

# Change

Puget Sound's Newspaper of the Poor and Homeless • Volume 9, No. 18

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**Inside: Seattle turns 150 • More  
power for housing • Rising tide of  
water rates • Mourning Turesa Logan**

LWU DOCKWORKERS MARCHED AT THE PORT OF SEATTLE ON AUGUST 10, IN RESPONSE TO THE BUSH ADMINISTRATION'S STATEMENTS ABOUT THEIR LABOR TALKS WITH WEST COAST PORT MANAGERS. THE BUSH ADMINISTRATION HAD STATED THAT THE PARTIES SHOULD TAKE A "COOLING-OFF" PERIOD BEFORE COMING BACK TO THE NEGOTIATING TABLE. PHOTO BY GEORGE HICKEY.

## Down and Out... Again

**Elderly, disabled lose out as state cuts take effect**

By Betsy Power

**T**wenty-five dollars might cover a movie and a quick bite to eat, if you're lucky. Losing the \$25 on the way to the movie theater would be a bit of a downer, although most of us would just head for the ATM machine. But imagine that you earned only \$570 a month. Do the math: \$570 to pay all of your monthly bills and eat. Now how does that \$25 loss hit you?

John knows how much it hurts. He is a 62-year-old Seattle resident who has learned to live on very little. Previously, John was receiving a monthly \$570 Supplemental Security Income (SSI) check from the U.S. Social Security Department. Last month that check was cut down to \$545, when Washington State discontinued the state's Supplemental Payment (SSP).

The SSP is an additional payment that the state provides to recipients of the federal government's Supplemental Security Income (SSI) program for people who are blind, elderly, and/or disabled. Approximately 100,000 individuals in Washington lost their State Supplemental Payment last month when the state legislature shifted

money around to cope with Washington's \$1.3 billion budget shortfall.

For John, whose last name is omitted at his request, the loss of \$25 has basically wiped out his pocket money. His monthly rent was \$545 a month, the exact amount of his new monthly income — it appeared that nothing would be left over. He continues to apply for odd jobs whenever he can, but is usually passed over for the younger, stronger men vying for the same positions. And when he is offered work, it is usually the type of job nobody else wants and is poorly paid. Not the ideal situation for a man with poor health.

"I think there are an awful lot of

people who find it difficult to understand the immediate position that

**"If I didn't get the subsidized housing, I would be way out on the end of the diving board, and there is no water in the pool."**

**— John, 62, whose monthly income went down \$25 when state cutbacks went into effect in July.**

the proper food. But he feels fortunate to be in subsidized housing.

"If I didn't get the subsidized hous-

ing, I would be way out on the end of the diving board," he says. "And there is no water in the pool."

When he first learned that his benefits were to be cut, he feared for his housing situation. "If I were to end up on the street, I would be in really dire straits, physically, and after a while it gets to you mentally, psychologically. You become this person that all of a sudden starts to doubt yourself."

John didn't question the cuts. He says that when you have little, you learn to not argue with authority. He makes it clear that everyone in his situation fears that protesting the change will only make things worse.

"They will be put on a red tag list, and if anything happens, they'll get nailed. They are looking to take people off the rolls, so nobody argues," he says. "Anyone with any brains doesn't argue."

Fortunately for John, the managers of his subsidized apartment decreased the monthly rent payment in proportion to his diminished income. He has also seen a \$14 increase in his food stamp allowance. But not everyone affected by the cuts will be so lucky.

### SSI, SSP — What's it all about?

In the early '70s, Washington State operated a state adult assistance fund for aged, blind, and disabled people living in poverty called the Mandatory In-

*Continued on Page 14*





tage of progress. Get a clue.

Sincerely,  
Mark Mulligan

## I ♥ Nietzsche

Dear Sir:

Mr. Harris' recent aberration, "Nietzsche, Dionysius, and Springsteen," both trivializes Nietzsche and his conception of Dionysius. Moreover, as far as it can be said to have any active relation with classical thought, it only illustrates the classical critique of the working classes. Nietzsche, that strongest critic of modern nihilism, is dismissed as a nihilist. Right before falling into insanity, Nietzsche began addressing himself as Dionysius, and yet, Harris describes the Dionysian as the irrational. The foundation of Nietzsche's critique, and indeed of all serious thought, is a distinction between civic rationality, the Apollonian, and reason. The Dionysian only appears irrational from the standpoint of the state. The Dionysian as Harris uses it is even worse than the Apollonian; it is a lapse into instinct or into blind desire. It does not even have the good faith of the Apollonian idolatry. Nietzsche criticizes his contemporaries for their faith in civic rationalism and for their simplistic rejection of anything that challenges the Apollonian as irrational. Harris demonstrates his point. Even Homer, whose characters hold

onto the Dionysian more firmly than in any book since, represents the grunt soldiers as governed by the fear of death or by a state morality. If Mr. Harris insists on soiling classical thought, he would be better served accepting a slave's role in any of Aristophanes's plays than by insulting the community he claims to be writing for.

Sincerely,  
David Kaufman

*Perfess'r Harris replies:* Sorry we ruined your day there, David. Classics Corner, all pretensions to the contrary aside, is not an academically respectable journal of classical thought. It is, rather, a humor column. I suggest you get over it, and/or, possibly, yourself.

## Likes our web site

Dear Editor,

One never knows where the gods of the net will exercise their prowess. I have just spent a timeless or lost time flipping through the pages and links of your site. THANK YOU!!

Although I am not homeless (yet), I am 62 going on dementia and I'm collecting welfare here in British Columbia. With the state nipping at my heels and promising to take that away from me in the next couple of years, I find myself in envy of you south of the 49th.

We have the reputation of politeness, when really it is a knee-jerk (more the latter than the former) reaction when what lies seething beneath the surface is an anger and meanness directed at folks in my situation rather than directed at the top.

Anyone who has tried to start what you have done has run into such opposition that they soon fade away. There are too few notable exceptions. I have bookmarked your page and will drop in occasionally and most definitely learn what I can from your site.

David, British Columbia

## Thinking outside the box

Dear *Real Change*,

I have been a protagonist of homelessness for many years. When I was growing up, I was lucky enough to have been taught that what were then known as "hoboes" were simply people who did not or could not live inside a house or building. I don't remember it being a criminal offense back then either!

What has happened to us as a society, that choosing to be different from most is illegal? I could go on all day but that's about the gist of it.

Thanks,  
Judy Dicks

## A wee bit critical

Dear Perfess'r Harris,

You write longingly of Electra. Yet when someone shows up with her level of passion and commitment, you might as well be a re-elected Bush official for all your support. Admit it, you'd ignore her (perhaps sneering, "even more nerdlake than myself"), just like the rest. It's SO MUCH EASIER that way.

I think I prefer the reactionaries; at least they're honest about the worthlessness of their ideas and results under any criteria but raw-meat greed. I've yet to find the special criterium [sic] that renders worth a damn any progressive and his Age of Pericles ideation. Three thousand years of rote repetition, and zero success. Arse-dottle would have been proud of his permanent sabo-

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# Change

Puget Sound's Voice of the  
Poor and Homeless

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### Mission Statement:

*Real Change* organizes, educates, and builds alliances to create solutions to homelessness and poverty. We exist to provide a voice for poor people in our community.

### 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

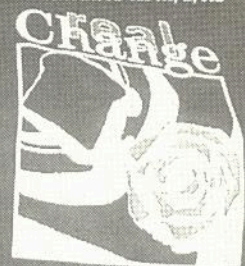
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### Editorial Policy

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. *Real Change* reserves the right to edit any material for length and style. Articles considered libelous or which encourage violence, sexism, homophobia, or racism will not be considered for publication.

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# The Fallout

## Ways to count the decline and fall of humanitarianism

By Adam Holdorf

**T**here is a crisis happening, over and above the usual crisis of homelessness in our nation, and our discomfiting tolerance for another person's deprivation.

The crisis in question is all the more deep because it appears to be historically retrograde, like the moon moving eastward in the night. It's happening despite all of our country's experience with poverty — the 40 years since Kennedy, the 70 years of Social Security. It's happening in spite of our belief in the inexorable march of progress: Lines on a line graph always point northeast; America takes care of its own. It's happening despite my flag, or yours.

**It's a unique and historic turnabout, away from people's human needs. City, county, and state funding cuts are carving at the dignity of our society and our ability to care for the vulnerable.**

It's a unique and historic turnabout, away from people's human needs. City, county, and state funding cuts are carving at the dignity of our society and our ability to care for the vulnerable.

Downgrades, cutbacks, and shutdowns are the result of state budget deficits which were enacted earlier this year, county budget-slashing brewing in 2003, and city cost-savings to be discussed in September. Among the hits:

- Community Service Officers — the "good cops" of the Seattle Police Department — are being cut back and possibly eliminated as part of the city's budget-saving measures. Community Service Officers don't carry weapons, or make traffic stops. They resolve problems and mediate disputes without having to call in the big guns. They also escort homeless families to hotel rooms during the winter months, inform campers of available shelter, and ferry homeless women to doctors' appointments

- Right now, a state-funded "circuit rider" is driving through rural Washington, delivering prescription medication to sick people — medication that local pharmacists no longer sell, because the state Medicaid program's reimbursement rates for prescription drugs are too low. This is the picture-perfect image of a stopgap measure — the state won't pay local pharmacists their asking price, so it pays delivery people to drive hundreds of miles to deliver the stuff. Doug Porter, overseer of the state's Medicaid program, told the Associated Press that he believes the courier work "is going smoothly. We have not heard [of] any catastrophic incidents." A poor diabetic can no longer pop down to the corner drug store for essential medicine — but at least he hasn't met with catastrophe, yet.

- Last week, the state Health Services Administration took time out from its fledgling delivery business to ask the federal government, again, to tweak the Medicaid program for poor adults, families, and children. Among their wish list: eliminate some adult dental, vision, and hearing services; establish waiting lists for newer, higher-income clients; and charge Medicaid recipients a co-pay every time they go to an emergency room for what the state determines was a "non-emergency" situation. Unlike an earlier version of this proposal, children's Medicaid services are left intact. The state could save millions — but where will people struggling to get by find the money for a co-payment?

- Earlier this summer, the King County Childcare Program was unceremoniously scuttled. The money left over in the county's matching-fund program, waiting for willing cities to pony up their own childcare assistance, was moved into the criminal justice budget. Just as schoolchildren's summer vacation loomed, working parents found themselves with less means to pay for daycare. One mother told *Real Change* that she could only afford day care for her daughter "if we ate Oscar Mayer for dinner every night."

In the face of such shortfalls, it's interesting to watch who gets the biggest slice of an ever-shrinking public pie. The South Downtown Foundation recently signed a two-year, \$325,000 contract to get cops walking the beat in Pioneer Square, the International District, and the stadiums' surroundings. A Pioneer Square community group has the money to set up video cameras in Occidental Park — to take a voyeuristic peek at the routine despair of homeless people in the park.

Meanwhile, in the face of such a cognitive dissonance, people do what they must. On Friday, September 13, concerned citizens will kick off the "King County Citizens' Winter Response Shelter," a substitute for the county's lack of funding for its 50-bed winter shelter, which, in fatter years, started October 1. There are alternatives to this mess, and it takes courage and creativity to get us out of it. ■

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## National News Digest

August 19, 2002

News from around the U.S. and Canada, provided by the Street News Service ([www.streetnewsservice.org](http://www.streetnewsservice.org))

**S**ucks to be homeless in Orlando, Florida. In early August, the Orlando City Council approved an ordinance that could land anyone found sitting or lying down on downtown public sidewalks with a \$500 fine and 60 days in jail, according to the *Orlando Sentinel* ([www.orlandosentinel.com](http://www.orlandosentinel.com)). Giddy with the pleasure of criminalizing homeless people, the council's next vote will be on whether to limit the number of days a year volunteer groups can hand out free meals. Turns out some organizations have no sense of propriety and are dishing up lavish grub "as often as once a week." By removing extravagant perks like unlimited access to concrete pavements and food once every seven days, the council appears to believe that Orlando's homeless population will finally concede theirs is not the luxurious, sophisticated lifestyle they once thought it was.

**S**peaking of throwing homeless people in jail, New York City has skipped the step of actually finding a homeless person guilty of any illegal trespass, under the premise that unused jail space can double as emergency shelter. According to the *New York Times*, The Bronx House of Detention for Men will house 80 to 100 families in addition to the 8,400 families already in the city's shelter system every night. New York City Mayor Michael Bloomberg concedes that a former jail is not the ideal accommodation, but notes that it beats sleeping on the floor of the Emergency Assistance Unit, where many of families have previously spent the night. The Commissioner of homeless services, Linda Gibbs, stresses that the city hopes to only use the detention center for a month or two, after which homeless families will be free to return to the city streets just as winter begins.

**A** woman who has been homeless for almost 10 years is one of the distant hopefuls among the candidates for Maryland's governor and lieutenant governor. Linda J. Atkins is the running mate of Robert R. Fustero, who recently retired after 28 years as a grocery store clerk, according to the *Baltimore Sun* ([www.sunspot.net](http://www.sunspot.net)). They will challenge the Democratic frontrunner Kathleen Kennedy Townsend in the September 10 gubernatorial primary. While Townsend is all but guaranteed the spot — she is the only candidate who can afford to run ads and even host her own website — Atkins and Fustero took advantage of the Maryland law that allows any resident over the age of 30 to run for the state office as long as they hand over a \$295 filing fee. Atkins, 43, first met Fustero, 51 — who has run for political office twice before — when she lost her job as a manager at a fast-food restaurant and suffered a bitter divorce that eventually drove her to become an alcoholic. While homeless, Atkins used local church addresses so she could continue to vote for candidates who cared about issues facing homeless and low-income people. She's now registered to vote out of a motel she recently moved into with her boyfriend. "Everybody should count," Atkins told the *Baltimore Sun*, "not just the rich." ■

— Compiled by Molly Rhodes

## Murder in Kent

**O**n August 5, three young men were charged in the brutal death of Kelly Rhae Craft, a woman who reached into one of the men's pockets after they arranged a crack deal. Kent Police Department spokesman Paul Petersen says Craft's body was found July 31 in the parking lot of a Kent manufacturing company on First Avenue South, next to two empty homes frequented by homeless people seeking shelter. Adjacent to the homes, police found Craft's personal belongings and fresh drops of blood. Investigators made contact with a homeless man sleeping in the vacant homes, but determined he was not associated with the crime.

The men have been charged with second-degree murder; each pleaded innocent. Craft's next of kin has been notified of her death, according to Petersen. ■

— Adam Holdorf

## Beer Ban is formal

**F**ollowing long delay and unsuccessful voluntary measures, the City Council voted 8-0 to designate Pioneer Square an Alcohol Impact Area on Au-



gust 12. Their request goes to the Washington State Liquor Control Board, which will decide whether people drinking in the neighborhood's public areas damages public health. The City Council seeks to ban the sale of all types of single cans or bottles of beer or malt liquor, and any alcohol in the early mornings, between 6 and 9 a.m. Mayor Greg Nickels supported the legislation, and in a press statement noted that "Pioneer Square will be stronger and more vibrant as these projects are completed." ■

— Adam Holdorf

## Home care workers get their union

**T**he largest union vote in the state's history took place August 16, and more than 80 percent of the ballots were in favor of the state's 26,000 home care workers joining the Service Employees International Union (SEIU) Local 6, the Seattle-based union that represents hospital workers, nurses and other caregivers.

The vote was a result of Initiative 773, passed by Washington voters last year, which gave home care workers the right to join a union and set up the Home Care Quality Authority, a watchdog panel for patients in in-home care. Prior to the initiative, home care workers were viewed as independent contractors by the state Department of Social and Health Services, which pays them as little as \$7.68 per hour to feed, bathe, dress, and assist thousands of elderly and disabled citizens.

Having formed a union, the home care workers will bargain with the new watchdog panel, then request a wage increase from the State Legislature early next year — as elected officials tackle the ongoing revenue shortfall. ■

— Adam Holdorf

## The Lillian: the wrecking ball can wait

**I**t wasn't exactly like an old movie where the Governor gives a man headed to the electric chair a last-second reprieve, but the Lillian Apartments will be around a while longer, thanks to mayor Greg Nickels.

Originally, The city Department of Design, Construction, and Land Use (DCLU) was going to make a decision on whether Paul Allen's Vulcan Associates could demolish the 33-unit building located at 1258 John Street in the Cascade section of the city. That decision was supposed to be made on July 26, and then was pushed back to August 8. Now a decision probably won't be coming until mid-September.

This spring, Vulcan paid the tenants of the 84-year-old building \$5,000 apiece to vacate the premises by May 1. Vulcan then appealed to DCLU to have the building demolished, but has faced opposition from the Seattle Displacement Coalition. That group has taken signatures and launched letter-writing campaigns to save the previously low-income complex.

"The Mayor has a high interest in the Lillian and has been in touch with DCLU," says the Mayor's assistant on housing issues, Katie Hong. "He's told them to take a closer look at the situation."

"I think the mayor got a lot of letters," says Colleen Doyle, who helped spearhead the movement. "I'm happy with the delay, but I don't want people to forget about the Lillian."

Neighborhood activists were originally concerned about Nickels' involvement particularly since Paul Allen, who has been buying other properties in the neighborhood, recently held a fundraiser for the Mayor.

Nickels will be in the Cascade Neighborhood, between South Lake Union and downtown Seattle, twice in the next couple weeks — August 24, at Cascade Park for the neighborhood's clean-up day, and September 6, at the low-income Lakeview Apartments, drumming up support for the Housing Levy renewal scheduled for the September 17 primary election. Nickels would have been greeted by angry protesters if DCLU had ruled in favor of Vulcan. However, activists would still like to meet with the mayor and express their concerns about the neighborhood's future.

The Seattle Displacement Coalition has filed a request under the state Public Disclosure Act to see any written or electronic communication between Vulcan and DCLU. The Coalition believes that DCLU told Vulcan what fixtures needed to be removed from the Lillian for the building to meet the standards for demolition. ■

—R.V. Murphy

*Do you have any stories we should look into? Call Adam at 441-8143, and just maybe we will.*



# Slow Drip

Who's responsible for the water bill: landlords or renters?

By Adam Holdorf

Starting this September, water rates for residential and commercial users are going up. The new per-gallon price will cost the average residential customer (a homeowner or renter living in a single-family house) about \$3 more a month. That's just the start of a two-step increase; next year, the typical water bill will rise another \$1.50.

Tenants of multi-family apartment buildings will be in a different situation. They never see the Seattle Public Utilities water/sewer/garbage bill. What they might get, instead, is a water bill from Minol-MTR, or MeterNet NW, or any of the other third-party billing companies that Seattle landlords employ to pass the water costs on to their tenants.

About one-third of the time, these billing companies use imprecise estimates to sum up a monthly water fee, according to Seattle Public Utilities conservation project manager Bill Dietemann.

Too bad for the frustrated renter, struggling to see the fairness of it all. "From a tenant's perspective, I wouldn't feel good. Why should the bill just be divided on the basis of the number of units [in a given building], and sent regardless of how much water I use?" says Dietemann. "It's not equitable."

This year, complaints of that nature to Seattle City Councilmember Judy Nicastro's office have prompted a look at the practice of third-party billing. Along with the new water rates, on August 12 the Council passed a resolution calling for Seattle Public Utilities to consider regulating the practice of third-party billing. Among the possibilities: the city could require landlords to disclose the name and phone number of the billing company, the criteria it uses to set the sub-metered rate, and the actual cost of the water.

Or, says Nicastro aide Charlie McAteer, the city could consider banning third-party billing altogether. He points out that city law bans one per-

son from selling City Light's electricity to someone else. "If it's illegal with electricity," he says, "why not with water?"

The billing may be imprecise, but landlords do it in order to pass on the cost of something they have little to no control over: a tenants' water consumption. Seattle Public Utilities has an incentive program for the replacement of leaky toilets; it gives out free low-flow showerheads; but if "young women with long hair who tend to shower every night" live in the building, says Dietemann, the water bill will be high no matter what.

The only other way landlords can pass the cost of water along to their tenants is impractical for both owners and city government. Landlords could install new water lines in older buildings. Jim Nell, executive director of the Rental Housing Association, says that sub-metering apartment buildings helps tenants conserve water. "There's a substantial savings when you sub-meter a building, because tenants use less water," he says. But the equipment and plumbing costs associated with this work are high.

Another option would be to install meters in the boiler room — except the city won't allow public water to travel in private pipes. "It's a liability issue for us," says Dietemann. "We can't be responsible for water damage in a burst pipe on the fourth floor of someone else's apartment."

A better solution may arise as Seattle Public Utilities investigates and prepares a report for City Council this winter.

No matter what happens, one-third of Seattle's tenants are part of a historic shift. Their landlords have devised a

## Getting help for water bills

Even if you're being charged by a third-party billing company, you can get help paying your water bill. Part of the money raised with the new rate increase will help subsidize low-income households who need relief. But it won't reach everybody. On Sept. 13, more people can take advantage of the water discount in Rate 27, the city's utilities assistance program. It offers rate discounts to people making up to 200 percent of the federal poverty level — for instance, about \$23,000 for a family of two. The change brings the water/sewer/garbage and the electricity assistance programs in line with each other.

City officials believe that people struggling to pay their bills seldom take advantage of the program. City Human Services Department staffer Barbara Evans, who gets about 30 to 40 calls a day seeking rate relief, says that about 25 percent of the city's eligible low-income households have accessed Rate 27. Those who do don't stick around: more than half leave the city within 12 months of being accepted to the program. She says the problem lies in the "mobility" of low-income people.

Still, she encourages people to consider applying. "A lot of times people will say, 'I'm not eligible for those low-income programs.' But the worst that could happen is we say no. We encourage people to make every effort to call us and find out if they qualify," she says. "The rewards will accrue over time."

Call the city (684-0268) to order an application form for the Rate 27 program. To qualify, you must meet the income guidelines and live in private, unsubsidized housing. Once you're accepted to the program, the discount lasts one year. ■

way for the user to pay for a finite, costly resource. "On a grand scale, you should say that everybody pays for what they use," says Dietemann. "Wa-

ter is the last utility to remain embedded in the rent. People can use all they want — like electricity was, before World War II." ■

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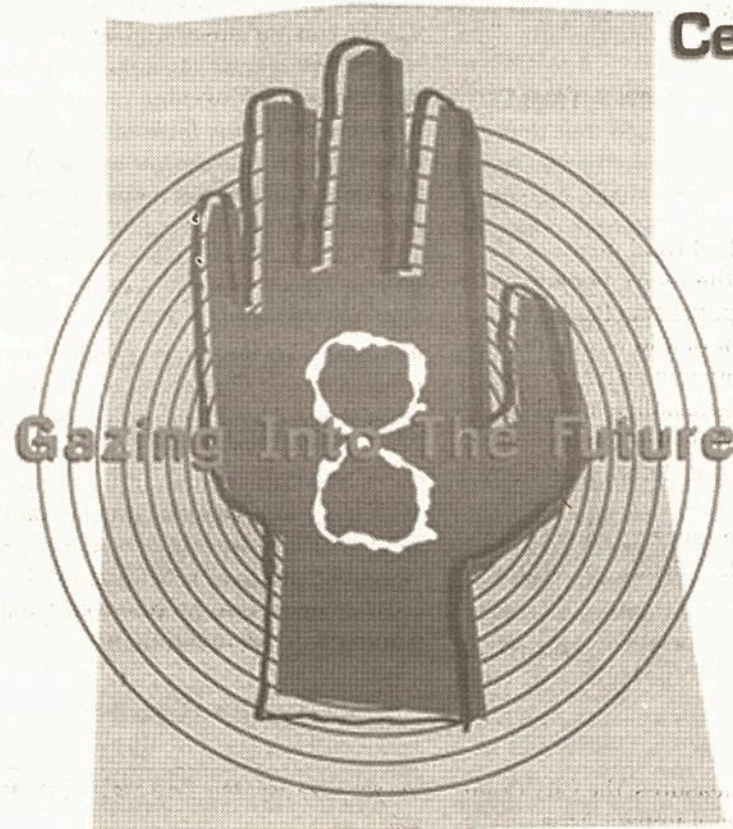
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# poetry

## Untitled

Some stories are hard coming down.  
I looked at her flat black eyes  
And knew that's how it would be.  
And so it was.  
Like hot ginger-scented lava  
Words slowly spilled over her lips  
And down into her lap,  
Joining the twisting fingers  
She had trapped there.  
Words and fingers entangled,  
Obscene in the metaphor they held.  
And still her story ruptured,  
Still hard coming down.

— CAROLE G. ANDERSON

## Water with Fire

Why do you call me  
When I shouldn't come

Why do you keep me  
When I shouldn't stay

And pull me to the height  
O a reeling ride on frothy waves of exhilaration

Then plunge me to the depth  
O an unknown blackness.

The next day's light slips into the room  
Then pierces its daggers into the heart of my senses

I turn to you for comfort but you are spent  
A curvaceous shell now empty of promise

Don't lure me again, let go your hold  
Let my feelings and you stay bottled up.

—PETRA HELLTHALER



### Adventures in Poetry with ©Dr. Wes Browning

**F**or this column I wanted to talk about the demise in court of the anti-postering law, but then a couple of things got in the way. First of all, I don't know anything about the demise in court of the anti-postering law. Except that it has something to do with the Washington state Constitution, a 70-or-so-page book that I can't begin to make heads or tails of. Second of all, a book that was lying around the office distracted me.

You may all recall that last issue in this space, I alluded to the fact that Henry D. Thoreau was deceased, but that certain of his concerns live on. When reading the blurbs on the back cover of this distracting book, I was shakti-ed, simply shakti-ed, to learn that the book was one of Henry's concerns.

No, I wasn't, but I couldn't resist saying that. Please forgive me.

Really, the Bhagavad-Gita (or the "Gita" as we aficionados like to call it) is just like the Washington state Constitution to me. It's a 70-or-so-page book that I believe is very important but that I can't begin to make heads or tails of. Yet, I am strangely attracted to it, in the same way that I am attracted to ducks. I keep coming back to it year after year, only to be bewildered as ever.

Part of the attraction of the Bhagavad-Gita is that it is a big poem, after all. It is a piece of the Mahabharata, the ancient Indian epic that has been called the world's longest poem. The Mahabharata is so long that I haven't even had the endurance to see the movie, much less read the book, but I know it goes on. So it was inevitable that we at Adventures in Poetry would have to mention the Mahabharata eventually, if only as an example of another way to write a poem to get noticed (write one really, really long.)

Part of the attraction is that as far as its content goes, considered as a poem, the Gita is unbelievably audacious. Who starts out to write a poem about a big battle, and then has the main guy of one side of the battle say he can't go through with it, it's wrong, and then spend the remaining vast major-

ity of their huge poem not on details of battle blood and gore but on laying out the main guy's conversation with his chariot driver about the nature of life-the universe-and-everything? And his chariot driver happens to be the Supreme Godhead, incarnated as the blue guy in those cool Hindu paintings, so He has all the answers? Can you say "cosmic"? I thought you could.

(Try it yourselves, you budding poets! Write a poem like the Gita. Start out by talking about somebody planning to do something, I don't know, like writing a column. Have her/him stop and say, "Naw, I don't want to do it." Then spend 70 freaking pages of poetry describing a conversation between him/her and some form of God, in which the God explains everything in the world, so that the upshot of the conversation is that at the end, God says, "So, just do it. But hey, it's up to you." Then take it to an open mike. Your audience will tell you just how audacious your poem is.)

**Certainly nobody today is born with a duty to wage war.**

Part of the attraction, also, is that the Gita is an ancient classic, therefore written for a world that doesn't exist anymore. (It has mostly gotten worse.) This makes for a lot of the difficulty in reading it, but that just adds to the charm.

OK, sure, the surface message — which seems to be that if you belong to the warrior caste, then you ought to do war — strikes many of us today as outrageously conservative and narrow-minded. But then we think, as justifications for war go, at least this one doesn't reek of hypocrisy. And we can escape the conclusion that war is justified by rejecting the premise that there is, any more, in the nuclear age, a warrior caste.

No, certainly nobody today is born with a duty to wage war. So, as an argument to preserve the status quo and keep the conquerors conquered and the conquerors conquering, the Gita would appear to have aged.

But the Gita does speak eloquently of duty. Now, the question still is, what's that? ■





## For the Women who Write for Real Change

Dear Poet,  
You wrote that you were  
Four — six — seven  
When you were raped.  
Now wonder you're at home on the streets.

I see in your poem,  
And in the faces of the girls  
Who work the curbs  
My own two sisters;

For I was  
Nine — ten — eleven  
When I coerced them  
Into playing Doctor,

Learning only later  
How persuasion  
Makes a boy  
Into a perpetrator.

While you crave Justice  
I hunger for Forgiveness,  
And we both wait in vain  
For Sanity.

I am,  
Despite my ardent inner war,  
A pedophile  
Imprisoned by preadolescent memories

Of searching with my fingers  
For acceptance  
In the void  
Of Dark Desire.

I've watched in horror  
As my sisters' lives unfold  
And fill with consequences the horrid mould  
I carved with curiosity.

But what unnumbered price  
Can I now pay  
To own the pain  
I gave them?

I've read the books.  
I've seen some shrinks.

There is no medicine  
For temptation,  
No antidote for evil —  
Except for understanding, vigilance, and GOD.

All I can do is fall on my knees  
Each night and pray  
That when I see a little girl smile  
I'll smile back, then look away —

And haste — GOD help me —  
Haste away.

— 44642

## Surrender

Serenity  
Silent as night's first star  
Offers to all who see, to all who believe the succession of darkness to surrender.

I  
Harbor dreams  
That someday I will cease to inhale the scent of smoke and ashes.  
I close my eyes and I see the Stellar Jays confined in my father's garage  
Desperate to be free and smacking against the webbed glass window in a futile effort to escape,  
Harder and harder each time, until I cried,  
Until they died.

These nights,  
These dreams I cannot escape.  
The final thud of regret, the frenzied ballet of death in feral supplication  
Upon life's exponential stage so prolific in mind, so evident in soul that even a lover's embrace  
Fails to ease the ache of old broken bones, The homes I have built in sands beautiful  
and useless as the tide eases in and washes everything away.

Strange  
As often as life  
Has stolen those individuals most profound in my life  
my home remains in the fleeting hands of those next to whom love's restiveness has grown.  
My sister who bore the dark crippled lines upon her arms like a roadmap of decimation.  
My brother who mistook his fists for my salvation.  
My father who crawled into my bed, pleaded for resorption and who clung to me as if  
I were the only one who could understand the needs which held us both in a disarray of thick  
smoke,  
Staid breath and broken promises.

These nights  
When I cannot sleep  
And there is no one to hold onto I remember the blue jays and I look upwards.  
Little survives the toneless light of day but, in darkness birds fly, windows open  
And love repents to all who have been injured or maimed...

My  
Sigh Is heavy,  
the cloud of smoke my own and my footsteps etched in winter sands are not meant to endure  
but only to signify I was here.  
I did. I did survive.

—CYNTHIA LEE OZIMEK



# Old-Fashioned Good Time

The Museum of History and Industry is having a birthday party for the city. Does anybody care?

By Trevor Griffey

Poor Seattle. It's the city's 150th birthday and almost nobody knows about it. Or, it's hard to tell if anyone cares. All of the birthday parties have been really lame. Reenacted pioneer landings in West Seattle. Commemorative ceremonies too shallow for even a spiteful editor to send an unpopular reporter to cover. Badly attended forums with some senior citizens from historical associations bringing out all the city's old, embarrassing, and boring baby pictures — the mothballed stories of Seattle pioneers like Henry Yesler and Arthur Denny. Yawn.

It wasn't always like this. Back in the bad old days, when the high ideals of the American dream took shape in Washington in the form of subjugating Indians, clear-cutting ancient forests, planting and farming invasive species, tearing any mildly marketable rock from the ground, and hunting and fishing the region's once-dominant animal populations to the brink of extinction, no city like Seattle would have been caught dead hosting some kind of wimpy, half-assed, ashamed-of-itself non-celebration of its own birthday.

But Seattle wasn't quite as smug back then. It hadn't yet become a dominant force in the world of Pacific Rim global commerce. Sure, many of the pioneers who came here were afflicted, or perhaps gifted, with fantastic prophetic visions about how their tiny little homesteads would one day mushroom into vast cities that dominated the entire region. Some of them turned out to be right, though not quite as they predicted.

But the problem was that there were too many urban prophets afoot, and too many of them had loans from venture capitalists challenging them to make good on their dreams at some other city's expense. The people in Tacoma thought theirs would become THE city of the northwest — and so did the people in Portland, and Port Townsend, and Olympia, not to mention all the little towns that never came close. So, to preserve and expand their investments, our city fathers would compete with other cities through insane boosterism and gigantic parties, trying to get more people to move here, to get more money for their investments, to get a railroad terminus, etc. so that Seattle could one day be the king daddy city of them all.

The biggest manifestation of this self-promotion came just as Seattle was achieving the kind of regional dominance its founders dreamed of. To celebrate the city's fiftieth birthday, a little belatedly, Seattle hosted a world's fair — the Alaska-Yukon Pacific Exhibition — touting its

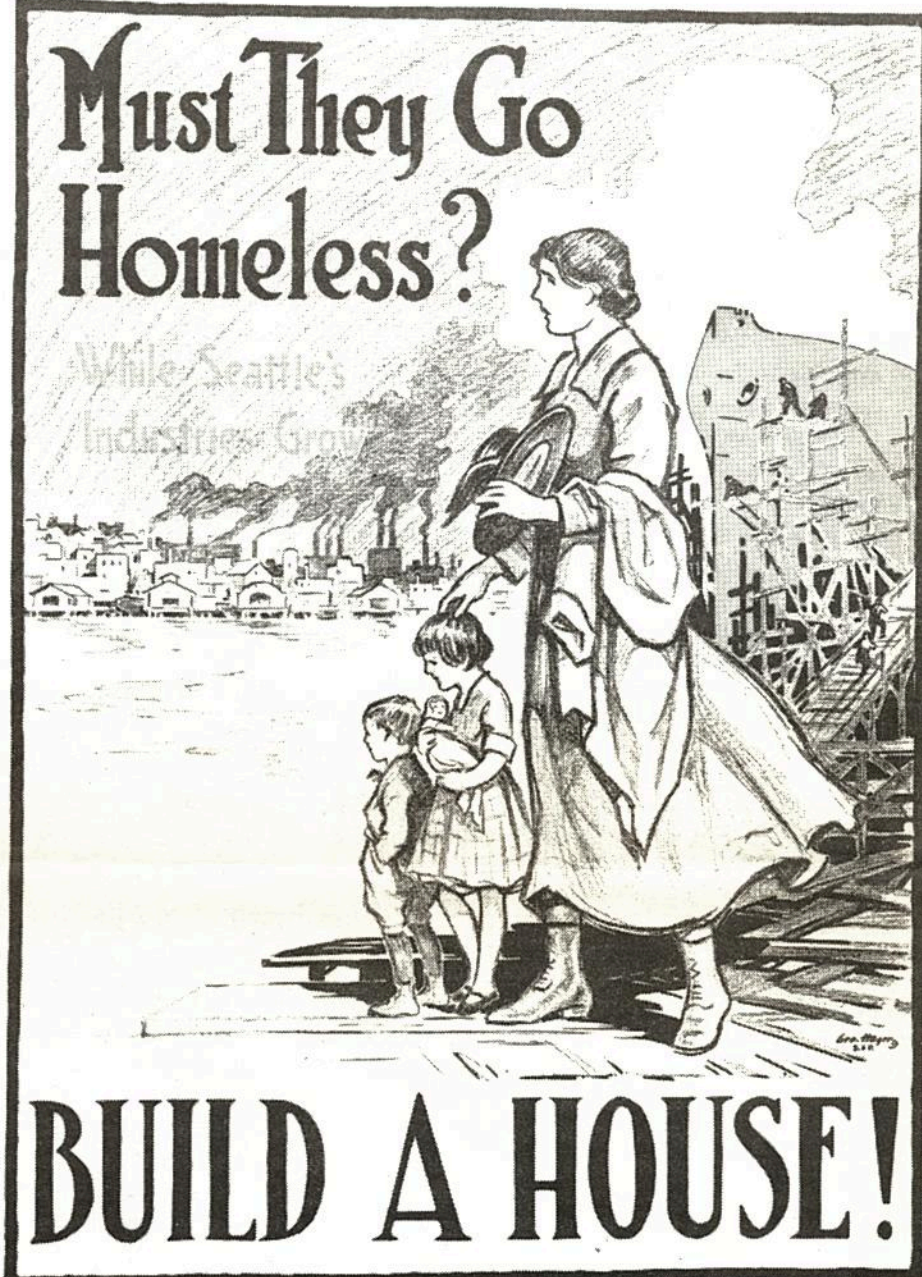
place in the world, marketing everything from fish to loggers to Indians. The huge event was part tourist attraction, part celebration, part trade fair.

For its hundredth birthday, Seattle's leaders replaced its traditional "potlatch" celebrations with Seafair. Seafair initiated weeks of community festivals and parades throughout the city, and its big, fast boats were a major step toward Seattle fashioning a new identity for itself based on the glamors of modern technology.

Seattle's last grasp at major boosterism (sorry, the Goodwill Games and the WTO just don't compare) was with the 1962 World's Fair, which is celebrating its 40th anniversary this year. To put on the fair, the city razed a bunch of low-income housing in lower Queen Anne to build Seattle Center. Purging its identity as a pioneer town of loggers and Indians once and for all, the fair was a temporary theme park that showcased advances in science that would change how we lived in the future. Open for much of the year and attracting tourists from around the world, the event was wildly successful.

"You couldn't do something like that today," says former Seattle mayor Gordy Clinton, whose work while mayor was crucial to bringing the world's fair here. Something happened on the way to the space age that's dragged this city and the rest of the country down. These days, people aren't quite so rosy about nuclear power or about Boeing, about technology being a solution to any social problem, or even about corporations and governments running roughshod over neighborhoods to build gigantic vanity projects with public money.

Maybe, having already reached global prominence, Seattle's residents don't really want to play this dumb boosterism game anymore. We won and we pay the cost of winning every day. We don't want more people to move here — they'll only drive up rents and make traffic worse. When some local Chamber of Commerce types were considering a bid for the Olympics a few years back, the idea was quickly shot down as a monumental headache and waste of public money.



WORLD WAR I ERA POSTER COURTESY OF THE MUSEUM OF HISTORY AND INDUSTRY

For those interested in local history, there is another part of Seattle's sesquicentennial to know about: a web-based encyclopedia of city, county, and state history. What the web site lacks in analysis, it more than makes up for with original research, rare information, historic photos, and oral histories you won't find anywhere else. Check it out at [www.historylink.org](http://www.historylink.org).

These days, what's the point of a big city celebrating itself? The whole of downtown is our theme park, our tourist Mecca, our consumer haven, our entertainment center and monument to big business and high technology all rolled up into one. There's even a daily tourist-oriented hawking of our city's history, in Pike Place Market and Pioneer Square. What more do we need?

No wonder Seattle's leaders can no longer find the wherewithal to throw a big public event for its sesquicentennial. This city is its own public event, and we and

the tourists we lure here are all its consumers — sometimes but not always happy to participate in the ever-growing spectacle.

Yet in this ahistorical moment, when most people don't care where their city came from and some would prefer the time go backward or stand still, there are humble attempts to preserve some semblance of celebration and identity for the divided Emerald City. Just on the south side of the Montlake cut, facing the U

*Continued on the top of Next Page*



**GOOD TIME Cont. from Previous Page**

football stadium, is Seattle's Museum of History and Industry (MOHAI). Host to innumerable boring events, it's also putting on Metropolis 150, an interesting if schizophrenic exhibit celebrating Seattle's birthday while most of the city barely takes notice.

Reflecting Seattle's identity crisis, Metropolis 150 is short on explanations and narrative. You could walk through the halls of old brochures, posters, newspaper clippings, film footage, doo-dads and gew-gaws, and come out without any sense of what the defining moments of Seattle's history were, or why they mattered. To put forward a critical interpretation of Seattle's past, in light of our lapse of faith in white male boosterism, would take guts that MOHAI just didn't have. Instead, the museum took the easy way out and simply offered a bunch of disconnected exhibits.

There is something to be said for the loose collage of artifacts and images brought together by Metropolis 150, however. As you wander through sections titled "vision city," "nature city," "engineered city," "world city," and "home city," the absence of heavy-handed interpreta-

tions allows you to draw your own conclusions about what Seattle is about. And to its credit, Metropolis 150 does have is some pretty cool stuff to look at.

There's a 20-minute black-and-white video of the sluicing, bulldozing, and leveling of Denny Hill to make way for Belltown, with this maniacal snare drum soundtrack that evokes a cynical vision of a the twisted yet inexorable march of progress.

You can marvel at the incredible camp of the 1962 World's Fair exhibit — its TV advertisements, its clothes, its brochures. The innocence is so endearing! The attempts to look futuristic are better than any bad sci-fi flick.

There are exhibits that offer interesting artifacts from Seattle's radical political history right alongside exhibits about retail shopping, and uncritical boosterism on behalf of Seattle's biggest corporations — Starbucks, Immunex, Boeing, and Microsoft.

There's an old sign from Shelley's Leg Tavern, an early gay bar and the city's first disco, telling would-be hipsters that gay people had first dibs on getting into the bar.

**These days, what's the point of a big city celebrating itself? The whole of downtown is our theme park, our tourist Mecca, our consumer haven, our entertainment center and monument to big business and high technology.**

It has to be said, even if Native Americans helped create the exhibit: the portrait offered of native people from the area is too small, and way too sentimental about their relationship to the land. Depicting early Native Americans as semi-shamans living in complete harmony with the land, and largely ignoring their importance to the culture and economy of pioneer Seattle in its first thirty years, Metropolis 150 falls into the common trap

of making Native Americans into a preface to, and not a partner in, Seattle's early rise. But not entirely — to its credit, MOHAI also displays some photos from

important sovereignty protests from the early 1970s, showing that indigenous people aren't just victims of white oppression or misunderstood caricatures of white guilt.

And there's much, much more, both to criticize and to spark your curiosity.

At its worst, the exhibit is a kind of before-and-after picture book of Seattle. Its unexplained objects can leave you in dumbfounded awe of change for its own sake, or for no sake at all. What's missing is a sort of human perspective: a sense of how human agency may have made the Seattle of the past so different from the Seattle of today. But these little objects, this collection of curious baubles that is Metropolis 150, is worth giving a visit to at least because that sense of awe for historical change is also fun.

That's right. Fun. Even if I'm bored by most local historians, I like local history — I like the dead characters, the obsolete technology, the prophecies that never came true, and all the evidence that reminds us, despite the ever growing homogenization of the world, that things haven't always been like this, and they couldn't possibly stay this way forever.

And anyway, why shouldn't it be fun? Isn't this supposed to be a party? ■

## Fighting the System

**For Martin Luther King, Jr., desegregation was just the beginning**

*Martin Luther King, Jr.*  
A biography by Marshall Frady  
Penguin Lives, Viking Book  
2002  
216 pages, hardcover  
\$19.95

Review by Molly Rhodes

Less than a year after his 1968 assassination, Martin Luther King, Jr., was already the posthumous symbol for all those who believed in and fought for racial equality. It was a status he had more than earned, starting with the words of a then 26-year-old minister who had suddenly been elected by the members of the Montgomery Improvement Association to lead the 1955 bus boycott. "You know, my friends," he intoned in his first speech before a crowd in Montgomery's oldest black Baptist church, "there comes a time, when people get tired of being trampled over by the iron feet of oppression—"

"Abruptly there exploded an astonishing thunderclap of cheering, shouts, and stomping of feet," describes biographer Marshall Frady, "seeming briefly to startle King as it stormed on to an accompanying roar a second later from the greater throng gathered outside — it had become, in fact, the birth of all the mass meetings to come in black churches and tabernacles over the South in the years ahead."

Yet even for all the gifts King possessed, and his tremendous belief in his own destiny to give all of himself — including his life — to the cause he was fight-

ing for, less than a year before he was assassinated he had begun to lose a large portion of the overwhelming support that had greeted him in his earlier days. What had started out in the mid-'50s as a fight against racism and racial injustice became, by the summer of 1967, the Poor People's Campaign, a conviction that until all the substandard wages, lack of education, inadequate health care, and all the other faces of poverty had been eradicated from the American economic and social landscape — for all races — his work would not be done.

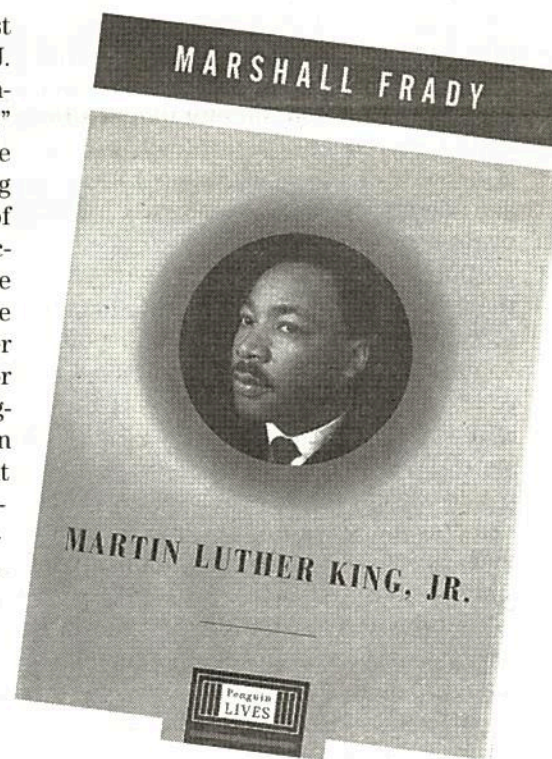
While Marshall Frady's biography of Martin Luther King, Jr. — part of the excellent and now-defunct Penguin Lives series of biographies of influential people — covers all of King's life, King's journey towards the Poor People's Campaign frames the story of the man-who-would-be-prophet that Frady has to tell. "King's moral vision had impelled him beyond the South into a mission, even more formidable and in the end tragic, as prophet of the whole national community at America's Augustan noon of pride and power," he writes in the introduction. "His evangelism against the primal Cain act of racism — its denial of a natural connection to other human beings, reducing them to objects, which then allows any manner of violence against them — inexorably evolved into an evangelism against what he saw as the moral coma of the country's whole corporate, technological order: its loud and vicious void of materialism, its isolation of individuals from each other....

In effect, he came to pit himself against his entire age.... he had wound up, as J. Edgar Hoover was not far wrong in fuming, the most subversive man in America."

However, fighting economic justice proved to be much different than fighting racism. The nonviolence at the heart of King's defiance of racial inequality succeeded — as King well knew — because of the violent antics of men like Birmingham's public safety commissioner Eugene "Bull" Connor. When Bull Connor finally unleashed his full bombastic, bigoted rage and turned high-power hoses on student marchers in 1963 — in the full sight of news photographers and cameramen — the world could see racism in the powerful good and evil terms that would eventually help change the laws against it.

Yet in fighting the entire economic structure of America there are no Bull Connors in plain view to incite to violence. King learnt — just as every young activist fighting against "the system" has learnt — that in "this ambitious language about addressing 'the system' lurked precisely the problem.... The pattern of racism that permeated... the country, in jobs and housing and education, persisted apart from any overtly racist laws as in the South, no less profound for being more a disembodied system of customs and attitudes, but that making it far more elusive to engage — it was instead like some vague, malign smog."

Yet it is a smog with continuing consequences, born by everyone from the working poor who must labor in its gargantuan stores to Enron employees who had to give everything to their company with no guarantees or protection. And when things go wrong — or, most recently, are revealed to have been wrong for a very long time — there is no one to hold accountable and therefore no way to change the system that



everyone is part of but no one seems strong enough to keep in check.

One wonders what King would have made of the Enron ruling, where the jury agreed to find the company criminally liable even though they could not find a single person to blame. Perhaps he would see it as a sign of hope. Yet even should this ruling defy the odds and survive a formidable court challenge from Enron's impressive bank of lawyers, it would still not, as of yet, have born any substantial change in how businesses — and the lives of the people effected by those businesses — are run. As King himself observed, "Legislation and court orders can only declare rights. They can never thoroughly deliver them. Only when the people themselves begin to act are rights on paper given life blood." ■



# Power Before Policy

**Buck Bagot has a simple strategy for getting public money for homeless peoples' needs: show politicians that their re-election depends on it**

Interview by John Shaw

**B**uck Bagot is a nationally admired housing advocate and organizer based in San Francisco. He was in Seattle recently, at the invitation of the City of Seattle Office of Housing, to talk to local housing advocates about strategies for expanding the McKinney program, the federally funded program that funnels money into local nonprofit agencies to provide housing, shelter, and services to homeless people.

Buck is an energetic, lanky white 50-year-old with a warm, enthused disposition and a full head of short dark hair. He was surprised when I told him that a web search had turned up his name in the keynote speech delivered at a homeless conference in Philadelphia last December by Sister Mary Scullion, who had referred to "phenomenal grassroots organizers like Buck Bagot."

"Really?" said Buck. "Sister Mary said that? Oh, she's great! She's a great organizer."

**Real Change:** How do you look back on your lobbying in the 1980s and '90s, in terms of where we are now?

**Buck Bagot:** We had relatively more power in the '80s because even though Reagan was the President, we did have the Democrats in the House and the Senate. So the McKinney program got created in '86 or '87; we created the HOME program; the tax credits [for low-income housing] got created.

One program we set up because HUD had given for-profit owners HUD subsidies to build [Section 8] affordable housing, and 20 years into their 40-year mortgages, they were permitted to pre-pay their mortgage and escape the affordability requirements. And in gentrified markets, that's just what they started doing. So we freaked out, and a bunch of people worked hard and got the Low Income Housing Preservation and Resident Home Ownership Act, or LIHPRA, passed as part of the National Affordable Housing Act in 1990.

LIHPRA was an attempt to keep private, for-profit owned, HUD-subsidized housing permanently affordable. In Seattle I worked with Sharon Lee [director of the Low Income Housing Institute, a nonprofit agency which owns, manages and develops affordable housing] on that, and in San Francisco I worked with Bill Rumpf, who is now your Assistant Director of Housing here and is one of the best guys in the country on these issues.

Nonprofits were given the chance to step to the plate and buy the developments, unfortunately at market rate, which we thought was a rip-off. So anyway, we're rolling along, and a lot of money got appropriated to do this, and then in '94 — *shit!* — we look up and the Republicans control the House and the

Senate.

Well, we freaked out, and we went to our Democratic allies, like my Congresswoman Nancy Pelosi, and she said, "If you can't bring the Republicans to the table, all the things we've worked to put together are at risk." Not only did the Republicans want to abolish LIHPRA, but they and Clinton wanted to take back \$600 million that we'd already gotten appropriated to save developments. We didn't know what the hell to do.

**RC:** LIHPRA still exists. How did that work out?

**Bagot:** I was working on a [housing] project in Northern California, represented by Wally Herger, a longtime conservative Republican. Residents wanted to have a nonprofit buy it and keep it affordable. I told them what was happening, and we started trying to convince Herger. None of us really thought it was possible, but after a couple of months, we did!

And it really wasn't that complicated. He didn't know that there were projects at risk in his district. He didn't know *white* people were living in them, including white seniors that were Republicans. They and their families all wrote letters — maybe 100, 120 letters. The City Council passed legislation calling for it to be preserved. The mayor called for it to be preserved. The *Siskiyou Daily News* ran a story on me as an "outside agitator" and a "red" — it was great! I hadn't been redbaited since the late '60s and the early '70s.

Anyway, Wally Herger turned around and became an active advocate for preserving LIHPRA. Now don't get me wrong — it turned out that he knew the owner of the building. But it was

primarily this grassroots effort [that saved the building].

Well, we said, "Now wait a minute! Where do we have projects at risk? And where do we have people that might work with the people in these projects, to put pressure on key elected officials?"

For the next three years, we ended up with about 29 or 30 House Republicans supporting us, and at least eight Senate Republicans supporting us, and we saved LIHPRA. And we got \$1.2 billion dollars appropriated, and it was a big deal.

**RC:** And you did the same thing in a fight to secure stable funding for nonprofits that provide services to homeless people. Tell us about that.

**Bagot:** The Corporation for Supportive Housing — which supports affordable housing with services for severely disabled, chronically homeless people — had been trying to save a part of the McKinney program called Shelter Plus Care, which gave away a billion dollars nationally. But the problem was, when they won the right for previous grants to be renewed, HUD renewed them at five-year amounts. It turned out that there were going to be as much as \$600 million in Shelter Plus Care renewals by 2006 — and there's only \$1 billion in the McKinney program.

So anyway, we got freaked out, and we did the same thing. We asked ourselves, where are there Shelter Plus Care projects at risk of not being renewed, and where do we have a base, and where does it overlap with key elected officials?

We started working with the Women's Empowerment Project in Denver, a program for African American women who had been on the street — crack and some prostitution — and were now living independently, with some support. Some of them were back with their kids. This was in 1999, the same year that some Shelter Plus Care

projects did not get funded — including the Women's Empowerment Project.

**RC:** Because the localities that distributed HUD's funds didn't have enough money.

**"If you would have said to some people, 'Almost the only progressive, affordable housing program on the federal level, the actual one that serves the hardest-to-serve homeless people, in a community-based, grassroots effort — it won a 10 percent increase in the budget!' they would have said, 'What the hell are you talking about? Not in this day and age.'"**

**— Housing advocate Buck Bagot**

**Bagot:** They didn't have enough money. So what we did was the same thing we'd done with LIHPRA. We made the story these women and their lives. They stood up and spoke on their own behalf. Staff wrote letters. Clients wrote letters. Organizations wrote letters. We worked with people all around the country, including here, in Seattle.

Slade Gorton was the Senator — my God, what a right-wing guy! Not a chance in the world of getting this guy's support. People here in Seattle and in King County, people in Snohomish County, people in the City of Seattle stepped up. Paul Carlson, who is now working at the city, had been working at Harborview, who had been helping people get off the streets, stepped up. And Slade Gorton was one of the Republican Senators that said, "Wait a minute, wait a minute, we shouldn't be robbing Peter to pay Paul." He was up for election, which didn't hurt.

So we got \$50 million set aside for those 2000 and 2001 renewals we were going toward. We're in the '99 fiscal year at this point; we got \$50 million set aside for 2000 and 2001. And now remember, the whole McKinney budget was only a billion dollars. This rag-tag bunch of people working around the country, with a lot of leadership coming from Seattle — we won.

If you would have said to some people, "Almost the only progressive af-

*Continued on the Next Page*



# Princess Julie

By Jeremy Street

Standing in line for an hour and a half behind gate number one until the eastbound Greyhound left the Seattle station must have seemed like a good idea to most of the eastbound passengers, because most of them were doing just that. But I couldn't see it. After checking my bag, I headed for the café section of the station, where they have nice padded seats.

Just a few steps in, I saw a woman taping a pile of newspaper and magazine clippings onto the pages of a yellow legal pad. Every inch of her clothing was covered with neatly printed declarations about God and glory. I watched for just a moment and then asked if she would mind telling me what she was up to. In a pleasant tone she agreed and invited me to sit with her if I had the time. So we sat together and talked until I had to go.

She introduced herself as "Princess Julie," and told me she is known in shelters all over the country. The book project has been going on for some time. There was a completed one in a binder on the table that she allowed me to look through. She said that she has more than 3,000 pounds of book projects in storage. The book that I looked at consisted of pages of neat hand-written text interspersed with clippings. Of course I had to ask what these books were for. And, as you might guess, they are spiritually motivated.

Julie believes that all humanity is in the beginning stages of an inevitable, positive, and most remarkable shift. Newspapers and magazines, she says, are reflecting this shift in what they publish, although they are usually unaware of this. By selective extraction of what is printed, Julie feels she is able to mark the shift's progression. This is the purpose of the books.

What we are on the brink of, Julie says, is "a time when good will cover the earth." She explained that evil cannot resist good just as darkness cannot resist light. Good is beginning to reach us so evil is beginning to disappear. Another way she explains the impending time of good is that from the beginning, God was schizophrenic, split, unable to integrate "his" male and female aspects. But now that integration has begun, it cannot be stopped because God's will to be whole cannot be thwarted.

We talked about angels and later about her identity, which was revealed to her in 1988. Julie said that angels have feelings but not emotion. "For example," she explained, "angels can feel a person suffering but they are not moved to relieve that suffering because feeling is merely awareness. People, on the other hand, have emotions and that is what causes them to act — to lend a hand." She later told me that President Bush is in fact not a person but an angel.

Julie's left eye has a fogged look to it and I was probably staring at it because she suddenly began to explain her eye and how it is linked to her identity. "In 1988, a woman knocked on my door — well she looked like a woman," she said, "and when I opened it she pointed her finger at my eye and lightning came out of her finger and blinded me in that eye. She was sent to help me realize who I actually am; it took that shock to do it."

"Well who are you then?" I asked.

"I am the female aspect or expression of God."

This struck me as quite a burdensome obligation, but Julie approaches it with alacrity. As we talked about her identity, I got the sense from some of the things she said that she feels that the quality of kindness is essentially a feminine trait. For instance, she pointed out that it was largely women who reformed and humanized the mental health system in this country.

My time finally ran out, and I asked if I could take her picture and perhaps



PHOTO OF PRINCESS JULIE, BY JEREMY STREET.

write something about her. That was fine with her, but when I asked her to smile for the picture she declined to do so, saying that she wanted people to simply see her as she is. ■

*Jeremy Street wrote this article soon after visiting the Real Change office in February. It was originally done for the Rising Times newspaper in Spokane.*

## BAGOT Cont. from Previous Page

fordable housing program on the federal level, the actual one that serves the hardest-to-serve homeless people, in a community-based, grassroots effort — it won a 10 percent increase in the budget!" They would have said, "What the hell are you talking about? Not in this day and age." Shelter Plus Care got a \$100 million increase.

**RC:** What did that mean for local services?

**Bagot:** What that meant was that every Shelter Plus Care project that came up for renewal didn't have to compete [with each other, or new programs, for funding]. They were pulled out of the planning process.

What is the logic there? The logic is, if you're living in permanent housing, permanent means permanent! You shouldn't have to worry about being

evicted! For God's sake, why shouldn't that apply to homeless people, chronically homeless and severely disabled? It should apply to anybody!

Well logic shmogic, do we have the power — if the only problem was policy, we'd win every time — but do we have the power to do it? And we did! People here in town played a significant role in it, and if we're going to win, they're going to have to play a significant role again.

**RC:** And what are you working on now?

**Bagot:** Here's the deal. In '99 we had the amounts funded retroactively. We got it funded forward for 2000, 2001,

and 2002. Every year, we're gonna have to go through this fight. Unless — where is the Section 8 program renewed? It's renewed out of the HUD Housing Certificate Fund. People view that as politically sacrosanct now, and

we know why it's politically sacrosanct: because of the people that fought to make it that way!

If we can get the Shelter Plus Care into the Section 8 Housing Certificate Fund, we can win. Then we can move on to fighting Health and Human Services for more service dollars. We have kind of a two-pronged strategy.

The long-term strategy is to solve homelessness for everybody. But [the short-term goal is to] create 150,000 units of supportive housing for chronically homeless, severely disabled people, people that are in dire need, put them in permanent housing with services. To do that, we [need to] free up the Continuum of Care by taking existing Shelter Plus Care projects out. If they get renewed from a separate pot, the Housing Certificate Fund, we're going to preserve all the special-needs housing we have, and create a whole lot more.

**RC:** What are you worried about now?

**Bagot:** The Senate Democrats. Gee, that's a hell of a thing. But if you ever want to notice that there's not as much difference between the Democrats and the Republicans, look at how the Democrats could not defend us [in the '90s]. It's better than the Republicans, don't get me wrong, but the key Appropria-

tions subcommittee is Veterans, HUD, and Independent Agencies. And the chair of that committee is [Democrat] Barbara Mikulski of Maryland, and I swear to God, how that works in her mind is NASA, and the Post Office [come first]. She doesn't think it's the HUD [subcommittee]. We really have to pressure her a lot.

**RC:** Share a lesson with us that you learned from all of this.

**Bagot:** One of the first rules of organizing is, people take action if they think they have a chance to win. Nobody feels like they have a chance to win on the federal level. And part of the reason you don't win on the federal level is you need a national operation to win on the federal level. And too often — the National Low Income Housing Coalition has changed, thank God — most of the national advocacy groups are a mile wide and an inch deep. They've got a position on everything, but they can't deliver an elected official on anything. The one thing we learned with LIHPRA was that if you want to win in D.C., you don't fight in D.C., you fight in the home districts. Tip O'Neil was right: All politics are local. ■

**"If you want to win in D.C., you don't fight in D.C., you fight in the home districts. Tip O'Neil was right: All politics are local."**

**— Buck Bagot**



# A Family to Mourn

Remembering a woman society almost forgot:

**Turesa Hellena Logan**

**September 23, 1957 – July 29, 2002**

By Pat Simpson

It has been a long time since the "good old days" of death. So many of us die in nursing homes, or in hospitals attended only by medical personnel. Bodies are whisked away, washed, and dressed by professionals. Pallbearers have been supplanted by wheeled carts, or made entirely symbolic by direct cremation. Obituaries often end with "there will be no services," or just "arrangements." You can hire a company to scatter someone's ashes. Can we still honor our loved ones in some personal way?

Turesa Logan's friends know how. Turesa died suddenly the night of July 29th, while getting ready for bed at Hammond House, a women's homeless shelter. An aid crew was called, but they couldn't revive her. Her body was laid on the dining room floor, wrapped in a sheet, waiting for the medical examiner.

She wasn't alone those two hours. While staff swallowed their tears and made post-midnight phone calls, three women stayed up to keep vigil. When shelter director Kim Sather came in, she found a good quilt to cover her. The preacher talked and prayed with the women, and sat with the body. Nobody went to bed until the medical examiner's work was done. At the end, flowers marked the corner of the Hammond House dining room.

It was like a small-town death at home. Word passed quickly in the morning, and most of Turesa's friends gathered at Mary's Place, their usual daytime hangout. The tears, fears, shock, and anger had a place there, and the talk went on all day. Women at Hammond talked about their loss that

evening. Turesa Logan had a community to mourn her death.

With family far away in Utah, the community here planned memorial services for August 7. Women worked together to write a flyer, describing her as "giving, compassionate, and merciful." They noted her pride in being clean and sober, and highlighted her love for her son. The flyer bore a quilt drawing, to honor a community quilt Turesa had recently started at the Sisters Project.

Drawing on old tradition, friends planned a huge meal of Turesa's favorites: orange chicken, basmati rice, tiny hand-made egg rolls. The cooking spanned two days in a crowded kitchen, with lots of talk and tears.

The simple service at Mary's Place included prayers, candles, and time for stories and tributes. Merlin "Magic" Howard, her partner, told a funny story about how they met, and a serious one about their

**As the story of  
Turesa Logan's  
death reminds us,  
however, shelter  
can bring more than  
safety. When the  
danger of the street  
is left behind; when  
a secure bed and a  
sure meal lessen  
the fierce  
competition born of  
scarcity; when  
caring staff and  
residents work  
together to foster  
peace and respect  
— then community  
can be born.**

shared journey into recovery. Her family in Utah was remembered: Darla Putnam, her mother; brother, Damon Putnam; and sister, Myrna Brooks, who is raising Ira, Turesa's 11-year-old son. Women who knew her casually said that she had touched their lives with daily acts of kindness. Close friends spoke of her talent for fun and laughter, and of her hopes for a future with her son. Many vowed to honor her memory with friendship, kindness, and laughter.

These tributes told the story of a woman who had emerged out of loneliness and addiction and had truly blossomed in Seattle. Her gifts for friendship and caring were revealed here, and put to use among the homeless women who became her community. She was young — just 44 — and poised for a new start in permanent

housing. Hope suddenly cut short lent extra sadness to her death, but the memorial was dominated by thanksgiving

for her life.

Mourners took time between memorial and lunch to mark a death in stark contrast to Turesa Logan's: the murder of Kelley Rhae Craft, beaten and stomped to death in Kent the same week. At a Women in Black vigil downtown she was remembered by women who did not know her, but who have promised that no homeless person dying outside of shelter will go unnoticed or un-mourned. Hers was the 23rd such death marked by a vigil in Seattle.

The Women in Black flyer was headlined "How Long Do We Have to Wait to Be Safe?" It pressed for renewal of the King County Winter Shelter, and asked passersby to search for possible shelter and Tent City locations.

People without homes need a safe place to sleep, at the very least. As the story of Turesa Logan's death reminds us, however, shelter can bring more than safety. When the danger of the street is left behind; when a secure bed and a sure meal lessen the fierce competition born of scarcity; when caring staff and residents work together to foster peace and respect — then community can be born. With the support of a community, the long climb out of homelessness can be endured with dignity and eased with laughter. And if tragedy strikes, no one bears it alone.

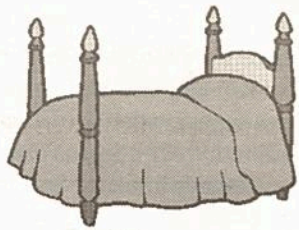
How do we honor our loved ones? We make a world where even the poorest among us can enjoy the blessing of human community. A community that cares for the living will know how to honor its dead. Turesa Logan's friends will scatter her ashes. No "arrangements" here. ■

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Thursday, July 25, alley south of 100 blk. Pike. Officers in an unmarked vehicle were driving through the alley at the above location, and observed two men walking towards them. One of the officers recognized one of the men from a previous encounter, and knew he was wanted by the Dept. of Corrections. Officers observed the men — a 46-year-old black male and a 53-year-old white male, both transient — go into a doorway. The officers went to make contact with the men, and observed one man with a glass pipe in his hand. He dropped the pipe; both men were patted down, and several pieces of rock cocaine were recovered. Both men were booked into King County Jail.

Sunday, July 28, 11:10 a.m., W. Mercer/S. Elliot. Kinear Park. An officer on patrol observed the subject — a 48-year-old transient white male — sleeping in the park. He contacted him and requested his name, which he provided. A computer check showed an outstanding warrant, which was verified by dispatch. He was taken into custody and transported to King County Jail.

Sunday, July 28, 9:38 p.m., 1st Ave. S. The complainant called to report the suspect — a 34-year-old transient white male — was inside a vacant building on 1st Ave. S. The complainant also stated that the man had been trespassing from the same building previously. Officers contacted the suspect inside the building, which is considered dangerous due to its decrepit state. The subject was ID'd, and two previous trespass admonishments were found. He was arrested and booked into King County Jail.

Saturday, August 2, 9:17 p.m., 200 Broadway East. An officer in a marked car was traveling north on Broadway and observed a 38-year-old transient black male crossing against the Do Not Walk sign. The officer stopped the man and noticed that the suspect was "glaring at him." Fearing for his safety, the officer requested that the suspect put his hands on the car and not move. The suspect began arguing with the officer about getting stopped and was then asked to provide his name and date of birth. The officer then ran the suspect's name through the patrol's mobile data computer and as the officer was turning on his "take down" lights he noticed that the suspect was rocking the car and mouthing the phrase "I will get you" through the windshield. The suspect was then taken into custody and transported to the precinct where he was found to have a previous arrest record. Suspect was interrogated and released pending review by the City's Attorney Office. ■

*Streetwatch is compiled from Seattle Police Department incident reports by Emma Quinn. Do you have your own story to tell? Call Real Change, (206)441-8143, and we'll get the scoop.*

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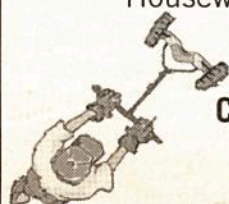


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## DOWN AND OUT Cont. from Page 1

come Level Program. Then the nationwide Supplemental Security Income program was created in 1972, replacing state funds for these needs with federal. The federal government mandated that states providing higher levels of support at the time the program took effect must continue to offset the difference.

So the state continued to contribute to SSI through the State Supplemental Payment program, with the goal of bringing the income of all recipients up to a general standard of \$550. State officials sent the federal government the money; the feds tacked it onto each SSI recipient's monthly check.

Those who receive the state's payments are over 65 years of age, or are permanently disabled and have either no or too little Social Security disability benefits. Eligibility is removed if the recipient has more than \$2,100 in the bank, or in any other type of asset — for example, a car.

"Anybody getting SSI is already living very much at the edge. These are people who are really low on the totem pole," says Joe Martin, a downtown Seattle social worker. Some receive it because they have worked their whole lives at a low-paying job and their resulting Social Security check is too low to live on. Others may have been unable to work due to a disability, and therefore only receive SSI.

Because of the eligibility requirements, it has always been too easy to lose benefits and create a common cycle of poverty. Martin says that sometimes an SSI client will be thrown into a "tizzy" if they receive, say, a \$3,000 inheritance. When the windfall is reported to the government, they are completely cut off from their SSI benefits — including Medicaid, the state-run program that provides medical care to poor people. When the inheritance dries up, having gone to the food and rent that SSI had previously paid for, the person must reapply for all of their benefits. Such a system makes it very difficult to get ahead.

Federal law requires Washington State to spend \$28.9 million each year within the SSP program, although the state can decide which category to support and at what benefit level for clients. Due to budgetary constraints, \$21.3 million has been redirected to bolster payments to individuals served by DSHS' Division of Developmental Disabilities. The balance of \$7.4 million remains in the SSI program, but covers far fewer people than previously. The changes took effect in July.

Prior to the change, the average SSI State Supplement Payment in Washington was \$25 per month. About 46 percent of the recipients received less than \$6; a small percentage received up to \$166 monthly.

Now, only about 5,000 people are still eligible for the payment; each of them will simply get \$70 a month. Those still eligible fall within one of two categories: a small group of about 112 people who are eligible under the Man-

datory Income Level program and have been receiving SSI continuously since the program's inception; and a larger group, who qualify for SSI, but whose spouses do not.

In addition to these changes, the state will begin to pay recipients directly, instead of forwarding its share of the money to the federal government to be included in the federal SSI checks. The old system cost the state government \$8.50 per check issued, even for a \$4 payment. The new system is expected to save over \$8.1 million in administrative costs.

## Making the new ends meet

About one in five of the 11,000 people who go to the Downtown Emergency Service Center every year are SSI recipients, says the center's executive director, Bill Hobson. "A reduction of 10 percent in income has more than a 10 percent effect on their lives," he says.

He calls the state cuts an "exercise in cost shifting." About 90 percent of the people on the state SSI program live in subsidized housing, which is largely funded with federal money. By shifting money out of the SSI program, the state is effectively shifting the cost burden onto the federal government. But for those not on rent subsidy, this shift will be a great hardship.

Former state recipients who still receive federal SSI payments will not lose their Medicaid benefits. But about 2,000 recipients may lose SSI benefits completely, and will have their medical eligibility re-evaluated. Alicia Koné at DSHS affirms that "every effort is being made to ensure that former SSI recipients will continue to get Medicaid coverage. We are working on a case-by-case basis."

Some recipients who have lost their benefits will have several ways to deflect the money crunch. About 36 percent of them receive food stamps. For every \$3 of lost income, they can expect their food assistance to increase by \$1. For example, if their State Supplemental Payment was reduced by \$24, their food assistance would increase by \$8. But food stamps don't buy electricity, gasoline, or medicine.

Others can apply for subsidized housing, which bases rent on income level. Or those already in subsidized housing, like John, can apply to reduce their payments according to the reduction in their benefits.

And lastly, they can tighten their belts even more, although there is only so far a belt can be tightened. For someone living on \$550 a month, tightening the belt any further could injure vital organs.

Social worker Joe Martin asks, "Is this a harbinger of things to come, with regard to the state deficit? We need to look at how cuts in social services and very modest kinds of programs like SSI affect the overall social well-being of a community. If you cut the modest programs that support poor people's lives, you are contributing to more hardship and destitution." ■

## CLASSICS CORNER



by Perfess'r Harris

**L**oathe though we must the occurrence of the words "G. Dubya Bush" and "Hero" in the same sentence, we at Classics Corner cannot help but be struck by the many similarities between the House of Atreus and America's First Family.

As you recall, Agamemnon, the irresolute and doomed leader of the Trojan War, faced a number of choices in his life and handled them all rather badly. His brother's slutty wife runs off with some pretty boy and he responds by organizing the testosterone-fest of all time. Then Artemis gets all worked up over a dead pregnant hare and demands he kill his own daughter. After a bit of hand-wringing, the ambitious Agamemnon complies. Then there was that whole Achilles thing, where his ego gets half the Greek army killed

**Agamemnon, we think, is a bit like Dubya himself: impulsive, warlike, not terribly bright, and doomed by the family curse.**

After he wins the war, he again pisses off the gods by leveling Troy and desecrating her temples, and then, to top it all off, he arrives home to his already ticked-off wife with a whore on his arm. The guy was a walking disaster.

Agamemnon, we think, is a bit like Dubya himself: impulsive, warlike, not terribly bright, and doomed by the family curse. Much of Agamemnon's behavior was, as we like to say,

overdetermined. While he was free to do as he liked, his family history limited his choices to the more or less unattractive.

His father Atreus, you see, did something very terrible. He did not sell drugs through the CIA to finance the Contras in Nicaragua. Nor did he wage an unnecessary and genocidal war against the people of Iraq. No, he butchered his brother's children and served them for dinner. This, we think, really isn't so bad when compared to the actions of George Senior, but it was enough to ensure that his son would bear the curse and everyone around him would pay the price.

But the family curse goes back even further. Pelops, the father of Atreus, cheated in a chariot race by loosening the wheel of Oenomaus, thus killing his opponent and incurring a terrible curse upon future generations. And his father, Tantalus, tested the gods by serving Pelops as a meal. Only Demeter, distracted by her grief for Persephone, took a bite. She later replaced the shoulder of the resurrected Pelops with ivory. The child-murdering proclivities of this family, however, would continue to haunt them.

The earlier days of the Bush family are only slightly less colorful and obscured by myth. George Sr.'s maternal grandfather, George Herbert "Bert" Walker, was a powerful Wall Street financier and a major financial backer of Hitler's infant Nazi Party. He, apparently, was related to William Walker, the American Adventurer who set himself up as President of Nicaragua in 1855, imposed slavery, and declared English the official language. While Walker planned to rule all of Central America, he was instead executed in 1860. The Bushes, however, reasserted themselves with a Marine invasion in 1912.

At least the House of Atreus kept the family curse pretty much to themselves. The Bushes have shared theirs with the whole world. ■

## Learn about homelessness through the Real Change Speaker's Bureau and Bedless Bards

Are you involved with a church, school, or community group that would benefit from learning about homelessness from those who understand it best — homeless and formerly homeless individuals?

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To schedule a speaker or a performance, call 441-3247 ext. 201 and speak to Rachael, or e-mail [organizer@realchangenews.org](mailto:organizer@realchangenews.org).



# Late Summer Notables

## Thursday 8/22

**Bullying in King County Schools**, an event for educators, parents and community activists, sponsored by Public Health - Seattle & King County. Hear about incidents that have been reported to the Hate Free Zone Campaign. 9 - 11 a.m., at Puget Sound Educational Services District, 400 SW 152nd St., Burien (Map <http://www.psesd.wednet.edu/agency/maps/buriendirections.html>), RSVP [elizabeth.reis@metrokc.gov](mailto:elizabeth.reis@metrokc.gov).

**Hamoui Family Support Rally**, to support this immigrant family who have lived peacefully in the U.S. for 10 years, now imprisoned including one family member who needs frequent medical attention; call on the INS to do the right thing; This and subsequent Thursdays as long as necessary, 4 - 5:30 p.m., [note new location] in front of the Key Bank Building, 1100 2nd Avenue @ Spring; Endorsed by American Arab Anti-Discrimination Committee (ADC) - Seattle Chapter, American Civil Liberties Union (ACLU), and Asian Pacific Islander Coalition (APIC) - King County, among many others; also please phone Bob Okin, INS Acting Director, 206-553-4145 and ask for the release of this family; info Rita Zawaideh, Arab American Community Coalition, 206-545-7300 or <http://www.hatefreezone.org> or [theaacc@yahoo.com](mailto:theaacc@yahoo.com) or Arab American Hotline 206-634-9001

## Friday 8/23

Film premiere **Hard Earth: Land Rights in Zimbabwe**, this documentary unveils the contradictions and racial politics of the Zimbabwean land dilemma. A discussion of the current U.S. "smart" sanctions targeting the Zimbabwean government will follow. 7 p.m., at Seattle Independent Media Center, 1415 Third Ave., \$5-10 donation, no one turned away; info 206-262-0721 or <http://www.seattle.indymedia.org>.

Benefit for **Northwest Harvest**, a space-time themed costume party, featuring some of the best trance and NRG DJs in the northwest. Select few of the best dressed get in free. 8 p.m. - 4 a.m., at Fremont Unconventional Centre, 160 N. Canal St., in Fremont. Limited \$10 presale tickets online <http://www.change-the-rave.com>, \$15 with food at the door.

[www.change-the-rave.com](http://www.change-the-rave.com), \$15 with food at the door.

**Seattle Young People's Project 6th Annual Young Women's Conference** planned and put on by high school age young women to be a safe space for young women to come together, learn about issues facing young women, exchange skills and knowledge, get access to resources, to empower young women to take positive action for change and just for a diverse group of young women to get to know one another. Through August 25, at Camp Brotherhood in Arlington; organized by Seattle Young People's Project, hiring Youth Interns to coordinate and organize the conference in late April or May, to work 8-10 hours per week for the summer and earn a \$500 stipend; with the support of a Hope For Youth Grant from the City of Seattle, we hope the conference will be free for all participants; info [sypp@drizzle.com](mailto:sypp@drizzle.com) or 206-860-9606 x 2

## Saturday 8/24

**Rolling Thunder Down Home Democracy Tour**, with featured speakers, Jesse Jackson, Jr., Illinois Congressional Representative, and Tom Hayden, Democratic activist, music by Holly Near, workshops, food, fun and more. 11 a.m. - 10 p.m., at 16400 Petrovitsky Road, Renton. \$5 advance, \$10 at the gate. Tickets available at <http://www.rollingthundertour.org/tickets>; info 206-686-2975, maps at <http://powerupmedia.com/seattle/events/petrovitsky.html>.

## Sunday 8/25

Northwest Labor and Employment Of-

fice (LELO) monthly radio program, "Speaking for Ourselves, To Each Other," with host Bev Sims, this and subsequent 4th Sundays, 8:30 a.m., on KEXP radio, 90.3 FM.

**Seattle Peace Concert** featuring GreenFlash, Carolyn Wonderland, Michael Williams, Nichole, Happy Savage and Jim Hinde. Noon - 6 p.m., at Volunteer Park, free. Please bring food bank donations for Northwest Harvest; info 206-729-5232.

## Monday 8/26

"A Room to Read" Benefit Musical Extravaganza to **build schools in Vietnam**, with jazz guitarist Tom Healy, Vietnamese musicians and Opus 80. Also food, drinks, Vietnam stories, raffle and silent auction. \$40 includes 1 drink ticket. 7:30 - 10 p.m., at Benroya Hall, 2nd level; RSVP and purchase tickets Kurt Messersmith 425-830-8226 or [kurtme@microsoft.com](mailto:kurtme@microsoft.com).

## Tuesday 8/27

**Foundation for Global Community** meeting, which contributes to a transformation of cultural values from materialism to a culture of spirit and diversity of life. 7 p.m., this and subsequent 4th Tuesdays, at 422 Magraw, a home on Queen Anne Hill; info Jerry Martin 425-746-7304.

## Saturday 8/31

Visiting Native tribes from Washington and British Columbia will be welcomed to the shores of the Duwamish River for the "Spirit Returns" Paddle, the culminating event of Seattle's sesquicentennial celebration. Festivities include canoe races, canoe parade, Potlatch feast, Native American entertainment and more. Saturday 10 a.m. - 8 p.m. and Sunday 8 a.m. - 5 p.m., at Terminal 107 Park on West Marginal Way, across from the future Duwamish Longhouse and Cultural Center. Info Duwamish Tribal office 206-431-1582.

## Sunday 8/1

"Don't Kill Your Television," Seattle Independent Media Center invites you to a night of political TV on the big screen, a monthly series featuring the best in artist and activist television programming found on "good TV" sources on a full-sized video screen, with snacks, couches and terrific programming. 7 - 9 p.m., this and subsequent 1st Sundays, at IMC, 1415 3rd Ave., between Pike and Union; info Susan 206-709-0558.

## Wednesday 9/4

**Jobs With Justice** Seattle Organizing Committee meeting. 5:30 p.m., this and subsequent 1st Wednesdays, at Labor Temple, 2800 1st Ave.; info 206-441-4969.

## Ongoing

Peace Vigil and leafleting to **stop the war in Israel and Palestine**, by Women in Black. Women wear black, men welcome to stand on the side or leaflet, every Thursday at Westlake Park near 4th and Pine, 5 - 6 p.m.; info 206-208-9715.

Train to become a volunteer advocate for abused and neglected children in court. Help make the legal system work toward a safe, permanent home for these children. Next training dates are September 13, 20, 27, and October 4 in Kent, at the Regional Justice Center. Must be 21, have excellent references, and attend training. Contact us three weeks prior to training dates at 206-296-1120, or at [galgroup@metrokc.gov](mailto:galgroup@metrokc.gov), [www.metrokc.gov/kcsc/depcasa.htm](http://www.metrokc.gov/kcsc/depcasa.htm) ■

## Computer Corner



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citizens participation project



## Protect the Right to Vote

**Issue:** When Congress returns to session, it could reconcile two House and Senate voting bills that run the risk of discriminating against the poor and homeless.

**Background:** Of all the rights that we have as citizens, the most fundamental is our right to vote. In response to the 2000 election, both the House and Senate have passed voting legislation. Unfortunately, both the House bill (H.R. 3295) and the Senate version (S. 565) include harmful and discriminatory identification requirements that would hinder the ability of many Americans to vote and threaten individual privacy.

The Senate-adopted bill does not respond to the need to protect the right to vote for low and no-income Americans. It includes photo ID requirements, which disproportionately impact minority voters. In addition, S. 565 would allow state officials to invade the privacy of voters and require them to disclose their Social Security numbers to vote. Support legislation that sets federal minimum standards for voting systems while respecting people's privacy and eliminating discriminatory voting barriers.

Every American has the right to vote but does not always have ways to obtain proper identification or the financial means to do so. For the 3.5 million people experiencing homelessness each year and countless others who lack the resources needed to obtain State identification, the current amendment could seriously hinder their right to vote.

The National Coalition for the Homeless has put together their own suggestions for a voting rights bill that would protect against the discrepancies of 2000 national elections and also protect the rights of homeless people. These suggestions include:

- A person living in a non-traditional abode other than a residential shelter has the following choices as to her voting residence: her "geographic location" or the street address of a homeless provider with which she has a relationship.
- A person's residency should not be challenged solely on the basis that the person lives in a non-traditional abode. People living in these locations should be treated the same as persons living in traditional residences with regard to determining residency.
- Registration for an election shall close at 8:00 p.m. on the 2nd Wednesday before the election. There is no reason for state legislatures not to reduce the deadline to about 14 days before the election. Registration deadlines are a major reason why people who are experiencing homelessness become disenfranchised. People are often unaware of the deadline to register. In addition, people who are currently experiencing homelessness may be outside of the media loop.

In Washington state, people living in shelter and on the street are allowed to register even if they don't have a mailing address. However the right to register is not guaranteed in writing and Washington state has no law protecting the right to register for homeless people.

**Action:** Call, write, or email your Congressmen and women and urge them to remove any language from the 2002 voter bills that discriminate against the poor and homeless. Contact information can be found at, [www.senate.gov](http://www.senate.gov) and [www.house.gov](http://www.house.gov). ■

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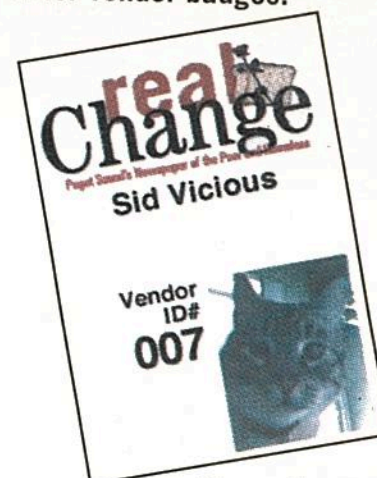
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