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Real CHANGE

VOL. 6, NO. 15, AUGUST, 1999

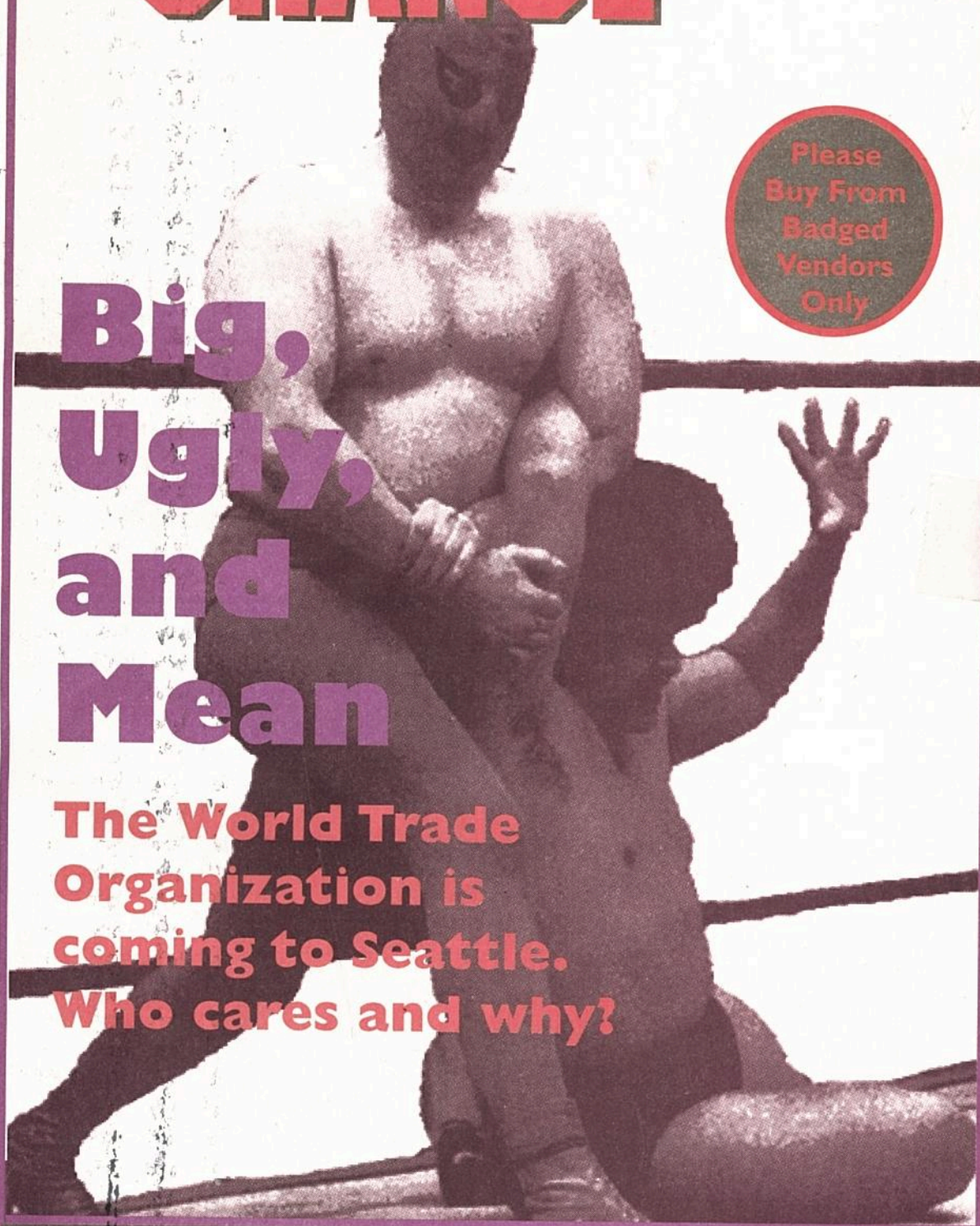
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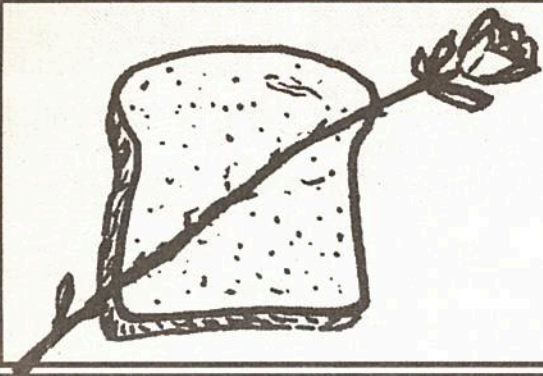
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The World Trade Organization is coming to Seattle. Who cares and why?



Puget Sound's Newspaper of the Poor and Homeless



Real CHANGE

Puget Sound's
Newspaper of the Poor
and Homeless

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AMY D'ACQUISTO OF SEATTLE DANCES WITH HER SEVEN-YEAR-OLD DAUGHTER HANNAH AFTER THE GRADUATION CEREMONY FOR STUDENTS COMPLETING THE CITY'S FIRST CLEMENTE COURSE IN THE HUMANITIES. PHOTO CREDIT: BETTY UDESON/THE SEATTLE TIMES.

A Grand Commencement Bard Clemente Students Step Out

BY GEOFF COLE

What happens when you put 26 poor, undereducated, some even homeless adults in a classroom with five leading scholars in the humanities — people with PhD's from places like Yale and the University of Chicago?

Real Change posed that question in our first story on the Clemente Course in the Humanities when it was just getting under way last fall (October '98 issue). We revisited the program for a "progress report" in our series on learning opportunities for the poor and homeless (April '99).

With this, our third and final report following graduation of the first Seattle class, the answers to our question are in. For the most part, they're positive — positive enough that plans for the second class are already under way. Program Director Lyall Bush says he's already accepted four students for the next class, which will begin in October.

Created in New York by sociologist Earl Shorris and brought to Seattle by the Washington Commission for the Humanities (WCH), the course is in-

tended to prepare its students to participate in the social and political life of their community, through the study of the humanities. The only prerequisites: be poor (income no more than 150 percent of the poverty level), between 18 and 35, and able to read a newspaper in English.

In his research for the book *New American Blues*, Shorris concluded that many people are locked into poverty — or believe they are — by circumstances over which they seem to have little control. This "surround of force," as he labeled it, includes such factors as "hunger, isolation, illness, landlords, police, abuse, neighbors, drugs, criminals, and racism, among many others" that did not permit them the time to think reflectively. This "surround of force," Shorris believed, "was what kept the poor from being political and that...was what kept them poor." He defines "political" in the classical sense, as "activity with other people at every level." At the conclusion of the first course Shorris reported that "a practical education in the humanities had begun to change the isolated, excluded poor into political people."

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UMOJA

Bringing Unity to the Central Area

BY SCOTT WINN

The Umoja Fest, also known as the African Heritage Festival and Parade, will bring together thousands in Judkins Park in Seattle's Central Area on the weekend of August 6th through 8th. Umoja, which means "unity" in Swahili, is one of the largest gatherings of African-Americans in the Northwest. The festival is a continuation of the traditional Black Community Festival, which has taken place in the Central Area for most of the past 50 years. The festival aims to bring all people together to celebrate the African and African American culture.

The Umoja Fest is organized by African American community members as part of their work to open the African American Heritage Museum and Cultural Center as a grassroots community institution. The museum will be located at the old Colman elementary school on 23rd Ave. in the Central Area above I-90. The mission of the center is to unite the African American community for the purpose of cultural and economic development. The museum and center will promote and preserve the history, culture, traditions, and achievements of Africans and African-Americans.

The road to the Umoja Fest and to the opening of the Museum has often been a bumpy one. "Every year the City tries to block or sabotage [the festival]," says organizer Greg Jackson, "and every year they fail." This year the city first refused to issue a parade permit, but later conceded after protests by the organizing committee. The City also prioritizes the Central Area Community Festival, which took place July 23-25, a city-sponsored event which emphasizes city programs and increased police presence in the community.

The African Heritage Museum and Cultural Center and the Umoja Fest are part of grassroots efforts by some members of the African American community to gain back what has been lost through slavery and its lasting legacy. In the Central Area, the traditional heart of Seattle's Black community, gentrification increases every year, while residents face not only displacement but criminalization and incarceration. Jackson and others are attempting to redress these wrongs and forge community where community has been lost.

Government and police officials concentrate community-building efforts on the issue of "public safety," through such programs as Weed and Seed. These efforts, however, actually wreck the communities they purport to save, particularly by incarcerating large numbers of African Americans. By the end of 2000, over one million Black men will be imprisoned in the United States. Is more police to "fight crime" the solution, or do there exist grassroots alternatives which would "create community"?

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Real CHANGE

Puget Sound's Voice of the Poor and Homeless

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

Mission Statements:

Real Change organizes, educates, and builds alliances to find community-based solutions to homelessness and poverty.

Goals

- Provide a foundation for grassroots organizing.
- Publish the views of marginalized communities.
- Create direct economic opportunity.
- Build bridges with a broad range of allies in the struggle against poverty.

The *Real Change* Homeless Empowerment Project is a 501(c)3 non-profit organization that sponsors the StreetLife Gallery, StreetWrites, and the Homeless Speakers Bureau. The RCHEP raises the voices of the poor by supporting cultural, artistic, and literary expression to place a human face on homelessness and poverty. All donations to the RCHEP support these programs and are tax-deductible to the full extent of the law.

Editorial Policy

Articles appearing in *Real Change* reflect the opinions and perspectives of the authors. We encourage the submission of journalism, opinion, fiction, poetry, and artwork, and hope to create a forum where the many perspectives on 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.

Vendor of the Month

Barry Cannon

Barry came to Seattle on a freight train in December of 1996. Originally from Anchorage, he relocated to Seattle because he heard the economy was good, with lots of jobs to offer. He immediately started doing construction work, but eventually came to *Real Change* "knowing I could make a job out of it." Seattle has held Barry much longer than any other city. "I like the people. I'm never gonna starve to death," he says. "I've sold street papers in San Francisco too. People in San Francisco don't care — you could starve to death there! People here are nice. *Real Change* makes me a living, I do well."

Barry would like to write for the paper in the near future. "I could write a whole story on riding freight trains. I've been homeless since Vietnam." In the meantime, he plans to continue selling the paper and sending money to his kids back home. He's also getting ready to make another cross-country trip. "I'm getting burnt out. I've been here for nearly four years and I've never been anywhere for four years straight."

"I would like to thank each and every one of my customers," Barry says. "They've been good to me. I appreciate it immensely." Congratulations, Barry, for all your hard work and thank you for contributing to *Real Change*. For being Vendor of the Month, Barry receives 100 papers and a dinner for two at FareStart.

—Michele Thomas



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Bad Attitude

Dear *Real Change*,

I am writing to protest wording in your newspaper that promotes a negative and wrongful attitude. Specifically, in the June 15th *Real Change*, the last paragraph in Tenant Talk asks: "Have you now, or have you ever been screwed by your landlord?" (The underline is mine.) The word "screwed" conveys a strong negative attitude which carries over to the tenant. Once a tenant believes he's a victim, he treats the landlord with an attitude. And I resent attitudes.

I have two duplexes and a triplex. I got into the rental business because my income was too low to qualify for a mortgage. A duplex didn't cost much more than a house and the rents were attributed as income, qualifying me to purchase. I still live in one unit and rent six. Four of the six units have been rented to the same tenants for 6-10 years. I take care of my tenants. Without tenants, I couldn't pay my mortgages. I'd like to know what percentage of tenants are unhappy with their landlord. Do you have data or even an idea? Do you believe it's right to encourage readers to assume their landlord is bad or inherently adversarial?

I work hard to improve my properties, not just maintain them. I know other owners of small multi's and rental housing who are just as consci-

entious. I would think most larger complexes with management teams are interested in at least maintaining standards. So again I ask, what percentage of tenants are unhappy with their landlord, and of those, what percentage actually say they've been "screwed!?" You wouldn't promote a negative attitude toward the homeless, especially based on a few. Why promote a negative attitude toward anyone? I venture to say, there are more good landlords than bad, and more tenants who are happy with their housing than not.

Janet Krogh

Editor's reply: We agree that the word "screwed" casts tenants as victims, and have changed the wording to read, "Have

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Tempest In the Stacks

Library cards aren't enough for downtown's homeless.

BY PAUL NOBLE AND MICHELE MARCHAND

The downtown public library has long been one of the last bastions of equal opportunity and access for homeless people. Homeless people, for years, have been able to get QCards using a shelter address, and have used the library for everything anyone else uses the library for: reading newspapers from home, doing research, using the internet, and entertainment. New City Librarian Deborah Jacobs has described the library as "the core of our community and our democracy." (*Seattle Times* 2/14/99) But this bastion of equality is now under fire, and the controversy has once again raised two serious issues: the propagation of stereotypes of homeless people, and the desperate need for more hygiene centers in the downtown core. Both of these issues damage the entire community.

This spring, Jacobs wrote to City Councilmember Nick Licata asking for dialogue and raising worrisome issues regarding homeless people's use of the central library. The language used in her letter, and its claims, made many people in the homeless community fear they will soon be targeted and excluded from full use of the library.

In her May 11th letter, Jacobs named a perception of homeless people as a distinct, uniformly problematic "population" who seem to be using the library as a hygiene facility or day center rather than for more scholarly pursuits. She went on to allege that homeless people at the library have had an effect on the "donor population. Many prospective donors are reluctant to give money to support a Central Library that they perceive as a day facility for the homeless. Many donors indicate that they do not feel safe visiting the Central Library or that the Central Library smells of people who haven't bathed in some time." Jacobs asked for the start of a "dialogue with key downtown stakeholders."

Licata responded by drafting a memo to his fellow councilmembers asking if they "might want to pursue some kind of facility for day use by the homeless" in the new Civic Center, which won't be designed until 2002 or completed until 2004. The problem

with this is twofold: it much delays the start date of new and much-needed services for homeless people, and it seems likely there will be no concrete commitment to its development or funding based on the initial response of at least one City Councilmember—Martha Choe. To date, City Council has not outlined any other response to Jacobs' letter.

Meanwhile, as soon as this brewing controversy hit the press, Jacobs started doing damage control and backpedaling. Two weeks ago an all-library staff meeting was held to "get feedback on homeless people and related issues." Seventy library staff attended, and although some aired concerns about behavior and enforcement of the library's Code of Conduct, several spoke up saying, "This doesn't have to be a homeless issue; this can be about who's disruptive."

A 10-year veteran library staffperson said, "What Jacobs said to Licata made me edgy about the direction we're heading. My point is, let's do something about our fear. Libraries are necessarily diverse, and pulling homeless people out as a separate group is inconsistent with that. There are homeless people among us, and they are us."

When questioned at the library staffmeeting, Jacobs said the newspapers had taken her statements out of context, and

that in fact donors have not stopped giving out of fear of homeless people. In *The Weekly* (7/22/99) she explains, "No one's said they aren't donating because of homeless people. One donor had concerns, but gave anyway."

Through library Public Information Officer Andra Addison, Jacobs explains her purpose in writing to Licata in the first place was to encourage the City to revisit the issue of siting services for homeless people in the new Civic Center. When asked, she also supported siting hygiene services in the new public library. She seems to understand such services must be built, and must be in the downtown core.

If Jacobs had articulated that goal in the first place—to push for the creation of more hygiene services for homeless people in the downtown core—this controversy wouldn't have arisen. We all can get behind the need for more hygiene services downtown. We've waited five years for LIHI's Urban Reststop (now, finally, scheduled to open around Christmas in the Julie Apartments at 9th and Virginia). We've waited three years for AHA's Wellness Center for Women (which might open in November in the Josephinum at 2nd and Stewart).

But let's not kid ourselves about what this will mean to the library, or ignore the deeper issues. Homeless people are not going to go away from the library when great new hygiene centers are finally built, and homeless people aren't the problem in the first place. Homeless people use the li-

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Real Change Wish List

All the stuff we need but would rather not spend money on: Syquest drives and storage disks, older software, ethernet cards and cables for Macintosh computers, 17 inch or larger color monitor, VCR, television, Laserwriter, HP Illsi and 4M toner cartridges, Mac RAM

Make our day. Call 441-3247

Be a Part of the Solution!

This little paper, which now publishes twice a month, receives no foundation or government support, and your donations matter a lot. *Real Change* depends upon the grassroots support of our readership to do a whole lot with very little money. Your contribution goes beyond simple charity. *Real Change* helps people help themselves while they work for a more just world for everyone. Please give to *Real Change*.

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Good News for Youth

TO THE GUARDED OPTIMISM OF HOMELESS ADVOCATES, the Mayor is working on a new plan: find shelter for Seattle's street youth, who number between 500-1000 on any given night.

Last year about this time, Mayor Schell initiated an effort to get all homeless women off the streets by Christmas. While many women are still homeless, Schell's "Christmas Promise" did result in several new programs and a sense that the city is taking its social responsibility more seriously.

Last year's commitment began with \$500,000 in new funding, but Schell is not yet making any promises for youth. A plan is emerging to make it a priority, however, and light a fire under the local business community to help.

"Corporate leadership here has tremendous potential," says David Cousineau, president of the 115 year-old Seattle Children's Home. "Not to make contributions — but to make investments."

Cousineau, tired of facing the constant tragedy of kids on the streets, asked the Mayor at a press conference in June if there wasn't a way to find a solution. Pointing to the fabulous success of many local corporations, he asked if they could be involved in another venture — one in which the stakes are, literally, the lives of young people.

"Forget the B.S. of artificial barriers [between business and social service]," says Cousineau. "Corporations bring in a different perspective... Instead of starting from the problem, let's start from a vision or destination: by 2005 can we eliminate homelessness among youth in Seattle?"

The Mayor and his Office of Human Services are assembling a task force "to find out what it would take," according to Sylvia Watson of the Seattle Human Service Department. "As this point it's still in the brainstorming stage," she said. The Mayor expects to have the task force at work by the fall.

Cousineau, like many advocates, is wary of the brain-numbing Seattle Process: "The city could study the problem to death," he says. But he is also hopeful. "I believe truly that it [getting all youth off the streets] can happen."

Get Along, Move Along, Go

The good news about the Mayor's positive effort on behalf of homeless youth must be tempered with this latest report from the trenches.

For months, about 30 homeless people had quietly occupied space under the Alaskan Way Viaduct south of downtown. Then, three days before Safeco Field opened, police posted 24-hour "vacate" notices on their tents. Some relocated immediately, while others lost their stuff to the eviction, which occurred at the appointed time.

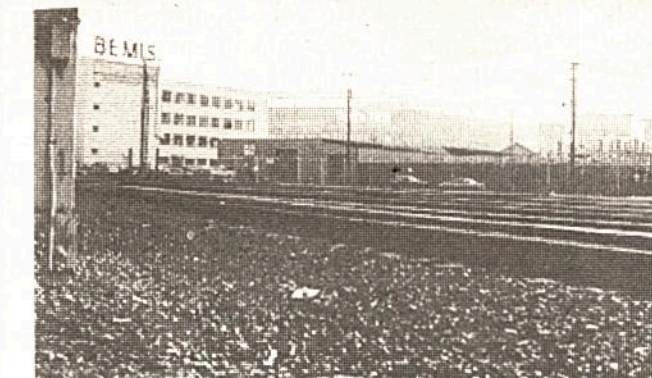
It doesn't take a Masters in Urban Planning to figure out why they were moved. The real question is where they were supposed to go. Operation Nightwatch reported, as usual, that there were no shelter beds open that week. In fact, the number of turnaways doubled the night before the Mariners' opener, though it's hard to know if it wasn't mere coincidence or bad weather.

The important thing to realize, says Nightwatch Director Rev. Rick Reynolds, is that the homeless have no options. "My question is still unanswered," he said, referring to his query to the city which asked, "Where can a homeless person sleep legally?"

Deputy Mayor Tom Byers, who marshaled the city's sweep of the Jungle last year, did not return our calls, which causes us to surmise our own answer: right now, there's no legal alternative for the homeless, especially if they are visible, in a large (i.e. safe) group, or near people who might connect corporate welfare with social disaster.

Housing Dollars to Spare

ON JULY 14TH THE CITY LEARNED that their program for rehabilitation and loans for low-income housing was running in the black — to the tune of \$8 million dollars. That's a bit too much



ROOM WITH A VIEW: WAKE UP TO QUIANT TRAIN WHISTLES OR THE OCEANIC SOUND OF THE FREEWAY OVERHEAD IN THIS SPACIOUS, PICTURESQUE ENCAMPMENT. SLEEPS 30-40, WITH CONCRETE ROOF, GENUINE GRAVEL FLOOR, RUGGED DECOR. ACCESS TO POWER STATION, STADIUM. POLICE HARASSMENT ON SUNNY DAYS. PHOTO BY DANIEL CAPLAN.

money in the bank, said members of the City Council's Housing Committee, when affordable housing is in such scarce supply.

And it's partly the reason they asked for an audit of the program earlier this year. Since

NEWS YOU CAN USE

CLOSE TO HOME

taking over the REACH (Rehabilitation and Emergency Assistance for City Homes) program from the Seattle Housing Authority, the city suspected they had lost control of the REACH budget.

Cynthia Parker, new Director of the Office of Housing, said that she has already requested approval from the council to reallocate half the funds to create about 200 units of brand-new low-income housing. Pending approval, funds will be allocated to numerous projects run by non-profit housing developers.

That still leaves several million in the bank, for which Parker has further plans. "We are going to request that [the council] put that money on the street to create new housing units — that's where the critical need is," she said. Could any of it go towards shelter or emergency housing? "It's certainly a possibility," said Parker. "We're looking at that."

Streetpapers of the World, Unite!

PILES OF STREET NEWSPAPERS COVERED A TABLE in room 301 of the Physics Hall in Case Western Reserve University in Cleveland. 82 representatives from 38 newspapers around the U.S. and Canada had brought them to share and trade, as they gathered for the fourth annual conference of the North American Street Newspaper Association, hosted by the *Grapevine*, Cleveland's voice of the homeless.

Looking over the papers, I saw as much variety as last year — but within that variety, a greater quality. More papers looked, and read, like newspapers — newspapers that covered what the mainstream wouldn't, with professional integrity and good writing.

As the newspaper reps introduced themselves in the opening session, many from new papers remarked on the help and support they'd gotten from the NASNA Executive Committee; names mentioned most often were *Real Change's* own Tim Harris, and Brian Davis and Angelo Anthony of Cleveland.

All of the workshop sessions I attended — on Journalism, Working with Volunteers, and the Exploitation of the Homeless — were so lively, with so much participation from everyone in the room, that they could have each continued several more hours. All the members are reaching out to their communities, getting involved with other civic groups, and continually working to raise the standards of their reporting.

Members met each other like old friends, talked almost around the clock, and enjoyed Cleveland together. The logo of the Arabica coffeehouse showed up on big styrofoam containers of both hot and iced coffee drinks all weekend. The coffeeshop hosted a Saturday night street-poetry reading where Dr. Wes and I read along with new friends Marc Goldfinger of Cambridge, MA and Daniel Thompson of Cleveland.

Our keynote speaker was Lee Stringer, author of *Grand Central Winter* and former editor of *Street News* (NY). I went with Marc and Daniel to hear Lee read at a local bookstore. Lee is a gripping speaker as well as an excellent writer; I was thrilled to meet him and had a great deal of fun talking with him.

Next year we get to go to Canada — Edmonton, Alberta will be hosting NASNA 2000. I have volunteered to revitalize the NASNA website and news-exchange service, which I hope to have in place long before then — so excuse me, I have some work to do.

The Real Change Homeless Empowerment Project would like to thank the Satterberg Foundation, whose support made our attendance possible.

See you in the news!

—Anitra L. Freeman

Grilled Candidate

THE SEATTLE DISPLACEMENT COALITION, along with the Tenants Union and *Real Change*, will sponsor a candidates' forum on Thursday, August 19th. The forum, to which all city council candidates (and the public) are invited, is traditionally one of the most well-attended events of the campaign season. It's also critical because candidates commit to positions on homeless and housing issues. It will be held at the Pilgrim Congregational Church, 509 - 10th Ave. E. (off Broadway), at 7:00 p.m.

— newsbriefs by Bob Redmond unless noted otherwise

If you have a news item that you would like *Real Change* to look into, please let us know. Call Bob at 441-8143.

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Soul and Faith

Work wanted. Can CASA Latina deliver?



MURAL ARTIST DEMETRIO BARRITA STANDS IN FRONT OF HIS WORK, WHICH GRACES THE NEW CASA LATINA DAY WORKER'S CENTER IN BELLTOWN. PHOTO BY ERIK CASTRO.

BY TODD MATTHEWS

For twenty years, laborers like Antonio, a thirty-seven-year-old immigrant from Mexico, have waited on the streets of Seattle for temporary work in landscaping, construction, the fishing industry, and other manual-labor jobs. The work is difficult and tenuous—an unsteady way to make a living in the United States.

Antonio knows this type of work well.

Five months ago he immigrated to the United States, landing in Seattle and looking for work. He quickly joined CASA Latina—a community-based organization whose mission is to educate and organize Latino seasonal workers and their families so that they can become economically independent and contributing members of the Seattle community—and began to attend meetings between fellow laborers, the City of Seattle, the Belltown Business Association, and the Millionaire Club, to address an organized way for day laborers to find work. The CASA Latina Day Worker's Center was formed as a result of these meetings.

When the Day Worker's Center opened to much fanfare in mid-July, Antonio was one of the program's first registered workers. The Center, formerly a parking lot recently beautified through donated materials and volunteer labor, presently serves as a temporary labor exchange site for the 50-100 day laborers who stand daily on the streets waiting for work in Belltown.

CASA Latina presently supervises the site with oversight by the City of Seattle and the Belltown Business Association. All services are offered in both English and Spanish, and the Center is open to everybody who respects the rules.

"I arrived in Seattle with nothing but my soul and faith," Antonio told me recently one morning. We were sitting in a couple of the Center's makeshift chairs, talking loudly as rush hour traffic hummed along on Western Avenue. Antonio is an affable, honest man who speaks candidly about the Day Worker's Center. While he eagerly joined the Center and arrives each morning at 6:00 a.m. in hopes of finding work, Antonio also recognizes that

the program is still new.

When I asked him how many jobs he's gotten through the program, he was a bit evasive. He had yet to find work. But he still had hope. "The organizers need to talk to the people around here," Antonio explained, "and let them know we are here."

Jaime Martinez, the Center's coordinator, echoed Antonio's comment. "This is only our second week," he told me. "We are still working on doing outreach to let people know that they have a place where they can wait for work. It's a transition that takes a little time. A lot of [these laborers] are used to being outside for many years, so they still don't see why they should wait here [at the Center] when they can wait [under the bridge]."

Also, Martinez commented, a lot of the immigrants arrive in the United States and are taught not to trust anybody, including a seemingly helpful program like the CASA Latina Day Worker's Center. Presently, Martinez and CASA Latina are spreading the word by distributing flyers to contractors and employers, in addition to Belltown residents. Also, there have been several articles in several Seattle newspapers, informing readers about the program.

I asked Martinez how he thought the Center could prove itself as a viable resource for day laborers. "Providing jobs," he replied, immediately. "That is the ultimate goal of this project."

It is also a difficult goal. Martinez showed me the registration log at the Center for its first five days. One hundred and ninety-six people registered in the first week; only thirty-one of them found work. The figures may not look promising, but Martinez and CASA Latina have hope for the project. Eventually Martinez would like to see the Center as a safe place for laborers to find work. "We have bathrooms, seats, some shelter, coffee in the morning, and some donations of food," he explained. "And we are also waiting for a trailer here so we can have a small library and computers that workers can use."

Community reaction in Belltown is mixed. John Nagy—who served as the Belltown Business Association's President when meetings were held between the City of Seattle, CASA Latina, and the Millionaire Club to address the formation of the Day Worker's Center—said that he had not seen a decrease in the number of workers waiting for work under the viaduct. However, he conceded, the program is new, and hopefully things will improve as time goes by.

Michelle Norris at the Millionaire Club also noted that she had not seen a decrease in the number of migrant workers in the area. But she stressed the importance of CASA Latina's Day Worker's Center, and indicated that the Millionaire Club was cooperating as much as possible. "We provide different services," Norris explained. "To work at the Millionaire Club, one must provide identification and submit to a Washington State Patrol background check. At CASA Latina, one simply must register at the Center."

Whereas some of the immigrant workers may not be able to find work at the Millionaire Club because they do not meet the program's requirements, they can find work at the Day Worker's Center. "We are not competing with CASA Latina," Norris stressed. "We are both trying to get homeless people off the street and provide jobs. I wish CASA Latina the best."

In our next issue: Photographer Erik Castro has been documenting the day labor scene on Western Ave. in Belltown all year. We'll publish a selection of his compelling work.

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Altruism in an Armani Suit

The WTO is Coming to Town. Who cares and why?

BY PETER BLOCH-GARCIA

The World Trade Organization's Ministerial Conference will be held in Seattle, November 30th through December 3rd. Representatives from over 150 countries will use this conference to launch the next major world trade negotiations, eventually affecting the lives of billions of people worldwide. Concerned activists say the WTO will eliminate the sovereignty of nation-states and local governments. Opposition to the WTO has been mounting as the date of the conference approaches. In Seattle, the Network Opposed to the WTO, a branch of Ralph Nader's Public Citizen's Trade Watch, has been rallying support to send a message of their dissent to politicians and conference attendees.

The WTO's main goal is to bring down what they see as "barriers" to trade and "to improve the welfare of the peoples of the member countries." Opponents of the WTO, however, describe WTO aims as far from altruistic.

Opposition groups describe the WTO as non-elected corporate powerbrokers who have been quietly bringing down democratically formed regulations under the guise of "free" trade. Mike Godfried, staff member of People for Fair Trade, defines "fair trade" as "trade that respects environmental standards, public food safety standards, labor rights, human rights, and does not limit the sovereign government to pass laws to protect the public."

David Korten, noted policy expert and author (*When Corporations Rule the World*), describes the WTO as a "secret world government" that serves only to benefit a small group of wealthy elite. Korten also says WTO policies create a "world-wide casino where high-stakes gamblers and monopolists play for the chance of garnering as much of society's wealth as possible."

Double Choke Hold

The WTO formed as a result of trade negotiations in 1995. It is largely made up of corporate trade lawyers who are unelected and unaccountable to the governments of countries for which they are making policy. According to Godfried, WTO members represent corporate interests, not public interest. "It is important to know that [WTO] is anti-democratic," he explained. "They are completely out of reach to the public. They are closed to the public. They are closed to the media."

The 130 members of the WTO represent corporations which control 90% of the world markets. In

addition to the power that this wealth represents, the power behind the WTO also comes from its trade agreements.

The General Agreements on Tariffs (GATT) enabled alleged violations of free trade to be tried before a WTO trade panel. In an article on July 16, the *Wall Street Journal* called the WTO the "supreme court of international trade." But is it a prejudicial court? Acting independently of any democratic governing body, every one of 100 cases over four years of WTO sanctions have favored corporations over public health and the environment.

In January 1999, a WTO panel ruled against the European Union over banana sales. The EU was not allowed to redress its history of exploitation of the Caribbean colonies, and the WTO favored claims by Chiquita, Dole, and Del Monte, who control 97% of the banana market. The ruling will result in unemployment of 300,000 workers in the Caribbean, which already suffers from 40% unemployment.

In 1998, a non-elected WTO panel ruled against the U.S. Endangered Species Act. The act required shrimp nets to attach excluder devices to prevent accidental killing of thousands of endangered turtles each year. The panel ruled that these devices were an unfair barrier to shrimp industry. After years of fighting by thousands of environmental activists worldwide, endangered species laws were overridden by this non-elected WTO panel.

In April 1997, the Ethyl Corporation sought \$251 million in damages from the Canadian government over their ban of MMT, a fuel additive added to gasoline to prevent engine knocking. Although the additive made cars less noisy, it is a dangerous neurotoxin that can cause nerve damage leading to psychosis, memory loss, and death. Under NAFTA provisions, Ethyl Corporation sued the Canadian government for banning their product, and Canadian taxpayers paid the company \$20 million.

Sneaking Knee Drop to the Head

Although not made public, the WTO agenda in the Seattle

conference is rumored to include negotiations of a new treaty with broader definitions for corporations to use to their own ends. The old agreement, known as the MAI (Multinational Agreement on Investment), also might appear on the WTO agenda.

Created by the OECD (Office Economic Cooperation and Development, itself comprised of 29 of the wealthiest nations in the world) in secret, and which only came to light after being leaked and spread on the internet, the MAI negotiations were ditched after protests by labor and environmental groups.

The MAI would have enabled corporations to sue any level of government — federal, state, or even municipal — for loss of trade caused by legislative action, whether that be through environmental

or public health laws. And governments would not have been allowed to outlaw doing business with corporations from countries with bad human rights records, essentially destroying the political clout of embargoes.

If ratified, the MAI would have also enabled multinational corporations to sue governing agencies for preserving our local

natural resources and upholding laws that protect the public from being victims of corporate greed. Opponents of the MAI called it "NAFTA with teeth."

Numerous officials and organizations say that concerns about MAI are moot. Senator Patty Murray's office said that it was a "dead issue." A spokesperson for the Washington International Trade Council said that the WTO is not associated with nor interested in the MAI.

However, on July 9, according to the *Globe and Mail*, the European Union called for new trade talks to include a multilateral trade accord similar to the now-defunct MAI. The proposal of Acting Trade Commissioner Sir Leon Brittan proposed reviving the defunct MAI, calling for rules that would "avoid the mistakes that led to the failure of the investment negotiations in the OECD."

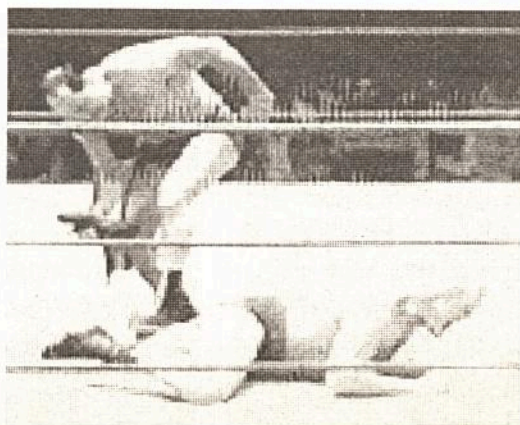
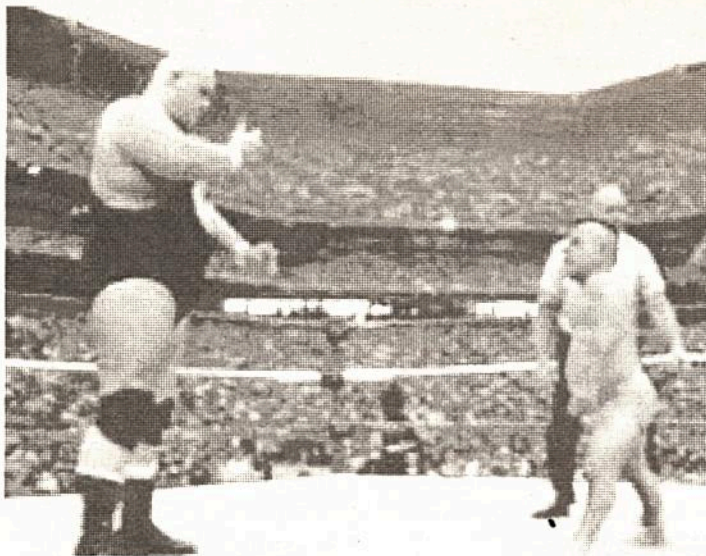
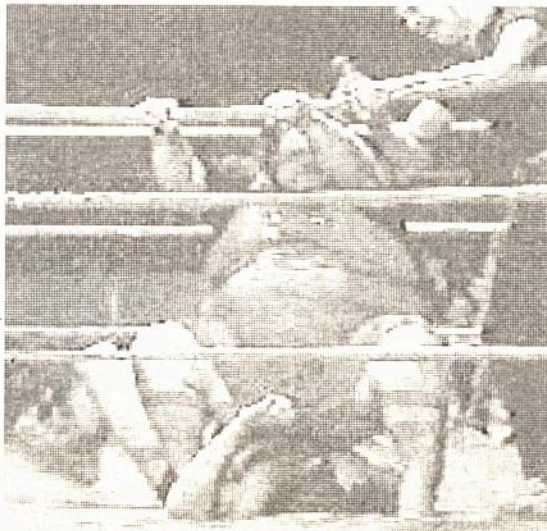
When asked about the defunct MAI negotiation, David Orten of the Washington Fair Trade Campaign called claims that the MAI is a "dead issue" misleading. "That is just the new spin they are putting on it," Orten said. "The WTO has not finalized its agenda, but they are pushing to bring the MAI back to the table."

Inverted Powerbomb

Other than the MAI, what may be on the agenda at the Seattle conference? All issues are up for revision, according to Margaret Strand Ranges of

Public Citizen Global Trade Watch. "We do know there is a built-in agenda that will include banking & finance, agriculture, investment, and free logging agreements," says Ranges. When asked what people should be concerned about, she says, "It is hard to see the link

Cont. to page 13



A Worthwhile Quest?

Food stamps, other assistance to be delivered by bank card

BY ADAM HOLDORF

Pioneer Square's mini-bank just moved into the 1990s. Thanks to contributions from six area banks, the Lutheran Compass Center's case manager-tellers can use a computerized system to access the accounts of their 600 homeless or low-income customers. No more handwritten book-keeping.

That's nothing compared to what the state Department of Social and Health Services is doing to modernize welfare payments statewide. Since April, DSHS has been dispensing a new debit card, the "Quest" card, to Washington's 200,000 welfare and food stamp recipients, first in southwest and now in eastern Washington.

And it's coming this way. Starting November 1st, the state's contractor, Citibank EBT Services, will make a balance transfer in a Florida database, and state benefit recipients in King County will pull out an ATM card at the grocery store, slide it through a debit machine, type in a PIN number, and go home with the groceries.

That's the way it's supposed to work. Thousands of welfare recipients in southwest Washington had a tougher time in the April roll-out. Citibank and DSHS mailed Quest cards with undeliverable addresses to about one-tenth of the 18,000 welfare recipients in the seven-county region. In Skamania county, few ATMs were equipped to accept the Quest card on the first day. Caseworkers actually drove clients across the Columbia Gorge to withdraw money from a U.S. Bank ATM in Hood River, Oregon, where the electronic system has been in place for months.

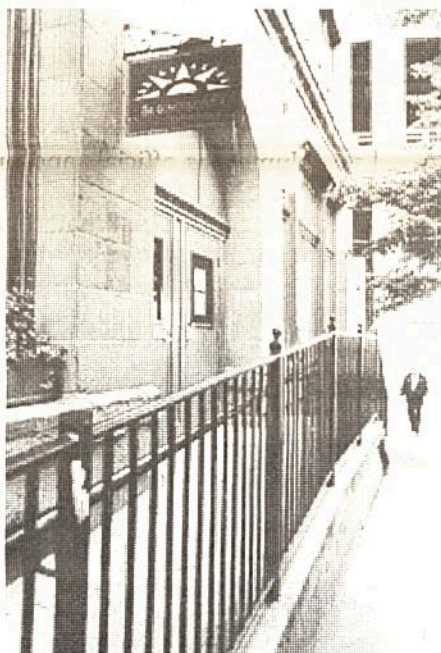
DSHS calls the spring regional introduction a "trial" which gave the agency time to fix problems before bringing the card to King County, where the

state's largest and most diverse pool of recipients resides. DSHS is still coaxing banks and other ATM owners to accept the Quest card. While some smaller, rural banks have been eager to take the card, larger banks have been slow, said DSHS's Dave Field. Seafirst, Key Bank and U.S. Bank were ready for the southwest Washington rollout. Key Bank is already displaying the Quest logo on its Seattle ATMs. But Washington Mutual said it was too busy with other business, and Wells Fargo has totally declined to participate.

Slow banks are passing up potential revenue, as Quest card users on TANF will pay the ATM's owner a surcharge of \$1 to \$1.50 every time they use an ATM machine, in addition to paying Citibank \$.85. In light of this, bank hesitancy is perplexing. Says Field: "They've got a captive market."

But even if banks affix Quest stickers to every ATM in town, welfare recipients who can't read the ATM's English or Spanish instructions might not be prepared to use them. Russian-speaking immigrants living in Vancouver got little attention during the spring rollout. The state required Citibank to mail information about the new cards in only English and Spanish, and according to Laurie Garber, an attorney representing welfare recipients at the Olympia-based Northwest Justice Project, the Russians "got this credit card-type thing in the mail, with a little paragraph in Russian saying more information was available at the [DSHS] office. Which wasn't true," she says; informational brochures in nine other languages were printed

PHOTO BY J. CHRISTOPHER



"Starting November 1st, the state's contractor, Citibank EBT Services, will make a balance transfer in a Florida database, and state benefit recipients in King County will pull out an ATM card at the grocery store, slide it through a debit machine, type in a PIN number, and go home with the groceries."

late. "DSHS just didn't have all its ducks in a row before going live down there."

And then there are people with other problems. "Clients vary in how sophisticated they are," says Garber. "I have one client with mental disabilities, and he didn't even know he had [cash benefits] on his card until a store clerk asked him if he wanted cash back. And I'd already spent ten minutes on the phone explaining this to him."

DSHS encourages people who can't remember their PIN numbers, or who can't use an ATM machine, to find an "alternate cardholder," someone trustworthy to pay the rent and buy the food on their behalf.

That's the only option for people who don't want to use the new system, points out Garber. Unlike the U.S. Department of the Treasury's Electronic Funds Transfer program, which dispenses federal Social Security, disability or veterans' benefits, there is no opting out of the new electronic system. The Treasury Department allows federal funds recipients to continue receiving a paper check in the mail every month — for whatever reason, whether they can't read the language on the ATM machine or prefer to pay cash for rent. Those people can't waive participation in the state's system. They will either entrust their benefits to someone else, get used to the changes, or drop out.

Tommy Richard, a Lutheran Compass Center customer who uses food stamps, heard about electronic welfare's introduction in his native

Louisiana. He doesn't think it's a big deal. "Anybody should be able to figure it out," he says. "If they can figure out who to get money on the street [in exchange for food stamps], they can figure this out." But the common scams under the current program are due for extinction. "The only problem is you'll get no change. You know, people go buy a pack of gum and get change; and then they buy another pack. And then they have enough money for cigarettes, maybe a beer." ☐

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Street Voices

I'm OK, They're OK

Library users accept homeless

Since City Librarian Deborah Jacobs made it a point to say that "Many donors indicate that they do not feel safe visiting the Central Library," (see op/ed, p. 3), *Real Change* reporter Dave Hall asked 20 patrons this question: *Does the presence of homeless people in the library ever make you feel unsafe?* Across the board, the answer was an unqualified *No*. Here are some of their responses.



No I don't feel unsafe at all.

—Chris Stilwell

I don't feel unsafe at all. I come from Los Angeles and there are a lot more homeless people in the libraries there. They're not threatening.

—Mike Homan

I don't feel unsafe in the library. Sometimes when I come at night I feel unsafe on my way here, but once I'm inside the library I feel very safe.

—Monica Flannigan

No, not at all. Access to knowledge is a damn good thing. I've never had any problem at all.

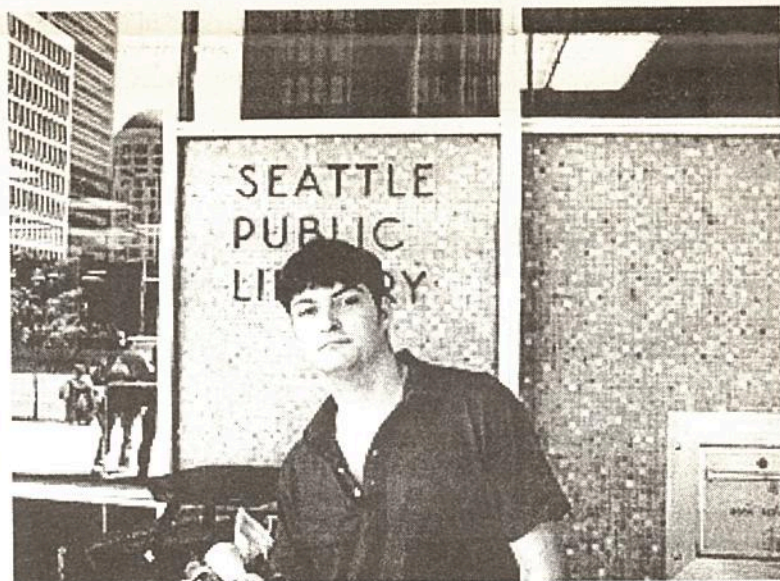
—Tim Gouran

No. I go every weekend and I have never been bothered by them. Being in the library is good for everyone.

—Brian Lew

Not really, no. If it was winter and cold out, I would be in there too. I think that it's good that people show compassion to them.

—Thomas Reilly



I'm homeless and I feel more comfortable here than at the missions and shelters. I've never seen any kind of problems here. People tend to mind their manners at the library.

—Mark Hurst



I didn't even notice. As far as I know, nothing has ever happened.

—Manuel Garcia

No I don't. I think homeless people have a right to be at the library. A library is the easiest way to get an education. Not allowing them here is like stamping the foot down even harder.

—Joshua Steele

I come here quite often and I've never felt threatened or in danger. I think it's good that homeless people are here. Education is key to getting back on your feet.

—Katie Drake

No. I don't come here a lot, but I never felt unsafe.

—George Wilson.

I didn't really notice there were a lot of homeless people here, so obviously they don't make me feel unsafe.

—Sarah Druzik

BARD. CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

That philosophy is reflected in one of the goals of the local program, that students will be "better prepared to be participating citizens, and, in many cases, go on to college." By this standard, the program has certainly been successful for students Amy D'Acquisto and Janet Welt.

D'Acquisto, one of five students who earned six credits from prestigious Bard College, was recently admitted to Seattle University where she will study to become a teacher. A series of blows in rapid succession — a shattered vertebrae in an on-the-job accident (she was a landscaper) followed by a rent increase from \$750 to \$1300, which forced her and her daughter to move — put her well below the poverty line. She heard about the Clemente course through a gardener friend. "I practically didn't know what the humanities are," she says, but decided to apply because "I love going to school and I figured I could drop out if the program was hokey... When I knew it was a good thing, which was right away, I made a commitment to see it through." D'Acquisto never missed a class.

One factor in D'Acquisto's dedication was the "really good teachers," especially her philosophy instructor, Elizabeth Lyall. "Her positive energy brought out a lot in the students," D'Acquisto says. Lyall encouraged students to have and express their thinking on issues, she explains, so that "by the end most everyone felt comfortable expressing their opinions."

Though she had a community college degree in landscaping, D'Acquisto had never aspired to a university education. A Seattle Pacific University counselor who visited the Clemente class to explain college entrance procedures encouraged her to go for a BA degree. "I would never have seen myself going on, especially not to Seattle University," she says. "The course had a lot to do with my

decision. I was inspired to move beyond working with plants to learning how to work with people."

Welt, who also was made poor by a disabling injury and who also hopes to become an education major at Seattle University, says she too has learned a lot about working with people. As a result of her class readings and discussion of Marcus Aurelius' *Meditations*, "I've learned to be more tactful in my dealings with others." She recommends the *Meditations* as "a good psychological clean-up" for achieving a more balanced, happier life.

For Welt, one of the unexpected benefits of the course was the opportunity to experience a true community of scholars. "I've learned as much from my classmates as from the instructors," she says. "Which is not to take anything away from the instructors. It was their ability to draw people out that made it all possible." The faculty have agreed, in fact, that next time around the classes will be even less focused on "getting through the material" and more on being "a real living conversation between student and teacher," says Bush.

Bush says his own best class sessions came out of student-initiated questions and comments. For example, when a student complained — and others joined in — that the philosopher Thomas Hobbes' writing was boring and repetitious, Bush challenged them to show him examples

that illustrated their point. In moments the students were citing specific passages, explaining what they meant and why they were redundant. By a fortunate coincidence, the topic of the next session after a break — US History — was the American revolution, in which Hobbes' ideas had an influence. The student who had complained about Hobbes was also the one who was best able to explain Hobbes' contribution to the revolution.

For Welt, one of the most revealing and meaningful experiences occurred just after the Littleton tragedy. "It was before all the media hype, the letters to the editor and such," she says. "We'd just finished our history

session and it was time for the break. But instead of taking our break, we began talking about what happened in Littleton — not the gory stuff, but the causes, the problems in society, like problems of class and race. And we came up with some solutions, things we could do to improve the situation. There are things I'm practicing in my life right now as a result of that discussion."

While Welt's goals and expecta-

tions of the course haven't changed a lot — she's added teaching to her original career possibilities of politics or human services — there were some surprises. She discovered a latent interest and ability in art history, "a component I really excelled in." For an art history project on "public art," she found a sculpture in the courtyard of the Washington Mutual Bank Tower downtown, and on a field trip to view examples of public art she led her classmates to the sculpture and led a discussion of it. The sculpture consists of two columns — "with elements of Ionic and Doric architecture," Welt told her classmates — made of stacked, burnished titanium discs. One is standing but lopsided, the other lies in pieces on the ground as if it has toppled.

"In a way, it's a sad commentary on the power brokers in our society," Welt told her classmates, adding that she believes it reflects the artist's sense of humor: an ostentatiously expensive sculpture, commissioned by a bank — one of the most powerful symbols of our civilization — depicting the fall of that very civilization. "Monuments have been built over the ages, and this mighty skyscraper will one day also crumble," is her interpretation of the artist's message. She was delighted when a classmate, Kidane Ayele, an immigrant from Ethiopia, added that the disks that make up the columns look like coins — an appropriate sym-

"I love going to school and I figured I could drop out if the program was hokey... When I knew it was a good thing, which was right away, I made a commitment to see it through."

**Amy D'Acquisto,
Clemente Program
Graduate**

Deeper than that, we need not to propagate stereotypes and separation. Homeless people are stakeholders in the community too, and need to be at the table when downtown development is discussed. Homeless people have key information about the mission and impact of the library on our community. Until and unless this is understood, neither the library nor the Civic Center will be the core of our democracy.

To give your opinion on the issue, contact the Mayor's Office and/or City Councilmembers Nick Licata, Martha Choe and Richard Conlin to encourage them to include hygiene services for homeless people in Phase 1 of the Civic Center Master Plan. Or, contact City Librarian Deborah Jacobs to encourage her to see homeless people as stakeholders in this discussion, and to push for hygiene services in the new Central Library.

SPL. CONT. FROM PAGE 2

brary for all the same reasons anyone uses the library—because of the STUFF that's at the library.

And homeless people are drawn to the library for something even bigger: the great thing about the library is that it's not a ghetto of homeless people. One homeless scholar said, "I feel more comfortable here than at the missions and shelters." The library IS necessarily diverse, and beautiful and comforting for that.

It's clear there needs to be a two-fold call to action: First, the push for more hygiene centers, soon and all over the downtown core. Two obvious locations for additional hygiene services are in the Civic Center, AND the new library itself. With the construction of these brand-new facilities we have the opportunity to address the immediate needs of all members of our community and increase our civic pride.

bol for a bank.

On the same field trip another student, Xochitl Bravo, took the group to El Centro de la Raza, where she works part-time, to show them a mural depicting the lives of migrant workers. Falling on hard times, the artist had to leave the mural unfinished while he sought work in other parts of the country. Twenty years later he returned to complete the project. It was a story of hope for her classmates: hard luck, perseverance, and eventual success.

Welt so impressed art instructor Hal Oppens that he invited her to participate in a program at the UW, and she's planning with history instructor Lorraine McConaghy to make a video about the interesting characters in her neighborhood as part of the "Nearby History" project jointly sponsored by WCH and the Museum of History and Industry, where McConaghy is staff historian.

Both Welt and D'Acquisto credited program director Lyall Bush — who, says D'Acquisto, "gave 300 percent" — with the course's success.

For his part, Bush is as enthusiastic about the students in the program as they are about him. A veteran of seven years of college teaching, Bush says, "These were the best students I've ever had. They really listened." Bush uses the word "driven" frequently to describe the students' eagerness to grasp and apply concepts.

Bush's only regret is that, despite careful screening, only half of the 26 people admitted to the course completed it — which has been about the norm wherever it's been done. Two enrollees never showed up despite their initial enthusiasm, two moved away, two became involved in other educational endeavors, and the rest eventually quit for "physical and mental health reasons" — victims of the "surround of force."

Students who stuck with it also had to contend with challenges. Despite the difficulties of living poor, a number of students participated in weekend field trips and hands-on experiences. And even after the course was officially over, several students accepted history instructor Lorraine McConaghy's invitation to an open house celebrating a new show of photographs by Phil Borges at the Museum of History and Industry.

At graduation ceremonies last month, students presented Bush with a framed "Special Merit Award" for "outstanding dedication and extraordinary efforts." The citation also applies to the new graduates themselves, who met the opportunities offered by the course and made themselves a new beginning. □

For more information about the Clemente course, contact Lyall Bush at Washington Commission for the Humanities at 206-682-1770 or by e-mail at lyall.bush@humanities.org. For more about the Clemente concept, see an article by Earl Shorris in WCH's online magazine Port, at www.humanities.org.

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Tenant Talk

**Educate
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 By TU Staff



Rent is Theft

In our Mailbag section (see p. 2) is a letter from a landlord with a question about the relationship between landlords and tenants: Why is it, she asks rhetorically, inherently adversarial? While this is not a new objection, it did spark organizers at the Tenants Union to offer their take on this fundamental issue.

In Tenant Talk, the Tenants Union has been offering tips for tenants to organize their neighbors for tenant power to ensure decent, affordable housing for all. We want to share the reasons the Tenants Union believes tenants need to organize. Looking at the tenant-landlord relationship makes it clear that it is an oppressive relationship. This is based on the economic power the landlord has over a basic necessity of the tenant and the governmental institutions that support the continued oppression of tenants.

All people deserve the dignity of individual or collective control and ownership over their own homes. Unfortunately, most working class people are trapped in the tenant-landlord relationship. This relationship has always been one of tension. Tenants enter the relationship out of economic necessity in order to meet one of the basic human needs: a roof over their heads. Landlords enter the relationship in order to make a profit. Landlords, as a class, have cultivated this relationship, organized action to gain control over it and limit its regulations, and maximize its profitability.

When tenants pay rent, we are forced to pay large portions of our incomes that should go towards other basic necessities. Our rents go up regardless of the increases or stagnation of our wages. As tenants, we work hard. We sacrifice in order to pay rent to landlords. This builds the wealth and power of landlords and keeps tenants struggling month to month. Many tenants are forced to choose between shelter, health care, and food with budgets that do not allow all needs to be met.

The power landlords have over tenants is immense. From when we may have visitors, to the color of our bedrooms, and to whether or not we can remain in our homes, even when we pay our rent. Landlords have the power to enforce rules and to decide whether or not to evict us.

When people struggle for human rights it is because of the existence of injustice. The struggle for tenants' rights is due to the history and present reality of wrongs tenants suffer at the hands of landlords. The Washington State legislature recognized this imbalance of power between landlords and tenants by passing the Residential Land-

lord Tenant Act, which regulates basic aspects of this relationship. However, the law is weak. The state does not enforce this law; it is up to tenants to enforce the law by asserting their rights.

Unfortunately, many tenants who assert their legal rights face retaliation in the form of eviction, rent increases, or being locked out of their home. The fear of retaliation keeps many tenants living in unsafe and substandard housing because it is all they can afford. When tenants assert their rights, they put their shelter on the line. Landlords, on the other hand, mainly risk their potential profits.

When tenants do assert their rights under the law it is the ultimate decision of a judge in eviction court if landlords are behaving illegally. In this society, it is more likely for landlords to become judges and less likely for tenants. Tenants do not readily have access to the courts and legal representation. Landlords have the judicial system and a police force to enforce their actions. Even if tenants successfully win an eviction, they have the fact that an eviction was filed against them in court on their record. It is hard enough to find a place to rent with an eviction on your record, let alone if you have on record that you beat a landlord in court.

But what of the landlord who says, "But I am a good landlord. I treat my tenants well. I am just using them to pay off my mortgage." Regardless of the civility of landlords, tenants are economically oppressed. Most individual landlords may choose to follow regulations. Some may choose to limit their personal profit. The kind behavior of some landlords does not change the fact that tenants are in a vulnerable position. Tenants do not know when they may lose their home due to a landlord selling or demolishing their building. Landlords have a loud voice in their well-funded organizations, which actively promote their interests. "Good" landlords allow their voice to be represented by these organizations.

Paying continually increasing rent to the profiting landlord keeps the American Dream of home ownership out of the realm of possibilities for most tenants. After the months have passed tenants have nothing to show for their investment. Landlords use their economic advantage by using tenants to pay off the mortgages of their properties. They gain more advantage through this long-term capital investment.

In the Principles of Unity of the Tenants Union, we express our core beliefs. We believe that all tenants have the right to decent affordable housing, free from all forms of discrimination. We believe that housing exists to meet a basic need, and when a conflict arises between a tenants' needs and owners' profit, the basic need for decent affordable housing must take priority over the economic interests of landowners. We believe that all homes should be safe and secure the privacy of tenants. We believe that tenants should have the right to live in the neighborhood of their choice. We oppose arbitrary evictions and all retaliatory actions against tenants. We are committed to see these beliefs become reality. We cannot achieve these principles without cultivating resistance to this oppression. [E]

To join the Tenants Union, call (206) 722-6848.

All people deserve the dignity of individual or collective control and ownership over their own homes. Unfortunately, most working class people are trapped in the tenant-landlord relationship. This relationship has always been one of tension.

Got a Tenant Problem? Get Help

| | |
|---------------------------------------|----------|
| Seattle CSOs (police matters only) | 684-4790 |
| Legal Action Center (low income only) | 324-6890 |
| Lawyer Referral Service | 623-2551 |
| Northwest Justice Project | |
| (Section 8 or HUD housing only) | 464-1519 |
| Tenants' Union | 723-0500 |
| or TTY (hearing impaired) | 723-0523 |

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LETTERS. CONT FROM PAGE 2

you ever had to stand up to your landlord?" For a response to your question about whether or not there is an inherently adversarial relationship between tenants and landlords, see Tenant Talk on p. 10.

The ilk of Human Kindness

Dear Real Change,

In my busy day-to-day life I sometimes find myself taking for granted the things that really matter! People!

Last week, in the midst of a busy day, I had a flat tire in downtown Seattle. I have never changed a tire and so was sitting in my car contemplating who to call, when two gentlemen appeared at my car window. When I opened the door one gentleman warmly asked, "Do you need some help? I can change your tire for you." Within 15 minutes, my tire was changed and I was on my way.

During that 15 minutes, I asked the gentlemen if they worked close by. One laughed, and the other replied "No, we are homeless and were just out walking around." I thought they were joking. I had never considered that a homeless person would approach me, offer to help me, accept my grateful "Thank you" and be on his way. But this was in fact the case. My intuition told me that the two young men were not "construction workers" as I had assumed, but were part of the homeless community in Seattle.

Real Change, I am sending this note as a request to publish yet another "Thank you" to the two men who changed the tire on my white Jeep Cherokee last week. These two men reminded me that we are all God's children who need others in our daily lives.

Grace in Seattle

Warmed to the Cockles

Dear Real Change,

Well here I am again with some more things that I can see that the homeless do need. I see A LOT of buildings that go empty and unused. Why can't the homeless have these or maybe one of them to try making themselves a beginning, for they're building themselves back up to the real world? Why is it that the city does not want to help the homeless?

I have gone out on Aurora, and you would not believe what I have seen. I saw a big St. Bernard and kitty cat sit side by side and their little sign said, "PLEASE HELP THE HOMELESS ANIMALS." They had their big box there and people were putting money into it like no tomorrow. It just warmed my heart to see this after all the work we have done to "help the homeless."

Then there was a homeless lady in the park who was selling stuffed animals and told us, "anyone that was buying a stuffed animal would receive a rose." We went into the Pet Smart and then came back to talk to the lady. She talked to us for a short time and then gave us both a silk yellow rose just for talking to her. I found it very nice. It was inspiring to me. We brought our roses home and we will have them the rest of our lives, and we will remember where they came from.

Donna J. Stout

Duck Lickers Unite

Dear Real Change,

This is a humorous response to Wes Browning's column in the May 15 issue. I'm surprised someone else didn't beat me to it:

Wes: Way back in the dawn of ancient history (last May), you confessed to one and all that you are a Duck-licker. Congratulations! You have taken the First Step, namely, admitted that your life has become unmanageable. Despair not, there is hope. Duck Lickers Anonymous, or DLA, now has their own Twelve-Step Group. For more information call 1-800-TO-QUACK. (You'll get the joke when you try to dial that number.) DLA is also online at www.webfoot.org

Meanwhile, good duck—er, good luck—to you!

Violet Ray

True Believer #11,476

Dear Real Change,

Wow, just had a great conversation with a gentleman named Art, a vendor for Real Change. He gave me a trial copy and I've just finished a second copy. What a great opportunity for Seattleites. A great newspaper. Great writing, very powerful insights. As a Bush Thousand Points of Light believer, I hope to be of some help in this effort. I will look forward to your next installment with much anticipation, you are all to be congratulated for a wonderful mission. A truly great Seattle resource. I agree with the letter to the editor suggesting that your paper should be winning awards and grants to support this effort. Thank you for a wonderful experience!

Jeff Koenen

Public Housing is the Answer

Dear Real Change,

Lest we forget that the federal government is morally responsible to protect the life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness of the people, we must remind our Congressional representatives and senators that housing is a tenet upon which civilization is based.

It was with the help of public housing that many young families were able to catch their breath in their struggle to give their families better opportunities. We see today the doctors, the lawyers, the elected public servants and the many persons who contributed to make their communities better. The public housing communities are still striving and we must not fail our future generations who today need the help of public housing. If the Generals (Electric, Motors, etc) receive subsidies, it is not a shame for us who do pay taxes to get some of that subsidy.

Public housing is the answer for our people whose incomes are at about the federal minimum rates, and most certainly for the retired and disabled persons whose incomes could not afford the "fair market rents" established by HUD which the landlords use as a guideline for rents.

With the great need for apartments with rents based upon income received, the federal government must not allow private/ non-profit markets to assume the total responsibility for supplying the needed housing. It is imperative that the federal government use our money for domestic needs—to promote domestic tranquility!

Let us become FRIENDS OF PUBLIC HOUSING and let us recognize its value and its ongoing need for tomorrow's generations.

Mamie Jackson



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Remembrance

Recently, we sat around the kitchen table,
finishing breakfast, we listened to the music
the Cree tape cassette with their high-pitched native voices
singing and the rhythm of the tribal drumming
became the background to our conversation.
It dawned on me, she, still,
had the aliveness; not being maudlin, the shiny
twinkle in her eyes. When she spoke
she, now, had lines around her brown eyes
they softened her look and her thin lips curved
into a smile laughing she told a story
of her childhood. Sometimes a person doesn't believe
their parents had life before them.
It is funny about relationships
and I still call her by her first name
not mother.
We were never close like television families;
we always knew there was caring
and love. However over the years, I've become distant
as a writer and somewhat

more observant
and a better poet. We, all, approach death
and begin to measure life
not only in ourselves
but others
as well. Life seems more precious in others.
She told me as a girl
when the Whipman visited: Discipline had to be meted out
not in a mean way but to remind you of the need
to be good and mind your ways.
The Whipman was a relative or close to the family.
She, again, related: she became more animated
with chores. He rode his horse down the grassy
hillside where now there is a wheat field
I, too, can see him. Her story makes me understand
our relatives more. I don't believe we have grown older
and I cannot write a good enough letter
expressing my love.

—Earle Thompson

Missed You

I knew my father like a sixty-year resident of a small town
knows her postman.
Through gossip, meaningless bus stop conversations.
Who's sick, who's pregnant, who's getting married.
Shared postcards.
He must've thought like Picasso,
twisted and jumbled,
to paint the pictures of his life so blue.
Divorced, my mother was his true love,
second to American beer.
His jacket smelled of leather, cigarettes
and cheap women.
A class act.
He warned me to stay away from boys and drugs
and to love Jesus.
I remember the bumper sticker for sale
at his AA meetings: One day at a time.
Where have the days gone?
My enemy, my friend, my wasted genius.
I am here in college
with your life insurance money.
I would spend it all
to touch your bristled face,
and to tell you
who's sick, who's pregnant, who's getting married.

—Amber Hubert

Lament for an Ex-lover With Whom I Share No Small Talk

And sold, I lie alone in the bed you bought,
where once entwined we lay and broke the day
together, soaring high as we sought out the
mountain birds and seashore's madness.

I thought the tears had long stopped falling
but they burst their return while my brain,
hoping to float dumbfound in stars' bondage,
is lurched instead into *hiraeth's* caterwaul.

This new woman who has taken your name,
mundane in her dyed blondness, proves
further anchor to your gaining solid turf
yet still I climb tumbling over ocean stones.

You are such a one of wealthy science and
I, a simply cracked nutcase poet whose
income of faith could never cut through
your carapace logic, have finally slipped.

Outside the carved circle in a nation that
praises the sensibly manifest, transient
pain merely entertains, I carry therefore
no rock to support our common struggle.

Busy fool, I nurture my unruly sore spot,
for I have only these traitor words and
one trapped bird nestling in my heart,
wings as waves beating, to prove my story.

—Ruth A. Fox

**Hiraeth* is a Welsh word that loosely means unquenchable longing

Call for Submissions:

Real Change is currently accepting poetry submissions for our fifth anniversary issue. We'll pick the top 5-10 and publish them on September 1. The theme is (what else) the fifth year anniversary of *Real Change* and whatever related themes that occasion inspires in you. Winners receive nice prizes. Send or bring 1-3 pieces by 8/15 to:

Real Change Anniversary, 2129 - 2nd Ave.
Seattle, WA 98122

Include SASE if possible, or inquire in late August about your submission. Thanks!

WTO, CONT FROM PAGE 6

between local and global liberalization and deregulation, [but] people should be concerned about widening the gap on a global scale."

According to the International Forum on Globalization, the WTO will pass a plan that will essentially increase consumption, dilute forest management standards, and dismantle environmental regulations. In response, the WTO website rebuffs the claims of environmental groups. It reads, "Many provisions take environmental concerns specifically into account... So far there has been no conflict between the WTO's agreements and the international environmental agreements."

Many people and even local governments aren't buying it. The King County Council and Olympia City Council have already passed anti-MAI resolutions. So have the Association of Washington Cities, the National Association of Counties, and the cities of Berkeley, Arcata, Boulder, and the San Francisco Board of Supervisors. The Network Opposed to the WTO has also been gaining support among groups including AFL-CIO, Citizens for Fair Trade, and the Seattle

Tenants Union. NO-WTO plan to be the focal point for other groups who wish to voice their dissent and to raise people's awareness of the WTO issues that will effect citizens of member nations.

Mandible Claw

If local governments and groups are outspoken against WTO, the same cannot be said for national politicians.

At a recent forum on WTO, Senator Patty Murray said, "I called Al Gore to make sure the Administration was doing all it could to include the views of labor and the environmental communities." But upon further questioning of Senator Murray's staff, they would only agree to speak off the record. When asked if Senator Murray would make a statement about the claim that the WTO is a threat to democratic government, they said that the Senator was unavailable to make a statement.

Not surprisingly, Senator Slade Gorton endorses WTO policies because, as he said in a guest editorial in the Seattle P-I, "It provides low-cost goods to consumers." What he fails to mention is that it also provides

huge profits to multi-national corporations, who market products manufactured by underpaid workers in underdeveloped countries. With an increase in the number of millionaires worldwide in the last ten years and an increase in women and children living in poverty, one would think the current trade practices instituted by the WTO are only working for some of the people.

"The WTO supporters talk about creating jobs," says Godfried. "What kind of jobs? All we've seen have been an increase in manual jobs, manufacturing jobs with minimal pay." He goes on to say the consequence of WTO policies so far has resulted in "2 million farmers in Mexico who lost their land because of NAFTA" which favored corporate run agri-businesses.

David Korten says, "While this twenty-year period has produced impressive economic growth and swelled the ranks of the world's billionaires, for most people it has brought about absolute declines in real living standards, unconscionable inequality, environmental devastation, and social breakdown — contributions most of us could do without."

U.S. Trade Representative Charlene Barshefsky says the Seattle conference "will shape world trade for the next century." For such an important occasion, it leaves one to wonder why has the WTO been largely ignored by the mainstream media? And with Democrats and Republicans alike supporting the WTO, why hasn't there been more public input? Seduced by the appeal for corporate profits, which inevitably lead to campaign contributions, politicians are quietly endorsing the WTO because it promises to keep the economy "booming" and the New York Stock Exchange making unprecedented gains. [E]

For more information about future plans and events in opposition to the WTO, check out these websites:

www.tradewatch.org

www.seattlewto.org

www.peopleforfairtrade.org

ADVENTURES IN POETRY

with © Dr. Wes Browning

Bottoms Up

What is poetry to me?

Your head, an orange,
a pencil up my nose.

A lost weekend,
found in my pants.

Chocolate cake,
vanilla snake.

The passing fancy,
the staying plain.

X marks the spot.
Anybody got an eraser?

Speaking of lost weekends, the North American Street Newspaper Association had its annual conference in Cleveland two weekends ago, and *Real Change* was there. Four of us, anyway.

I bet a lot of you wonder what we homeless and formerly homeless representatives of street newspapers do at these long weekend conferences. Do we exchange train hopping techniques? Do we share pigeon recipes? Do we drink gallons of coffee? Do we use these conferences as an excuse to have loads of wild anonymous casual sex?

Sure, we're only human, but there's more to it than that. That other stuff only takes so long and then you find yourself in the odd workshop listening to an ACLU lawyer or a labor pool organizer, and then Anita "on whose kitchen floor I have sometimes slept" Freeman suddenly gets up and foment's revolution.

That's right. Our Anita, urging us all to help establish an alternative economy. Down with capitalism! Up with some other thing!

All right, I'm exaggerating. The closest we all came to fomenting revolution was when in one workshop, after trading horror stories about the treatment of the homeless in our respective cities, we all agreed that "it's bad everywhere" and "we should make a list of common demands."

So now the street newspaper movement has a list of demands and principles which includes such things as "people have a right not to be homeless."

Some other things we decided included "people should not have to accept illegal work (like prostitution, running drugs, transporting illegal immigrants) in order to survive," and "people should not have to breathe asbestos in order to get a paycheck."

Radical stuff, huh?

OK, it was as boring as a Republican caucus in Peoria. The high point, for me, of the whole conference came when one of the organizers told us that our conference site (Case Western Reserve University) was the cultural center of Ohio, prompting me to ask, "If this is such a hot-shot cultural center where are all the 7-11's?"

You see I have this theory, that poor people are so essential to every economy that anywhere you go in the US and Canada it must be possible to find cheap alcohol. Somebody has to do the grunt work. Somebody has to clean the toilets, mop the floors, wash the dishes. And

there have to be affordable drugs to make that all possible.

I go so far as to say that in every city there must be, within walking distance from city center, 40-ouncers of beer or the equivalent for two dollars or less.

So far I've always been proved right. I never found the 7-11 I was looking for near the campus in Cleveland, but found instead, right in the middle of the school, a drug store selling 40-ouncers of Schlitz Malt Liquor for \$1.60 including tax — score!

Don't get me wrong, I'm not against the poor drinking cheap booze.

On the contrary! My point is that the alcohol industry knows what it is doing. They know that poor people are a market. So they don't just sell expensive aged wine, they sell Thunderbird and Night Train.

So why can't we have the housing equivalent of Thunderbird? Why can't real estate developers see the market that is so plain and evident to Schlitz, and move in on it?

Your answers are anxiously awaited. [E]

"You see I have this theory, that poor people are so essential to every economy that anywhere you go in the US and Canada it must be possible to find cheap alcohol. Somebody has to do the grunt work. Somebody has to clean the toilets, mop the floors, wash the dishes. And there have to be affordable drugs to make that all possible."



UMOJA. CONT. FROM PAGE 1
Defending a heritage

"We did not come here for the American dream. We were kidnapped, put on a ship, treated like animals, stripped of our culture, our language, the history and knowledge of self, and our self respect. And, now you asking why we don't act like we got all that?" remarks Omari Tahir, who has been involved in Central Area politics his whole life. "We don't have it because you have to have cultural institutions to establish all that. And the public schools don't do that—they don't teach African American history. They don't even teach the history of racism in this country.

"We are against crime but we feel that a positive institution is the answer," continues Tahir. "We need a cultural institution, a technical institution, to get the kids involved in the trades. A place to create a sense of well-being among youth and in the community, as opposed to just letting young people have no job opportunities so they get involved in crime and dope and hustling and all that foolishness."

The struggle for that institution, the African American Heritage Museum and Cultural Center, developed out of a successful effort to stop the construction of a police station in the Central Area in 1984. "We couldn't have a jail in the Central Area—'cause if you live by the beehive you're gonna get stung—especially with the attitude the police have, you know they like to sting Black folks," exclaims Tahir.

Community activists, including Tahir, occupied the site in 1985 and demanded an African cultural facility instead. The City backed down on its plans and the community claimed a victory. A few years later the City officially approved this site as the formal center. A budget was created to begin the steps to purchasing the building. Slow progress continued

into the 90's as a rift developed on the board of the Museum between grassroots members and the corporate and city-supported members.

In the mid '90s a Youth Action Committee operated programs such as youth sports, arts and cultural activities, foreign language classes, and a homework and computer center, at the Colman School site. All that changed on June 4th, 1998. Responding to corporate and political pressure, Seattle Police SWAT teams raided the site and expelled the community members.

brought against them by the Seattle Police Department. The charges resulted in an incident in 1998 when the three men aided some young people who were injured in a car accident in the Central Area. As it turned out, the car had been stolen, and when the police arrived they initiated a confrontation.

In front of gathering community members, police assaulted the good

"Culture, self-respect and pride are the key to eliminating crime. Culture fights crime, not the police."

Omari Tahir

tion and have demanded an audit of city spending on the project. Though the audit is still under investigation, the effort is moving forward to purchase the school.

In the meantime, the Umoja Fest brings its positive energy to the Central Area August 6-8, featuring food, events, music, and a parade. The Bite of Africa, African Village and Market-place, and "Hoop Fest" happen all weekend. Special Children's activities are planned for Friday (and kids are welcome all weekend); you can also check out a Hip Hop concert (Saturday); African Heritage Parade (Saturday, 2 pm); and Family Unity Day, Gospel Fest, and Fashion Showcase (Sunday).

"Culture, self-respect and pride are the key to eliminating crime," reiterates Tahir. "Culture fights crime, not the police." The dream of a gathering place for African Americans is still alive with people committed to seeing it become a reality. Instead of reinforcing the punishment-based judicial system of incarceration, the center and festival just might prove to be able to infuse young people with a further sense of themselves, their history, and their future.

ment-based judicial system of incarceration, the center and festival just might prove to be able to infuse young people with a further sense of themselves, their history, and their future.

For more information on the Umoja Fest and the African American Heritage Museum and Cultural Center call (206) 320-9321 or check out their website at www.nwblackent.com/umoja



THE AFRICAN AMERICAN HERITAGE MUSEUM IS STILL EMPTY, BUT THE UMOJA FEST SHOWS WHAT COULD BE, AUGUST 6 - 8 AT JUDKINS PARK. PHOTO BY J. CHRISTOPHER

Fighting back, marching forward

Since then, activists involved in the struggle for the Museum have continued to draw fire for defending their community. Greg Jackson, founder of Copwatch 206, which documents police abuses and teaches legal defense against them, recently found himself at the center of a rare situation—not for its context but its outcome.

This past spring, Jackson and two other African American men were found not guilty on assault charges

Samaritans, who in turn defended themselves. "The not guilty verdict sets a legal precedent—that self defense is everyone's right, even against out of control police officers," remarked Jackson. "It helps reduce the fear of the police in the hearts of Black youth and adults."

The grassroots members of the Museum board, including Tahir and Jackson have also challenged the efforts to silence them. They have worked to regain control of the decision-making process for the organiza-

Real Change August 1, 1999 www.realchangenews.org

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AUGUST

NOTABLES

19th Annual Seattle Peace Concerts' Free Summer Park Concert Series, Summer Festivals of Music, Food, and Arts & Crafts, with Riverroots, Left Hand Smoke, Swamp Mama Johnson, Tiny Giants, sound by Affinity; admission free; please bring food bank donations for Northwest Harvest; noon - 6 p.m., at Golden Gardens; info <http://www.seapeace.org> or 206-729-5232

Annual commemoration and lantern floating ceremony remembering the victims of the atomic blast at Hiroshima and all victims of war; theme is Youth Activism; 7 p.m., just south of the Bathhouse Theater at Greenlake's northwest shore; rain or shine, info Peace Action 206-527-8050

UMOJA Fest 99, the Northwest's Largest African Heritage Festival & Parade; this year presenting the 1st Annual Black Family Business Award; 6 - 9 p.m., at Judkins Park/ Sam Smith Memorial Park; Parade August 7 at 2 pm, 23rd Ave. between Jackson & Massachusetts St; info 425-644-1011

Capitol Hill Artwalk: an alternative to loud boats, bombs, and planes; also a benefit for Washington State Ceasefire Campaign which provides gun violence education; Artwalk features dance, art, tea ceremony, and more; 1 p.m. - 2 a.m., including Arts Orbit Open House & Performance 1 - 6 p.m.; artists' reception and performance 6 - 10 p.m.; special guest DJs 10 p.m. - 2 a.m., at the Aeon Gallery; 1510 - 12th Ave Suite #2; info 206-323-8896 or aeongallery@hotmail.com

Witnessing to Trident, weekend of reflection and action with Sister Kathleen Pruitt, CSJP, culminating in response/ action to the violence symbolized and perpetrated by the Trident Nuclear Weapons system at Bangor. Some people may risk arrest. At Ground Zero Center for Nonviolent Action, 16159 Clear Creek Road, Poulsbo; info 360-377-2586 or <http://www.gzcenter.org> of info@gzcenter.org

Tenant organizing meeting sponsored by the Tenants Union; come plan actions to further tenants' rights and support the struggle of tenants to save their housing; Right of First Refusal Campaign strategy, snacks and socializing too; This and every 2nd Monday, 6 - 8 p.m. at the Pike Market Senior Center, 1931 - 1st Ave.; enter on the side door on Virginia St; for special needs (interpretation, kids etc.) please call ahead 206-722-6848 ext. 102

Art opening for Streetlife Gallery artist Roberto Valenza. Reception from 4 - 8 p.m., with screening of rare videos and poetry too. Show will remain up through August. Streetlife Gallery, 2301 - 2nd Ave.; info 206-956-8046

Benefit for political prisoner Mark Cook, who should be released from prison this fall after serving 25 years for activities related to the George Jackson Brigade. Former Brigade members and political prisoners Rita "bo" Brown and Ed Mead will talk about the history of the brigade, their own experiences, and current efforts to dismantle the prison industrial complex. Sponsored by the Washington Prison Project, and endorsed by Left Bank Books Collective, the Seattle Mumia Defense Committee. 7:30 p.m. at Central Lutheran Church, 1710 - 11th Ave. by the reservoir off Broadway. (Also will be broadcast live on Free Seattle Radio 87.9 FM.) For info; call 206-324-8165.

Washington NARAL's Eat for Choice! Eat at this wonderful restaurant and a portion of the proceeds go to National Abortion Rights Action Network to protect reproductive choice, all day, at Cow's Meow, 1835 Queen Anne Ave N; info wanaral@earthlink.net

Multicultural Teen Health Fair to promote emotional, spiritual, and physical fitness to teens of all backgrounds. Sponsored by the East Cherry YWCA and Consejo Counseling and Referral Services; from noon to 4:00 p.m. at the Rainier Beach Community Center, 8825 Rainier Ave. S.; info 206-568-7849

19th Annual Seattle peace concerts' Free Summer Park Concert Series, Summer Festivals of Music, Food, and Arts & Crafts, with The Green Pajamas, Mean Jolly Green, Fedora, Clinton Fearon Boogie Brown Band, sound by Green Banner; Admission Free. Please bring food bank donations for Northwest Harvest, noon - 6 p.m., at Magnuson Park; info <http://www.seapeace.org> or 206-729-5232

City Council Candidates' Forum, sponsored by Seattle Displacement Coalition, the Tenants' Union, and Real Change. Come hear what the candidates for Seattle City Council have to say about the real issues. This forum helps set important community issues for the campaign and the ensuing year at the Council. 7:00 p.m., at Pilgrim Congregational Church, 509 - 10th Ave. E. off Broadway; info 206-632-0668

Author Mona Lee reads from her recently published book, *Alien Child*, a fantasy in which Wella de Gornia arrives from a planet where war is so unheard of that there is no word for it in the vocabulary; her alien child facilitates a movement for a just world government. Mona Lee is a life-long activist for peace and justice and is co-chair of the Seattle Women's International League for Peace and Freedom; 7:30 p.m., at Elliott Bay Book Co., 101 South Main at 1st Ave S.

Northwest Communities Conference, the annual summer gathering of the Northwest International Communities Association, featuring a major address on consensus-based decision making and many workshops on practical aspects of living in intentional communities. \$25 registration includes camping, all workshops and events, breakfast and lunch on Sat and Sun, plus free admission to River Farm's Herb Festival, at River Farm in Deming, near Bellingham; info Jonathan 206-782-9305 or www.infoteam.com/nonprofit/nica

Seattle chapter National Organization for Women (NOW) **Women's Equality Day potluck picnic,** 6 p.m. at Meridian Park, behind Good Shepherd Center, 4649 Sunnyside N; info 206-632-8547

Community Resources Fair. Identify community resources, employment opportunities, volunteer boards, work training programs, and education development opportunities. 1 p.m. - 7 p.m. at Judkins Park, 22nd Ave S. & South Norman

General meeting of People for Fair Trade/ Network Opposed to WTO; 9:30 a.m. - 1 p.m., at the King County Labor Temple, 2800 - 1st Ave. at Broad; info 206-632-1656 or 1-877-STOPWTO (1-877-786-7986) or <http://www.peopleforfairtrade.org> and <http://www.seattlewto.org>

www.peopleforfairtrade.org and <http://www.seattlewto.org>

19th Annual Seattle Peace Concerts' Free Summer Park Concert Series, Summer Festivals of Music, Food, and Arts & Crafts, with The Side-Effects, Annieville Blues, Mark Dufresne Band featuring Billy Stapleton, Smokin' Gun, sound by Motorbark; Admission Free. Please bring food bank donations for Northwest Harvest, noon - 6 p.m., at Gas Works Park; info <http://www.seapeace.org> or 206-729-5232

Urge Sen. Gorton and Sen. Murray to ratify the comprehensive nuclear test ban treaty which 152 nations have already ratified; a vote is needed by September if the U.S. is to be a partner in implementing this treaty, local numbers Sen. Gorton 425-451-0103 or Sen. Murray 206-553-5545

Education for Activists, organizers, workers, and the community: series of Urban Action School courses offered frequently, sliding scale fees, space limited, early registration recommended, checks to Public Information Network, PO Box 95316, Seattle WA 98145-2316, info 206-464-9129

Continue to phone President Clinton 202-456-1111 to urge No Military Action against Iraq; End the economic sanctions killing thousands each month right now. The crisis is not over!

Join in the efforts of Jubilee 2000, press Congress to cancel the debts in the 41 most heavily indebted poor countries; Structural Adjustment Programs, conditions imposed by the International Monetary Fund, cause hardship and desperation all over the world; payments on international debts eat up half the national budget of these nations, with nothing left over for

education or healthcare; call 202-783-3566 for an information packet, info Ann McLaughlin 360-779-4774

Free Video Rentals of Citizen Vagrom's micro-media offerings, a video magazine highlighting independent, micro-media from Seattle and beyond at Rain City Video, Fremont, Ballard, Sunset Hill; Video Vertigo, Broadway Video, Broadway Market; Scarecrow Video info 206-344-6434 or citizen@speakeasy.org

Special Thanks to Jean Buskin at bb369@scn.org
For complete listings with meeting times for local advocacy & peace groups, see her fine calendar at <http://www.scn.org/activism/PJ-cal.txt>



Bo Brown, August 14

Shelter in a Storm

Safe Harbor proposal needs support now

The CPP seeks to provide you with the views and concerns that homeless, poor, and working people's organizations have about pending legislation, both local and national, in a clear, concise, and meaningful way.

ISSUE: Homeless people have nowhere to go. Shelters are full; public bathrooms and day centers are scarce; it's illegal to sit on a sidewalk and rest after 7 pm, it's illegal to sleep in a park; and police can ban individuals from being in parks or other areas for up to a year. When folks gather together for safety and security, even under a squalid bridge in the industrial section of town (see "News You Can Use," p.4), they are "evicted" under threat of arrest for trespassing.

City Councilmember Peter Steinbrueck has prepared a resolution that would address the basic right of all people to have a place to call home, even if it is a scrap of cement. While the proposal, to create a "Safe Harbor Roundtable," is a far cry from ideal, it is the first step to give homeless people, especially those without shelter, a place to call their own.

Trouble is, councilmembers are not interested. It's time to convince them to take action.

BACKGROUND: In an effort to brainstorm solutions to the situation just outlined, Councilmember Steinbrueck and his staff drafted a resolution to create what he's calling a Safe Harbor Roundtable, "to examine and recommend policy directions for alternative, innovative forms of housing in a safe environment."

The legislation would not commit the Council to do anything other talk about the problem and issue a report. Furthermore, the necessity of having to create "safe zones" so that a whole class of people don't get arrested or otherwise harassed is frankly obscene. Yet the social emergency demands that something be done.

Whether that's to recommend a tent city, a 24-hour parking zone, support innovative shelter ideas like those put forward by Environmental Works, or some other bright idea, is for the Roundtable to decide. But at the least, the council should get the discussion going.

As Councilmember Nick Licata

said about the proposal, "Homelessness has reached crisis proportions. People have died on the streets... If there were a natural disaster displacing 5,000 of Seattle's citizens from their homes, we'd find a place to shelter people." The Safe Harbor idea, says Licata, is an idea "whose time has come."

Unfortunately, Steinbrueck has few allies besides Licata, and talk has begun about whether or not his resolution will wither on the vine.

The resolution has been through eight drafts and passed legal review by the City Attorney's office. While Steinbrueck originally intended to present it to his Housing, Human Services, and Civil Rights Committee in June, he postponed introduction twice, saying he didn't have enough support from his committee or other councilmembers.

Now, busy with other legislation, the departure of a key staff person, and other councilmembers' summer vacations, Steinbrueck has pushed back his timetable yet again.

The homeless can't wait. It shouldn't take a lot of discussion to pass this mild resolution, but clearly, the council needs prompting.

ACTION NEEDED: Contact members of the City Council's Housing, Human Services, and Civil Rights Committee.

They are: Peter Steinbrueck (chair, 684-8804); Richard McIver (vice-chair, 684-8800); Martha Choe (684-8802), and Sue Donaldson (684-8806). For extra credit, call Richard Conlin (684-8805) and Tina Podlodowski (684-8808) who could be sympathetic. Emails are firstname.lastname@ci.seattle.wa.us

RECOMMENDED MESSAGE: Pass the Safe Harbor resolution immediately!

BILLY MITCHELL



Real Change/RCHP
2129 2nd Avenue
Seattle, WA 98121

Seattle Public Library, Serials Unit
1000 Fourth Ave.
Seattle WA 98104

