

March 15-31, 2000

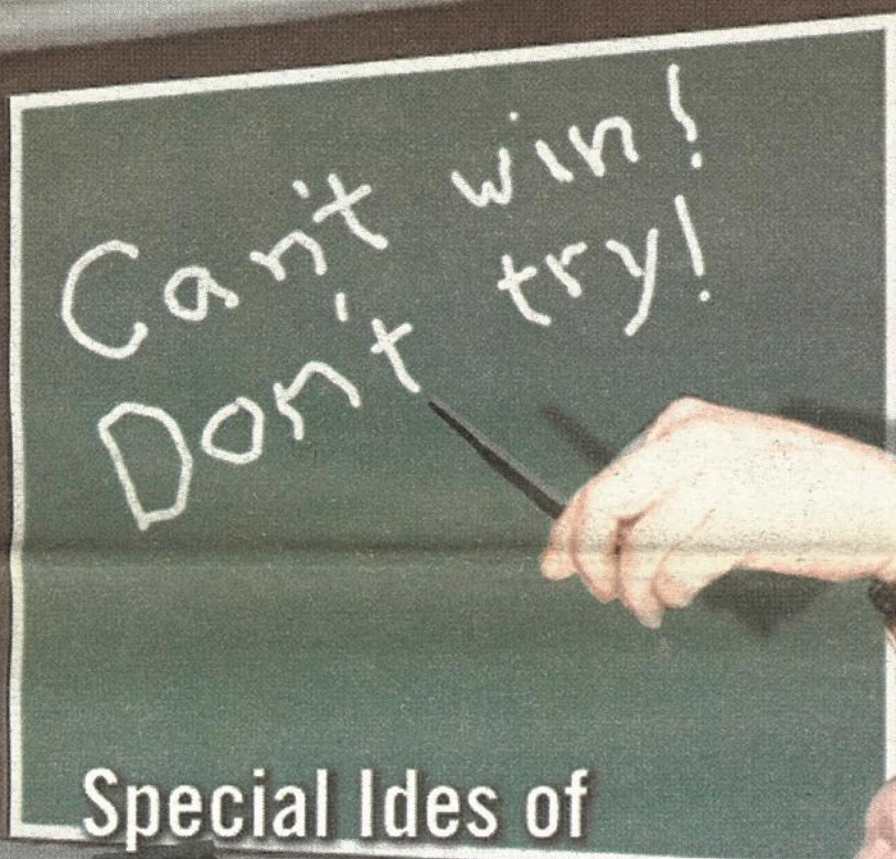
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Change

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Puget Sound's Newspaper of the Poor and Homeless • Volume 7, No.6

JAN 04 2006



Special Ides of
March Politics Issue.

Conlin Just Says No

Gore vs. Bush vs. us • Kaiser convergence • StreetLife artists show.

by Adam Holdorf and Shira Richman

More than 150 business owners, teachers, artists, and homeless people filled the Plymouth Congregational Church on Wednesday, March to confront Seattle City Councilmembers Judy Nicastro, Richard Conlin and Nick Licata with the realities of renting in Seattle.

As Seattle native and Capitol Hill resident Mark Taylor-Canfield said, "What I've witnessed is this amazing change, this rapid deterioration, as artists, small businesses, and nonprofit groups come under siege from developers."

The event was sponsored by the Seattle Displacement Coalition, the Tenants Union, the Puget Sound Council of Senior Citizens, and *Real Change*.

Nicastro and Licata expressed their support for most of the issues brought forward by the organizations' sponsors. They want the city to help overturn the statewide ban on rent control. They support the city's Safe Harbors plan, so long as nobody is denied services because they refuse to fill out a form. They'd like to ease rental costs and write clear, fair landlord-tenant laws. They want tenants to be able to have a say in who buys their buildings. They would like to see more tent cities and temporary shelters for homeless people.

Richard Conlin would have none of it.

"I don't think these are the kinds of things we want to accomplish over the long term," said Conlin.

continued on page 12

Change

Puget Sound's Voice of the
Poor and Homeless

Real Change is published the first and fifteenth of each month and is sold by the poor and homeless of Seattle. Annual subscriptions are available for \$35.

All material is copyrighted to the authors. Submissions are encouraged and should be mailed to "Real Change," 2129 2nd Ave., Seattle, WA 98121. Tel. (206) 441-3247.

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 MacWorkshop, 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.



Frankenfood?

Dear *Real Change*,

Thank you for the "Food" issue of *Real Change* [February 1].

Something that concerns me about the combined issues of poverty and eating is that people with little or no money are probably more likely than those with a lot of money to be eating food made with GMOs (genetically modified organisms).

As someone says in the video "Showdown in Seattle" [a documentary about the WTO produced by the Independent Media Center], what's going to happen if food continues to be polluted with GMOs — the privileged will get all the natural, organic food, while everyone else has to eat what the Europeans call "Frankenfood"?

In the interest of space, I won't go into a lot of the problems with GMO foods, but the main points are that homeless and low-income citizens are as deserving of healthy, normal foods as are those with money, and that *everyone* must demand that foods be labeled as to whether or not they contain GMOs.

Everyone concerned about this issue is welcome to talk with the "Food

and Farm" group in the big coalition formed out of Stop-WTO week. The coalition meets on the last Sunday of each month at 5 p.m. at the Teamsters Hall, corner of Denny Way and Taylor (east of 5th Avenue). [The regular March meeting was moved up to March 12 — ed.]

Erin Snow
snowdoll@speakeasy.org

Demonic Tracking

Dear *Real Change*,

As I read your article in *Real Change*, "Steinbrueck denies tracking plans" [Feb. 1], some bells and "Ah-Ha!"s went off for me. The Bible predicts a time at the "end times" when people will be tagged with the "mark of the beast" without which people cannot buy or sell, i.e., cannot participate in the economic daily living activities.

The New World Order is slowly and mostly quietly — insidiously — manifesting right under our noses, while most of America slumbers and sleepwalks to the tunes of various forms of idol-worship.

Grateful to hear that homeless folks do not want to accept this technological invention. I imagine its real purpose is demonic, relating to control and eventual extermination.

The Bible refers to the number of the beast as 666. If you look at any bar code on any product, you will notice that the first two lines and the last two lines are always — ALWAYS! — two thin lines together, and if you look

closely, you will notice that there are two thin lines just like them in the very center of the bar code. Can you guess what number those two thin lines represent? Right, the number six! So every bar code already contains the mark of the beast.... My guess is that in this technology for tagging people under the skin is a similar notation.

Thanks for your good work; keep it up. And keep the faith. In the end, God wins.

Maah Li Lynn
Seattle

Busted

Dear *Real Change*,

The article about the NASA-sponsored "Shadowcatcher" project in the most recent issue of *Real Change* ["This Just In," March 1] seems completely bogus. Can you provide citations and sources for this article? Thank you.

Joseph Hull
Environmental Science,
SCCC
jhull@sccd.ctc.edu

[Ed. Replies] Congratulations! You pass! The "This Just In" column features stuff that, in the tradition of Jules Verne, Ray Bradbury, and Abbie Hoffman, isn't true at all, but maybe could be. We hope our exercise in apocalyptic surrealism hasn't caused any lasting damage.

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Primary Cares

The revolution will not be electoral

by Joe Martin

As the smoke clears in the aftermath of Super Tuesday, it appears we have a typically bleak choice for the presidential election: either Al Gore for the Democrats or George W. Bush for the Republicans. Things do not look too good, especially if you are poor or homeless.

George W. Bush as president? I have been waiting for someone to jump up and let us all know that this fool's candidacy was really just a big ol' joke, a little bit of Texas humor. A spoiled frat brat having a big laugh on a snoozing public. But no, this is for real, folks. Let me suggest to any readers who have access to the internet: go to Bush's campaign website and do an issues search. Type in "homelessness" or "affordable housing" and you'll come up empty. There is nothing good to say about this guy. Nothing. The very idea that George W. Bush could occupy the White House concerned about poverty and related social issues squirm.

We are told repeatedly that Al Gore has learned to loosen up, learned to crack a few jokes. What will he do about poverished schools, affordable housing, about the working class, be fair, Gore does not seem to be anywhere near as hopeless as his opponent. Go to his campaign website and or "affordable housing" and you will find mention of these matters. His wife, Tipper Gore, has over the years shown interest in mental health issues and homelessness.

In a recent interview in *Rolling Stone*, Gore himself admitted the need for increased mental health services. But presidential campaign rhetoric is cheap.

So, what can we expect out of this election year fiasco? Not much, I'm afraid.

Not one candidate likely to win in November is talking seriously about homelessness or affordable housing. The concerns of the corporate agenda will be heeded by either a Republican or a Democratic president, and the damage done to the poor and homeless will differ only by degree, with the Republicans exercising a more traditionally vicious disregard for the growing ranks of indigent citizens.

Here in Seattle, just a few short months ago, we saw how people taking their rage and resentments to the streets can make a difference. Poor people in this country, whether homeless or housed, number in the tens of millions. Add to these numbers the myriad activists, housing advocates, and others of good will who are outraged at the social and economic inequities of our rich nation. Put them all together and you have a lot of people. A lot of people can have an impact.

What is needed is organization, direction, and a determination that understands the formidable dimensions of poverty in this economy. This is no short-term fight. It will not be won by people who are too attached to their bourgeois comforts and security. It will not be won by homeless or poor people, no matter what their numbers, if they are disorganized, demoralized, and exhausted. It will, in short, not be won by doing what most of us have been doing, no matter the strength of our intentions.

At the time of his death, Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. was in the process of deepening and extending his campaign for justice. He was in the process of honing an even more radical approach to nonviolent change and resistance to economic injustice. It was a vision that was fraught with risk, and demanded one's full dedication. King knew what he was up against, and what it would take to radically challenge those forces in our society: forces of money, power, arrogance, and racism, all of which are still at work.

So, come November, by all means vote. If you're not inclined to vote for Gore, vote for Nader, or the Socialist candidate David McReynolds, just to register your sentiments. But until we get back to the streets, until we become fully conscious of the arduous job of bringing about positive and just change in a society drunk on money, power, glitz, and cynicism, we can expect to see the ranks of the poor and homeless grow in the decades ahead. ■

Joe Martin is a social worker at the Pike Market Medical Clinic.

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An unidentified government source reported that the U.S. Congress is considering a plan to increase the buying power of low-income people. Under the plan, called "Children for the Future," approved individuals will be able to build equity based on the work futures of their children.

The children must be born healthy and cannot be enrolled until age six. Parents can then borrow money against the earning potential of the child, and will have to pay off only 10 to 15 percent of the loan in nine years. When the child turns 15, they will be offered a job with the creditor, or "sponsor," who will also share their income over the next 20 to 30 years.

"It's much like a mortgage," said the source, "except the borrower and the borrower's children receive a much greater immediate benefit — a benefit most of them could not otherwise access."

Critics of the plan say it will simply force more people to have more children, but supporters point to the two-child limit for enrollment, plus the fact that it will provide guaranteed jobs for the enrollees. "Kids have never had such a guarantee of security," said the official. "It's truly a win-win-win situation." ■

— Bob Redmond

Raise to nowhere?

Child care workers for preschool-age kids get a boost this month when an 18-month pilot project will increase their disturbingly low hourly wages.

Governor Gary Locke set aside part of leftover welfare funds last year for the \$4 million project, called the Washington State Career Ladder Project. Under it, child care centers will increase wages 50 cents per hour for each new level of education. In turn, the agencies commit to comparable raises when workers take on more responsibility.

But evaluation of the program may be up to the political winds of Olympia; if the pilot project ends and funding is dropped, day care centers will revert to the old wages (in King County in 1996, aides made an average of \$6.50 an hour). "I don't know how they're going to benchmark it," says Laura Paskin of the Economic Opportunity Institute. "It's a really short study. It's a good question for [DSHS]."

Mary Tuominen, an academic who's spent a decade studying childcare wage issues, says that average yearly turnover in the childcare industry is around 42 percent nationwide. She agrees that the pilot won't tell the state much about the effect of increased wages on retention. Still, it's a step in the right direction: "The positive element in this whole thing is that it recognizes that child care is a public good, just like we recognized that K-12 education is a public good," she says. "The flip side is that 18 months is a very short amount of time." ■

Bigots in the backyard

The Northwest Coalition for Human Dignity released its annual report on regional racist organizations, and the *Seattle Times* and *Post-Intelligencer* recounted organized hate groups in small towns from Ferndale to Kelso.

Both papers ignored the report's comments on the United Property Owners of America, a group formerly based in Redmond. The report says group members seek to block native tribes' access to traditional hunting and fishing grounds, and that around the Suquamish, armed property owners patrol the shorelines to scare off nighttime clamdiggers.

Barbara Lindsay, with the United Property Owners of America, says her group wants Congress to "implement the Boldt agreement in a fairer way." She says tribal fishers and shellfish diggers trespass on beachfront property owners' lands.

Lindsay "would very strongly discourage" people from patrolling their property with guns. "Some of our members are on hand to observe native diggings, especially at night," she says. "But we have worked to prevent this from becoming a violent confrontation."

The report also notes last summer's outpouring of anti-Native sentiment — much of which occurred in the pages of Seattle's dailies — when the Makah Indian Nation killed its first gray whale. ■

The trickle-down stops here

Seattle Mayor Paul Schell says the downtown retail core is doing well. Sales tax revenue from local stores is streaming into the city's coffers. So many people are parking in the city's parking garage beneath the Pacific Place Shopping Center that last year's parking revenue will pay the city's \$400,000 annual construction debt.

What will the city do with the \$400,000 it no longer has to use to pay off the massive construction loan? Could the city divert the cash into housing or



services?

Glenn Lee, manager of the city's budget-setting team, says probably not. The city's \$15 million dollar revenue shortfall from Initiative 695 overshadows any considerations of new spending.

"I don't want to trivialize what \$400,000 could do on the street," but in the wake of I-695 we're in a different reality now," Lee says. "The way to avoid these cuts in the future is to accrue savings now."

The mayor and city council may have other ideas. City Councilmember Jan Drago, chair of the budget committee, has no definite plans for the money yet. But the council and mayor's office have scheduled their first-ever joint discussion of the next biennium's budget on Friday, April 21, at Town Hall on Eighth and Seneca. The public is invited to observe. For more information, call Drago's office at 684-8801. ■

Times vendors get double duty

On the third day of the *Seattle Times*' switch to morning circulation, vendor Michael Greenslade is out on the corner of Fourth and Stewart at 8 a.m., hawking both the *Times* and the *Post-Intelligencer* to morning commuters.

Like the rest of the *Times*' afternoon workers who sold "Night Final" editions to evening commuters, Greenslade is trying to keep his commission-based earnings up by selling the paper from 6:30 to 10 every morning, then returning to satisfy the afternoon market from 2 to 5:30 that afternoon. He hopes that his afternoon regulars get accustomed to the new routine.

"In a couple weeks, I'll be out in the morning only," he says. "Right now I'm out here twice as much for the same amount of money."

Times spokesperson Kerry Coughlin says the paper employs eight to ten downtown vendors at any one time. She says vendors like Greenslade are paid a base rate of \$10 per shift, then a commission of 10 cents a copy. The *Times* has people working an afternoon shift for at least a few more weeks. "We're testing the selling times," she says. "There's a good chance people will still buy a paper on their way to the ferries."

She acknowledges that some people may miss the late-afternoon "Night Final" edition, which vendors typically sold to rush-hour passersby. At the same time, "we strongly believe the *Times* has content that's good all day. We expect people will read the front section on their coffee break, then settle into the more in-depth articles in the evening."

"Pretty asinine" is how Greenslade describes the paper's switch. From where he stands, his customers "still want today's news today."

In the five minutes that Greenslade stands talking, nobody buys a paper. ■



PHOTO BY ADAM HOLDORF

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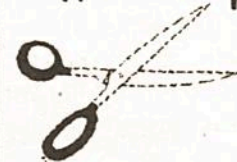
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Dirty Business

Treehuggers and steelworkers target Maxxam

by Glenn Goldman

At the end of this month, more than 500 people will gather at Kaiser's Tacoma plant to stage some Seattle-style civil disobedience. The coalition of labor, environmental, student and community activists will resurrect the tactics of last year's WTO protests against a new target: Maxxam, Inc., owner of Kaiser Aluminum and Pacific Lumber Corporation.

Maxxam has its fingers in three stinky pies. Charles Hurwitz, its majority shareholder, acquired both companies in the late 1980s using junk bond financing. He's attempted to pay off his junk bonds by putting the squeeze on both the Kaiser Steelworkers and on the ancient Headwaters forest in Northern California. Maxxam also has a stake in the Nashville-based Corrections Corporation of America, a prison management company sources say has one of the worst abuse records around.

Hurwitz began his assault on labor by selling or closing half of Kaiser's plants. He then demanded significant wage and benefit concessions from the United Steelworkers of America. Unwilling to accept these conditions, 2,900 steelworkers voted to go on strike in September of 1998. Hurwitz then hired scabs and locked out the union workers on January 14, 1999. The lockout, one of the longest in U.S. labor history, keeps 2,400 steelworkers in Tacoma and Spokane out of work.

On the environmental front, Pacific Lumber accelerated the devastating practice of "liquidation logging" of the largest remaining stand of old-growth redwoods in private hands. John Goodman, a locked-out steelworker, has been involved in organizing the upcoming actions. He speaks as fluently on the environmental issues surrounding Maxxam as he does on the labor issues.

"We found a similar disregard for the environment as well as humanity on the part of Maxxam Corporation. Their clear-cutting of old growth forest in northern California, and the environmental desecration that was created when they used herbicides to defoliate the hillsides after they had clear-cut the land, caused silt to wash down into the rivers, destroying two major rivers and four tributaries," Goodman says. "Hurwitz increased the cut rates four times what they were, and in a matter of 13 years has basically destroyed the economic sustainability

of that community."

Elijah Saxon, one of the event's organizers, explained how coalition partners are hoping to tap into the spirit of the WTO protests unleashed last fall. "A lot of people on the streets in Seattle during the WTO protests saw tremendous strength in numbers from locked-out steelworkers. There was a lot of street education about how they had been locked out for a year. Coming off of WTO, people were looking forward to what was next in terms of something that could carry forth the coalitions that were formed around corporate globalization," he says. "It seemed that a Kaiser/Maxxam action excited the most number of people."

Many groups and individuals are contributing significant amounts of sweat equity to the organizing effort. Cathy Kaufman, co-chair of the Out Front Labor Coalition, described some of the strategies being used.

"We're going to be sending people out into the community, specifically groups of workers, students, environmentalists; we're gonna go on a speaking tour and they'll talk about what we're doing from the 24th through the 27th of March. We're also doing a lot of phone banking, calling up hundreds and hundreds of people in Tacoma, Seattle, Olympia, Portland, all over the Northwest, to get them to this four-day set of actions. We're also doing a lot of educational events to educate people on exactly what the issues are."

Organizers are hoping that their efforts will result in increased bargaining power for locked-out steelworkers, increased public awareness around the detrimental practices of Maxxam, and the strengthening of the environmental and labor coalitions formed around the WTO protests. So far, the Pierce and King County Labor Council, the Direct Action Network, regional Earth First! chapters, and Washington State Jobs with Justice have offered their support.

"We're doing some very basic grassroots organizing," says Kaufman. "We cannot assume that people are just going to turn out for this great event because they think it's an important thing to do. We absolutely have to be very methodical about it."

For more information about the events, contact Seattle Jobs with Justice at: (206) 441-4969. ■



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Growing Up Hip

William Upski Wimsatt speaks to the rich and reaches to the poor



Interview by Adam Holdorf

Seen the "No More Prisons" graffiti on the sidewalks around town? Chicago writer and community organizer William Upski Wimsatt, author of the books *No More Prisons* and *Bomb the Suburbs* was in town when those started appearing.

Of the graffiti, he says "I don't think it's a crime to write on sidewalks. It's a crime to spend \$30,000 a year incarcerating first-time nonviolent drug offenders. That's what Washington state is doing, and it's money that could be spent on education, rehabilitation."

Wimsatt walks on two sides of the street. He's a white guy preaching hip-hop gospel to multiracial audiences. He coaxes wealthy people into donating their money to nonprofits that can't afford a professional grantwriter or even a copy machine. He was in town recently to meet with some of his recruits, members of what he calls the burgeoning "cool rich kids movement." A big fan of street papers, he took a little time to talk to *Real Change*.

RC: Why'd you write your first book, *Bomb the Suburbs*?

William Upski Wimsatt: *I was writing half for hip-hop magazines and half for weekly newspapers. I always felt like the most interesting stories, that the funniest, quirkiest, most over-the-edge stuff would all get cut out. I was writing for two totally different audiences. I wanted to create a publication that spoke to, brought together both sides of my work.*

RC: In *Bomb the Suburbs*, you seem to be asking your hip, white audience whether being in tune with hip hop can create any social change. But you say in the second book, *No More Prisons*, that this strategy blew up in your face. Why?

Wimsatt: *With Bomb the Suburbs the idea was to get white people, wherever they were at in their thinking, to try*

and think about a new set of issues from the perspective of people of color. But the problem is once white people start becoming really aware and critical of racism, then what? All over the country I hear little groups of white people getting together and being like okay, we're gonna discuss and critique our white privilege. Then what? A bunch of white people in the Central District are going to get together and discuss gentrification. Then what?

I got frustrated with the lack of action that seemed to come out of it, tangible action that improved the quality of everyone's life. That is how I got interested in the prison thing. People can stop building prisons right now and put the money into youth programs — that is a real obvious, bread-and-butter concrete thing.

Any white people who want to be less racist or discuss racism or whatever, you can read and talk all you

want, but go and work on the prison system — that is going to bring you in contact with poor people, black people. You can be a hell of a lot more useful. In the meantime you will probably have some really important revelations about race and class. Changing the focus from white guilt to action is a more tangible victory.

RC: So, in *No More Prisons* you are confronting people with wealth, asking them not to deny or hide their privilege, but to acknowledge it and then take action.

Wimsatt: *From just a personal angle that I found out that my grandmother is much wealthier than I had any idea. And I realized there is no conversation whatsoever about what to do with our resources and connections [as wealthy people]. So I just jumped out there. There was a network forming of young people, moving hundreds of thousands or millions of dollars to grassroots, bottom-up practices. I said, let's collaborate and share strategies, and let's get more people giving more strategically. And it's starting to work. It's having a much bigger effect than anything I was doing around racism.*

RC: This is the "cool rich kids movement" that you talk about in *No More Prisons*?

Wimsatt: *Yeah.*

RC: I heard this criticism of your work: that addressing wealthy people, saying "You have a lot of money; use it in a positive way" supports philanthropy instead of making more systemic change. It's like saying "Can't we all just get along?" Do you have any response to that?

Wimsatt: *Yeah. Most people I'm saying this to don't want to hear about destroying capitalism. I don't want to discourage anyone who thinks they have a shot at challenging the system. It is really good to have people who are uncompromising out there asking for the whole pie. But from where I stand I feel like we are in the baby steps of trying to change. We each need to build our specific infrastructure. We need to have a Left Bank Books, we have to have an African American Heritage Museum, we need basic shit.*

RC: And you're saying those are things that can survive if a small minority of

wealthy Americans plays a part.

Wimsatt: *This is the first time in history that you have people in their late teens and twenties and thirties with enough money to change the world.*

RC: Is this work especially ripe for doing in Seattle?

Wimsatt: *I would say so. But the truth is, we haven't done that much yet. We're just starting.*

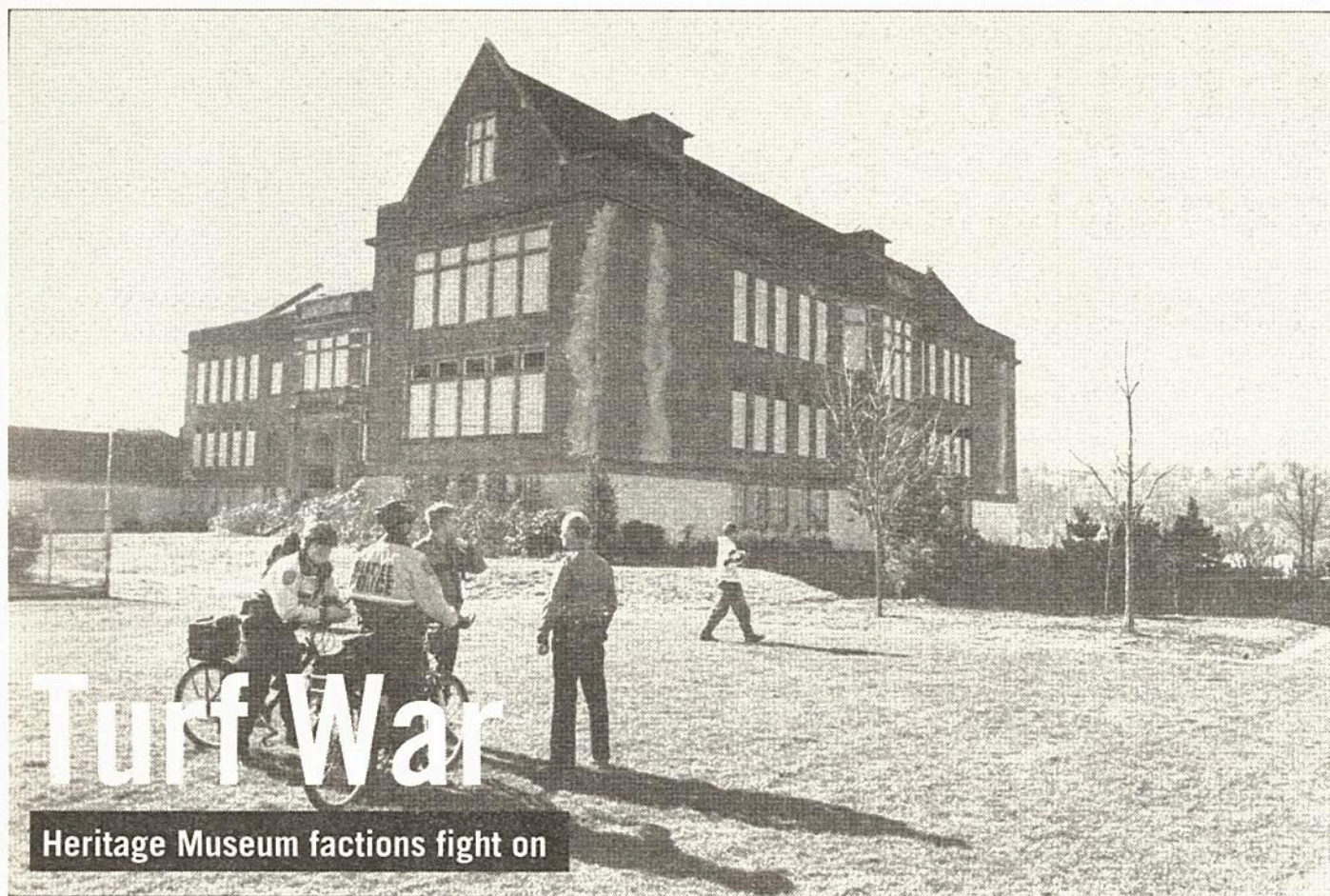
RC: You say in *No More Prisons* that there needs to be a donor's guide to philanthropy. That investigative reporters need to report on philanthropy and foundations.

Wimsatt: *My biggest problem with philanthropy is that most money goes to big art, big education, big religion, big government. Big and unchallenging, big and uncreative. And a tiny percentage of the money, somewhere around one percent, goes to the rest. What would our democracy look like if 10 percent went into organizations like Real Change and Left Bank? What I want is really moderate; it's just for multiple voices to be heard. It's a real basic prerequisite that Jefferson and the other founders of our country [believed in].*

RC: Your hometown, Chicago, has *Streetwise* [a homeless paper with circulation in the hundreds of thousands]. Why do cities have homeless papers?

Wimsatt: *Ten years ago there was one homeless newspaper; now there are close to 200 around the world. You have an incredible explosion of effect. Not only are people making a living out of it, not only is it a voice for the voiceless, not only is it a medium for homeless and middle-class people to meet each other, but when people who sell Real Change stand on the corners, they become a part of the community. They get to know store owners, people can read about them in the paper. Then they can be a challenging voice to the status quo.*

I have been living in Washington, D.C. and there I feel like homeless people and middle-class people are so alienated from one another. I realized it's because they don't have a street paper. People in Seattle should be really grateful to have Real Change because it is one of the two best papers in the country. It's like the most powerful and effective multi-faceted form of real change there is. ■



Turf War

Heritage Museum factions fight on

by Rahul K. Gupta

The event sounded confrontational: on February 20, activists were invited to "celebrate the reopening of the African American Heritage Museum" by throwing open the Colman School building and offering it back to Seattle's Black community. But the Sunday afternoon event mellowed into an impromptu press conference and lecture detailing the 15-year controversy surrounding the opening of the African American Heritage Museum.

Gathered at the museum site were newcomers as well as hardened community activists who once took over the building. As one participant said, "A lot of people who don't know anything about it were coming for a party, not for a fight."

Speakers managed to lay out a clear vision and a plan for what they see as a necessary addition to Seattle's landscape. "If you want to make change in a society, you have to have a base," says Omari Tahir, president of one museum board faction and organizer of the event. "And that building will serve as the base."

The event provided a staging ground for education and learning. People came to speak and listen. It was much like Tahir and his fellow board members envision the atmosphere in the cultural center they would like to build.

James Fearn has a different vision. As interim president of the second board vying for the museum, Fearn is on one side of the issue; Tahir on the other. Tahir has allies in groups like the People of Color Against AIDS Network, Food Not Bombs, the October 22nd Coalition to Stop Police Brutality and the Direct Action Network, all of whom were present at the event. Fearn has the ear

of the building's owners, the Seattle School Board.

The two factions' rift has been called the worst political conflict in the city. It began in the 1980s in a series of power plays between grassroots activists and developers. Each side has endured bureaucratic hoops, the school board, fights with each other, personalities, and most importantly, a neighborhood change. Meanwhile, the Colman building has sat unused and neglected.

Both groups agree on the basics: they want historical and contemporary exhibits detailing African heritage in the United States. What they differ on is what else to do with the space and how to pay for it.

Tahir, among other community activists, envisions a building serving the same functions as the Latino community's El Centro de la Raza, with an open meeting space for community groups that supports afterschool and extracurricular learning for kids, youth activities and a center for all-ages education.

"We don't want our children going to jail or getting involved in being negative, standing on the corner doing nothing."

Omari Tahir

"They [developers and politicians] want to minimize the impact of the museum on the state of Washington, and we're not going to let them do that," says Tahir. "We don't want our children going to jail or

getting involved in being negative, standing on the corner doing nothing."

But it is this particular idea, of building a cultural center that will generate little or no rent money, that may be keeping Tahir and his board from gaining recognition. Meanwhile, Fearn's board is negotiating with the Seattle School District over the purchase of the school. The School Board discussed

the legal conflict over the museum at a March 1 meeting.

Under a plan discussed between the Fearn's board and Murray Franklyn, a local developer, the entire building would become two wings. The 15,000 square feet designated for the museum would be offset by 41 housing units, probably condominiums, since neighbors in the area have expressed concern over new rental housing. Murray Franklyn would pay for the renovations and the overall construction of the museum. The museum would pay off its initial loan, with interest, and split the housing profits evenly with the developers.

Fearn says the resulting center would be similar to the Nordic Heritage Museum, a public/private cultural center and museum. In addition to the construction aid from Murray Franklyn, and the revenue from sale or rental of housing, he says this type of project would attract more grants and public money.

The two factions' rift has been called the worst political conflict in the city. ... Meanwhile, the Colman building has sat unused and neglected.

It's also more attractive to the building's owner.

Red flags flew up when community activists heard of the housing proposal. Other activists see this as one more example of how the neighborhood around Mt. Baker has changed demographically over the last decade.

"All the studies the city paid for said we weren't going to duplicate what was already in the community. We don't need housing in this building," says Tahir.

"Which community?" counters Fearn. "There is no unified community on this issue."

But there is some chance for compromise. Segments of the African American community have stated their willingness to back either of these groups. And members of both factions have indicated that they would like to return to the table and discuss merging their visions. ■



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• The Adventures of Sticky Al •

HOWLING HOWDY BOYS AND GIRLS: Nobody remembers me. I don't even remember me. Used to care too much to be a journalist. Used to think. Used to buy into a whole lot more crap. Nowadays after my world tour of seven continents and Asia, a few ass kickin's and horse doctors, lots of rumors of me dying followed me everywhere anyone would listen, and I was just dying for attention. But now I'm back after six months at Harborview in five-point restraint. I must admit I feel a little restrained. You might remember me when I was at the top of the literary world. Lots of folks may remember the way I coruscated across my genre with the splash at the end of the meat ramp. Now that I've fallen from that lofty place, I have fallen indeed, and all that is left to me is journalism. One thing about being in the gutter is you sure get a kick out of people.

But just when you thought that maybe ol' Sticky was too dried out from sloughing the old cast that I might have run out of cheap inventions or dirty laundry to air I whip out the .357 of truth, the holy crying baby Jesus of truth about all the gnarly shit we don't wanna talk about when I talk about it. It being the most damnable monstrosity what ever walked out of a swamp at 2 a.m. and bit your wife on the face or else you owed money to or something. I'm talking about getting run over by the lottery while playing on the off-ramp. Of course I'm talking about the homeless.

Right. All of a sudden there's a chill snap of air, the quickened pulse of the chemically dependent, and a hideous scream. Something happened while I was down being pummeled by the foots of life, that when I looked up through my one good eye, I saw an image in front of me that tore up all the slick magazine images which whipped a couple of winters through the fancy fashions, and bare the threads of these threadbare times. What I'm going on and on about is not something anyone will spend money on so nobody really wants, thus it's safe from mass marketing. It's a homelessness image. It has no value.

You understand, my financially challenged friends, our consumer society respects you only when you are actually pulling money out of your pocket. As soon as your money is in the box, F.O. The smile fades, the gate slams shut, tears no longer flow. But since being tenderized by fate and having pawned my charms for cheap thrills, I found a form we poor can subscribe to for nuttin' and so funky that Madison Avenue would rather wait. I'm talking about the image of the marginal hero. The marginal hero doesn't spend money unless absolutely necessary, and then never retail!— without forgetting. Fully conscious and with intent, motivated by unconditional love, our hero reaches back for those yet to find out, offering them REAL CHANGE instead of momentary change, promising Sticky Al without housecalls. What a relief. Help us with the construct of this image. Let's build something cheaper than Jesus, something untainted by Mad Ave.

Seattle is a sweeter smelling place now. Seems like I might even find a free shower and laundry downtown if I only knew what day it was. Damn, you can't hardly avoid running into one of those clean homeless folks, all laundered and everythang. When Norm Rice sold out to the tightwhite downtowners around the Glen Hotel the Millionair Club and the Compass Center did what all the smarmy backhanders couldn't, and now Seattle is a little better of a place if you care. This is a good thing.

Now the real winter is upon us it looks like there'll have to be the big sacrifice before anyone in Seattle takes homelessness seriously, except Reverend Shoestring. Operation Nightwatch has been desperately trying to find more beds, but there's no room at the inn. Seems like the Homeless Count, which was more than an event, and which discovered homeless people living in jungles on desert, was ignored by the bigwigs who came for the free breakfast. Someone has to die. Choose among yourselves, and don't let me know. Jeez. Operation Nightwatch is getting squeezed by the D & D crowd over at the Haven Building, the new digs. Some of those guys were doing the same shit back when I was able to. With all the newbies on the street, how can we continue to help the folks that've needed help for years and years? What's the limit? Christ weren't no ranger, and set no limit. But why does someone have to die? ■

Sticky Al will return on Tax Day

The Landlady

If living in the cracks
brings you to safety, no
sly, unwanted touch,
no conversation desperate
into hours past the moon's rise...
If spiny isolation is how
you know best to make your way
through hours and days,
I say more power, don't mind me.
Call it solitude or the touched eccentric
in the back apartment,
it's what it is. I don't pry
but I'm intrigued,
you see, it's why I'm in the business,
watching your ins-and-outs and wondering
at the thick, scuffed sounds back and forth
across that old blue carpet.

— MERCEDES LAWRY

You Killed All the Buffalo

(Oct. 8, 1998)
Almost all the whales you killed.
The extinction list grows out of your
concrete greed.
Now you white people want to get in
the way of a dying tradition.
How about checking yourselves out for
a second?
Check the body count across this
new nation of dead older nations.
Get the video machine out of our faces!
Look down at your workaholic
Genocide fingers.
Send another blood money check to a
reservation.
You've killed just about everything
on this planet.
Can we please do in one whale?
Pretty please just one whale so we might
feel a bit like ourselves.

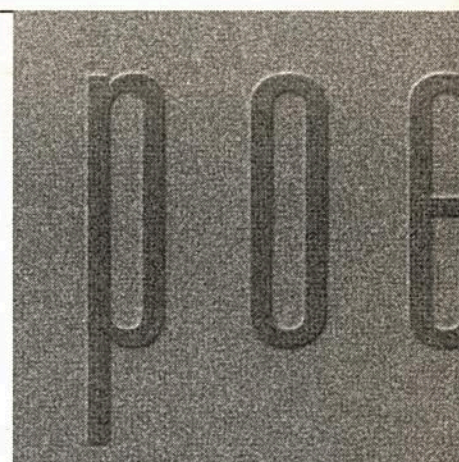
— ANON.

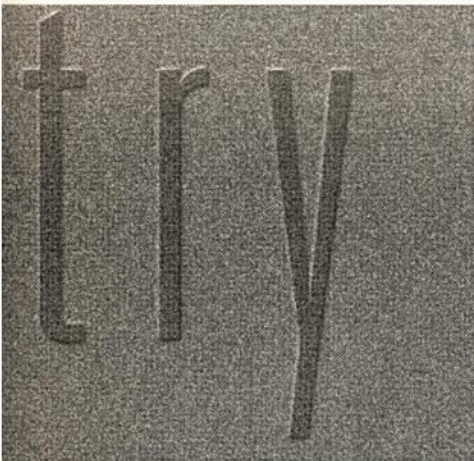
Housetrap

you can still catch them, butterflies
with your bare hands, sheathed fists
lure little girls in which your music
sweet words. I hide in my room
watch you through the doorway
remembering when it was me sitting there
on the couch, feet tucked beneath me
in awe of your beauty,

of you. your charm
still amazes me, even feeling the effect
second-hand, through these almost-lovers
you lure and collect, these brilliant
trophies
invading my home.

— HOLLY DAY





Not Waiting for Godot but for the Next Step to Fall

Popeye wheeled his chair
out the shelter door
In the bar he heard
and smiled
Mutt and Jeff the dynamic duo
in blue. He wondered did Mutt die;
Popeye's last change had been poured out
on the street.
At the stop light — waiting
for his drink.

Tomorrow — or the next
he will get his
new leg.

—EARLE THOMPSON

All Homeless Song

I blow you a flame across your gasoline.
We are all homeless on a strange piece of land.
Walking in old folks empty clothes, old
feathers, homeless and far from home.
Just a cloud in the true blue sky.
All us one homeless song.

Sometimes I'm the landlord when I speak
real words.
Truly I know I am homeless, can you keep a
secret "my name is, my name is, I can't
remember."
There's a big difference about what
white skin thinks it knows.
And what white skin is, is well known
by different colored skins.
It's in the sunglasses, at best with exact
hard practice I might become a visitor a
guest. But it is a lifetime coming.

— ROBERTO VALENZA

"If I Could Just Talk To The Judge"

Says the boy, eight
long years in foster care.
Packing his bag again.
New faces,
new rules, new ways
to love and forget.

J.T. is 11. Been waiting
for a room, half a room
of his own.
It's too late now,
don't you know,
J.T.'s not cute.
He's edging into tough.
He does not remember home,
though,
he has been interviewed —
one of those exposés on child welfare.
The daunting complications.

But mostly,
where J.T. is concerned,
it's just a matter of nobody
listening.
"If I could just talk to the judge,"
he says, straight at the camera.

— MERCEDES LAWRY

piecemeal

Sounds from the valley, are
voices —
so many times. All at
night these

bottles broken
smashed

on the stones
of this wall behind
me,
fall—ragged! from eyesight to a
shirt on my

back,
knack...

only! as threads
falling. Glass,
broken...second
thoughts, at

night.

— STAN BURRISS

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No Labels

StreetLife artists bust out of Belltown

by Jennifer Van West

Walking into the StreetLife Gallery for the first time is a journey into a wildly colorful, liberating heaven. Framed paintings in every hue neatly adorn a red wall, sheaves of paper and bits of clay lie across one end of a long table. Homeless and low-income artists work quietly in small private workspaces with materials supplied by the gallery for free.

It is in this environment that visions are brought to bear in color, texture, and a wide variety of media, and from which the artists have culled the best of their work for two shows in the Seattle area this month.

When the new StreetLife show opened recently at the Lion's Lair, a smoky tavern at 7406 Aurora Ave. N., four pieces sold immediately, and one sold for 10 times the listed price. The work of Streetlife Gallery artists Paula Rozner, Robert Gross, Jay Anderson, Dolores Ledbetter, and Allen Moss will continue to be displayed there until March 31.

In addition, beginning March 16, a second show, "Respect" will open at the Belltown Underground Art Gallery with work by Rozner and Ledbetter, as well as that of Jody Pearl, Ako, Chan Ku Yi, Bill Sessions, Storm, and

Meet the StreetLife
Gallery "Respect"
artists
5-9 p.m. Thursday
March 16
Belltown Underground
Art Gallery
2211 First Avenue in
Belltown
Through March 31
The Lion's Lair
7406 Aurora Ave N

Mary Klein. The March 16 opening will feature the presence of the artists, giving the rest of us a chance to meet them and discuss their work.

With roots as geographically diverse as Austria, Utah, California, Massachusetts, New York, and Seattle, these artists represent an equally broad range of styles and techniques: Realist to Impressionist, acrylics to fabrics to ink on paper. Their work is unified, however, by an uncommon soulfulness, skill, and passion for their media. As Storm is fond of saying, "Don't read the book by the cover...the story you see may not be the right one." Come meet the artists on March 16, see their work, and see for yourself. ■



The Demolition, and Other Spectacles

Domesday fable: 8:30 a.m., Sunday, March 26

photo by Michelle Atkinson

Once upon a time there were two sisters. The younger was delicate and beautiful, shiny and new, and though she was a spoiled little girl, everyone loved her. The older was gray and drab, monstrously proportioned, hideously squatting in the floodplain of the land. She was a solid plain girl. The oldest was seldom seen; she flitted along in the people's memories and in the unused portions of the City.

When one day the City determined to destroy the older sister, everyone wanted to watch. The pretty rich people bought seats and fancy breakfasts behind the windows of the big black skyscrapers that looked down on the land. Others turned on their televisions as newscasters reveled in ugly old girl's last moments.

Some of the people moved along up Jackson Street from the heart of the City, or settled in under the underpass. They had pretty good views, but nothing personally against either sister.

After the dust settled, the City moved on to other business. The TV-watchers and breakfast-eaters went on to watch other marvels. But some people remained outside, with nothing to watch. And for all we know, they're still there. ■



Speaking to Gulls

Joe Gould's Secret,
by Joseph Mitchell
208 pages, \$9.95 paper
Vintage, 1999
Review by Joe Martin

Last year, at the request of Bob Redmond, now departed from *Real Change*, I submitted a couple of book reviews to the paper. The one that didn't see print is now in demand: *Joe Gould's Secret*, a terrific little book by the late *New Yorker* journalist Joseph Mitchell, has been recently made into a film. The film's director, Stanley Tucci, also appears in the movie as Joseph Mitchell; the actor Ian Holm plays Joe Gould. The movie will be released around the country in April. Since I haven't seen it yet, here's my review of the book.

Twelve months ago, I couldn't have told you who Joseph Mitchell was. But one afternoon during a visit to the Madrona branch of the Seattle Public Library, a diminutive volume seemed to whisper to me from the biographical shelves. I extracted the book from its row. It turned out to be a reissue of two profiles of a character by the name of Joe Gould who was a ubiquitous and eccentric presence in New York's Greenwich Village decades ago.

Mitchell loved the teeming social, ethnic, and artistic salmagundi of New York City. He came to NYC by way of North

Carolina. The day after the great stock market crash in 1929, Joseph Mitchell, all of 21 years old, arrived in the Big Apple. Over a 10-year period, Mitchell was a reporter at a couple of dailies; then he landed a slot at the prestigious literary mag, the *New Yorker*. Mitchell's colleague at the magazine, Brendan Gill, himself a doyen among American writers, would aver that "the finest writer on the *New Yorker* is Joseph Mitchell." Clearly, Mitchell was a skilled, savvy, and respected journalist.

Joe Gould, on the other hand, was cut from an entirely different cloth. He would have fit in easily on Seattle's old Skid Road before displacement, demolition, and gentrification changed things so drastically. Joe was a big drinker and supremely independent of mind. He was obsessed by his own literary project to be writing, expanding, and emending constantly. It was known throughout many parts of the Village that Joe was immersed in a very unique and important disquisition. In fact, historians at Columbia University have credited him with the coining of the phrase "oral history."

Joe was a well-known denizen in his day. And he received recognition from some artistic heavies, such as e.e.

cummings who actually wrote a poem about Joe, "No. 261" in his *Collected Poems*. Ezra Pound made a reference to him in one of his essays. William Saroyan attributed his own literary enlightenment and growth as an author to an encounter with one of the few actual published items Joe ever contributed to a literary journal.

Mitchell limns a hilarious vignette involving Joe Gould and Saroyan. It seems that somebody mentioned to Joe that Saroyan had expressed his indebtedness in some interview. Joe could have cared less, but then he learned

that Saroyan was actually in New York. At the time, Joe needed new teeth. He had lost his false teeth and it occurred to him that this successful writer Saroyan might be willing to buy him a new pair. Joe's search for his literary disciple was unsuccessful. Eventually the two meet, but Joe was less than satisfied because he felt that Saroyan monopolized the conversation.

Seagulls were a source of wonder and inspiration to Joe. His affinity for his avian friends won Joe the cognomen of "Professor Seagull." He claimed that he could communicate with them, and was himself very adept in their language. On occasions when Joe would grace a Vil-

lage party, he might give a demonstration of seagull language and behavior. Such a demonstration often followed a couple of drinks, and Joe's efforts to edify his fellow party were not always appreciated.

Joe's appreciation for the language and sentience of the gulls might not be all that far-fetched. For it was seagulls that gave us the word "quark," the term for that fundamental subatomic particle that supposedly comprises the basis of all matter. It seems that while he was in the midst of composing his most arduous and convoluted and challenging book, James Joyce was moved to render the screeching of the seagulls outside his window into a new word: quark! The physicist Murray Gell-Mann would appropriate Joyce's assonant concoction for the lexicon of science. I think that Joe Gould would have rather liked that.

Joe's clothes were shabby. He said that his life was plagued by "the three H's": hunger, homelessness, and hangovers. He died penniless in 1957. Mitchell's first profile was written in 1942. Years after Joe's death, Mitchell composed the second and longer essay which was published in 1964. Both pieces are individual. It is easy to see how Mitchell and so many others took an interest in Joe.

For many of us who have either lived on the streets, or lived in and around downtown Seattle or any of America's Skid Roads, or worked with those folks who do, Joe Gould will seem pretty familiar. Joseph Mitchell has left us a beautiful little book. ■



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FORUM, continued from page 1

He said he wanted to get past immediate fixes to look at the "root causes" of homelessness. "What are the resources needed for employment and education?" he said.

Conlin suggests that advocates have distorted the real number of homeless on the street. "I've participated in the One Night Count," Operation Nightwatch's annual census of homeless people sleeping outside, he said. Of 85 people his team counted as they walked through Belltown, he said about 15 were sleeping outside. "The rest we weren't sure about. They could have been homeless; we don't know."

He believes that a tracking system like Safe Harbors would more accurately assess the need for services. And if you want services, you should be required to divulge information. Since credit cards, banks cards, library cards and drivers' licenses are used so widely, he says, this kind of card representation is "appropriate."

One angry woman from the audience rose to inquire, "Did you just come here to piss us off?"

Nicastro responded to Conlin's doubts about the chances of winning a fight over rent control at the state level with enthusiasm. "Anything is possible," she declared. "If we say it isn't possible, we've already lost." If a law banning rent control is going to be repealed, however, "public pressure has to build.

You need to call. If you're quiet on it, nothing will happen."

Licata said he would continue to push for tenants' right to a mobile credit check, a one-time credit rating that would cost \$30, good for 45 days. Prospective renters would be given a copy of their credit report that they could present to landlords. This would replace the current system of paying each individual landlord to check your credit for you.

Concerning tent cities, Licata said, "I could easily say yes to that," but he quickly qualified his endorsement by adding, "But if you're going to do that you also have to reach out to the community in which you set up the tents. Otherwise you'll end up pitting the neighborhood against the homeless people. You need to establish an open dialogue."

He pointed out the inevitable NIMBY argument that people deserve real housing — not tents. "Therefore, tents can only be a temporary arrangement," he said. "They will never get support as a permanent spot."

Nicastro also supports tent cities. Although she admitted to having her reservations at first, she now believes they are "the right way to put pressure on the city. The city is really dragging its feet."

Members of the assembly expressed concern about the decreasing supply of low-income housing, and it was proposed that the Morrison Hotel, a housing development that provides housing for elderly, disabled, and recently homeless, be turned over to a non-profit organization. The Morrison is currently being managed by the Seattle Housing Authority, which may convert 100 of the 205 units into Section 8 Housing. This conversion would require that residents pass the federal government's screening process, which includes rental checks, credit checks, criminal searches, and potentially very long waits.

In order to keep talks of policies and laws on a human level, one man suggested, "If you see homeless in line getting food, go get in line with them. Sleep where they sleep." He requested compassion. "We're all human," he said.

Neither Nicastro nor Licata are ideally situated to bring the issues they support to the rest of the city council.

While Licata's record on housing and tenant issues is strong, he has no power on either the council's landlord-tenant or housing committee.

Nicastro, a first-year councilmember and chair of the landlord/tenant committee, will have an uphill battle convincing her senior councilmembers to pass progressive bills. Case in point was her co-sponsorship of the doomed circus animal ban, which was shot down by the full council vote last month. Even so, both Licata and

Nicastro responded with warmth to most of the audience's testimony.

Real Change Director Timothy Harris asked the last question of the evening. He asked Conlin to name a single service for homeless people that wasn't at full capacity. Conlin couldn't do it. ■



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S.O.S.

Your energy and ideas are needed. Accepting applications for Board membership at Street Outreach Services, an agency committed to reducing the harm associated with substance use through innovative outreach and education in downtown Seattle. Seeking ethnic minority membership reflective of our diverse client population. For information or to request an application call Delores at 547-0176 or Kris at 625-854.

Buyer Beware: Each individual tenant situation involves factors that cannot be addressed and people who may react differently. My responses are based on a general application of the law to the questions raised and it cannot be assumed that following these responses will resolve the issues in the way that the law would seem to indicate. I have gone to court on many occasions feeling that I had a sure thing and come out a loser and I have even gone to court with a case that I thought was a dead loser and ended up winning. Hopefully the responses will give you an idea of how to proceed to protect your rights.



Tenant Talk Educate Agitate Organize

Life's not fair

Dear Tenant Talk,

A previous landlord took me to court, threatening to evict me. I won the case... but since then I've been living with my girlfriend. Whenever I apply for an apartment, the landlord turns me down based on the information on my credit check. Does information about the court case show up on my credit information? Can landlords legally choose not to rent to me, just because of my record? Can I take legal action?

Shut Out

Dear Shut Out,

This one falls in the "life isn't fair" category. Once an unlawful detainer action is filed in court, it becomes part of public record and will be picked up by collection agencies and tenant screening services no matter what the outcome is. Even if you win your case and the landlord has to pay your attorney fees, the fact that you were sued for unlawful detainer (eviction) will be a part of your tenant screening history for a very long time. In the not-too-distant past, California passed a law that declared it illegal for screening services to report on evictions that were dismissed, but the statute was overturned because the credit reporting agencies were merely reporting the truth.

There is nothing in the law that prevents a landlord from declining a tenant because he has been sued for unlawful detainer in the past. In order to challenge a refusal to rent to an individual, you must show that the refusal is based upon your membership in a protected class such as ethnicity, religion, family status, etc. Unfortunately, having a bad landlord in your past does not qualify a person for protected class status. This problem is why the Legal Action Center tries to settle cases before they get filed even to the extent that we explain to a client that fighting for your rights is going to cost you a clean tenant screening report. This is one of those situations where a person in good faith can exercise their rights with the full knowledge that they will be penalized for doing so.

Generally, the only way to deal with this is to be up front with every potential landlord and explain that an unlawful detainer will show up on your tenant screening report. You should take with you a copy of the judgment that dismisses the case so that you can show the prospective landlord that you were

in the right. If the landlord states that this explains away the problem, then it might be safe to pay for the obligatory credit check, but if the landlord won't

accept the explanation, just move on. The fact is that many landlords are more hesitant to rent to a tenant who beat their former landlord in a lawsuit than a tenant who has been beaten.

Tenants need to organize around this issue and find some resolution that at the very least insures that tenant

screening services actually report the outcome of the lawsuit.

Write to Tenant Talk!

Have you now, or have you ever been, screwed by your landlord? Got a tenant issue you'd like to raise? Have anecdotes from another country or city? We want to hear about it! Send all gripes, anecdotes, or questions to "Tenant Talk" c/o Real Change, 2129 Second Ave., Seattle, WA 98121 or email rchange@speakeasy.org

The credit racket

Dear Tenant Talk:

Most landlords charge anywhere from \$10 to \$40 for a credit check. Does it really cost that much to the landlord to check on my credit history? Do all landlords require them? What else do these records reveal? Is there a way to get information deleted or erased from my record?

Miffed

Dear Miffed:

Landlords are allowed to charge only for the costs incurred when the landlord uses the services of an agency that provides background information on a tenant. The landlords who do their own tenant screening may charge only the actual cost of obtaining the background information, such as long distance calls and time spent. The landlord must notify the prospective tenant in writing what the screening entails, the prospective tenant's right to dispute the accuracy of the information obtained, and the name and address of the tenant screening service used. Costs for screening reports vary. I have seen advertising that suggests that credit reports cost \$8.75, criminal information nationwide costs \$23, and doing Washington Superior Court searches run at about \$5. If a landlord is asking for \$40 then he should be detailing that the search includes a credit report, prior rental history, and criminal background check, or something to that effect.

Most landlords are now using tenant screening services. If a tenant discovers that incorrect information is included in the report, the tenant should notify the screening agency in writing that they dispute that information. The agency is then required to re-investigate the underlying information. The tenant should clearly set out why they are disputing the debt and include any documentation that supports the tenant's position that the information is inaccurate. If the information is found to be inaccurate or cannot be verified, the reporting agency is required to delete the information from the consumer's file. If the reporting agency finds the information in the report is supported by the facts, then the tenant is allowed to submit a brief statement disputing the validity of the information which would be distributed to consumers who request a screening report on a prospective tenant.

These procedures are generally applied to credit reporting agencies but they also apply to tenant screening services. ■

Mark Chattin, Legal Action Center

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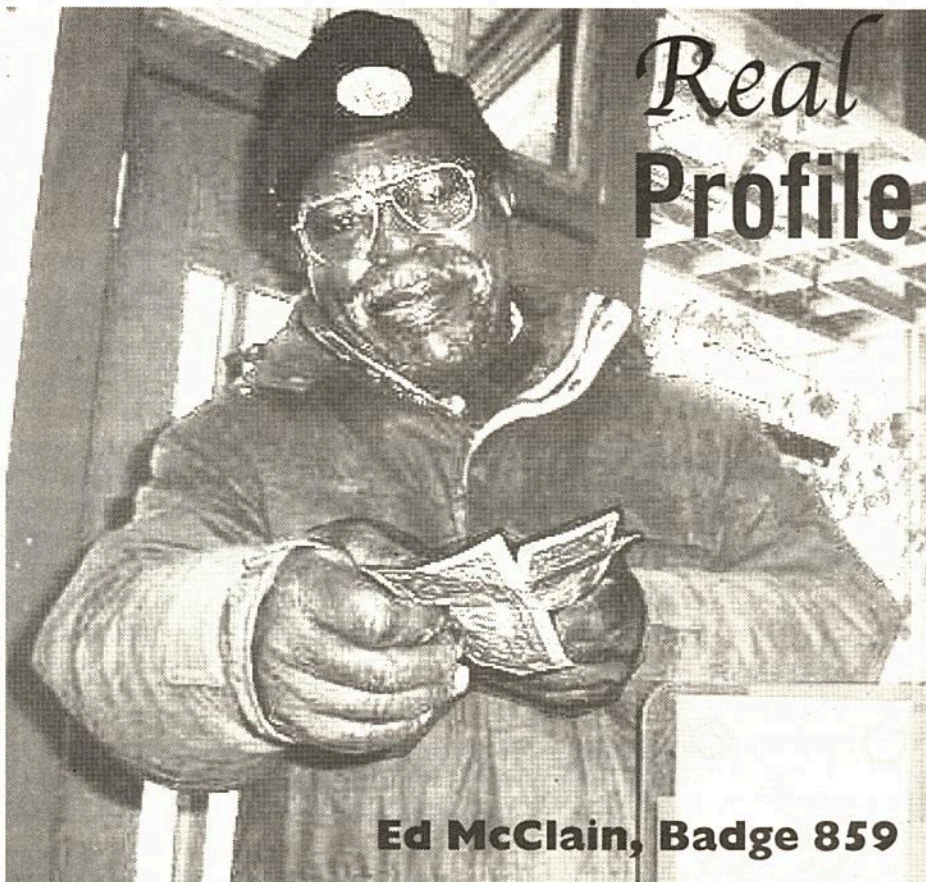
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Ed McClain, Badge 859

by Chris Gordon Owen

Ed McClain is as cheerfully polite to people who don't buy *Real Change* from him as he is to loyal customers. But he'd bristle if anyone suggested that he could find a better job.

It's true that his bachelor's degree in political science and sociology from Northern Illinois University (which he attended through a federally funded program for young, gifted black students) might have led elsewhere. It's also true that when he was younger, he spent years traveling in England, Europe, parts of Africa, and Mexico.

"Why be stuck if you don't have to be?" he'd like to know. For the same reason, he never stuck to his cooking and baking jobs for long.

On the other hand, for the past five years he has willingly stood in front of the University District Safeway hour after hour, day after day, in all kinds of weather. One of the few vendors from the paper's early days who's still at it, he hands out so many papers — currently 1200 or 1300 a month — that the arm-sweeping motion has contributed to a repetitive stress injury.

The recurring motif: on the move or in one place, Ed is his own boss, making choices by and for himself, beholden to no one. Such freedom hasn't always come easy. But fortunately Ed happens to relish the thrill of mastering the difficulties.

Consider his latest move. After spending about 10 years in Minnesota, working alternately as a baker and a cook, he decided to try out Seattle "for a minute" (a year or two, he explains) and see his son, now a young adult, who has been living here since the age of seven.

Ed arrived with a bundle of money, expecting to have himself a good time before settling in for that prolonged minute. Unaware of the high rents, he blew so much of his savings that he wound up spending several months at St. Martin de Porres, a shelter on Alaskan Way South for men over 50. It was during that time that he heard about *Real Change*. He chose his spot at the Safeway and stuck to it. He remembers selling only 100 papers in 30 days early on (less than a tenth of what he now sells), but he was soon earning enough to move into a hotel, where he lived for 42 months.

In August he started a second job as Facilities Coordinator at the University Heights Center for the Community, across the street from the Safeway, where he keeps the place clean and ready for use. He says it's a good back-up job with a regular pay check, good benefits, and nice coworkers. He also calls it a laid-back place, even though he works there from 6 a.m. to 1:30 p.m. five days a week, in addition to selling the newspaper most days.

Four months ago, fed up with hotel restrictions on having company, he moved into his own apartment in Lake City, where he is free to entertain anyone he wants and can get away from his work.

For the first time in his life, he has chosen to buy furniture for himself. After all, for the first time in his life, he's got a four-month-old grandson, and he just doesn't want to move on.

There are highs and lows in any life, Ed says, but you don't remember the lows, do you? If he had his life to live over again, knowing where he'd wind up, he'd do it all just the same. ■

"There are highs and lows in any life," Ed says, "but you don't remember the lows, do you?"

CLASSICS CORNER



by Perfess'r Harris

Here's a question The United States now has more people in prison per capita than anyone ever, including apartheid South Africa and the former USSR. Yet progressives are oddly silent. Why?

Here's another: every Christmas, my liberal democrat relatives from California spew their ugly opinions on Mexican illegals, whose hardscrabble lives apparently cost too much. This year, the logic extended to prisoners. How can normally decent people talk like Nazis and feel no shame?

Example three: a petty bureaucrat from Minneapolis considers it a victory that their homeless tracking system has identified the out-of-towners and denied them services. "Did they need the services?" we asked. "You're missing the point," she replied.

To understand all of this, one naturally turns to Thucydides' *History of the Peloponnesian War*. There, as in the entire course of human history, you find two kinds of people: those within the community, who are thought to be human, and those without, who are not.

Consider Melos. In a bid to shore up their empire, the Athenians make the Melians an offer they can't refuse: surrender or die. The Melians argue from justice for their right to neutrality. The Athenians explain, as if to a 10-year-old, how the world really works. "The strong do what they can, and the weak suffer what they must."

Their icy logic prevails through force of arms, and the Melians, who have naively chosen to put their faith in what is right, are destroyed. The men are killed, the women and children are sold into slavery, and the land is resettled by Athenian colonists. Melos basically ceases to exist. Thucydides is unemotional. Genocide is the way of the world.

Oddly, the annihilation of Melos occurs during one of the greatest flowerings of democracy in history. Pericles, during his famous funeral oration, describes Athens as a city of people who "fearless of consequences, confer their benefits not from calculations of expediency, but in the confidence of liberality."

There is no contradiction. Pericles was talking about other Athenians here. When the outsider is involved, different rules always apply.

So, given that little has changed, the amount of justice in the world seems directly related to how broadly community is defined. If we don't consider poor black males to be "one of us," we probably won't much care that about one in ten of them are locked up.

At a recent City Council forum, at which Classics Corner briefly refrained from referring to ourselves in the first person plural, a formerly homeless Indian man kept shouting, "Poor people of color are people! Poor people of color are people!"

Evidently, he thought it needed to be said. Evidently, he is right.

In our more misanthropic moments, we at Classics Corner commiserate with James Joyce that history is a nightmare from which we are unable to awake. Yet, we still work for a world where empathy and compassion will overwhelm our appallingly selfish natures.

How big is your community, and what have you done about it lately? Classics Corner wants to know. ■

Visit the Northwest Society for Classical Studies website at members.home.com/nscs

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March Notables

Weds. 3/15

Northwest Coalition for Human Dignity and the Seattle Jewish Film Festival present "From Swastika to Jim Crow," a movie about African Americans and Jews in the South during the 1930s, followed by a panel discussion with Prof. Thad Spratlen, co-chair of the African American / Jewish Coalition for Justice; filmmakers Steven Fischler and Joel Sucher, and Terre Rybovich, director of Northwest Coalition for Human Dignity. 7 p.m., at Cineplex Odeon at City Centre, 1420 5th Avenue; \$7.50, student and senior discounts, reservations 206-390-7791, info <http://www.ajcseattle.org>

Thurs. thru Sat. 3/16-18

The only African American owned and operated theater in the Northwest presents "Deadwood Dick, Legend of the West or Them N—s Went Thataway: the untold saga/fable of Nat Love and his road partners," a musical parody of western movies written by W. B. Burdine, Jr., directed by Malcolm West, with musical direction by Doug Barnett; 8 pm, also 2 p.m. Sat., at Nu Black Arts West Theatre, 153 - 14th Avenue one block north of Yesler; \$7-\$10, \$2 discount with a can of food for the homeless, info 206-329-3328.

Thurs. 3/16

The UW School of Social Work presents Professor Anita Hill of the Brandeis University School of Law, on "Rising to New Heights Through Promoting Social Justice" about the power and personal responsibility that individuals have to advance issues of social justice and effect social change. Drawing from her recent book, *Speaking Truth to Power*, Dr. Hill shares insights on universal principles that each one of us can adopt to advance social justice; 5 p.m., at UW Kane Hall, Room 130; open house 6:30 - 8 p.m. Seating is limited. Please RSVP by March 7 to UW Alumni Association. 206-543-3839.

Radical Women meeting "A Report on Mother Jones," militant labor organizer; 7:30 p.m., at 5018 Rainier Ave S, dinner at 6:30 for \$6.50; info, rides or childcare 206-722-6057 or 206-722-2453.

Fri. 3/17

"Free Radio" Premiere Screenings of a new Documentary Video on Micropower Broadcasting by Kevin Keyser; the most comprehensive documentary to date on the Micropower Broadcasting movement; a struggle and movement which has forced the Federal Communications Commission to recognize its legitimacy and strength by enacting a new low power FM broadcast service within the last month. The film is presented as a fundraiser for Studio X, a new community netcasting facility; screenings at 6 p.m. and 9:15 p.m., in the Speakeasy Cafe Backroom, 2304 - 2nd Ave in Belltown; \$5 donation requested;

Keyser may be available for a short discussion after each screening; info 206-736-1400.

Sat. 3/18

Gray Panthers of Seattle present their third in a series of speaker/ discussion group programs on "Critical Analysis of Genetically Engineered Food and Agricultural Products" with speakers: A.V. Krebs, editor and publisher of *The Agribusiness Examiner* and Todd Fedorenko, UW Department of Technical Communication; a film will be included in the presentation. Discussion and question/ answer session will follow. Free. Suggested reading on genetically engineered food: *Changing the Nature of Nature* by Dr. Martin Teitel and Kimberly Wilson; 10:30 a.m. - 12:30 p.m., at Good Shepherd Center, Room 223, 4649 Sunnyside Ave. N.; info Janet 206-528-2454.

Tinto por La Paz (A Cup of Coffee for Peace); Seattle Colombia Committee will host a presentation of the issues surrounding the illegal cultivation of coca in Colombia. Mercedes Ortiz, a Colombian anthropologist, and Diana Leal, a Colombian who worked with coca growers in the Amazon as part of a small project to introduce alternative crops, will provide their insights on the issue. Colombia is considered the number one coca producer in the world. In spite of the illegal status of coca, more than 35,000 people in Colombia are involved in the cultivation of coca, the raw material for cocaine. Presentation will be accompanied by a documentary film on the coca-producing Amazon region in Colombia. 2 - 5 p.m. at the Greenwood Library, 8016 Greenwood Ave N; info Maria Posada 206-706-8377.

"Street Survivors," performance by participants of Seattle Public Theater's Homeless Youth Project Theater of Liberation workshop for homeless youth, drawing youth served by various agencies, a week-long theater experience which ends in a series of forum theater performances based on real-life situations drawn from the experiences of youth in the ensemble. Spectators have the opportunity to become "spect-actors" and enter the scene to show their feelings and how they would react to the conflict in each situation; ensemble actors and audience members alike share the outcomes of these interventions — an uplifting, transformative, and truly educational experience. 7:30 p.m., at University Friends Meeting, 4001 9th Ave. NE; Pay what you can suggested donation \$15 - \$25; info 206-328-4848 or spt@scn.org; Also on 3/20, 7:30 p.m., at Central Lutheran Church, 1710 11th Ave.

Sun. 3/19

Seattle Women Act for Peace and Women's International League for Peace and Freedom present an educa-

tional meeting with Ruth Yarrow of Physicians for Social Responsibility of Cleaning Up the Radioactive Hanford Mess; 11 a.m. with refreshments, at 3842 NE 90th St. near 35th Ave NE; info 206-523-1127.

Join Studio X for Tea and Cookies and assigning time slots for the month of April; Studio X is a new community netcasting facility broadcasting from downtown Seattle between 4 p.m. - midnight (PST) on the internet at <http://www.microradio.net>; connecting you to 'unmediated' voices from Seattle's social movements including October 22 Coalition, Women's International League for Peace & Freedom, Mothers for Police Accountability, The Hemp Coalition, StreetWrites/Real Change, Resist the List, Seattle Labor Chorus, and more; plus music, poetry, and plenty of weird sounds. 1 p.m., at Speakeasy Cafe Backroom, 2304 - 2nd Ave in Belltown; info 206-736-1400.

Weds. 3/22

The Committee Against Repression and for Democracy in Mexico will hold a protest against the low intensity war in Southern Mexico and to support the Zapatistas; noon - 1 p.m., in front of the Mexican Consulate, 3rd and Blanchard; info Ryan 425-235-7180 or ryjudge@u.washington.edu

Meeting about County Councilmember Larry Gossett's proposal to change the county logo to the likeness of Rev. Martin Luther King, Jr. Build towards a possible public hearing before the Labor, Management and Customer Services Committee at the end of the month. 5:30-7 p.m., at the Labor Employment Law Office, 1419 South Jackson.

Dr. Patricia Dawson will read from her recent book: *Forged by the Knife: the Experience of Surgical Residency by a Woman of Color*. Dr. Dawson is a breast surgeon in private practice at Providence Hospital; the reading will be followed by discussion; no admission charge. 7 p.m., at the Lesbian Resource Center, 2214 South Jackson; info 206-322-3953.

Sat. thru Mon. 3/25-27

A coalition of environmentalists, labor, students, community activists, people of faith, and other concerned citizens will use the power of mass nonviolent protest to show solidarity with locked-out Kaiser Aluminum Steelworkers; in Tacoma; info <http://www.agitprop.org/artandrevolution/kaiser/index.html>

Tues. thru Thurs. 3/28-30

Seattle Colombia Committee will be hosting Colombian labor leader Luis Alfonso Velasquez Rico. Colombia has recently attempted to obstruct the ILO and ICFTU's inquiries into the terrible level of repression against trade unionists in Colombia; the Clinton administration wants to massively increase military aid to Colombia; AFL-CIO President John Sweeney has expressed serious reservations about increased military aid to Colombia. Velásquez Rico is the Director for

the Department of Judicial and Labor Affairs for the main federation of union workers of Colombia, the CUT, and holds leadership positions in various Colombian labor unions; info Justin Delacour oakleyruth@igc.org

Fri. thru Sat. 3/31 - 4/1

Conference on Free Speech. Ralph Nader will be the keynote speaker on Saturday; evening session on Friday devoted specifically to free speech issues in the context of the WTO, featuring panel speakers representing many shades of opinion and a substantial opportunity for the audience to ask questions. Saturday workshops on various free speech topics. Part of the President's "Campus Conversations" about the future of the University, and a broader effort to address the idea of education for citizenship; at UW. Info davis@u.washington.edu

Ongoing Mondays

Books to Prisoners. Visit our new space. Ongoing volunteer project could use your help answering letters and sending books to incarcerated individuals; 6-10 p.m., at 1004 Turner Way East on 23rd Ave, two blocks north of Aloha, Bus lines 43 & 48; Info. 206-322-2868 or <http://weber.u.washington.edu/~jargon>

Ongoing Sundays

Seattle Food Not Bombs collects food and serves free vegetarian meals to the homeless each and every Sunday, 2 p.m. Cook at Green Tortoise Hostel, 1525 2nd Ave.; share dinner at Occidental Park, 5 p.m. Info. 206-346-0335 or <http://www.scn.org/activism/foodnotbombs>

Ongoing Daily

Studio X, a new community netcasting facility, is broadcasting on topics such as politics, homeless issues, local news, youth issues, global issues, police brutality from downtown Seattle, 4 p.m. - midnight (PST) on the internet at <http://www.microradio.net>; info and to find out how to produce your own show 206-736-1400

Join picketing at the gates to support striking SPEEA workers; in Seattle at the Developmental Center; Gate J-26 across from Museum of Flight; info SPEEA 206-433-0991 or 800-325-0811 or <http://www.SPEEA.org>

Free Video Rentals of Citizen Vagrom's Micro-Media Offerings, a video magazine highlighting independent, micro-media from Seattle and beyond (also on TV Channel 29, Sundays, 8 p.m.), at Rain City Video, Fremont, Ballard, Sunset Hill; Video Vertigo, 913 East Pike; Broadway Video, Broadway Market; Scarecrow Video, 5030 Roosevelt Way. Info 206-344-6434 or citizen@speakeasy.org

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

citizens participation project



No More Nordstroms

Issue: Congress will divert Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) funds away from services and housing for the poor and into programs for better-off people. Don't let them rob Peter to pay Paul.

Background:

Like flesh-eating bacteria, actions by Congress and HUD over the last eight years have taken more and more CDBG money away from low-income people. Downtown Seattle benefited from HUD's largesse several years ago when the agency determined that a section of downtown suffered from "spot blight" and launched the monstrous Pine Street redevelopment. New York Rep. Rick Lazio has a different, but equally dreaded, tactic for opening HUD's bank account to more affluent people.

In his position on the Banking Committee, Lazio helped himself to HUD's CDBG funds. Now dozens of other cities and counties want a piece of CDBG.

The House Banking Committee is discussing H.R. 1776, a bill which deals with a variety of housing and community development issues. Lazio's amendment to H.R. 1776, called Title IV, would do two screwy things:

1. Exempt 10 Jurisdictions from the Income Cap. For years, the law has allowed HUD to adjust the meaning of "low and moderate income" to serve poorer people in more affluent areas. HUD has done this by "capping" the upper income limit in wealthy areas at 100 percent of the "national median income" — \$47,800 in 1999.

In 1998, Congress first allowed 68 affluent jurisdictions in 10 metropolitan areas to use the more traditional level of 80 percent of the areawide median income. The exemption will divert more than \$207 million in CDBG money away from poor people in the year 2000 alone.

2. Subsidize People with \$94,000 Incomes. The proposed bill would allow CDBG money and homebuying subsidies to be used to help teachers or "uniformed" public employees with incomes up to 150 percent of the median income. The proposed change doesn't even encourage homebuying in low-income neighborhoods.

Adding insult to injury, the proposed amendment would allow CDBG to be used to pay off the entire down payment on a home. For real low-income people, the law would still limit assistance to only 50 percent of a down payment.

Rep. Michael Capuano of Cambridge, Massachusetts, proposed raising eligibility to 150 percent of the area median income. Using 1999 numbers, that means a firefighter making \$94,000 in Cambridge could get CDBG help to buy a house. Don't let Congress further pervert the purpose of HUD's scant resources.

Action Needed:

Washington representatives Jay Inslee (eastern King and southern Snohomish Counties) and Jack Metcalf (Snohomish County north to the border) are on the Banking Committee. If you live in Seattle, call or email Rep. Jim McDermott. Ask him to urge Inslee and Metcalf to delete these two sections from Title IV of H.R. 1776.

Inslee's Mountlake Terrace number: 425-640-0233. In D.C.: 202-225-6311. Or email him (jay.inslee@mail.house.gov).

Metcalf's Everett number: 425-252-3188. In D.C.: 202-225-2605.

McDermott's Seattle number: 206-553-7170. In D.C.: 202-225-3106. To contact him through email, click "contact" on his web site (<http://www.house.gov/mcdermott>).

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