth track in.

Scout out your car, wedge the door so it can't shut, and then watch the train till they hook up the engines. If the engines hook up on the south end of the train then it's going south for sure. If one engine hooks on it's the cross-town shuttle, two and you might not be going much further than Tacoma. Three engines means it's rollin' on down the line.

A train moving forward and then backing up is picking up or dropping off cars. Grab your stuff and be ready to run after the part of the train that's still going in

"You can jump off a slow moving train if you hit the ground running. Myself, I prefer waiting for the train to stop."

case they're going to leave you behind. It's not a bad idea to jump out to eyeball the situation more closely.

Runaway Trains

When a train stops it can stop for two minutes or for hours. Don't run off across a field to look for water up behind someone's house or wander off to the bushes to pee. Stay right near the train. It can take off again very quickly.

If the train stops and soldiers go all through it and put everybody out, you're too near some secret military what-not.

If you can, seek out the friendliest face and ask them which direction and how far to town. Let them know you don't give a rat's ass about whatever's out there and you want to go home. If you don't get a friendly response, follow the tracks away from wherever the train was going.

If you sit where you can look out the door and watch, you'll have a pretty good idea how far back the last piece of civilization was in case you get into a jam.

If you ever did get left, you'd just have to pick a direction and follow the tracks. Eventually you'd find something. When you're down to your last candy bar, kill and eat Bambi.

Armed and Dangerous

If you're by yourself it's not a good idea to sleep. You could wake up to find unwanted company. Or you could wake up and find your car and a few of its friends has been dropped off somewhere, and there

will not be a big red "you are here arrow" to help you out.

When you're awake you can tell when someone is hopping on your car. If they are bad news, pull a gun. Catch them at the door, tell them let go, or die.

If they are wrong but not real bad news, do not wave the gun; simply show them you have it. Send them to the other end of the box car. Tell them very clearly to leave you alone and don't take your eyes off them.

If you go through a tunnel, it gets dark. Have a flash light, know right where it is so you can grab it without rummaging through your pack. That way, if you are holding someone at bay, you can grab that light and not lose track of them.

A Safety Tip

If you sleep on a freight get all the way to the front of the car and sleep against that wall. Never sleep with your head toward the engine and feet toward the caboose because there's some real hot rodders in some of the yards and they really slam hard into the cars they're picking up. You can crack your skull open.

Sweet Dreams

Bring a supply of water and ready

to eat food. On my first trip I only brought food to cook. Without a fire it was useless. I've got to tell the story because it's so funny (now).

Bob and Randy ate my onion like an apple. Later on I was just sitting there and Bob was sleeping. All of a sudden he sat up looking really scared and upset. Finally he told me "I dreamed I was eating my hand and it tasted just like a pork chop." Then he went back to sleep.

Valhalla

A town that you are familiar with when you drive through will look totally different from the other end of town and it's hard to tell where you are. I could always tell when we were in Stockton because we'd pass an abandoned platform with an old dilapidated sign that read Valhalla.

Later I returned to Ballard telling of how I'd seen Valhalla. [E]

Real CHANGE \$1

Hopping Freights
A Practical Guide for the Uncommon Adventurer

Welcome to My Country

- Review: A Therapist's Memoir of Madness
- Nowhere to Go
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Speaking to Stones and Other Serious Acts of Faith

Last Thanksgiving Day, as Strand Helpers fed two hundred homeless men and women at Occidental Park, five people stood in the rain and shouted at the cobblestones. I am sure that sounds familiar. We've all seen the mentally ill standing on corners and in parks, shouting epithets and haranguing whoever passes.

Wes Browning

How was this different? These people were acting together. The event they were gathered for had been planned as a rally, a demonstration that "bread is not enough," that free Thanksgiving dinners aren't enough, that what the homeless need more than meals and shelter is eradication of the causes of homelessness.

The rally was conceived by artist Rahn Porter, who arrived in Seattle only weeks earlier. He approached local homeless

activists with the idea of creating a rally around the unveiling, at a city park, of giant loaves of bread which he would fashion. The local media would be notified, flyers would be circulated, and the giant loaves of bread would attract a crowd of interested NON-homeless to hear the homeless activists speak.

Occidental Park was selected for its nearness to downtown and to homeless shelters, and because no permits would be needed as long as only a bullhorn was used.

Now let us examine how sane this "rally" idea was in the first place. Who, besides the speakers themselves, and the homeless who have little choice, would be out in Occidental Park at noon on Thanksgiving Day, with or without giant loaves of bread?

How were these giant loaves of bread going to be created and transported to Occidental Park in two weeks by an artist who had only just moved to Seattle?

How sensible and sane could these homeless activists have been to believe that these giant loaves of bread would be in place, the TV cameras would be rolling, and throngs would gather on a warm, sunny (huh?) Thanksgiving Day in SEATTLE, listening to speeches they would really rather not hear because they would rather be enjoying Thanksgiving at home, basking in the glow of their own charity, having contributed to the holiday foodbanks?

Rahn Porter himself couldn't actually make it, so not only was the art not present, there was no bullhorn. No one at all showed up for the rally except the speakers and one of their friends.

Speaking were Anitra Freeman, Madeline Lewis, and Norma Rennison, representing the Homeless Women's Network and

WHEEL; Steve Martinez, a Real Change vendor representative; and myself.

Yes. Me.

We discussed among ourselves the ludicrousness of presenting our arguments about the long-range needs of the homeless to the people in the soup line, who live it and don't need to hear it. We agreed unanimously to go ahead with the rally, although no one was actually there to be rallied.

Perhaps the only concrete beneficial outcome of the "rally" came about incidentally. One of the homeless men in the soup line was a young man who came over and asked us to pray for him. He had come from Hawaii to find work. Instead he was robbed and wound up on the streets.

We formed a circle and prayed that he would find shelter and peace, and a way to return to his family in Hawaii. Then we found a guide to show him where Lutheran Compass Center is, and pressed him to apply there the next morning.

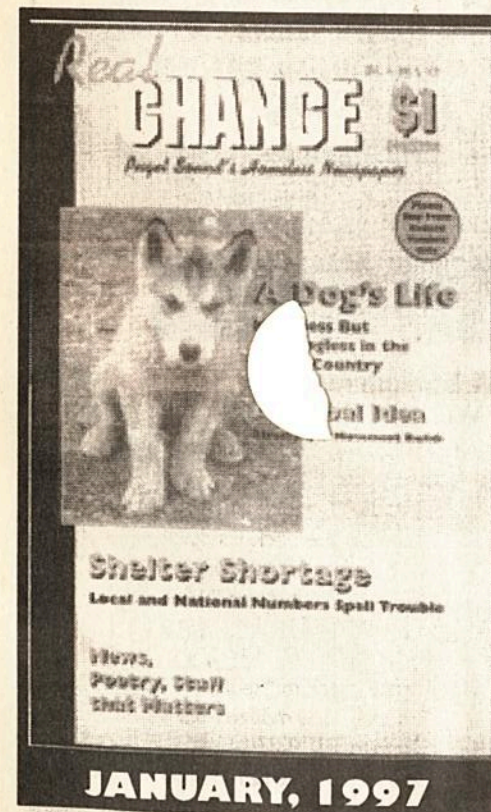
We didn't need the rally to help that man. The five of us do this sort of thing on a daily basis. If we hadn't met him there we might have met him somewhere else in our work.

So, was the rally crazy?

Absolutely not. No political movement is possible without the intangible will to make it happen. The rally served to strengthen our will, and gave us renewed hope and confidence. Nobody gave up and walked away.

As long as there are people willing to try to move cobblestones, there is hope that others will be moved. ☐

"No political movement is possible without the intangible will to make it happen. ... As long as there are people willing to try to move cobblestones, there is hope that others will be moved."



1M Documented Immigrants Lose Food Stamps

Nearly 1 million documented immigrants have been lopped off the federal food stamp rolls since the nation's welfare law was rewritten last year, and food pantries and soup kitchens say they cannot possibly make up for the welfare law's cut in food stamps - estimated at \$22 billion over five years, including \$3.7 billion for immigrants, reports Associated Press.

"The law really is harsh on most legal immigrants," said Christine Vladimiroff, a Benedictine nun who is president of Second Harvest, the nation's largest charitable emergency food provider.

By month's end, the last of the 935,000 noncitizens losing their eligibility for benefits will have received their final federal food stamps, which average \$172 a month per household.

So far, 10 states have taken steps to extend food stamp benefits to some noncitizens cut off by Washington in the law enacted a year ago. Typically, the states have offered help for children, the elderly and the disabled. Neither federal nor outside policy experts can predict how many people the state relief will benefit.

The cuts hit particularly hard in four states - California, Florida, New York and Texas - which account for three-quarters of all noncitizens on food stamps.

Of the four states, Texas alone has taken no steps to provide relief to the 168,000 immigrants there who were receiving food stamps earlier this year.

Authors of the 1996 welfare overhaul turned their attention to noncitizens while looking for ways to curb growth in such programs as food stamps, Supplemental Security Income and Medicaid. The cutbacks in noncitizens' benefits accounted for nearly half of the \$55 billion in savings envisioned over five years under that law.

Proponents of the cuts noted that immigrants must sign a pledge upon admission promising not to become public charges. Those who sponsor immigrants into the United States - often family members - must be the first recourse for needy new arrivals, they said.

But advocates for immigrants contend the cuts are unfair, both in their size and because they amount to a change in the rules mid-game for documented immi-

grants, who work and pay taxes. The working poor make up most of the immigrants on food stamps, they say.

Immigrant-rights lobbyists managed to persuade Washington to restore the Medicaid and SSI benefits to noncitizens, and they now are pressing lawmakers to revive their food stamp eligibility as well. Several proposals to restore at least some of the aid have been introduced in Congress.

Where Have All the Welfare Recipients Gone?

Families are coming off public assistance in record numbers in nearly every state, but it is still unclear where these families are landing, or what will happen should the economy turn down, reports Associated Press.

States are forcing recipients to work for benefits and look for private jobs. And dire predictions made a year ago—a million children slipping into poverty, overrun homeless shelters—have not come true.

"The debate is over," President Clinton declared last week. "We know now that welfare reform works."

New on the Net

But many others say the debate is far from over.

"The real test is whether people stay off," said Clinton's secretary of Health and Human Services, Donna Shalala. "Is it too early to tell? You bet."

Welfare reform began in earnest in the early 1990s, as states got permission to experiment. One year ago Friday, Clinton signed a sweeping bill, crafted by Republicans in Congress, into law nationwide.

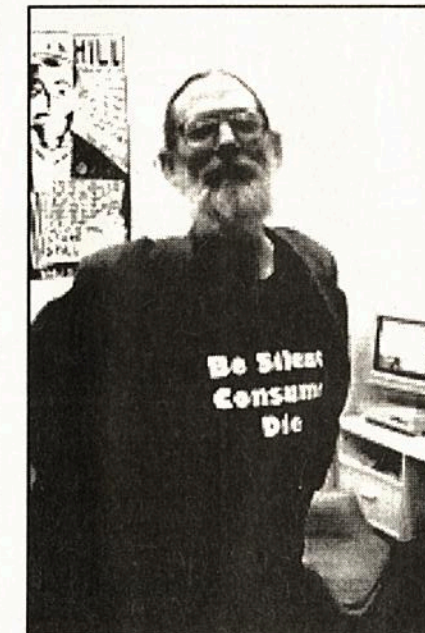
Today, a smaller slice of the nation relies on welfare than at any time since 1969. And an incredible 3.5 million people have left over the last three years, a drop of nearly 25 percent.

The numbers have never dropped so far, or continued to drop for so long.

No one can say with certainty why people are leaving. Presumably, many find work, but do they all? State officials don't know.

Continued on page 17

Shut Up and Buy Something!



When Real Change poet provocateur © Dr. Wes Browning isn't geeking it up with his writer buddies on the internet, he's buying 100% cotton consumables from his publisher of choice. It's cool, it's cotton, and it and has a pithy anti-consumerist slogan on the front and the Real Change logo on the back. It's black and comes in large or extra-large. It costs \$15. Buy it now.

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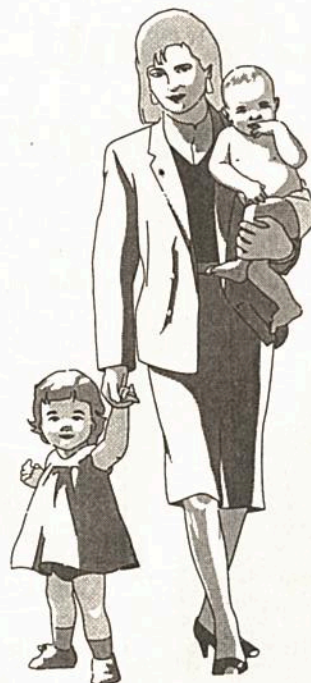
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NEW ON THE NET, CONT. FROM PAGE 15

In Idaho, fewer than half the welfare families reapplied for benefits when a new system took effect July 1. The state has no idea what happened to the rest and is studying the question.

"We're very concerned," said Bill Walker of the Department of Health and Welfare.

In Iowa, less than half those pushed off the rolls found jobs. About half had even less money than they did while on welfare.

And in Massachusetts, half those leaving welfare found jobs. Another 11 percent moved out of state. The rest either found other support, no longer have eligible children or are reapplying.

Welfare reform's toughest tests are yet to come.

No statewide time limits have kicked in yet, so massive numbers of people have not been dismissed at once.

And states have yet to feel real pressure to get people into work. By 2002, states will lose federal money if half of recipients are not working or off the rolls. This year, the target is just 25 percent.

The biggest unknown is what will happen when the economy sours. The booming economy — with its low unemployment rate — is responsible for 44 percent of the caseload decline, says Clinton's Council of Economic Advisers.

With unemployment low, companies don't have much choice of workers when they hire. Even people without much experience can find work.

Even in a strong economy, moving people off welfare is likely to get tougher. The most employable are moving into work now, leaving those with the fewest skills and deepest problems, be it drug abuse, domestic violence or lifelong dependence on aid.

Marriott, which runs one of the most successful programs to hire welfare recipients, tried and failed to recruit an entire class with deep troubles.

"We shouldn't have done that," said Janet Tully, who runs the program.

Just a handful of the more-disadvantaged remain with the company, compared with high retention rates for other recipients who have gone through, Tully said.

They just had too many problems, she said: Many were regularly moved from one

homeless shelter to another, some were fighting domestic violence, their child care arrangements kept falling through.

Now Marriott plans to include a maximum of four difficult cases for each group of 16.

Clinton last year vowed to restore benefits for immigrants cut off Supplemental Security Income and food stamps. He won on SSI, but noncitizens still will lose food stamps by Sept. 1.

Labor Secretary Eyes Gap Between Rich, Poor

Labor Secretary Alexis Herman's Labor Day message was that "the unfinished business of America's new prosperity" is to narrow the gap between rich and poor, reports Associated Press.

"These are indeed prosperous times, but still a quiet unease lurks ... that our nation will declare success before all Americans will have their chance to claim their fair share," she said.

Herman said she found during a week's nationwide tour that "workers are in better shape than in many, many years." But she also sensed worry that "America's rising tide may be casting our citizens toward two separate shores."

On one side is a "new economy, full of opportunity and challenge," she said. But on the other side, "the same tide may be stranding some Americans on the shoreline of an old economy that is quickly washing away beneath their feet," Herman said. She was referring to those displaced by downsizing, new technology and offshore production.

"On Labor Day 1997, the task before us as a nation, as a moral people ... as children of God is to make sure that the

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economy's new buoyancy lifts the lives of all Americans ... that we do not declare our work completed until America's new prosperity is shared by all," she said.

White House Predicts \$63B Surplus in 2002

The White House forecast today that the budget deal between President Clinton and Congress, and the nation's continued strong economy, will produce a \$63 billion surplus in 2002.

That's nearly twice the size of the surplus estimated earlier this week by the Congressional Budget Office.

In a mid-year review of the economy, the White House Office of Management and Budget also said the deficit for the current fiscal year, which ends Sept. 30, would be \$37 billion, the smallest deficit since 1974 and \$90 billion lower than the White House initially estimated.

The administration predicted that the surpluses would rise at least through 2007.

Clinton said earlier this month that he expected this year's deficit to be \$37 billion and the 2002 surplus to be at least \$20 billion.

The projected \$63 billion surplus in 2002 would be the first balanced budget since 1969.

All items from HandsNet, News & Blues

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We're Outta Here!

Seattle Homeless Flee to Pittsburg

Homeless people are literally leaving Seattle by the busloads. In the past two months nearly four thousand have left by Greyhound, bound mainly for East Coast cities. The departures have been coordinated. They leave daily, each bus carrying away up to fifty homeless men, women, and children.

Some pay their own fare, others have their fares paid for them, generally by national organizations dedicated to homeless causes. Chief among these is the American Homeless Union. Recently the Seattle head of the AHU, Phil M. Hand, explained the ongoing exodus this way: "Basically around December or January we all began to realize that we really weren't wanted here in Seattle. And we're not masochists, OK? I mean, we've been working hard for years at making this city a real haven for our folks, but if Seattle isn't into it, we can live with that."

Further details are sketchy. The rumors among street people (what's left of them) are, as always, incomplete and unreliable. What is certain is that the departures began near the end of January and coincided with a number of setbacks for the homeless in this city. There was the recent reclearing of the "Jungle" along I-5, and the so-called sweep of the Municipal Building encampment.

But worst of all was the resistance by local merchants to plans to expand laundry and shower facilities at a few downtown service-centers. As one Belltown alley resident put it, "I always knew no one wanted me around when I was dirty and smelled like a sewer. But when I saw they didn't want me clean and smelling like a rose, either, I really got the message! It is personal, isn't it? So right then I spent my welfare check on a ticket to Pittsburgh. I'll be gone by tomorrow."

The repercussions of this mass exodus cannot be understated. Most of Seattle's homeless-advocacy groups have already ceased to function, even though the last busload of homeless isn't expected to depart until mid-April. These groups include SHARE, WHEEL, and Operation Homestead. Several hundred social workers formerly employed by service agencies throughout the city have already been laid off.

But in addition to the expected, there have been some perhaps unexpected consequences of the sudden scarcity of homeless. For example, at City Hall, everyone from Norm Rice to Mark Sidran is complaining about the long waits for cab rides.

It seems that as many as one-third of all Seattle taxi drivers have been homeless and are now driving elsewhere. Dishes are piling up unwashed in even the best local restaurants, houses are going unpainted, and overgrown backyards are remaining so. Non-homeless residents are experiencing more muggings and burglaries than ever, now that gangs don't have easier

"I always knew no one wanted me around when I was dirty and smelled like a sewer. But when I saw they didn't want me clean and smelling like a rose, either, I really got the message! It is personal, isn't it?"

targets to victimize.

Gay-bashing and race-related violence is on the increase again as "bum-bashing" declines. Dumpsters are overflowing with recyclables throughout the city. Seattle is awash in aluminum cans, refundable bottles, repairable TV sets, and stereos.

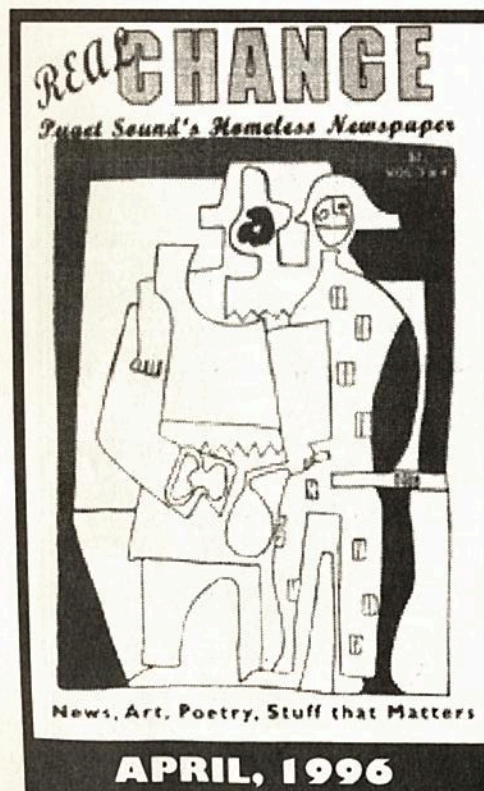
Corner rose-vendors have vanished and with them half the street musicians. And many service-industry businesses are discovering that they can't afford to pay the higher wages demanded and required by rent-paying and home-owning citizens. To help with these and other problems, the city has established special consulting hotlines. Anyone concerned may request assistance or further information at 684-8200.

Naturally, the *Real Change* homeless newspaper will not be unaffected. "Sure, we'll keep operating for a couple of months," said Timothy "Make My Day" Harris. I mean, we've got donations coming in, and we've got our subscribers and our advertisers. But let's face it. People are going to catch on."

"With no vendors and nothing to write about, what are we going to do? Well, I'll tell you what I'm gonna do! Get the hell out of here! That's what!"

Perhaps he'll head for Pittsburg.

This memorable bit of April Fool's satire by Dr. Wes Browning surprised us all when it was taken seriously by large numbers of people in April 1996.



Under the Bridge

A True Story of Accidents and Apathy

By DAVID

You ever heard of the expression "the thin blue line"? Well, the line separating a law-abiding, hardworking citizen from the catastrophe of homelessness is a lot thinner. It's as thin as a missed paycheck for some people; for me, it was a driver running a red light and hitting me square on.

The bicycle was totaled and carried off by the fire department. As for myself, I was totaled too, but not just by the accident that left me disabled — that was the first crash. I got hit many times over and was left homeless by a number of bureaucracies that are more interested in the bottom line than they are in the people they're meant to serve.

First off, I want to say something to those people who can't understand how a college graduate like myself could wind up on the streets. Becoming homeless was not what I had in mind when I left my low-paying job in Pennsylvania. I did not picture myself sleeping under the Alaskan Way Viaduct when I got off the bus with five hundred dollars in my pocket.

I came out here to work hard and earn better pay on the fishing boats. I'd never ever been homeless before March of last year — nor had I encountered it much in my rural hometown. Homelessness doesn't happen in the middle of Amish country. I'd heard the pay was better here and did what any person trying to improve his life would do. I took a chance. Is this a crime?

Not in my book. Or with anyone else I know. What is a crime is the way you get treated if you're

unfortunate enough to slip out of the American dream and fall into the American reality. I can't, in the space I have, give you the full picture of what has been the worst year of my life, so I will try and give you a glimpse of this one

year journey. And then maybe you'll understand why getting out of homelessness isn't a hop, skip and a jump for some people.

The accident left me with a herniated disc and a permanent limp. A leg that was tender from previous injuries now threatens to give out on me. I can't sit for too long without the back acting up, or walk two blocks without my leg going numb. I have the X-rays, M.R.I. tests and doctors' reports detailing what my own body tells me everyday.

All this should be able to get me temporary assistance from G.A.U. as a disabled person. Not that \$339 a month goes very far, but it'd be enough to get me off the streets and give my body time to heal. The snag is, they'll only accept medical tests done in Washington State and these tests were done in Pennsylvania.

Why? Because Harborview Hospital in Seattle, when they looked at me after the accident, said I only had soft-tissue damage and that the pain would go away in three or four days. When those three or four days passed, the pain did not. And it didn't go when they changed their prognosis to three or four weeks. The physical therapy they put me on for three months only worsened the pain. (I was later told by a doctor in PA that the wrong kind of therapy can inflame the problem.)

Because Harborview only had me down as disabled for three months, the G.A.U. I was able to collect for awhile was about to run out. Which is why I had to take the bus back to the hospital

in PA (which had my old records) to get a second opinion. And that's where they did the M.R.I. and found I had a herniated disc.

In the meantime, there was the other problem of trying to settle with a major insurance company (that shall go unnamed, in case they try to cripple this newspaper in court). The company's witness to the accident is the driver who ran the red light. And she says she only tapped me.

If she tapped me, the bicycle the fire department now has in its possession would not be the twisted mess it is. A tap does not transform a ten speed bicycle into a heap of metal. It doesn't do much for the rider either.

I have given the insurance company permission to look at all my medical records, which clearly show — contrary to what they're saying — that the herniated disc and sciatic nerve damage are not old injuries. I have X-rays taken before the accident proving this.

Continued next page



"If I sound angry, I am. It happens when you return and get an eviction notice to move from your sleeping place under the bridge."

THE BRIDGE, CONT. FROM PREV. PAGE

But this company isn't too keen on finding out what actually happened. They would prefer to buy me off for two thousand dollars. But I have no intention of laying down and shutting up for somebody else's convenience. (It took me five and a half months just to get them to send me a check to replace the glasses that were busted off my face, and the teeth that were busted out of my mouth.) The only reason I came back to Seattle was because I was told that I wouldn't be able to pursue my case from Pennsylvania.

If I sound angry, I am. It happens when you return and get an eviction notice to move from your sleeping place under the bridge. It happens when Harborview gives you an appointment to see a doctor and you come ready with the PA doctors' reports, wait three hours, only to have the doctors look at them, agree with them, but then wonder why you're here since they're foot doctors, that this is a foot day and that you should make an appointment to see a back specialist.

It also happens when you're assured that the six week wait to see a specialist will not prevent you from getting assistance during that time — and then learn that G.A.U. can not help you because they only offer disability for a minimum of three months. Which means you'll continue living under the bridge in weather that worsens your herniated disc.

And when finally you do see the Seattle back specialist, the guy whose diagnosis you need to impress the G.A.U., you might get even more upset when he declares your back isn't so damaged, that you can lift twenty pounds and do light work. Never mind that the specialists in PA. recommend surgery to correct your spine. What the Seattle doctor says goes. Which means you can't get assistance. And since you were hurt in Seattle, you have to stay here if you want to settle your claim and secure what is just and fair.

And what might add to the anger is knowing that G.A.U. would help you in an instant if you were an alcoholic or a drug abuser. But disabled? No.

This is the shortened version of the rat's maze, or limbo hell, that I find myself in. In the meantime, I'm doing what I came out here to do: I'm working — as best I can. I'm selling newspapers and trying to keep my head above water and my spirits up. But it isn't easy. Living under the bridge like a

troll is not a happy feeling. In fact, it's degrading.

It's degrading to be looked at as something cheap and disposable; to be stolen from, and snowed on while you're sleeping. And it doesn't help matters when you begin thinking about suicide. There comes a point when you start feeling you can't do anything to improve your lot, when having all the right paperwork and required proof doesn't make a scrap of difference — when you know you will not be able to work the way you want to and that the people you're up against, and those who pass you by, would like nothing better than for you to disappear — at this point, you contemplate taking your life.

But my religion — and the fight in me — will not permit that. Besides, I don't much like the idea of disappearing just to make somebody else's life comfortable.

There's an idea

out there that no one has to wind up homeless. It's uncalled for. That if it happens, it's because of some flaw in the person's character. This is a naive point of view. Sure, there are drunks among the homeless, just as there are drunks among the housed. But don't think you're immune from crossing that thin line.

Were it not for the accident and everything that followed I'd be like you, on my way to work, walking past people who live the way I do now.

The line separating you from my situation is a lot thinner than you think. [A]

-As told to Yussef El Guindi

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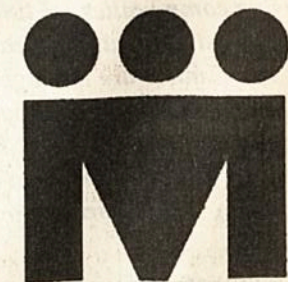
The Millionair Club

Stop!

3 reasons you should **NOT** pick
up a worker on the street:

- We can't guarantee your safety
- We can't guarantee the worker will receive a fair wage
- We can't guarantee the worker has the right skills for the job

Please call us.
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right worker
for your job,
free of charge.
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My Room

I woke this morning with anger
rolling through my body
like a flash flood,
and I was afraid.

The sun filtered through the curtains
with harsh and clear illumination
like the eyes of an angry relative.

On these blank walls
I have hung pictures
of Tahitian maidens,
whose calm and innocent faces
survey the proceedings below them
with unchanging knowledge
and all that they need at hand.

The dark water pursues me and I am tired,
seized by a strange paralysis as in a dream.
I know that low place waits
that I cannot see out of or above.
This tour is the only escape,
only by not leaving
can I be free.

The big red chair is covered
with books, papers,
clothing, towels and my knapsack:
the accumulation of haste.
The heater whirs like the conversation

of a monotonous but faithful friend.
On the upholstered bench
my cat
washes her black and gold fur
with her confident pink tongue.

—Elizebeth Romero

Hungry

They say there is no magic,
or they say
the Magic's gone away.
But I say

when my stomach aches for bread
I know there is bread
somewhere.
If I cannot buy bread
I can make my own.
If I cannot bake
I have friends
who will feed me bread,
share yeast starter
and some flour
to get me going again.

I say that when my lungs
ache for air,
I know it exists—
I have only to open doors,
or clear the block in my throat,
or just remind myself to stop
and breathe.

And I say when I look up at stars
an empty space within my chest
expands and reaches out for something
I have not found for sale yet.
If I never find a friend to share it,
never find the door to open,
if still waiting never brings it—
I'll just have to make my own.

—Anitra Freeman

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For more info, call Anna at 328-5659

This was written due to memories of sleeping in a downtown stairwell and hanging out in the Metro underground tunnel.

Did You Hear That?

I'll never forget it
I was surrounded by cement
And I burst out
with a pent-up
built-up
monstrous scream

So loud
It echoed off the walls
So full of anguish ...
the echoes lingered in my ears
And then I wept
bitter tears
from an empty heart
with a voice
that was now, barely there

No one came by
the walls served as silent sentinels
in the war that I had lost...
...Or so it seemed

I screamed
again.
This time, my jaw yawned wide
like a python about to devour
the minutes that had to have been hours
Yet this scream was a silent scream.
It erupted from the basement
floor of my soul.

Angels in heaven
were awakened by the agony
They heard.
Even a few of those in hell
cocked their heads
for a moment, and paused to... listen.

Then, it was Back to Business
(This was nothing new to them)

Once, I said to another, I said,
"I have two guardian angels-
because one has to rest
while the other angel is on duty"
And then I laughed.

Yet, now I know.
There must be two.
And the one who was sleeping
Was paid for overtime later
For when that silent scream
Was heard by him (or her)
He (or she)
had no shoes to grab, Yet
He (she) came running.
—Catherine M. Condeff,
from "Web of Dreams"

He Stands With

His Hands Behind

him ... beside

me! Such a future of cars in
this jungle, headlights
swarming

around my head
tonight, in
this place where I rest, if
I rest-

the future again, in my
night's sleep.
I'll remember the years of tramping, of
sleeping without my day's work

through each night at home, that led
me to this jungle
of nerves, of
more or

less than I deserve after
years ... everything

I might tell you, today.
We might tell you!

—Stan Burriss

I Shall Die

I shall die with a beer in one hand
and fading photographs in the other.
I shall die with the memory of someone's eyes.
Was there ever such a person?
I shall die screaming and snarling
like an old alley cat.
Mean, ugly
and disrespectful
to the last
so help me God.

—Elizebeth Romero

Another Greyhound Encounter

I
Once upon a Greyhound
Outside Salt Lake City
In the foul
Industrial Flats

I met a young girl
Fourteen, fifteen perhaps
Dressed like an
LA hooker

Lost
with a lost look
she gave me a
Lost Look

On a break
Bummed a smoke
And confided
in hushed tones
painfully
with Great Fear
"I'm Weird"
I said, "That is good
weird is good:
Unable in my sleeplessness
to go further
She told me her story
And we parted
Back into the bus

I lost her in
Salt Lake City...

II
I go back to
that time
Sorry I didn't
offer more
I want to say
"Weird is good
Come with me
You don't have to
Dress like that
Weird is Good

"Take me as Mother
I take you as Daughter
YOU don't have to dress
Like that
weird is good
"You don't have to
Find your Father
who has answered
None
of your letters....

"weird is good
You don't have to
Dress like that
"Come With Me
To Sweet Air country
We are weird
Weird is good
We will be weird
In

Sweet Air Country
Montana
Together
"Come with me
You don't Have to
Dress Like That
"Weird
Is
Good!"

III
And ,
How are you
Now,
my child?

—Marion Sue Fischer

Untitled

Only a few remained
wandering aimlessly about

In this obvious dissolution of order
We were uncertain of what to do next

The war was over
We lost
They lost
It was all lost

No longer enemies
We could not look into each other's eyes

The smoke cleared and the fires died down
The last shrieking siren
Groaned and fell silent

It was all over but the waiting
—Sally Johnson

The History of Them All

Sounds of flowing traffic becomes muted
through vibrating glass
the cry of a sea gull becomes another street.
We descend the bus steps
cobweb-air rakes our faces,
walking east, cross the bridge.
Entering I open the door and the glass
holds a reflection of the moon
as it skims by.

We rest
and order a drink
rain beads the window
oval drops net light
from passing cars, flickering signs
and evening stars.

We talk,
someone had mentioned
I am pretty much the same
and, over the years, my words
haven't changed very much.
My friend said he knew you

and I were together;
His sister said you probably love
to be whipped with my poetry.

We order another beer
the foam on top of the glass,
settling, resembles a sand-dollar.
Neon smoke curls
and spirals to the cracks
in the ceiling.

She told me of her childhood
in the country and how she played
in the milkweed field.
An abandoned car became her house
she shared it with roosting chickens
and her dog.
During the afternoon, she served
homemade donuts
and tea.

Later, a calligraphy of leaves
bruise her body. She kneels
combing her hair, pulls it back
tying it into a French braid.
She sits naked on a camouflage
sleeping-bag. Again I hold her.
—Earle Thompson, 01:XI:95

The Invisible Lines Are Drawn

The invisible
was here first.
Stone and steel
grew up around the idea
of a bank,
post office,
grocery store.

Pound stone to rubble,
money will pile up somewhere,
public servants carry your letters
into limbo,
and you will still stand in a long, slow line
for cold food.

—Anitra Freeman

Dragon Pending

My life is a hollow unhallowed

Every street
is Second Avenue between James and Yesler
one-o'clock in the morning
November and not even Thanksgiving
in a long slow rain

My lungs
have been stored in an unaired locker
for too long

My muscles haven't been
anywhere

My body is become
pavement

Somewhere
very
very
very
far inside
a dragon curls

Someday

she'll rise

—Anitra Freeman

Blue Willow

Cooking was something I
learned to do well- this was
a chicken roasted golden
perfect- I was carving the leg
and thigh huddled like a plump
comma-the fork slipped-
the chicken fell on the oak
floor while he held
a plate- he liked things
to go smoothly- frightened
I picked it up- I'll take
that one I said and hurried
to carve some more- No
you won't he said- I don't

mind I said- I never
knew the answer to these things
whether my obvious fear
infuriated him or something
else- suddenly he slammed
the whole plate of food
down on the floor- chicken
rice peas- bits of plate
everywhere- I don't remember
the sound- how about this
he said- the dishes
were Blue Willow- a gift
from my aunt- I loved
them- now there is one less
I thought- I don't remember
what happened then- not
the children's eyes nor
the frozen silence of dinner-
only that bits of plate kept
appearing in the sweeping
in the dusting- bits
of plate for weeks afterwards
—Elizabeth Romero

Open Edge

I
I write my name, with
the hand you raise —
breaking
each time you see, through
this face you see,
my face...
I carry my name with
hands you never see —
ringing
this sound
of mine, with the pain you
never knew. My pain:
"Got a dollar I can have?"
"Got the dollar?"

II
Before I lost a job,
before I grew older, before
I knew friends could see me —
before
you could see me, here —

I was the better

man. Like all of you, this
woman. Like you all,

reading this...I could say,
"I've got the
name."
Give me my name,

now!

"Got a dollar?"
—Stan Burris

Noel House Women

The Bearded White Man
SWAGGERING down the Alley,
Between two lines of Homeless Women
thinks:

"Each ONE of them
would RATHER be
with ME,
than in the SITUATION
she's IN..."

And you KNOW WHAT??
he's
WRONG.

Most of us have been THROUGH
him, or
some version of him,

And found his
Lies unfathomable
his Lies UNFATHOMABLE
his Lies objectionable,
his Lies ANATHEMA,
and, so,
here we are, in an Alley
Behind Noel House,

Waiting
to
Get
IN.

—Marion Sue Fischer

Frame of Strength

Rip my skin
And I will bleed
I do not have enough fat
To cover my tender joints
Pull hard enough
And the flesh will separate
Easily from my bones
But do not attempt
To break that which is my frame
My bones have been tested so often
They now bend from the pressure
But will not fracture
The flesh will heal
And the blood be replenished
Seek my scars and you shall find
Not my Achilles heel
But a tally of battles won
—Nancy Craig

Forest Hotel, circa 1974

Small-boned woman stands,
squats near the stained white sink
urinating in a clear plastic cup.

I watch television,
drinking wine,
and we smile.

Someone once wrote
drink makes friends
of us all.

—Earle Thompson

U.S.A. Usual State of Affairs

The rich
Will xerox babies
To continue
Their way

The poor
Will die
With the lance
Of frustration
In their backs

—Leslie Carl High Rock

Three Years Old and Still Growing

A Heartfelt Thank You to All Our Friends

Real Change depends on the grassroots support of people like yourself for its survival as a voice of the poor and a source of immediate employment for the homeless. We'd like to take this opportunity to thank all of those who have found it in their heart to stop and write us a check over the past year. Without their support, this paper would simply not exist.

We hope to continue our project for many years to come. *Real Change* is an important model for social change, and recently hosted the founding conference of the North American Street Newspaper Association. Through our work in NASNA, we are helping other papers like ours get started throughout the continent. Together, we will make a difference.

Real Change has also recently launched the Real Change Homeless Empowerment Project to support self-expression by the poor and homeless, sponsoring such projects as the Street Life Art Gallery, the StreetWrites homeless writers group, and our Homeless Speakers Bureau.

All of this is made possible by the generosity of our readers. Please consider making a "Happy Birthday" gift to *Real Change* today.

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Help us celebrate our third birthday with a generous donation to help the homeless help themselves. *Real Change* depends upon the grassroots support of our readership to do a whole lot with very little money. Every dollar donated to this paper winds up putting about five dollars in the pockets of the homeless. Best of all, your contribution goes beyond simple charity. We help people help themselves while they work for a more just world for everyone.

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MAIL TO: REAL CHANGE, 2129 2ND AVE, SEATTLE, WA 98121

OCTOBER 1

Jobs With Justice, 5:30 p.m., Labor Temple, 2800 1st Ave, Seattle. Meets 1st Wednesday of the month. Info: 206-325-3040.

OCTOBER 2

Fire Your Boss workshop, a hands-on Workshop For Uppity Workers; 7:30 p.m. Learn how to get a little more from your employer using ten easy direct-action tactics with your co-workers. Sponsored by the Puget Sound IWW, Industrial Workers of the World (the "Wobblies") with a long history of Labor Activism in the Pacific Northwest. 1st Thursdays of the month, Center For Urban Ecology, 5619 University Way. Info: 206-516-0483, PO Box 4814, Seattle WA 98104.

OCTOBER 4

Workshop on Media Relations for Non-Profits and Community Organizations on a Shoestring Budget, 12 - 5 p.m. Facilitated by Janin Wilson, President, WJKL Public Relations and Communications & Kevin Henry, Diversity Coordinator for City of Bellevue, host of "Voices of Diversity" radio program and journalist, Bellevue Art Museum, 301 Bellevue Square 3rd Floor, \$21 advance registration required. Info: 425-452-2835.

"Songs For Peace," 7:30 p.m. A Concert to benefit the Fellowship of Reconciliation, Seattle Chapter, with Mezzo Soprano Rose E. Betz-Zall, Pianist Dr. Joan Purswell, Flautist Patrick Purswell. Keystone Congregational Church, 5019 Keystone Pl N (just north of Sunnyside N & N 50th, a few blocks west of I-5). Suggested donation \$10. Info: 206-789-5565.

OCTOBER 6

Meeting of Coalition Working Against Initiative 200, Washington State Anti-Affirmative Action Initiative, 6:30-8:30 p.m. 1st & 3rd Mondays of each month at CAMP, 722 18th near Cherry. Info: Lonnie Johns-Brown 206-523-1412.

OCTOBER 7

Gabriela Network-NW, a U.S. Solidarity Group with Gabriela-Philippines (alliance of over 105 women's organizations in the Philippines), 6 p.m. Join in to get involved in solidarity work around Filipina and Asian women's issues globally and domestically. First Tuesday of each month, locations vary. Info: 206-824-8229.

OCTOBER 8

Boeing Retirees on the Line Seattle, 10 a.m. Boeing Hourly, General Office and Salaried Retirees: Protect what you worked for! Plan how Retirees Can Obtain COLA at last. All former hourly, general office, salaried, and supervisory Boeing Company workers are invited to attend. Second Wednesday of each month IAM 751 District Headquarters, 9125 15th Pl S. An interpreter for the hearing impaired will attend. Info: hnoable@eskimo.com or Jackie Terrell 206-722-0241.

Monthly Meeting of the Labor Party, 7 p.m. Info on Independent Progressive Politics Network, which includes the Labor Party. Second Wednesday of each month, Labor Temple, 2800 1st Ave. Curt 206-329-1048; info on Labor Party 206-382-5712.

OCTOBER 11

"Links in the Chain," a multi-media show, 7:30 p.m. A birthday benefit for Welfare Rights Organizing Coalition, traces the histories of the Civil Rights and Labor Movements through song, spoken word, and slides. WROC, a group started by low income parents in 1984, celebrates 13 years working for health and well-being of all families. Museum of History and Industry, 2700 24th Ave E. Info: WROC 206-324-3063.

OCTOBER 13

General Meeting of the Welfare Reform Coalition, 6:30 p.m. 2nd Monday of each month, CAMP, 722 18th near Cherry. Info: 206-273-9120.

OCTOBER 15

Meeting of Seattle City Council Welfare Ad-hoc Committee, 12 - 2 p.m. Matters concern City's response to federal and State changes to welfare system, including employment and training opportunities, immigration and naturalization, basic survival services, and prioritization of human service. 3rd Wednesday of each month. Allocations/info: Phillip Fujii or Junko Whitaker 206-684-8804.

OCTOBER 16

12th Annual MINORITY AND WOMEN'S Small Business Conference, "Unlocking Your Business Potential," 8 a.m. - 5 p.m. One of the most successful and informative conferences for small, minority- and women-owned businesses in the state of Washington. Keynote speaker Sally Jewell, President of Western Bank. Meydenbaur Center, Bellevue. Info: Deborah Seamans 800-585-9179.

OCTOBER 20

Meeting of Coalition Working Against Initiative 200, Washington State Anti-Affirmative Action Initiative, 6:30 - 8:30 p.m. Subsequent meetings 1st & 3rd Mondays,

CAMP, 722 18th near Cherry. Info: Lonnie Johns-Brown 206-523-1412.

OCTOBER 22

National Day of Protest to Stop Police Brutality. Wear Black is a joint project of the National Lawyers Guild, Coalition Against Police Brutality, and Anthony Baez Foundation. Info: (Seattle) 206-233-7940, (national) 212-822-8596.

OCTOBER 24

Fellowship of Reconciliation calls for a National Interfaith Feast for Sanity for sane and compassionate priorities, remembrance of victims of war and military spending, through Oct 26. Info: Clayton Ramey 914-358-4601.

OCTOBER 25

The Million Woman March, to strengthen the cohesiveness among African-American women from all economic, education, age, and social lines. Benjamin Franklin Parkway, Philadelphia. Info: National Organizing Committee 215-925-9613; Kim 313-961-5670 or <http://members.aol.com/lilbitz/mission.html>.

ONGOING

Call the City Council Health Committee members Cheryl Chow (206-684-8804), Tina Podlowski (684-8808), Charlie Chong (684-8805), Richard McIver (684-8800), Margaret Pageler (684-8807), and the rest of the council 684-8888; ask them to reverse their April 14 decision and to fund the toilets, sinks, showers and laundry for homeless people and all members of the public at the Glen Hotel or find and fund a better site immediately!

Call Seattle City Councilmember Jan Drago 684-8801, Chair of the Economic Development Committee to tell her you oppose privatization of our downtown park (Westlake Park, at 4th & Pine) and that you want a public hearing. A private group, the Westlake Park Management Company formed by the Downtown Business association wants to take over the park. This could restrict public access for demonstrations, socializing, and just sitting on benches: they even want to take away the benches! Info: Diane 206-726-0864.

October



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Some people took drugs and became lumps of gold

And some people took drugs and turned very, very old

—John Rider

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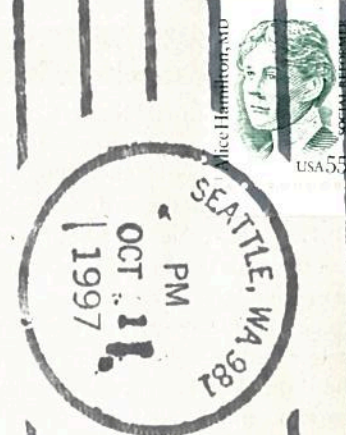
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