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MNGP

Change

Puget Sound's Newspaper of the Poor and Homeless • Volume 7, No. 12

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June 15, 2000

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Let Them Eat Cake

**Renters Summit
Wrap-up • The Return of
Rape Relief • Workers
Priced Out of Seattle**

The Slow Decay of Downtown Dental Care

By Adam Holdorf

COVER DESIGNED BY WES BROWNING

George Lewis can't stand the taste of his own mouth. He says it's like a rotten grapefruit. Fifty-eight years old, a worker all his life, and a resident of SHARE's Bunkhouse shelter, Lewis has 11 teeth left. He's got an appointment to get them all pulled next week. Meanwhile, the taste is so bad that he's looking for a cleaning as soon as possible.

"It's making me sick," he says.

There's plenty of provisional home-cures for Lewis — homemade pain-relievers and tonics low-income people use when, for whatever reason, professional help isn't available. Robert Hansen gargles with a mixture of peroxide and lukewarm saltwater. Wes Browning swishes with 151-proof rum. Others swear by lemon wedges. JoJo Tran would throw himself against the wall of the Bunkhouse to divert his attention from a bad toothache.

These remedies may come in handy for Lewis and dozens of other homeless people that the Downtown Dental Clinic stopped seeing in May, when two part-time dentists quit. The former patients, referred by the Pike Market Medical Clinic, are finding help at offices less centrally located than the clinic's Fourth and Blanchard site.

Administrators say the dentists will be replaced shortly, and Lewis and others will be back for the cleanings and

fillings offered on a sliding-scale basis. In fact, they would like to double the number of patients walking through the clinic's doors, without increasing the number of staff. It's part of a plan to turn the downtown branch, run by the city-county Public Health Department, from what former director Nova Jones calls a "dump clinic" to a break-even enterprise. Critics say it'll never work.

Overbooked

Site administrator Ellen Jeffcott aims to double the number of patients seen at the downtown clinic, to about 600 per month, without increasing staffing or expenses. She says that typically, more than 10 percent of the patients scheduled don't show up for their appointments. So appointment setters will simply overbook the staff, knowing that rarely do all patients make it. "We'll put in extra visits, knowing historically that some [patients] won't show up," says Jeffcott. "If they all show up, I guess we'll be extra-busy."

These work expectations were a factor in the departure of Dr. Abrah Goudarzi, a dentist at the clinic for over ten years, last month. At the same time, another part-time dentist quit, leaving staffing at a third of regular levels.

Administrators won't comment on either dentists' departure. They say

only that their expectations are "in keeping with good dental practice."

Under normal working circumstances, dentists downtown see less than one patient every hour, says Jeffcott. Under her plan, they'll see one patient every 45 minutes, as well as tend to some half-hour 'emergency visits.' "We need to maximize our resources for clients that are already underserved," she says. "Finding dental care for uninsured adults is like finding enough shelter beds in this town."

It's also a bid to bring in the medicaid vouchers that subsidize dental care for poor people and get the clinic to break even.

Other aches and pains

Though administrators promise to have new dentists working as soon as they can be hired, they warn that the labor market is tight. Dentists in private practice with five years' experience stand to earn \$90,000 a year; working for Public Health, they'd start out with an annual income of \$20,000 less.

Dentistry for low-income people is

"Administrators would like to double the number of patients walking through the clinic's doors without increasing the number of staff. Critics say it'll never work."

on the run in other quarters. Mark Secord is director of the Puget Sound Neighborhood Health Center's four dental clinics, which, in terms of the number of low-income adult patients

served, dwarfs the downtown clinic. More than two-thirds of the county's low-income adults go for sliding-fee dental work at PSNHC clinics. Unlike Public Health officials, Secord uses United Way and other private philanthropy to subsidize the work. But expenses are about to climb. Seattle Housing Authority had

donated two dental offices to PSNHC at the Holly Park and High Point housing developments. Even the electricity was paid for. With the redevelopment of Holly Park, and a renovation of High Point on its way, the free ride is ending. The Holly Park clinic closed last month.

"The idea was, if you provide our residents with free services, we'll provide you free facilities," says Secord. "Those days are coming to an end."

SHA will lease new land to the organization, and they'll start construction on a 10-chair office this fall. It

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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.

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Mission Statement:

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.



Youth talk back

Dear Real Change,

A few days ago I attended a conference on Undoing Institutional Racism. When over five hundred people showed up, my group and I were very empowered.... Our vision is to take what we have learned about this issue and share it in a thought-provoking way with other youth around Seattle. I am very active in the struggle for social justice, because I can't stand to think that while the U.S. is the most powerful country in the world, there of millions of minorities not getting the health care, financial support and more that other white ruling people in the country receive. The question for me has always been how can our founding fathers come to the Americas because of religious and economic oppression, and then begin to shun and oppress other people? I see institutional racism every day, and by not speaking up, the message I give is that this unjust system we live in is O.K.

Sincerely,
Candice Bolger
Youth Undoing Institutional
Racism (YUIR) Member

Soon to be Homeless?

[The following was a voicemail left on the *Real Change* line last month:]

"Hello, I'm with the amazing Washington state Tenants Union. The rule that has to be rid of, or softened down, in regulations, policies or other plans, are the rules, regulations and policies that are unfair as they are administered by these public housing authorities Nazi Gestapo groups. The ones that are making me suffer are the King County Housing Authority; they have made it possible to get rid of us and knock us out on the street. How inhumane!

"Then the Federal government comes up with these thought-provoking words: "Oh, there's so many people living on the streets of America, these homeless people, we have to help them find housing to keep them safe and sound, buncha blah-blah! If the federal government were fair-minded in the first place, they would have gotten rid of that housing standard quality program or made it softer in verbal attitude towards the very poor or the disabled such as myself. I'm a senior citizen, and I'm 100 percent outraged against this moronic stupid view of the housing authority. So, hoping you will come out here to Burien and write a fact-facing article. [Address follows]. Adios Amigos, vaya con dios."

Sincerely,
Elaine Brodeen

Tents Times

Dear Editor:

I am writing to you regarding Tent City. In case you haven't noticed, the prices of hotels in this city have become beyond the reach of common ordinary people. You have to be a millionaire to stay at one of the hotels downtown while you're getting it together to move into something like an apartment.

At the same time, many apartments have been taken over by businesses in the downtown area. I am only guessing that most of those apartments were low-income housing. Seeing how we are not living in a country that is a monarchy... those people that have been ousted into the streets via high-priced, uptown, made-for-millionaire-hotels, and via the super-imposition of businesses... ought to have a form of protest.

I say move Tent City to where the new stadium is being built. Of course, all of the residents of Tent City should be informed, to the extent that every occupant speaks with one voice: make the city of Seattle livable for all walks of life, rather than for a chosen few!

Sincerely,
John R. Austin

[A neighbor to the Tent City at St. Mark's Cathedral, on Capitol Hill]

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Beyond Charity

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Priced Out

Seattle's hospitality industry spawns poverty-wage jobs

By Dana Wise

The director of a church-based nonprofit housing agency told me the other day that room cleaners who work at one non-union, four-star hotel downtown occupied half the units in his group's publicly-funded apartment building. It's bad enough that Seattle's hospitality industry doesn't pay its workers a living wage; it's worse that full-time employees have to rely on scarce public resources provided by the city and the nonprofit sector.

The same wealth producing Seattle's fancy hotels also produces thousands of poverty-wage jobs. There are roughly 8,000 hotel workers in downtown Seattle, and the city estimates that more than half are from low- and very low-income families. Many people working in Seattle's growing tourism sector earn between \$7 and \$9 per hour, work part-time, and receive no health benefits. Many, if not a majority, are women, recent immigrants, and people of color.

More jobs like these are on their way. City officials expect the number of hotel rooms downtown to double by 2014. More than 2,000 hotel rooms are currently on the drawing board. And the city and the Port of Seattle continue to spend billions of dollars in tourism-related development — taxpayer subsidies that directly encourage the industry's expansion.

In order to afford the average two-bedroom, market-rate unit in Seattle, workers need a full-time job paying over \$14 per hour, according to the National Low Income Housing Coalition. The city estimates that just four percent of the entire housing stock is affordable to people earning below \$20,000 per year, and just 14 percent of all units are affordable to people earning below \$37,000 per year. The lack of affordable housing means that few people who work downtown can afford to live downtown.

Instead, we see our highways clogged with traffic, residential development spreading through outlying areas, and people forced to spend fewer hours with their families and more hours commuting to one or two jobs. Seattle's rising housing prices, coupled with the persistence of low-wage jobs, and the overrepresentation of people of color in these jobs, contribute to segregation and economic inequality.

The city has various taxpayer-financed programs and developer incentives that encourage affordable housing. But they meet only a fraction of the need.

The "Bonus" and "Transferable Development Rights" incentive programs were created to mitigate the impacts of high-density downtown developments — and the low-wage jobs that they create — on the city's social service budget in general and its affordable housing stock in particular. In exchange for permission to increase building height and density, which translates into profits from valuable commercial floor space, developers voluntarily participate in the TDR/Bonus programs by contributing cash and/or making in-kind contributions toward housing. Developers are supposed to compensate the city for the affordable housing needed for the hundreds of low-wage jobs they themselves created.

In their roughly 15 years of operation, the programs have had mixed success in addressing Seattle's affordable housing problems. They have lost some of their focus on housing: the city has used them to encourage developers to contribute over \$7 million to Benaroya Hall, theatres, and open space. And the impact fee, a charge to developers calculated on a per square-foot basis, hasn't increased since 1989.

What we can do

The city's own analysis shows that the current fee is a small fraction of the true social impact of high-density development. Even with a proposed increase from \$13 per square foot to \$25, the program would fund only a third of the true housing impact of downtown development. Furthermore, the city admits that janitors and other contingent workers are not considered in the housing impact calculation.

Because officials can't leverage enough money to address all of the social impacts of downtown development, the city should use its developer incentive programs to promote requirements that improve the quality of jobs.

It is time we make sure that developers pay their workers a decent, family wage. It's not in the city's interest to allow developers to get away with creating jobs that don't pay enough for housing, that force taxpayers to pick up the bill for workers without health care, and that don't let workers find a place to live in the same communities where they work. We believe quality jobs should be the first priority in the effort to create a "livable Seattle." ■

Dana Wise is a researcher for the Hotel Employees and Restaurant Employees International Union (HERE). For more information, contact him at danawise@att.net or (206) 441-0499.

Please join us for a
"Conversation between
downtown service workers,
housing advocates, and the
Mayor" 5 p.m. June 15,
Gesthemane Lutheran Church,
911 Stewart Street

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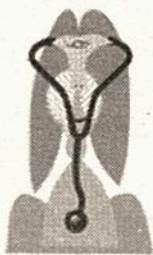
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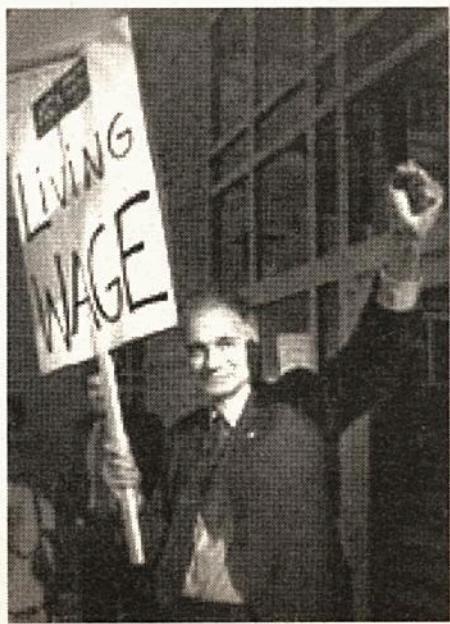
They still call it Sin City, but no one could have expected that popular Las Vegas mayor Angela Gomez could sink so low. When she confessed to her lesbian liaison, people wondered how she could have escaped the genetic tracers. But Gomez not only engaged in the illicit intimacy, she broke several laws to do so, including creating a false profile for which she obtained black-market DNA. That this conduct could come from a city official is no surprise to many conspiracy theorists, who are now getting a grim kind of satisfaction. Edward Lazowska, spokesperson for the Vegas Gambling and Ethics Commission, says, "This is just the tip of the iceberg. We're looking at the cops, the lab techs, basically anyone with access or authority." Lazowska cautions against hasty conclusions, but did acknowledge that his commission was responding to allegations of a same-sex ring "at the highest levels of government." ■

—Bob Redmond

Not easy being Green

Green Party presidential candidate Ralph Nader was recently in the northwest, attending a press conference in Portland, then making a campaign stop in Anchorage. He bypassed Washington entirely. Despite delivering the fourth-largest number of votes for his presidential bid in '96, Washington had no statewide Green Party to host Nader until last month.

Right now, Nader is concentrating on states where he'll have



RALPH NADER BRINGS WORKERS' ISSUES TO THE PRESIDENTIAL DEBATE

to struggle just to get his name on the ballot, like North Carolina. Organizers hope he'll be in Washington later this summer, when Green Party chapters in Spokane, Olympia, Vancouver and other places should be up and running, according to organizer Sean Rockhold. Local Green groups anticipate such visits as a way to build a strong statewide progressive party.

"Rarely do third parties have anyone with a higher level of public trust, and a better reputation, than the major-party candidates. Nader gives us a lot of legitimacy," Rockhold says. It would have been nice to have him sooner: "As much of his time as we could have gotten, we could have used."

Everyone is welcome at the June 24 convention; for more information, call Robin Denburg at (206)324-5675. ■

The Seattle Greens will hold their nominating convention June 24, complete with speakers like anti-corporate author David Korten and city

councilmembers Nick Licata and Peter Steinbrueck. They'll collect the 200 signatures needed to place Nader on the state ballot. Polls taken in late May suggest Nader would get about four percent of the vote nationally, but boosters are suggesting that he could get as much as 10 percent in western states. Also on the Green's roster, running against Democratic Rep. Jim McDermott, will be Seattle schoolteacher Joe Szwaja.

Everyone is welcome at the June 24 convention; for more information, call Robin Denburg at (206)324-5675. ■

Down to the wire

Three weeks from the deadline to turn in nearly 180,000 signatures for the health care reform proposal Initiative 725, organizer Sally Soriano says volunteers have collected just under half that amount. Undeterred, the campaign is using 30 signature gatherers for cities outside the Puget Sound area.

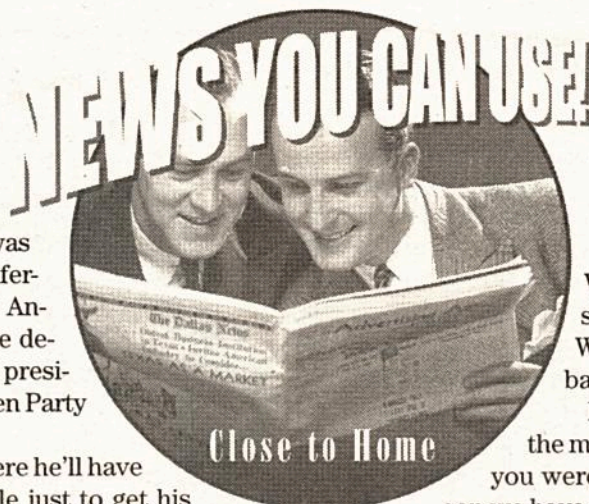
Small business groups have already voiced some opposition to the measure, which would make employers pay a 9.75-percent tax on payroll to fund health insurance. Soriano says small business owners should realize the premiums they

already pay for employee health plans like Premera, Blue Cross and Group Health will continue to climb, especially since the state legislature recently lifted the cap in a bid to bring big insurers back to the market. Since then, the insurers have come back, and raised their premiums by as much as 24 percent. Small businesses also can get a five-year grace period before paying the tax. ■

— Adam Holdorf

WT-Over

The Seattle Host Organization, that big business-led body charged with welcoming foreign ministers to the Seattle's World Trade Organization meeting last fall, paid all it can to the city to reimburse its security costs. The sum total:



around \$320,000, or, with earlier payments, a little more than half of the \$1.5 million the SHO had originally promised.

In a letter to Mayor Paul Schell, SHO director Ray Waldmann cited the organization's \$2 million fundraising shortfall, and said it had paid off all of its required debts. With that, coffers dry, the Seattle Host Organization disbanded.

In a written reply, Schell politely thanked Waldmann for the money, acknowledging the "difficult environment in which you were asked to raise funds.... Perhaps the most obvious lesson we have all learned is the importance of securing in advance federal government support and funding for an event as complex and controversial as the WTO Ministerial."

Maybe the Host Organization should get a loan to help pay off the rest of its debt to the city. May we suggest the World Bank? ■

— Adam Holdorf

Investigation in progress

Forty-year-old Debbie Jean Cashio had a home address in Oak Harbor, but recently had no other home than Seattle's streets. Sometime before the Sunday on Memorial Day weekend, she was killed, and her body was left under the Interstate 5 overpass on S. Jackson Street near the International District.

City detectives are investigating the homicide, and a detective agency is offering up to \$1,000 cash for information. Call Detective Doug Lewis at (206)343-2020 or (800)274-6313 if you have any leads.

The Women's Housing, Equality and Enhancement League (WHEEL) drew 25 women together for a silent protest outside the city Public Safety building on Wednesday, June 7, calling for safe shelter for all women. ■

— Adam Holdorf

A City on the go

Some West Seattle neighborhood residents have voiced qualms about Habitat for Humanity's wishes to house the SHARE/WHEEL Tent City on their land. At a community meeting last week attended by Tent City residents, city officials and Habitat for Humanity, at least one neighbor shouted down Tent City supporters. But this was the minority's viewpoint, says Tent City resident Cynthia Morris.

"I think there were more for us than against us," she says. "A petition went around [in opposition to siting the Tent City in the neighborhood] and most people just passed it on. The meeting went pretty good."

Linda Murtfeldt, director of Habitat for Humanity, says her organization needs until at least early July to decide whether to host the tent city on



Habitat property in the Westwood neighborhood for up to six

months. Habitat will continue to meet with neighborhood residents of the vacant property, in West Seattle's Westwood neighborhood, where they plan to build a home.

"Before we had a chance to talk to the neighbors, the media did, and that made people [in the neighborhood] mad. We've had to put out a lot of fires," she says. "We feel like, to be good neighbors at a site we eventually want to build at, we need to address all these concerns."

Toward that end, to allay neighbors' fears about property damage, Murtfeldt says Habitat will investigate whether crime has occurred around former camps in the Rainier Valley or on Capitol Hill.

Tent City was readying to move from its temporary place at St. Mark's Episcopal Cathedral on Capitol Hill on June 14th, and hoping to go to Habitat's site. As of press time, organizers hadn't yet found an alternative. ■

— Adam Holdorf

Do you have a story we should look into? Call Adam Holdorf at 441-8143, and just maybe we will.

The Strong Survive

One year after Seattle Rape Relief closed, CARA gears up

By Sarah McCormic

When Seattle Rape Relief closed its doors last June, citing financial problems, the city lost an organization that had been providing unique, grassroots services to rape victims for almost 30 years.

"It was horrible," says Alisa Bierria, a former Seattle Rape Relief volunteer, of its closing. "But we have to recognize when it's time for an organization to die. For Seattle Rape Relief, it was time to go."

A group of former Seattle Rape Relief staff and volunteers have founded a new organization to fill the void, and take Seattle Rape Relief's work one step further.

Communities Against Rape and Abuse (CARA) began operating in January, funded mostly by city funds that

city money that supported its programs went to two similar programs in the area. King County Sexual Assault Resource Center (KCSARC) absorbed the Seattle Rape Relief crisis line into its existing 24-hour hotline; Harborview Center for Sexual Assault and Traumatic Stress works with other agencies to provide outreach to communities formerly served by Seattle Rape Relief.

According to Mary Ellen Stone, executive director of KCSARC, the volume of calls on the county's crisis line has increased by around 30 percent since the two lines merged. KCSARC continues to provide free legal advocacy for survivors of sexual assault, as well as counseling services and referrals.

"It's a loss that Seattle Rape Relief is no longer offering services," said Anette Schiferl, who was president of

Seattle," says Bengston, "and determined that those were the three areas where there were the most gaps."

Three CATs, composed of five to 10 representatives of each community, will "figure out ways to address rape and abuse issues that are specific to their community," explains Bierria. A grant from the Seattle Youth Involvement Network will provide stipends for members of the youth CAT, and the CARA staff is trying to obtain funding to pay other CAT members as well.

Hollis Rendleman, a former community organizer for Seattle Rape Relief, is now community organizer for CARA's Youth Program. She hopes to recruit youth from diverse backgrounds, including homeless youth, to serve on the CAT.

"The big hope is that youth will come to us with ideas, and that I can be the support and provide resources to make those things happen," she says. Features of the program might range from trainings and support groups to art projects and poetry slams.

Cristien Storm, Director of Home Alive, is excited about the new non-profit's unique philosophy: "CARA is fulfilling a niche which other agencies focusing on sexual assault are not providing."

CARA's founders hope that their approach will be a more effective means of reaching new communities. While SRR was known for reaching out to underserved communities, it was not always successful. Most of the callers and crisis line staff at Seattle Rape Relief were white, middle-class women, says Rebecca Farr, community organizer for CARA and a former Seattle Rape Relief staffer, "and the resources that were available were targeted for that community."

CARA is still in the planning stages, with its staff of four busy networking with other organizations and individu-

als in the communities they plan to serve. They hope to have the CATs assembled by the end of the summer.

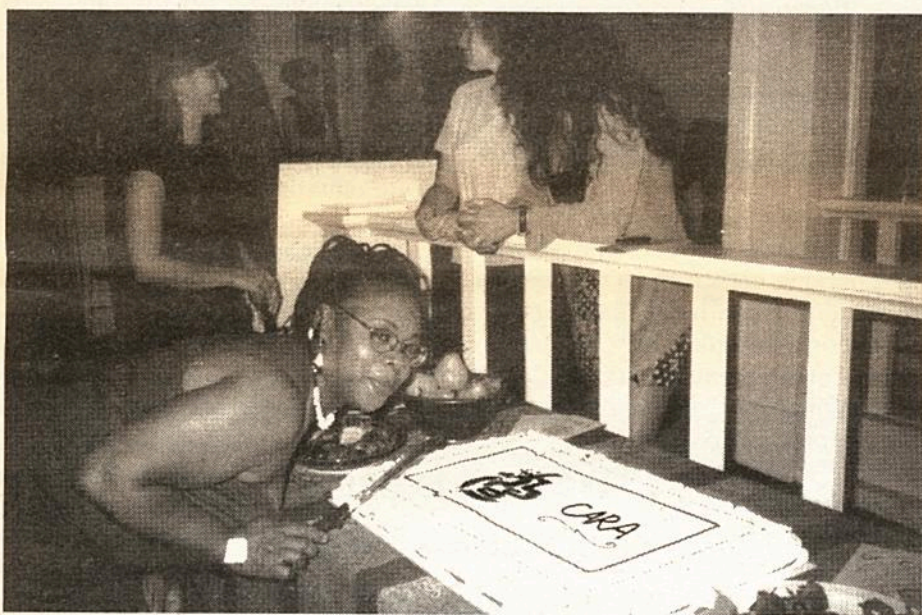
Some things still missing

CARA may step in to provide direct services that were not absorbed by Harborview and KCSARC. Organizers say a notable gap exists in the area of free counseling. Seattle Rape Relief sponsored a free support group for victims of sexual assault. "Right now there is no such thing," says Bengston. CARA plans to provide a free support group facilitated by trained volunteers. "Our goal is for this to happen this fall or winter," Bengston said. KCSARC does offer a free support group for adult survivors of childhood sexual assault, but none for survivors who were assaulted as adults.

And Home Alive, which stepped in to Seattle Rape Relief's shoes to organize the annual Take Back the Night march and rally last September, has decided against doing so this year. So far, no other group is organizing the march, according to Home Alive and CARA staff.

Many also mourn the loss of Seattle Rape Relief's crisis line, which was staffed by volunteers who themselves were often survivors of sexual assault. The only existing crisis line, run by KCSARC, is staffed exclusively by paid, professional counselors. Citing cost and red tape, Bengston says CARA won't consider setting up another crisis line for at least a couple of years.

The volunteer line will be missed, says Bengston, who used to staff it. "It really is a different approach to the work — that sense of grassroots service. I think it's different when you call someone and you know you're talking to someone who isn't being paid to talk to you. There's a different spirit to it." ■



Theryn Kigvamasud, community organizer for the Black People's Project, celebrates the opening of CARA. Photo by Sarah McCormic.

had gone to the old agency. Like Seattle Rape Relief, CARA plans to focus on reaching out to underserved communities. But "we're in a different place, in terms of anti-rape activism," says Bierria, program coordinator for CARA.

"Seattle Rape Relief was still caught up in thinking in a context of a 1970s and 1980s response to rape, with things like a crisis line and legal advocacy. All those things are really needed, but we're pushing anti-rape activism to the next level by empowering survivors in their communities."

Filling the Gap

Founded in the early 1970s, Seattle Rape Relief was one of the nation's first rape crisis centers. The non-profit was known for reaching out to gays and lesbians, the homeless, minorities, and other communities whose needs are less often met by traditional social services organizations. When it closed, the

the board of Seattle Rape Relief when it closed, "but things have been well covered, and survivors have been well served."

While Seattle Rape Relief offered many direct services to rape survivors, CARA will focus almost exclusively on community outreach and education. Its founders envision a grassroots approach to anti-rape activism, in which communities are given the tools and information to empower themselves. "We're not going in to talk to people as the experts. We're going in and asking people what they need. Tell us about your experience. That's a much different approach than any other organization," says Julie Bengston, a member of CARA's interim board.

To do this, CARA is recruiting representatives from the African-American, youth, and developmentally disabled communities to serve on Community Action Teams, or CATs.

"We met with the other sexual assault service providers, and the city of

RESOURCES FOR SURVIVORS OF SEXUAL ASSAULT IN THE SEATTLE AREA

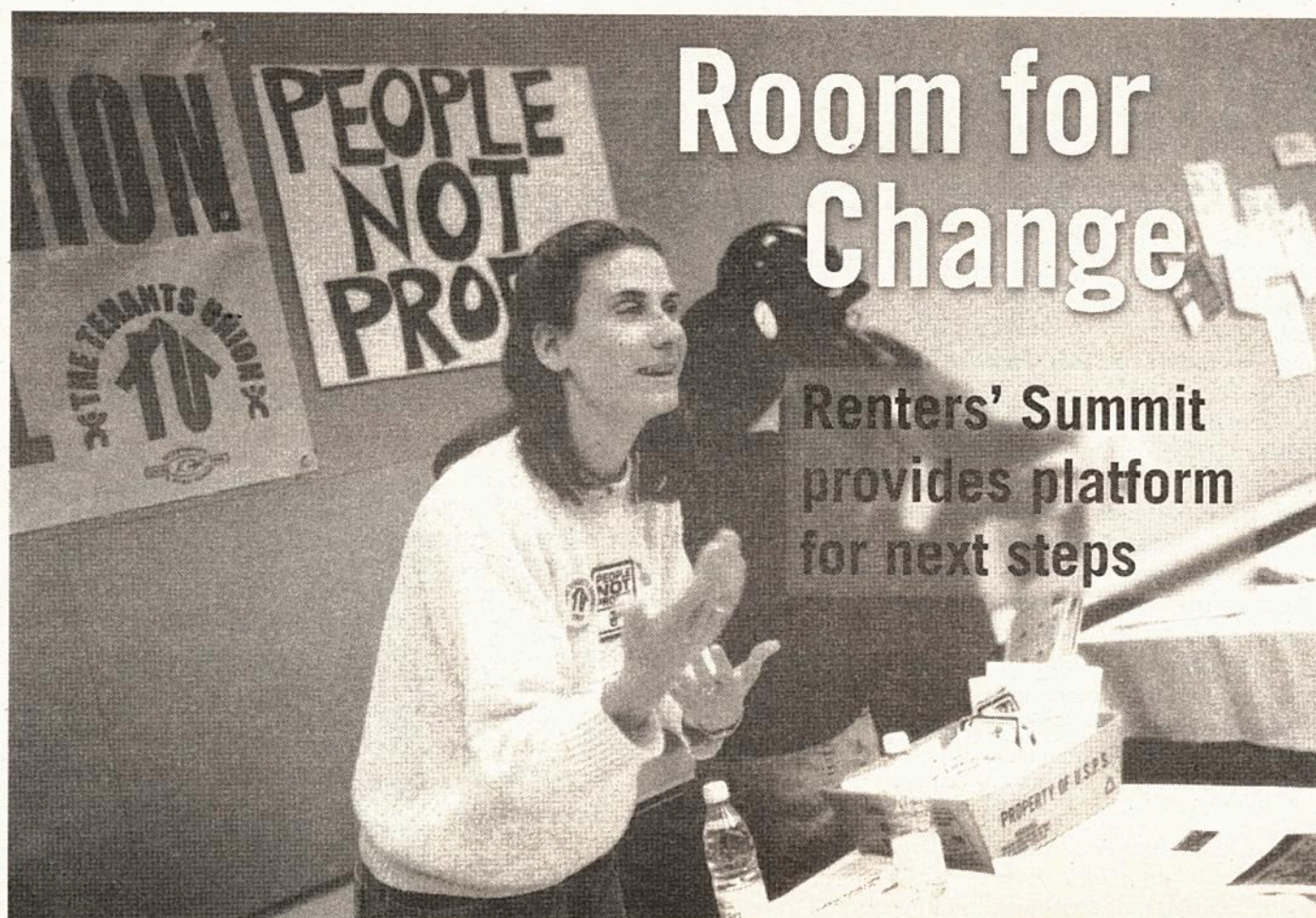
King County Sexual Assault Resource Center
24-hour crisis line number: 1-800-825-7273 or (206) 632-7273.

Communities Against Rape and Abuse (CARA)
(206) 322-4856
CARA welcomes public input at its monthly community forums, held on the last Thursday of each month. Call CARA for details. CARA is looking for people to serve on their community action teams and for volunteers. To get involved, call or send e-mail to: info@CARA-Seattle.org

Harborview Center for Sexual Assault and Traumatic Stress
(206) 521-1800

Home Alive
(206) 720-0606; selfdef@homealive.org

Abused Deaf Women's Advocacy Services
TDD only: 726-0093



ALINE CARTON OF THE TENANTS UNION ENCOURAGES INVOLVEMENT AT THE RENTERS' SUMMIT. PHOTO BY SABINE KOSCHORRECK.

By Trevor Griffey

When a panel discussion at the recent Renter's Summit opened up for comment, Robert Canamar raised his hand and spoke. He said that Seattle's Department of Construction and Land Use (DCLU) has been ignoring his complaints about the apartment he rents in Belltown. Unlike the many public forums in which citizen concerns are given little else than microphone time, his comment got results.

Rich Krochalis, head of DCLU, walked up to Canamar after the workshop, handed him a business card, and assured Canamar that a call to DCLU would soon bring city inspectors to his building.

The exchange between Krochalis and Canamar epitomized the kind of new relationship between government and renters that Seattle city councilmember Judy Nicastro convened the Renters' Summit to inspire.

In an open letter announcing the Summit held last Saturday, June 10, Nicastro claimed that "Seattle is experiencing a rental housing crisis." But contrary to what naysayers predicted, the event didn't focus on the crisis as much as it attempted to breathe new life into wonkish policy debates.

By centering the event around policy forums and award ceremonies, Nicastro shied away from using the Summit to push a particular agenda. She said as much in the opening speech, citing a state law that prevents city lobbying. "If you're waiting for me to organize a big grassroots movement to lobby down in Olympia," she said, "I'm not going to do that."

Instead of heading up forums, advocating specific reforms, or providing the keynote speech herself, Nicastro acted more as a moderator of an event in which renters like Canamar, land-

lords, and city officials could come together in new ways. It provided an unusual opportunity for otherwise obscure zoning debates to receive public attention and be placed within the context of their very real human consequences.

But even with an estimated 500 participants, the mayor, and all nine city councilmembers in attendance, there is little consensus about what, if anything, will result from the Summit.

Debating in a Vacuum

Chris Benis, former president of the Apartment Association of Seattle & King County (AASK) and a panelist for the final forum on rent control, complained after the event that "no specific proposal has been brought forward from the Summit," making most of the discussions "like something in a vacuum."

Scott Winn, organizer for the Tenants Union, had the opposite worry. "I'm concerned that schemes to subsidize landlords and developers will be priorities, and will be the only things passed [as a result of the Summit]."

Contradicting Benis' criticisms but giving Winn's more substance, the Summit's forum on "Parking and Incentives" dealt with the Summit's most specific proposal and the one most likely to get passed anytime soon — a developer incentive coming before the city council in the following week.

At issue is a reduction in the amount of parking developers are required to build for new units in the Pike-Pine corridor, particularly those renting at 60 percent of the median income level. The city's public hearing on the reduction was held June 14. Though widely supported by the Pike-Pine neighborhood, and mainly for the benefit of non-profit affordable housing advocates, it

elicited strong concerns from the audience at the Summit that similar models might be applied to other neighborhoods.

University District activist Matt Fox was certain that new development with less parking construction would be a nightmare for already high-density neighborhoods like his. "Median-income requirements won't last," Fox commented from the audience. "But the units are forever."

Seattle Press editor Wallis Bolz added that reducing parking construction while increasing neighborhood density would simply make Seattle's traffic problems worse, since it lacks an intra-city public transportation system.

And panelist Dana Wise, a researcher with the King County Labor Council, warned that "we can't allow the market to decide who will have a car [through decreasing the parking requirement on new developments], or only rich people will have cars... only rich people will have mobility, and the poor will be stranded in their neighborhoods."

Landlord associations like AASK dismiss such arguments, claiming that parking space requirements drive up the cost of construction so much that they are almost entirely to blame for Seattle's lack of affordable housing. AASK Vice President Paul Birkeland even goes so far as to claim that he "would build studio apartments that would rent for low rates if it weren't for parking requirements." He didn't

address transportation needs, however, nor did he say why he or any other landlord would turn the savings in construction costs over to tenants in the form of lower rent.

Wise also addressed another policy issue coming before the city council soon: changes in the way the city encourages low-income housing downtown through the Transferable Development Rights (TDR) and Bonus programs [for a more complete argument, see Wise's op-ed on Page Three — ed.]. The incentives get downtown developers of high-density office and housing space to pay into a city fund used to support nonprofit, low-income housing. The program makes an explicit connection between downtown development and the low-wage janitorial and service jobs it spawns. With Seattle rents skyrocketing, and development predicated on low-wage work, Wise argued that Seattle's poor are being hit with a double whammy: working in cities they can't afford to live in, at jobs they can't afford to commute to.

Wise said that the true cost of downtown development is around \$80 per square foot, not the \$13 that the city currently charges for the fund. City councilmember Richard Conlin's subcommittee addressed an advisory committee's proposed changes to the Bonus/TDR program on June 14. The full council will consider changes to the TDR/Bonus program in the next several months.

Other panels simply reviewed the advantages renters already have. At one discussion on "Renter's Perks," two employees of Seattle Public Utilities and Seattle City Light discussed the utilities subsidies available to low-

income renters. Both agreed that these subsidies, which are among the most generous of any city in the country and are no longer available to just the elderly, are under-utilized by renters. Verlene Wilder of the King County Labor Council was there to plug the AFL-CIO's low-income home ownership program called the Housing

Investment Trust.

More than one member of the audience pointed out that this was supposed to be a discussion of renter's perks. One man asked why there wasn't any discussion about making rents more affordable. Two women said they did not want to buy a home and would like the millions of dollars in tax subsidies assisting homeowners to be extended to them as renters.

Refused

Another agenda item that could come up for consideration by the Council in the next few months is the Right of First Refusal (RFR). RFR gives a building's tenants the option to match

"We need to find a mechanism by which we go to step two. The 500 people that came out today need to go build a movement."

Larry Gossett, King County Council

the first bid a landlord receives on his building and requires that the landlord accept the tenants' offer if they meet certain requirements. RFR would encourage the creation of co-ops, empowered tenant unions, and nonprofit housing ownership rather than redevelopment, land speculation, and dislocation of low-income renters.

Local housing activist Ishbel Dickens describes RFR as a "win-win", in which "the city preserves affordable housing, landlords get market-rate, and tenants get stability."

While housing advocacy groups have made a broad-based RFR a cornerstone of a new agenda to preserve affordable housing, few people in power see it that way. The policy is strongly opposed by AASK. In addition, Councilmember Peter Steinbrueck, who presides over the committee which RFR must first pass through, already has plans to leave out the kind of broad application of RFR activists are pushing for. And it is uncertain what kind of support there is on the Council even for his more modest language.

In his current legislation, Steinbrueck is limiting RFR to Section 8 tenants only — a move Nicastro was unwilling to challenge in her Renters Summit policy proposals. Low Income Housing Institute's (LIHI) Sharon Lee says RFR for Section 8 is important but "doesn't go far enough. It's too narrow,

and should include renters in all types of multi-and single-family housing." Lee points to successes in Washington, D.C., as a better model for RFR legislation.

But for now, even that conversation is on hold since Steinbrueck refuses to introduce the legislation while a State Supreme Court case on the RFR of mobile home owners is pending. According to the Supreme Courts Clerk's office, if the Court takes its usual four to six months to rule on a case, an RFR ruling should come sometime between this July and September.

For some, that still isn't soon enough. "I think it's disingenuous to hide behind that Supreme Court rule to not act on a very real need," commented Dickens. "We don't want to put something on the books to be overturned, but the city has a very strong and intelligent city attorney to use as a proactive force. We can find ways to make it work instead of just saying it won't work."

Despite the potential pitfalls of developer incentives and the obstacles to enacting a broad RFR, there were also encouraging signs

that the Summit was inspiring new plans for action. Council president Margaret Pageler, who has largely been

ington Association of Cities to lobby state legislators for the repeal of the statewide ban on rent control. "Every city in the state has an interest in passing their own laws on this," she said.

"It's amazing tenants turned out for the Summit," Winn offered, on a positive note. "Organized tenants is what we need to move things forward... and ensure that issues such as right of first refusal, which alter the balance of power between landlords and tenants, are prioritized and passed."

Longtime community activist and current King County councilmember Larry Gossett offered a similar assessment of where housing issues should go after the Summit.

"I'm hopeful that Judy will let us know where to go from here. I was a little concerned at the end. We need to find a mechanism by which we go to step two. No matter what our agenda is, if we don't have a citywide grassroots base of tenants — and there can be homeowner-supporters too — then we can't develop anything that's enforceable. The 500 people that came out today need to go

BELLTOWN RESIDENT ROBERT CANAMAR VOICES HIS HOUSING CONCERNS. PHOTO BY JASON GUYER.

silent on affordable housing issues, told *Real Change* she would ask the Wash-

build a movement." ■



Family Self Sufficiency Program

Hello, My name is Kimiko Allen and I am a proud owner of my own home. Five years ago, the idea of owning my own home was a little more than a pipe dream. At the time I was a single mother finishing college and working my way off of welfare. I had one goal in mind, to be independent financially. It wasn't something that happened overnight. I had a plan of action and help from many people and programs that believed that I had what it would take to become financially independent and a home owner.

The Family Self Sufficiency Program helped me to map out my goals and create a plan of action to accomplish them. As I worked towards my goals and advanced in my career my income increased. As my income increased so did my rent amount because I was on Section 8. When my rent would increase, the Family Self Sufficiency Program would match that dollar amount by putting the money in an escrow account to go towards the purchase of my home. When it came time to purchase my home I had enough money in the escrow account to cover my closing costs and moving expenses.

This program is so beneficial, especially if you get involved when your income is very limited. Once you begin to make more money your rent will increase at a greater rate and more money will go into your account. There are even times when the government will match the funds in your account, doubling your total! My advice to anyone on Section 8, get into this program and then do the following:

- Pay rent and all bills on time
- Make sure your credit is good and in order
- Work on getting rid of debt - this will be a huge factor in qualifying for a home loan.
- Continue to educate yourself so that you can advance in your career of choice and make a livable income.

Thank you, Family Self Sufficiency Program, for helping me to make my dream of being a home owner come true.

(signed) Kimiko Allen

Note from Seattle Housing Authority: The stories that appear in these advertisements are volunteered by SHA residents or Section 8 voucher recipients.

Seattle
Housing
Authority



With reporting assistance from Rick

The Marginal Lifestyle by Sticky AI

Notice to “New in Town”

If this column ain't a space where anyone can get the skinny then I don't know where to send you, friend. One bit of advice I will offer you: be careful who you listen to. Having been in the lines, and listened to the “hot tips” from our more experienced denizens of the street, I can assure you that the misinformation going around among the homeless about the services they receive is so far off if it was a map you'd have to burn it at sunrise like a false Paiute prophet.

Recently I spent time behind the scenes at an agency where I was a client not long ago. I was shocked at how far from factual my knowledge of the “system” was. I can only conclude that the more experienced homeless folks I listened to viewed me as competition for services, and led me wrong intentionally. Not to harm, but more like telling you about a great meal at 6:30, you show up and they on the second pork chop. Miss the first half-hour, some kitchens only have sandwiches left.

One of the white guy images of homelessness is that the badge of homelessness is two big black hefty bags, round with the accretions of scrabbled-together goods. If you got those two bags, you're either homeless or looking to cheat a dumpster. But what else're you supposed to do with your shit? Go to the gray dog and pay a dollar a day? You even know what day it is after months of sleep deprivation and cat turds for vitamins?

SHARE has storage, the only one in town. It's way out in b-funky Egypt, which is better than nothing. Still, folks want to hide something and ten minutes after they's gone it's gone. Everbubba is going through everything, all the time, around the clock, non-stop. So many folks “ripped off” and “robbed” you gotta wonder what little hole they thought was safe. Nothing is safe on the streets. If a guy has to die for attention, do you think anybody gives bull followins about whether he's got a extry shirt or a toilet kit? Get the grit, newby. When you're homeless you can't have pets, or too much chit, because you don't need friends and things when you're poor.

This is good training for when you cycle around and be rich again, if you ain't the one to die so that the bigwigs will notice. You can't have friends when you're rich either, not really really, and things are valueless without someone to share them. This is the cycle of the big empty universe of consumerism.

Here's a couple more figures you'll need to get used to, being new in town:

ADVOCATES: Homeless Advocates, some of whom respect the marginal lifestyle, are all around us, and while it isn't hard to find an advocate, it can be difficult to keep one.

Relatives and friends make reasonable advocates, but they don't get my highest recommendation. Your friend or relative may not think that certain services, say for instance food stamps, are good, for whatever reason. Besides that, an experienced advocate knows where to start, not just where to go: some agencies have voicemail accounts that're not posted anywhere in their literature. All agencies specialize at the nitty-gritty level. Only a trained person knows where to go for particular services.

And folks, be gentle with your advocate. More than likely you're not going to surprise them, but you will be able to tire them out with B.S., attitude, or D&D (drugs and delinquency). Treat them like gold because they're the one's who'll be able to straighten out the rough spots.

RAT RACERS: Just because we have an unblemished image of the marginal hero doesn't mean that we want to alienate folks who want to be part of the rat race. At worst we need their contributions of cash. At best we need them sleeves rolled up, offering ideas while they participate in programs.

They need us too. The marginal lifestyle can rescue them from almost any situation brought on by consumerism. Most of the medical problems associated with consumerism nudge our consciousness with stress, and stress doesn't take up a lot of room if you are marginally successful, or rather, successfully marginal. Stress is one of the first and most gratifying sensations to agonizingly die when the marginal lifestyle begins to kick in. And as we all know but it still comes down on us like a load of bricks, a little bit of marginal living, even planning for marginality, goes a long way. To plan is to choose, and a choice is one thing you can make freely, and make yourself free. ■

Frank

Frank, have I passed you on the street,
handed you a quarter, a dollar bill,
walked on by?

Frank, where are you now,
did you stay employed
and off the streets,
out of the VA back wards
with the muttering
semi-catatonic
bed-ridden bullet-riddled men
through the long gray afternoons
of Jeopardy and Oprah,
the shrapnel from a Bouncing Betty
working its way upward
through the flesh-colored light,
brothers bloods
gooks grunts
in the jungle mud napalm balmed,
swimming in the South China Sea
behind barbed wire
and mine fields,
di di mau
boom boom.

Frank did you stay married
to your high school honey
who waited while you fought
and filled the front seat
of a 1957 Chevy,
that meat cleaver of a car,
with her widening body
and your babies?

Quiet moments while the
synthetic marble hardened in
sink top molds you'd come up behind me
and pull me up by my chin
so only my toe tips touched
the concrete shed floor,
place a screw driver
against my throat and say
“this is how we killed sentries
in the Nam,”
and I'd go limp,
pony tail in your face,
say “Knock it off Frank
we have to get these forms laid
if we want to pour the day's orders”
and you'd drop me, laugh,
comment about long hairs and queers,
puzzled because you liked me.

Frank, did you ever stop telling
people at parties, after a few beers,
about the time your best friend's head
was blown off by a rocket
and his body kept on running
just like a chicken's does,
did you ever become welcome again
in the homes of people who wanted you
to be quiet, just fit in, go back to work
and leave the jungle behind,
Frank, did you ever come all the way back,
did you ever come home again?

DAVID THORNBRUGH



Shooting A Victim

The boy from the shelter
was tired and frustrated
“Ha!” he said, “that’ll
when, trying to claim
I gave him the sign a
“You're right,” I said,
when he scoffed at me
This was not a kid you
Later, he cried, “Dire
flailing his arms and
He wanted it all
and when it didn't work
went off in a corner to
and write something
We took him back, fr
and let the others sta
who crawled into you

Head

Hop on
Take a r
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Shooting A Video

The boy from the shelter
was tired and frustrated and angry.
"Ha!" he said, "that'll never happen,"
when, trying to claim the boisterous kids,
I gave him the sign and said "peace."

"You're right," I said,
when he scoffed at me.
This was not a kid you lied to.

Later, he cried, "Director! Director!"
flailing his arms and making demands.
He wanted it all
and when it didn't work,
went off in a corner to bang a chair
and write something nasty on the wall.

We took him back, first carload
and let the others stay, the ones
who crawled into your lap, held your hand.

— MERCEDES LAWRY

Head Trip

Hop on ... take a ride
Take a ride deep down inside
Round and round and down we go
To the psyche far below

Down below the street facade
Where things are real, where things are odd
Down where all the true selves dwell
Where each one has a tale to tell

Down below the painful shells
Of Pain and Fear and private hells
To the glowing central core
Where Peace and Love bathe every shore

And in that loving peaceful tide
A quiet place where we can hide
A place to rest awhile and then
We'll spiral up and out again

To face once more the world outside
Strengthened by our inner guide
Knowing we can go below
Whene'er we need our peace to flow

—RENEENE ROBERTSON

front page

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—RENEENE ROBERTSON

One More Nuclear Waste Dump Won’t Matter

WHAT
is left in Squaw Valley?

Apricot trees, willows
“No-thing to invest in”

Song-of-the-Wind
Through the sage

Holy Song
Holy Sage

No oil
coal
uranium

Native American people
Heritage-rich

“No-thing
to
hold
the
children...”

Impoverished are we ALL!!

—MARION SUE FISCHER

front page

It seems to work best. The lines
do tangle once I preach
anything described in school. Our
books there, seldom reach

further than our skills...while, your
computers and our souls
still define our lives as living
people. And, our goals.

—STAN BURRISS

Short Letter to Maxine

Sorry I didn’t write
sooner
you once wrote:

“...waiting for men
to write
is not
how
women
ought to spend their
precious asset: time...”

and you were right
giving me elbow-room
didn’t laugh at me
misquoting
and mispronouncing words
taught me
or gave me the chance
to write
but another thing
you should know
our opera house,
above our cherished bus tunnel,
you know — it looks
no, resembles
the Port Authority in New York.
Take care and thank
you.

—EARLE THOMPSON

DENTAL: Continued from page 1

should cost at least \$400,000 to build.

"Every \$1,000 we spend on facilities is money we used to have for providing care," says Secord. "That's the kind of pressure the safety net is facing."

Kids to the Rescue?

Nova Jones, former director of the Public Health department's five-clinic dental care program, doubts the downtown branch will ever be able to live up to administrators' expectations. He says it's being compared to clinics which see mostly children.

Caring for kids' teeth is good for business: they're not only quicker to serve, but they bring in state-subsidized vouchers, even if their parents make over twice the federal poverty level, or around \$34,000 a year. The childrens' dental clinics run by Public Health, such as Columbia Health Center, an office for children and pregnant women in southeast Seattle, are able to see about 600 or 700 clients a month with the same number of dentists. There, 80 percent of the patients are children, and Washington state law allows dental assistants to perform a wider range of duties. Downtown, 80 percent of the patients are adults, most of them elderly. When caps, dentures and fillings cost more than the minimal amount they can pay, or which Medicaid subsidizes, Public Health eats the cost.

City, state and federal funds make up the difference. Two years ago, Jones proposed shutting down the clinic, but protest from local service providers prompted the city to help keep it open. Trouble didn't go away. Jones remembers looking at the 2000 budget last fall: "We said there's no way we'd ever break even, so we'd just have to absorb it the best way we can."

Before retiring in December 1999, Jones engineered a boost in the number of patients cared for at Public Health's Eastgate and southeast Seattle clinics. Both doubled the number of visitors seen in the last couple years. He tried for several years to bring the numbers up at the downtown clinic, giving preference to children with state-subsidized vouchers.

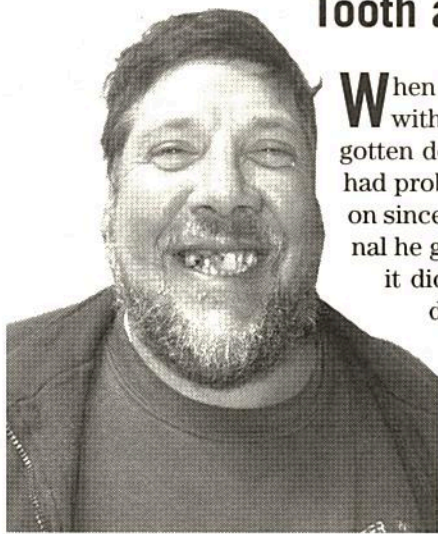
"We'd give them priority, we'd bump other people. Getting that child into that clinic chair was our number-one priority," he says. Nothing worked: "We got two referrals in two years."

Jones blames it on the neighborhood. Families with children either don't live downtown, or choose not to come in for a dentist appointment. He says current plans are just as doomed to failure.

"You can't just arbitrarily go to 600 clients. That's a marvelous goal and objective, but the point is, are you going to get the kids, the ones with the insurance, there? Who's going to cart them in there?"

"The Health Department shows no signs of expanding their services for uninsured adults," says Mark Secord of the Puget Sound Neighborhood Health Center. Its branches "nearly all serve children. That's where the richest source of revenue is."

Caring for the mouths of low-income adults, he says, is "a money-loser, big time." ■

Tooth and Nail

PETE TOCCO HAS LOST 14 TEETH.
PHOTO BY ADAM HOLDORF

as a car salesman, and they just looked at me like...," he shrugs. "What are you gonna do?" ■

When Pete Tocco has had a well-paying job with benefits, and the extra money, he's gotten dental work; when he hasn't, he's just had problem teeth pulled. Homeless off and on since 1983, he's lost 14 teeth. The root canal he got when he could afford it cost \$400; it didn't fix his toothache. A cap over a decayed tooth has fallen off.

Now, "you just gotta take care of what you got," he says. He tries to brush every day. It isn't an easy habit to maintain; the day we talk, he's lost his toothbrush and the First Avenue Service Center, which usually hands them out, doesn't have any.

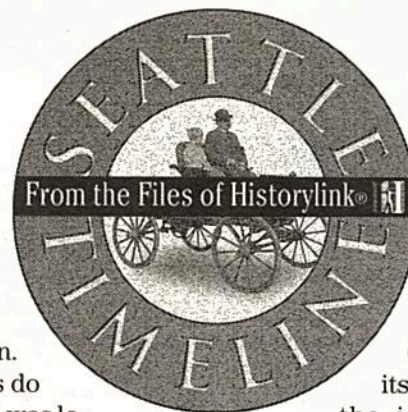
"Two years ago, I went for a job

—Adam Holdorf

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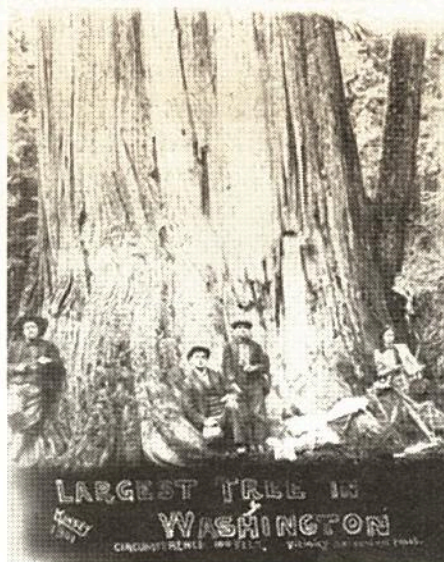
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On June 20, 1879, the last tree along the Seattle waterfront was cut down. The tree (the sources do not reveal what kind) was located just north of Pike Street.

On June 19, 1890, African American families from Seattle and Tacoma gathered in Kent to celebrate, for the first time, the adoption of the 15th Amendment to the Constitution, which enfranchised persons of color. This celebration, sponsored by the Sons of Enterprise, was the first observance of what is known to African Americans as "Juneteenth." The assumption was that by June 19, 1863, slaves throughout the South had become aware of their freedom.

During June 1917, logging camp workers in Washington went on strike to reduce the workday from 10 hours to eight hours. It was one of the few major industries on the Pacific



LOGGERS WORKED LONG HOURS TO FELL LARGE TREES SUCH AS THIS ONE

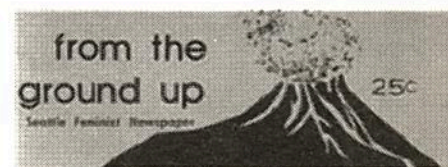
Coast which had not instituted an eight-hour day. By July 1917, the strike expanded to lumber mills, including those in Seattle. By August 1917, logging in the state was completely shut down.



1970s BILLBOARD BRINGS UNEMPLOYMENT MESSAGE HOME

On June 1, 1970, Seattle's unemployment rate was at 10 percent compared to a national average of 4.5 percent. The joblessness was the result of massive reductions at the Boeing Co. during 1969-1970. Unemployment in Seattle peaked at 13.8 percent over the next two years. Not until 1977 were the city and the state jobless rates on par with the rest of the country.

In June 1974, Seattle's feminist newspaper *From the Ground Up* published its first issue. Included in the issue: articles about unions for clerical workers, CLUW (the Coalition of Labor Union Women),



THE MASTHEAD FROM THE FIRST SEATTLE FEMINIST NEWSPAPER PUBLICATION

COYOTE (the prostitutes' trade group, Come Off Your Old Tired Ethics), and abortion; a letter from a lesbian about cops cracking down on a gay bar in Pioneer Square; a story from a ward clerk at Group Health describing poor working conditions for hospital workers, a second article complaining that Group Health does not cover birth control pills; a letter denouncing the treatment of female prisoners at the Purdy Treatment Center for Women; and an essay criticizing inadequate daycare.

On June 22, 1970 the University of Washington *Daily* eliminated Female and Male Sections from Help Wanted Classified Ads. The following statement was printed at the beginning of the newspaper's Help Wanted Section: "In compliance with the guidelines of the equal employment opportunities act of 1964, the University of Washington *Daily* does not list sex (male and female) in the help-wanted columns of the classified advertising section." This was one of the first papers in the nation to establish this policy.

From June 24 to June 30, 1974, Seattle's lesbians and gays celebrated the city's first Gay Pride Week. This was the first event in Seattle and King County in which the gay community as a whole came out of its collective closet. Gay Pride Week was held in honor of the June 28, 1969 Christopher Street Liberation Day, later called the Stonewall Riots. David Neth, director of Seattle's Gay Community Center, explained in a 1975 interview: "June 28 is a rallying point in gay history. On that day in 1969, police raided a bar in the Greenwich [Village] gay ghetto. Instead of letting themselves be hustled and herded off like sheep, as they usually did, the gays rebelled." ■

To learn more about these and other events and benchmarks in Seattle and King County history, visit www.historylink.org. All photos are courtesy of historylink. Copyright ©2000 History Ink. HistoryLink is a registered trademark of History Ink.



May 25, 12:32: Responding to a report of a "dog fight" outside a Rite Aid store on University Ave. NE, police officers find a black pit bull and a German Shepherd in a heated match. A man who seems to be in charge of the pit bull says he is homeless and not the owner of the dog, and tells officers the fight was over and not intentional. The pit bull is impounded by an animal control officer until police can determine its owner. The German Shepherd remains at large.

May 25, 23:31: It is a dark night and an officer is driving around without his siren on. As he approaches Courthouse Park, he observes a 21-year-old man in a bulky black coat sitting on a park bench with his hands in his pockets. Leaving the vehicle, the officer asks the man if he has any weapons; the man puts his hands up and says he has a razor blade in one pocket and a knife in the other pocket. The man tells the officer he is living on the streets and has not slept for four days. The officer then explains that the park is closed, pointing to a sign which says the park is not open between 11:30 p.m. and 6 a.m. Since it is 11:31, the man is charged with trespassing in a park and unlawful use of a weapon. When asked why he is carrying knives, the man answers, "Because I'm in Seattle."

May 27, 19:41: Police respond to a report of assault at the Union Gospel Mission, where two men were involved in a verbal altercation. According to the victim, the other man became enraged during the argument, struck him in the arm and then fled the scene.

May 27, 22:12: At a youth shelter, a 17-year-old girl is told by shelter workers that she is not following certain shelter rules. The workers counsel her for two hours, but she still refuses to follow rules, at which point the workers tell her to leave. The girl refuses, and the workers call the police. When police arrive, they ask the girl if she would like to use their phone to contact family members. She says she will only use the phone inside the shelter; when that request is denied, she walks away.

May 29, 22:12: A woman, who suspects her husband of seeing another woman, spends the day with her husband, arguing. During the argument, he hits her, leaving a mark. Later, she returns to the shelter where she lives and calls police. She tells them she will seek medical help later. Her husband, who lives in a different shelter, remains at large.

May 30, 10:08: A 50-year-old disabled man reports that his backpack has been stolen from an emergency shelter building, where he was staying. He tells police he had been staying in the males' sleeping quarters at the shelter. His backpack had contained a cellular phone, medication, clothing, a jacket and some cloth material. ■

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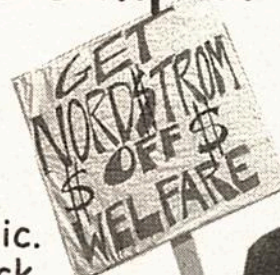
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The splendor of being a vendor

by Patrick Bissell

Once again I am here to talk to you about being a vendor. Of course, I can only speak for myself, but I can say that I sometimes get unusual remarks from passing folk. Like today. Today a fellow made the distinctive comment, "You look perfectly capable of working to me. I'm sorry."

And then, one Saturday, a fellow rode past me on his bicycle and told me, "Real change for you would be to get a job."

And someone drove by in a dark gray sedan, yelling "Dirty bastard!"

However, there is a light at the end of the tunnel, and it is not a train. There was the miracle of a well-known author who kicked me out a \$20 bill. Thank you very much. And there are those kind and gentle people who knock me down a

fiver. And still to come, those who tell me that "They really appreciate the work I am doing."

But wait. Stop, thief! When I wasn't looking, and got distracted, someone stole my bag. It had a short story I'd written, my original. One reader had told me the story "doesn't go enough into the character;" another had said "the writer and the character are very self-aware." It was my last copy! Along with it, I lost a small batch of more recent poems.

You're probably wondering, now what does he do with the money? Some people equate being a vendor with being little more than a panhandler, but either way, panhandling or being a vendor, you got to live. I eat, I drink, and I smoke. Some days I have just enough to re-invest in more newspapers so that I don't get caught broke, with no food, drink, or cigarettes.

I get uneasy at times, because being out on the street you are at the mercy of the public. But I'm pretty much content with being a vendor. I was told by someone that vending is not a means to an end: it's designed to "get your self-esteem up so that you are ready to move on to other things."

But it takes a certain amount of character to be a vendor in the first place. You might even say you need a sense of humor. Waiting at the office for the newest issue to arrive on the truck (which vendors help unload in exchange for ten free copies of the new issue), I made a comment to another vendor that "I didn't want to get out of bed that morning," to which he asked me, "What? You mean you have a bed?" He broke out in peels of laughter, but being embarrassed, I couldn't find the humor in the situation.

Maybe some people think you need to be "on the skids" and truly homeless to be a vendor. Let's all take one hard look at the situation. A man, or woman most likely isn't going to serve as a vendor for *Real Change*, unless it becomes necessary. I mean, the money is just not there.

One fellow older than myself came to me with this advice: "Shave and get a job, you'll make more money." But later, a more supportive soul said "It's not about money. That fucker needs to mind his own business." You do what you have to do to stay afloat.

So, next time you're floating by, don't be shy, come and sing with me... "Bye-bye Miss American Pie — drove the Chevy to the levy but the levy was dry. And them good ole boys were drinking whiskey and rye, singing, 'This'll be the day that I die!...' " ■

Patrick Bissell sings and sells *Real Change* in front of Noah's Bagels on Broadway.

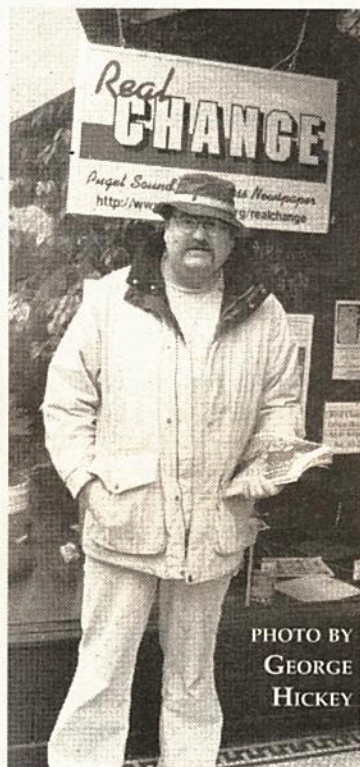


PHOTO BY
GEORGE
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NOTES FROM THE KITCHEN

School's Out, Hunger's In

by Liz Smith

All year long, no matter what's in the cupboard at home, nearly 20,000 children are sure to get a meal in the school cafeteria through the Seattle School District's free and reduced-price lunch program. These kids get as much as 60 percent of their daily sustenance, and nutritional value, from school breakfasts and lunches. When school lets out, they go from the classroom home to look in the cupboard. Hopefully, there's something there.

Thanks to the city's Summer Sack Lunch Program, some of these kids get a ready-made lunch at over 150 parks and playgrounds around Seattle. Part of Lyndon Johnson's War on Poverty, it began filling the nutritional gap between mid-June and September in Seattle around 1980. Funded by the U.S. Department of Agriculture and the city's Department of Child Nutrition, the program delivers lunch to about 7,500 kids at summer schools, community centers, Housing Authority neighborhoods, and even church Bible schools.

At so-called "open sites," any child who wants a lunch can pick one up. These are in a neighborhood where 50 percent of the children at a nearby school qualify for the school lunch assistance program. In "closed sites," like religious schools or day care centers, parents must fill out an application and meet household income guidelines. While kids in some neighborhoods, like Queen Anne or Magnolia, might need a free sack lunch, not enough neighboring families qualify.

At least they're in the big city, not out in Washington's smaller towns, where few kids have access to subsidized summer meals. For the first time this year, children at Delancey Houghton Elementary School in Soap Lake, a farmworker community in Grant County, have a summer activities program with a free meal. In a school district where 82 percent of the children qualify for free or reduced-price school lunches, "This is the first time kids have anything to do, let alone anything to eat, during the summer."

Each June, the lunch program launches into a frenzy of work.

Teens from the Seattle Youth Employment Project are employed to oversee meals served at parks. Each site must detail their refrigeration and sanitary facilities. Estimates of how many children are eating at each place are drawn up. Supplies for the summer are ordered and delivery schedules are written.

All of the breakfasts, lunches, and snacks are prepared at only two kitchens. While summer school is in session, as many as 12,000 meals are served each day.

After the meals are cooked each



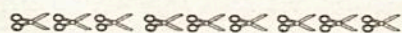
day, they are packed and loaded onto delivery trucks. The drivers carry lunch for that day and the next day's breakfast. The meals served are meant to be eaten cold, which keeps things simple and is entirely appropriate for hot weather. Kids get cereal, milk, and juice for breakfast; a bagel and cream cheese for lunch; and snacks. The program aims to meet one-third of each child's nutritional needs.

At this time of year, hungry families just get hungrier. Bob Cooper, of food-bank supplier Food Lifeline, says more families use food banks from mid-June through September. "There's a certain irony to it. Everyone thinks to give from October to Christmas. But the real need is when we're carefree, on vacation, and don't think about it." ■

For more information or the location of a lunch program near you, call the Summer Sack Lunch Hotline at (206) 386-1140. To make a donation of groceries or produce, large or small, call Food Lifeline at (206) 545-6600.

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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

Peace and Plumbing

Dear Tenant Talk,

My landlord is doing all types of improvements to my home: sanding and repainting, re-shingling the roof, some plumbing in the basement. While he's not intruding on my space, the noise of saws, hammers, air compressors, etc., is bothering me early in the morning (I work late and don't get up until 9, at the earliest). I've asked the workers to be quiet before 8 a.m., with limited results. If they continue, can the city cite my landlord for exceeding noise limits in a residential area? Am I entitled to a rebate or some other compensation for the inconvenience of all this work?

Sincerely,
Flummoxed

Dear Flummoxed,

The city does have the right to regulate the level of noise created by certain activities; however, it is unlikely that the construction work being conducted at your premises violates the Noise Control Ordinance. This ordinance establishes certain decibel levels that are set as the maximum noise levels. Those maximum levels can be exceeded at various times if certain activities are occurring. The ordinance

allows such variances between the hours of 7:00 a.m. and 10:00 p.m. There are lots of technical provisions, which are too complex to explain here; for your specific case, consult the ordinance itself.

A tenant does have the right to quiet enjoyment, and a violation of the right is a breach of contract. The problem is

that your right to quiet enjoyment has to be balanced with the landlord's right and duty to maintain his property. The fact that the construction noise doesn't start until 8:00 a.m. probably negates any claims you can make. It is probably best to

talk to your landlord and request some credit on your rent for the time that the work is ongoing. I would hesitate to act unilaterally and withhold rent. This could put you on the defensive and subject you to the possibility of being evicted.

Covert Compliance

Dear Tenant Talk,

I want my landlord to make a repair on my apartment to bring it up to compliance with city code. I could make a complaint to the city's Department of Design, Construction and Land Use (DCLU), but I'm afraid he'll find out and retaliate somehow. Will the city act on

anonymous tips? How do they generally respond to tenants' complaints?

Sincerely,
A Plaintiff

Dear Plaintiff,

I spoke with one of the representatives of DCLU and they informed me that they could not take anonymous complaints if the inspector needed access to the building to do the inspection. If a tenant is having trouble getting repairs and is concerned about code violations (exposed wiring, etc.), they should contact DCLU. If it is their unit they want inspected, they will have to give DCLU their name and phone number. DCLU will keep the complaint confidential; however, it shouldn't be difficult for the landlord to deduce that the tenant was the one who complained. If the complaint is made in good faith, the tenant should be protected against any retaliatory acts by the landlord, including termination of tenancy, rent increases or reductions in services. The law provides that such acts that occur within 90 days from the date that a tenant exercises their legal rights are presumed to be retaliatory, and are illegal.

A tenant can make an anonymous complaint if the inspector does not need access to a building, such as complaints about trash. There may be some question regarding DCLU's response to complaints about common areas that are in a building.

In the normal procedure, when DCLU receives a complaint, the staff confirms that the tenant has first tried to contact the landlord to have the repairs done. Once DCLU does receive a complaint, they must verify the conditions. Usually an inspector will come to the site and take pictures. Then the inspector will contact the property owner to see if they will voluntarily comply, without the issuance of a Notice of Violation. If the landlord is unwilling to take immediate steps to remedy the problem, DCLU will issue a Notice of Violation. Generally, the landlord has 30 days to comply; if he fails to do so, the matter will be referred to the city's legal department. ■

Mark Chattin, Legal Action Center

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

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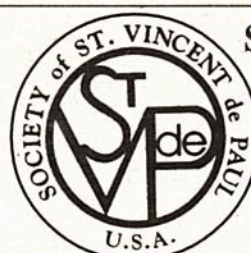
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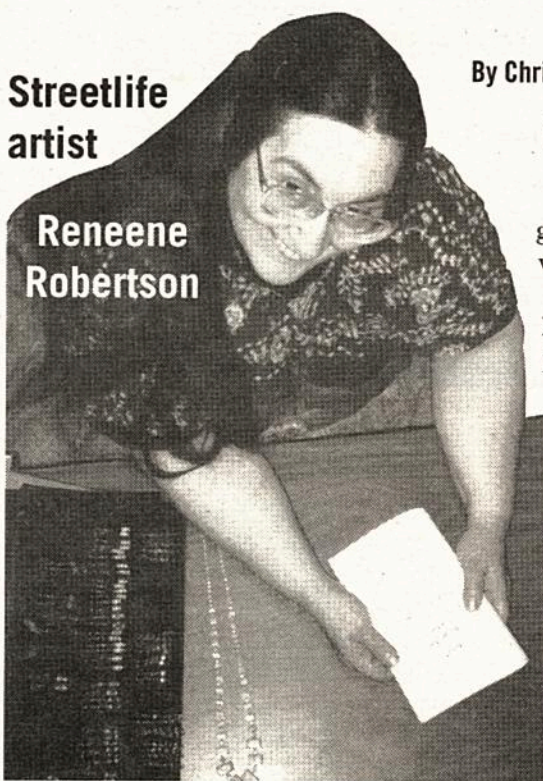


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Real Profile

Streetlife artist

Reneene Robertson



By Chris Gordon Owen

"One thing I'd like to stress," says Reneene Robertson near the beginning of our interview. "I'm a survivor."

Later she says that a tiny wild-haired self-portrait "just happened" when a cat's eye didn't work in one of her sketches.

Tough and light-hearted, these statements could be a verbal self-portrait of Reneene, a studio artist at the StreetLife gallery and writer with StreetWrites. It could be entitled *Woman (Laughing) Triumphant over Misfortune and Mishap*.

There's no doubt she's been through plenty in her 56 years, including several assaults in the 1970s that led to post-traumatic stress disorder, which

wasn't diagnosed until the 1980s. Tracing her bipolar symptoms and what she says is a faulty memory to much-belated treatment, she urges other trauma victims to avoid potentially permanent brain damage by seeking therapy and medication right away. "Even if you think you're managing," she says, "go get help!"

But if "surviving" suggests minimal endurance, it doesn't describe what Reneene has done.

Take her stay at a family shelter in 1990. Her husband had recently walked out, taking the family savings with him; the post-traumatic stress disorder had made her income tax business impossible to maintain; and her part-time jobs didn't cover rent. So she started writing haiku.

By now she has written over 800 "lowku," her own version of the Japanese form. As she explains in her collection "Short SmartAss Shit," she sticks to the 17 syllables of the haiku, "but all the other rules are ignored. Enjoy."

The "Enjoy" is characteristic. Much of her prose and poetry is fiercely critical of the Establishment — especially its lack of compassion for the less fortunate — but her writing also contains bursts of exuberance and good-natured humor.

Despite her complaints about her memory (it "was like swiss cheese, now it's like bar [cheddar] cheese — the holes are smaller"), she rattles off the names of the materials out of which she makes necklaces and earrings: ancient Tibetan turquoise, hematite, various kinds of pearl and glass, and a luminous nylon created by a pre-World War II process that she says has been lost. She also periodically demonstrates conversational points by reciting her poems or launching into her songs, for which she composes the music as well as the lyrics. (If a guitar is handy, she accompanies herself; she also plays the bass balalaika.)

She first got involved at StreetLife Gallery to fulfill community service requirements resulting from a traffic violation. She stayed on as a studio artist, though she now does most of her visual art at home. Through the gallery she found StreetWrites and has participated ever since in workshops and performances.

For the record, Reneene says she has been "semi-homeless," not homeless. Aside from the shelter stay, she spent several months with her children in a camper, driving each night from one Seattle park to another in search of an unlocked bathroom. For the past three years, she has lived in south King County low-income housing. (She says waiting lists for county housing are much shorter than Seattle Housing Authority ones.) In the near future she hopes to move to the north Cascades, where she recently bought a small cabin after her father died.

Even after she moves, she'll keep coming into Seattle to be with her fellow writers and artists. After all, in her essay "Under the Ice," having compared the poverty line to ice covering a lake—a tangible barrier between rich and poor—she writes, "My association with . . . StreetLife Art Gallery, StreetWrites, and *Real Change* has not only helped me to work my way out from under the ice myself, but to help to build a road out from under the ice that others may also use." ■

Excerpts from "Short SmartAss Shit":

**Cleanliness is not next to godliness
It's next to impossible**

**Checking for weapons
They forgot to take away my paper and pen**

CLASSICS CORNER



by Perfess'r Harris

Despite the fact that Rome isn't really our specialty, we at Classics Corner recently waddled down to Oak Tree Cinema to watch "Gladiator," which features Russell Crowe doing his best Anthony Hopkins on steroids impersonation, and Richard Harris, who looked about 90, which is odd, since he plays Marcus Aurelius, who died at 59.

If you are the sort who needs the element of surprise to stay interested in a predictable story line, I suggest you stop reading right now and spend the next three minutes making crank calls to 684-4000. Tell the Mayor you're not pacified by bread and circuses, you're still pissed about SAFECO field, and that one day, the revolution will come. Otherwise, read on.

In the movie, Marcus Aurelius, after conquering most of the known world, asks Maximus, his lead general, to restore the state to the senate and end political corruption as the next Emperor. Maximus momentarily demurs. Commodus, the Emperor's son, takes the news badly and offs the old man before the decision becomes known. Maximus is unsuccessfully executed, winds up a slave, becomes a gladiator, and eventually, with the ineffective help of Commodus' sister, plots revolution and kills the annoying upstart Emperor in the Coliseum before a cheering crowd.

It was great. Yet, as the credits rolled, we began to suspect that "Gladiator" was not exactly an historical document. While we don't want to sound like some nerd at a Star Trek convention whining about how ships in space don't bank for turns, we thought, as a public service, that we might separate history from Hollywood for those who care.

Marcus Aurelius was, in fact, Emperor from 161-180 AD, and was pre-occupied as a philosopher with the problem of power and responsibility. Despite this, he disastrously named his son Commodus as successor. Commodus had a sister, Annia Aurelia Galeria Lucilia, who attempted his assassination. For this she was exiled and finally executed. In the movie-land of happy endings, perfect teeth, and extensive cleavage, she triumphantly survives to offer a climactic speech.

According to our *Oxford Classical Dictionary*, which we read every day and twice on Sundays, Commodus was "obsessively devoted to performing as a gladiator and appeared to be dangerously deranged." He also, in true Roman tradition, called the months of the calendar after himself and renamed Rome as *Colonia Commodiana*. He was finally strangled on New Years Eve 192 AD. The people did not mourn his passage.

Unfortunately, there was no general-turned-slave-turned-gladiator upon whom the story turned. Nor, presumably, was there an improbable love interest between this gladiator and Commodus' dearly departed sister. Nor did Commodus bring the games back to Rome after Marcus Aurelius, the saintly philosopher king, had them banned, thus desecrating the memory of his father. In truth, the games were never banned in Rome until Constantine, in 325, decided they were too bloody for a peacetime activity.

But we at Classics Corner would never let our facts get in the way of a good story. "Gladiator" has an enduring moral: bread and circuses are not enough. The people love entertainment, but will eventually see through the politicians' tricks to support the scrappy underdog, especially if he puts on a good show. Justice will prevail, and all they'll have to do is cheer.

At least that's how it works in Hollywood. ■



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June Notables

Friday, 6/16

Juneteenth Celebration and gospel music competition with Pat Wright and the Total Experience Gospel Choir and 100 voices of the Gospel Happening Choir from Hamburg, Germany, plus food, storytelling, and games. Juneteenth is a holiday celebrating the Freedom from Slavery of African Americans. Through June 18 in Flag Pavilion, Seattle Center, free, info 206-322-7904 or <http://www.seattlecenter.com>

"Intersection: A Journey Through Social Encounters" Diversity Dance Workshop is a Seattle-based, nonprofit, educational performing arts company devoted to expressing solutions to critical social issues, a troupe of dancers composed of college-age youth from around the world. Through June 17, at On the Boards, 100 W. Roy St, tickets 206-217-9888, info 206-323-7663 or <http://www.diversitydance.org>

Fathers Day Vigil Against Police Murders and in memory of those who have died while in police custody and will no longer be with their families on Father's Day. Sponsored by the Michael Randall Ealy Social Justice Foundation, 5 p.m., at the Downtown Police Station on 3rd and James; info 206-320-7069 or opealy@uswest.net

Saturday, 6/17

Fremont Street Fair, many non-profit groups will have tables and petitions, at noon on Saturday through June 18, starts from North 35th St and 1st NW in The Center of the Universe.

First Meeting of the Millennium People's Assembly in Seattle, realizing the dream of global citizenship in the spirit of diverse philosophies and faiths, 9 a.m. - 3 p.m., at Rainier Valley Unitarian Universalist Congregation, 4620 S Findlay St, \$15 includes lunch, snacks, materials, co-conveners Dick Burkhart and Mona Lee, info 206-721-5672.

Sunday, 6/18

"Art in the Struggle for Freedom," a new film by Abe Osherhoff, on the posters, poetry, and music of the Spanish Civil War. In 1937 Osherhoff joined several thousand women and men from the United States as part of the Abraham Lincoln

Brigade, which fought against fascism in the Spanish Civil War. He'll present his new educational film and take part in a discussion. 7 p.m., Independent Media Center, 1415 3rd Ave, \$3 to \$5 suggested donation. Call 206-860-3938 for more information.

The 12th Annual YWCA East Cherry Father's Day Brunch with theme **"Building on Traditions in the New Millennium."** Join in celebrating fathers in our community, enjoy a brunch buffet, and listen to the sounds of the Emerald City Jazz Band. Proceeds benefit the programs of the YWCA's East Cherry Branch in Seattle's Central District, which provide services to homeless families, victims of domestic violence, teen parents, and low-income girls. 11 a.m. - 3 p.m., at the Embassy Suites Hotel in Tukwila, ticket info Deloris Marks 206-568-7840 or dmarks@ywcaworks.org

Seattle Peace Concert, music by Randy Hansen, Organica, Shades of Purple, Straw Dogs, and Don Glenn, free, collection of canned food for Northwest Harvest, noon - 6 p.m., at Gas Works Park, info <http://www.seapeace.org>

Thursday, 6/22

"Peace Trees Vietnam: A Humanitarian Journey"; Take an inspiring one-hour journey to Vietnam through compelling stories of Peace Trees' efforts to reverse the consequences of war. Learn how you can get involved in saving the lives of Quang Tri children and create friendships for a lifetime, breakfast complimentary, guests will be invited to contribute, 7:15 a.m., at Bell Harbor Cruise Ship Terminal, Pier 66.

Friday, 6/23

Soulforce, an interfaith coalition dedicated to applying the principles of non-violence on behalf of all who suffer injustice, especially sexual minorities, training in negotiation, action and civil disobedience, 6:30 - 8:30 p.m., at Trinity United Methodist Church, 6512 23rd Ave NW, Rm. 119, info Articyn@aol.com or 206-615-8041 or <http://www.soulforce.org>

Benefit for Studio X Microradio: panel discussion on news, performances by Jim Page, Katya Chorover, The Endorfin, StreetWrites, Shanawa C. Littlebow. Also, Kevin Keyser's "Free Radio," a

documentary on the Micropower Broadcasting movement. 7-10 p.m. at the Independent Media Center, 1415 3rd Ave. \$5 at the door. Nobody turned away for lack of funds. Labor donated. More info: (206)736-1400.

Sunday, 6/25

The Freedom Day Committee announces the **19th Annual Gay/Lesbian/Bisexual/ Transgender Pride Parade and Rally**, theme Family Reunion, 11 a.m., kick-off at Broadway and Pike, info <http://www.seattlepride.org> or 206-324-0405 or info@seattlepride.org

Thursday, 6/29

Women's Leadership Circle, an intergenerational cross-cultural meeting working on women's oppression and racism, snacks provided, this and every other week afterwards, 7 - 8:30 p.m., at [suggest calling to confirm location] American Friends Service Committee, 814 NE 40th, downstairs from University Friends meeting, 4001 9th NE, info Jessica Levy 206-524-7489.

Friday, 6/30

Crossroads Cultural Arts Series presents local actors, actresses, poets, and singers/musicians in performances and presentations focusing on pro-diversity themes, this and subsequent last Fridays of each month, 7 - 8:30 p.m., at Barnes and Noble Bookstore, Crossroads Shopping Center, corner of NE 8th and 156th, Bellevue, info Gail Paul 206-517-4107 or Kevin Henry 425-452-7886.

Ongoing Daily

Signature gathering campaign for I-725, petitions now available for an initiative creating Universal Health Care in Washington state, donations and signature gatherers needed, info Health Care 2000 206-903-9723 or 1-877-903-9723 <http://www.healthcare2k.org> or info@healthcare2k.org

Call the City Council at 206-684-8888 and tell them to fund **Services for Homeless People**, not lights on bridges, not studies, not tracking systems. When shelters don't turn people away there will be enough of them!

Studio X, a new community facility broadcasting to the world on topics such as politics, homeless issues, local news, youth issues, experimental audio, global issues and police brutality, from downtown Seattle between 4 p.m.

- 2 a.m. (west coast time) 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, Voices in the Wilderness, The Hemp Coalition, Street Writes/Real Change, Red Bandana, People's Assembly, and more; plus music, poetry, and plenty of weird sounds, please attend our monthly time slot giveaways held on second Sundays at 1 p.m. in the Speakeasy Cafe, Backroom, 2304 - 2nd Ave 4 p.m. - 2 a.m., info and to find out how to get your own show 206-736-1400.

Ongoing Mondays

Books to Prisoners, a 100 percent not-for-profit, 100 percent volunteer effort, has sent tens of thousands of books to people in prison since 1979 and could use your help answering letters & sending books to incarcerated individuals, help wrap packages or choose the books that a prisoner will receive, books also needed, 6 - 10 p.m., at 1004 Turner Way East on 23rd Ave, 2 blocks north of Aloha, Bus lines 43 & 48, info 206-322-2868 or <http://btp.tao.ca/>

Ongoing Saturdays

Progressive "Alternative Radio" with David Barsamian each week presenting a different voice from the left on a variety of justice and peace issues, including racial and economic justice, first amendment issues, etc., hear information and opinions otherwise not available in the mainstream media, 3 p.m. and Sun. 11 p.m., KUOW 94.9 FM Radio (also 6 a.m. Sat. on KCMU), info www.freespeech.org

Meeting of October 22 Coalition to Stop Police Brutality, Repression, and the Criminalization of a Generation, ongoing 1st and 3rd Saturdays, 3 p.m., 1st Sat at the Speakeasy, 2304 2nd Ave; and 3rd Sat at the Douglass-Truth Library, 23rd & Yesler, info 206-264-5527 or toll-free national line 888-NOBRUTALITY or <http://www.unstoppable.com/22>

Ongoing Sundays

Seattle Food Not Bombs collects food and serves free vegetarian meals to the homeless. Help cook at 2 p.m. at the Green Tortoise Hostel, 1525 2nd Ave., share dinner 5:30 - 7 p.m. at Occidental Park, info 206-346-0335 or <http://www.scn.org/activism/foodnotbombs> <http://www.hostels.com/greentortoise>

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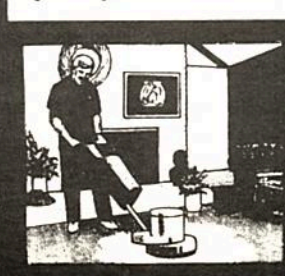
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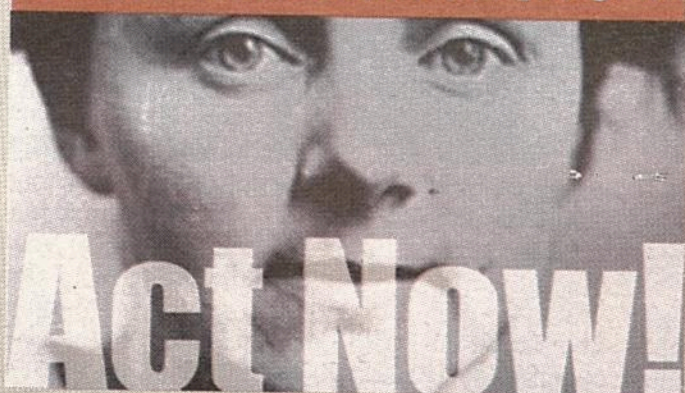
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citizens participation project



Support Organic Food for Poor Children

Issue: On June 30, a panel for the state's Women, Infant and Children (WIC) supplemental nutrition program will be deciding whether to allow mothers participating in the program to purchase food that is labeled organic.

Background: WIC is a 26-year-old joint state and federal program that supplies mothers and their children with vouchers to receive basic foods such as milk, cheese, eggs, juice, vegetables, tuna, peanut butter and cereal from authorized grocers and food banks. Last year, over 300,000 Washington mothers and their children benefited from \$260 million in WIC-subsidized food programs. Nationally, one in four new mothers participates in the program.

As the program now stands, mothers who received vouchers last year were denied any food that was labeled organic. That means they can't afford to buy food that's free of chemical residues and genetically modified food. According to a 1993 National Academy of Science report entitled "Pesticides in the Diets of Infants and Children," these young people are more at risk because they eat more food per pound of body weight. They also tend to have less variety in their diet, and could therefore expose themselves to high levels of pesticides. It's estimated that by their first birthday, infants eating non-organic food consume more than one-third of their lifetime limit of just one toxic pesticide.

Unlike traditional methods of farming, organic farming places particular emphasis on the quality of soil, maintaining an ecological balance. It is already recognized through a state-run certification program as a highly productive, safe and economically viable approach to growing food.

Women and children who use the WIC program do not currently have the option of choosing food that is less harmful to the surrounding environment, and less likely to expose them to potentially harmful pesticides. The no-organic policy prevents mothers from exercising their consumer right to choose. Everyone, no matter their income level, should be able to afford access to safe, healthy, pesticide-free food.

Thanks to the pressure of a task force formed by the Washington Sustainable Food and Farming Network the beginning of this year, a WIC panel will convene in Olympia on June 30 to decide if the production and purchase of organic foods should be subsidized through the WIC program.

Action Needed: For child food safety, child health and agricultural sustainability, please help to influence the WIC panel by sending short letters and emails in support of organic foods to Governor Gary Locke and state Department of Health Secretary Mary Selecky.

Letters should state clearly your support for including organic food in the WIC program, with something like, "Let mothers on WIC purchase organic." If you have knowledge or personal experience with the nutritional benefits of buying and eating organic, you can include those as well. Make a difference in the lives of Washington children.

Send your letters to the following addresses, allowing for enough time for them to arrive before the June 30 meeting:

Governor Gary Locke
PO Box 4002 Olympia, WA 98504-0002
<http://www.governor.wa.gov/contact/govemail.htm>

Mary Selecky, Secretary, Washington Department of Health
PO Box 47890, Olympia, WA 98504-7890
Mcs2303@DOH.WA.GOV

Governor Locke and Selecky can also be reached by fax and/or phone:
Governor Locke (360) 904-4111 (phone); (360) 753-4110 (fax)
Mary Selecky (360) 236-4030 (phone)
To participate in WIC, call (800) 841-1410. ■

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