

JAN 9, 2003

# Real Change

Puget Sound's Newspaper of the Poor and Homeless • Volume 10, No. 2

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## The Rich want more

Bill Gates Sr. and Chuck Collins on the Estate Tax

Inside: SHA cries uncle • Decent dog biscuit • Paying for Shelter

By Adam Holdorf

**C**huck Collins and Bill Gates, Sr., are infusing new life into a debate that, more than a year ago, President Bush and a Republican-controlled Congress had all but closed: How much should the tax man get when America's millionaires pass away?

None of it, thundered wealthy heirs and their lobbyists who pushed the estate tax onto the public agenda. Now, the "death tax" is undergoing a slow, weird death: its rates are gradually declining until it disappears in 2010 — then, in 2011, because opponents couldn't muster the votes to kill it forever, it comes back full force. Around the time when \$300 income tax rebates were arriving in workers' mailboxes around the nation, some of the nation's richest families were celebrating the fact that, in 2010, the millions they bequeath to the next generation would be tax-free.

That means that the federal government will lose out on about \$30 billion in revenue — nearly the same amount needed to keep Social Security afloat in the next 75 years.

*Wealth and Our Commonwealth: Why Americans Should Tax Accumulated Fortunes*, which Chuck Collins and Bill Gates, Sr., have co-authored, shows how estate tax opponents twisted the American romance with liberty and independence to entrench the fortunes of a select few. It reminds us of something Alexander Hamilton, Thomas Jefferson, and Andrew Carnegie all believed: when great disparities in wealth are allowed to flourish, political power goes out of balance, and democracy flounders.

Conservatives in Congress are committed to killing the estate tax for good. They will get their chance, as the White House has floated another tax cut proposal. The prospect of a costly war, a long recession, and a cash crisis for states and the federal government may dim the prospect of more giveaways for the rich. You can pile on, too; Collins' activist organization United for a Fair Economy ([www.faireconomy.org](http://www.faireconomy.org)) is asking people to call for reforming, not repealing, the tax.

*Real Change* spoke to Collins before he left for a book tour that will include a late-January stop in Seattle.

**Real Change:** Throughout the '90s, the proponents of repeal manipulated public opinion to suggest that noble farmers and industrious shopkeepers were threatened by the estate tax. Despite the opponents' claims and a New York Times reporter's search, no one has found a farmer forced to sell his land in order to pay the "death tax." Who's really behind the movement to repeal the estate tax?

**Chuck Collins:** A combination of some very wealthy Southern California families — the descendants of the owners of Mars Candy and Gallo Wine — who put a lot of money out to create an organization that would lobby for the end of the estate tax. At the same time, it's a result of a whole plethora of Washington, D.C. groups whose goal in life is to shrink government by cutting taxes. And, not insignificantly, there's *Seattle Times* owner Frank Blethen's effort to organize independently owned newspapers. These are very, very wealthy interests. But they knew early on that they couldn't really show the true face of who was behind this effort. Imagine a 25-year-old man standing in front of his Porsche and mansion, say-

ing "Please repeal the estate tax so I can inherit \$80 million without having to pay taxes." It wouldn't be very effective. So they have deliberately talked about "family businesses" and they want you to think of the mom-and-pop shop.

Right now, the tax is only paid by less than 2 percent of the wealthiest households. Under the reform proposals [United for a Fair Economy has promoted], that would go down further, to roughly 6,000 households a year. And the bulk of the tax is paid by the wealthiest 3,000 estates who pass on every year — estates over \$5 million.

**RC:** What does the estate tax say about money in people's lives — how one gets it, and how much is too much? What decisions have we made by having an estate tax for most of the last century?

**Collins:** We've decided to strike a balance between individual liberty — the ability to make money without government interference — with a concern about the dangers of concentrations of wealth and power, and how those dis-

Continued on Page 14



Look for the Mockingbird Times Inside!







What's wrong with you, Alfonso? Most people have a heart. I hope that the next time *The Wizard of Oz* is done that you have the pleasure to get the part of the Tin Man, because you most definitely need a heart.

Sincerely,  
Bob Healy  
Portland, OR

## A gentle man

Dear *Real Change*,

Thank you for a thoughtful tribute to one of the finest peace activists in America — Philip Berrigan (*RC*, December 26).

My mother met Philip in the Danbury Federal Prison in Connecticut in the early 1970s. She was doing a story on imprisoned drug offenders for the Connecticut Mental Health Center newsjournal. En route to the cellblock, the warden asked my mother if she would like to meet Philip and Daniel Berrigan. "Yes," she replied. They were in the workroom in their prison garb. "Philip appeared to be the gentlest man I ever set eyes on," she told me in a phone conversation the day after Christmas this year.

Sincerely,  
Jill Eannicott  
UFCW #1105 Member

## Just doing his job

Dear Editor,

Who does Micah Smith think he is, passing judgment on someone who is just doing his job (*RC*, letters, December 26)? Has Mr. Smith ever stopped and talked with the *Real Change* vendor? Or simply hurried by? I also live in Rainier Valley and know about this particular person, because I buy my copy of *Real Change* from him almost weekly at his other "office" at Third Avenue and Cherry Street downtown. Sure, he's a bit scruffy looking, but I've had many a pleasant short conversation with him. He always has a smile, sometimes a joke.

I guess if we all get to pass judgment on people, I will assume from Mr. Smith's letter and his PCC-ing it in Seward Park that he's loaded and therefore so isolated and insecure that he must invent his own internal ranking system for those around him in order to feel of value.

Colleen Browne

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## Better late than never

Dear *Real Change*,

I am writing in response to a thoroughly disgusting letter to the editor that appeared in your 12/1/02 issue [*actually, it was more like Spring 2001, but never mind.* —ed.] from Alfonso Ribeiro, the Libertarian and so-called cultural pop icon from the '80s most of us remember from the show "The Fresh Prince of Bel Air."

He mentioned names in his letter like Rick Schroeder, Michael Jackson, Robert DeNiro, and Will Smith, all who have supported homeless causes in Los Angeles and New York.

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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* is a 501(c)3 non-profit organization. Programs include the *Real Change* newspaper, the MacWorkshop computer lab, *StreetLife Art Gallery*, the *StreetWrites* peer support group for homeless writers, the *Homeless Speakers Bureau*, and the *First things First* organizing project. All donations support these programs and are tax-deductible to the full extent of the law.

#### Editorial Policy

Articles appearing in *Real Change* reflect the opinions and perspectives of the authors. We encourage the submission of journalism, opinion, fiction, poetry, and artwork, and hope to create a forum where the many perspectives on poverty and homelessness can find expression. *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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# Double Bind

Washington's low-income taxpayers, already charged more than their fair share, now see needed services disappearing

By Michael Ramos

Like many other people, I usually prefer to turn the page when talk turns to taxes. Yet perhaps we need to be paying a lot more attention, not in order to achieve more and more tax cuts, but so that everybody — especially those at the top — pays their fair share. Then, we might have enough to preserve vital human services, minimum and living wages, and public amenities like parks, swimming pools, and libraries.

Bill Gates, Sr., chaired the Washington State Tax Structure Study Committee, which after a year's work released its report on our state's tax system in December. The committee highlighted the fact that people who earn less than \$20,000 per year pay nearly 16 percent of their income in state and local taxes, while people earning more than \$130,000 per year pay a bit over 4 percent in state and local taxes. The Committee's conclusions about our state's tax unfairness were

borne out in a brand-new national study placing Washington state dead last in the ranks of tax progressivism. Ours is the most regressive tax system of any state in the country. People who are struggling to make ends meet feel the weight of the burden they bear on a daily basis. In a time of economic down-

**Does our leadership have the will to begin to narrow the wealth gap that our tax system makes worse each year?**

turn, this is bad news for all who care about economic justice.

Our state has no personal income tax; rather, we rely on sales and excise taxes, property taxes, and Business & Occupation taxes. Since poor people spend a greater portion of their income on household items than do more well-off people, *they pay more in taxes. We face the double-bind of an unfair system of taxation coupled with a projected \$2.5 billion state budget deficit over the next two years. Are services for those who are most in need and already paying more in taxes than they can afford an important enough priority for our legislative leadership and the governor?*

We cannot look to the federal level to supplant our state's woeful financial problems. With the tax cuts passed in 2001 and proposals for further cuts coming forth, there will be less federal aid to states. In addition, with the gradual repeal of the federal estate tax — one of the few progressive taxes — there is pressure to eliminate that tax at the state level as well.

The Washington Tax Fairness Coalition has been formed to respond to this crisis. Consisting of more than 50 organizations from across the state — from human service, education, labor, faith community, small business and consumer groups — it's built a mutual consensus that:

- The tax system should be fair, meaning taxpayers with higher incomes should pay at least as high a rate as taxpayers with lower incomes.
- The tax system should provide a more stable stream of revenue during times of economic growth and during times of economic recession.
- The tax system should provide enough money to promote a healthy economy and to meet citizens' needs — including education and human services.
- The tax system and the uses of tax revenue should be clearly understandable to the people of this state, easy to comply with, and easy to administer.

The Coalition is looking at short-term and long-term options to ensure a fairer tax system that provides for adequate revenues for the basic needs of the state. We will examine proposals generated in the legislature with these criteria in mind.

The state Legislature needs to take bold steps not to fall into the trap of tax cuts that assist some, but gut the services that provide continuity and hope for others. Raising tax revenues for specific public priorities like home care worker wages, accessible health care for the poor, and assistance to immigrants is a legitimate goal in a society that places people first. Does our leadership have the will to begin to narrow the wealth gap that our tax system makes worse each year?

In the interest of democracy and the common good, those who can pay more should pay more. Our actions for tax fairness this legislative session and in the coming years will make the difference not only for ourselves but most importantly for those who seek a voice in our state's decisions. ■

To find out more about the Washington Tax Fairness Coalition, please call Kelly Ross at (206) 625-9790.

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## National news digest

January 3, 2003

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

Requests for both emergency food assistance and emergency shelter increased by 19 percent over the past year — the steepest rise in a decade — according to an annual survey released in December by the U.S. Conference of Mayors ([www.usmayors.org](http://www.usmayors.org)). Of the 25 participating cities, 18 saw a rise in homelessness and hunger, which were attributed to housing prices, low-paying jobs, unemployment, and the weak economy; half of the cities saw a decrease in resources to meet emergency food demands; and two-thirds had to decrease the amount of food given to each family in need in order to cover everyone's demand. Among the homeless populations surveyed by the cities, 39 percent were single men, 39 percent were families with children, 32 percent had substance abuse problems, 23 percent had mental illnesses, and 22 percent had jobs. "These are not simply statistics," said Nashville Mayor Bill Purcell, who chairs the Conference's Task Force on Hunger and Homelessness. "These are real people who are hungry and homeless in our cities." Both Portland, OR, and Seattle were included in the survey.

Being homeless in Los Angeles's downtown core would essentially become a criminal act if a coalition of 300 downtown businesses gets their way. The Central City Association wants to make camping illegal, establish a "fast track" downtown police court, and prevent church groups from providing people with food, according to the *World Socialist Web Site* ([www.wsws.org](http://www.wsws.org)). Spearheading the operation is L.A. police chief William J. Bratton, who gained his anti-homeless reputation as New York commissioner of police when he forcibly cleared off New York's streets. Even before the city council began debating any proposed changes to existing laws, Bratton started "Operation Enough," pre-dawn raids on downtown encampments and low-cost hotels, with more than 200 officers arresting almost 215 people mainly for parole violations and associating with known felons. Once the homeless population has been cleared off the streets, the abandoned industrial buildings and warehouses that they stay in for shelter can be converted to luxury apartments and lofts.

Rather than kick homeless people out of future market-rate homes, New York City's solution has been to move homeless families into them, according to the *New York Times* ([www.nytimes.com](http://www.nytimes.com)). An emergency housing program — begun two years ago when shelters were full and the city had no where else to put homeless families — now houses 2,000 at the average rate of \$2,900 a month per family, and has cost the cash-strapped city \$33 million since July alone. In addition, because the program is considered temporary, landlords and buildings get little scrutiny. Known slumlords are taking in cushy city checks while much of their housing is considered dangerous, with extensive records of violations for unsafe living conditions. While the city wants to end the program as too costly and not helpful for getting a family into a long-term home, there are too many unsheltered homeless people and too few alternatives.

Just as one of the alternatives New York is considering involves retired cruise ships, now a former San Francisco supervisor is keenly interested in the retired Navy ships sitting idle off their shores. The Rev. Amos Brown has his eye on the U.S.S. Proteus, a former submarine tender that comes complete with laundry facilities, fitness center, store, barbershop, and 1,200 rooms that could hold hundreds, maybe thousands, of homeless people, according to the *San Francisco Examiner* ([www.examiner.com](http://www.examiner.com)). Yet even if the cost of refurbishing the ship — \$4 million — and mooring it — \$4,000-\$5,000 a day — were not so prohibitive, homeless advocates note that any water location would be too far from other services like mental health care and job training to be any help in getting homeless people off the boat and into permanent housing.

No matter what Florida's Pinellas County sheriff Everett Rice thinks is the best solution to deal with homeless people, he might at least think twice before calling them "bums" again. In response to his newspaper remark, 80 homeless people and homeless advocates marched in protest outside Rice's office, according to the *Herald Tribune* ([www.heraldtribune.com](http://www.heraldtribune.com)). Rice's spokesperson said the sheriff was only referring to homeless people who commit crimes and "terrorize" the neighborhood, but the protest organizer, Steve Kersker, hopes Rice now sees he has to do more to get homeless people off the streets than call them names. ■



## Hotel Salvation Army

The bell-ringers were out with their bright red buckets, as usual, this holiday season, and the dough came rolling in. But at the end of this month, the Salvation Army will open up a new revenue stream: homeless people who have been staying at two area shelters for more than a month will start paying a nightly fee.

Major David Clitheroe, who oversees the shelter programs, says the move came after individual donations ebbed in the fall of 2001. The last straw came this fall, when the city announced that it wouldn't make a slight increase in the annual grants the charity receives. This year, donations at the red buckets were up 6 percent over the Christmas before. But the organization still forecasts a \$1.2 million budget gap.

The charity is taking this step reluctantly, says Clitheroe: "This was the last choice we could have made. Not quite — the last choice was to close the shelters."

The new fees take effect at the 30-mat men's shelter located in the Gethsemane Lutheran Church downtown, and at the 20-bunk Pike Street Women's Shelter near Boren Avenue. For the first four weeks, people coming to each shelter can stay for free; after that, the \$5 nightly charge will kick in.

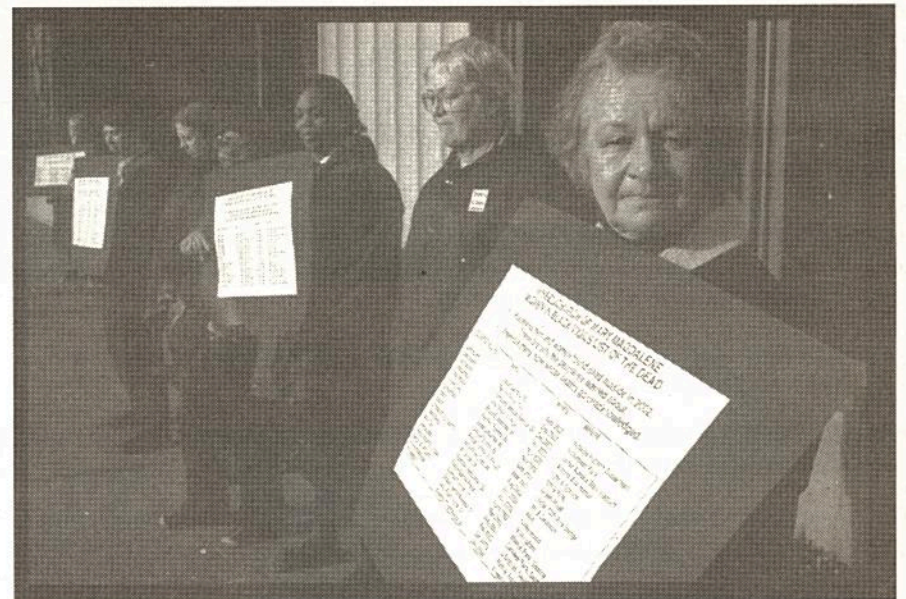
How will this impact the people staying there now? Paying a fee encourages people to think of the Salvation Army's shelters as "a stepping stone, not a flophouse," says Clitheroe. But he also worries about how a nightly fee undercuts the efforts of people trying to save up for an apartment of their own. On the other hand, as those who can't pay depart, others — who are also waiting for a berth — can move in.

A nightly charge isn't unusual. While the winter-weather shelters, the Downtown Emergency Service Center, the Union Gospel Mission, shelters operated by SHARE, and the First Avenue Service Center don't ask their guests to pay, the Compass Center men's shelter charges \$5 per night. The William Booth Center, a 180-bed men's shelter south of Pioneer Square also run by the Salvation Army, charges anyone fit enough to work \$10 a night.

Rev. Rick Reynolds, who runs a shelter referral program called Operation Nightwatch, calculates that it costs at least \$150,000 to run a 40-bed men's shelter. "Even at \$5 a night, you still need another \$100,000 or so" before you've covered your operating costs, he says. Reynolds says the Salvation Army is making a sound decision: "When we start a new shelter, we'll charge people to stay there." ■

— Adam Holdorf

## Homelessness kills



WOMEN IN BLACK OUTSIDE THE SEATTLE TIMES BUILDING. PHOTO BY ZACK CARDENAS.

Local women dressed in black for a silent vigil outside the headquarters of *The Seattle Times* and the *Post-Intelligencer* on Friday, January 3, to call attention to the number of homeless people who died outside in the last year.

Six homeless men have passed away this fall in King County, according to the county Medical Examiner's Office. The bodies of all but one were found outdoors. Greg Thomas died on October 30. Bruce Martinez, 51, died November 26. Charles Beverly Sampson died December 9 at a Salvation Army shelter. Francisco Macias-Revilla, 29, died December 12. David Saylers, 50, died four days later, on December 16. And Clinton Ray died on December 31.

Martinez died of pneumonia, while Sampson had a fatal heart attack. Macias-Revilla died of acute intoxication resulting from alcohol and drugs. The causes of the other men's deaths are still under investigation.

One organizer says a *Times* reporter who saw the vigil wants to write a story on the men's deaths. ■

— Adam Holdorf

— Compiled by Molly Rhodes

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



# All Quiet

## SHA, residents, and housing activists end quarrel over redevelopment

By Adam Holdorf

A three-year battle over the future of Rainier Vista has come to a close. And the truce changes how the Seattle Housing Authority does business with low-income residents around the city.

Representatives of SHA and plaintiffs in a federal fair-housing and environmental lawsuit finished five days of negotiations on December 23 with their key issues resolved: SHA could continue demolishing the 481 units of public housing at Rainier Vista, and replace them with a mixed-income neighborhood of 1,010 units, including 300 market-rate homes for sale to the public. Neighbors and low-income activists could be assured that the housing authority would abide by its word — the former residents could return to the community when new units are built, the renovated public housing would serve Seattle's poorest citizens, and a community council would be able to closely monitor SHA's management of the new Rainier Vista.

That last condition gives citizens the kind of power that city agencies possess, but — activists involved with the lawsuit say — haven't used. The citizens' aims will be to uphold a memorandum of agreement between SHA and the City Council passed in 2001.

Activists say that SHA amended an earlier agreement with the city, deferring the construction of family units, and replacing some of the public housing lost onsite with new units five blocks beyond city limits — changes that resulted in a greater net loss of housing for the city's poor. Given that history, "We feared that, as weak as the [Rainier Vista] Memorandum of Agreement was, even it wouldn't be upheld by the city," says Colter, a neighbor of the Rainier Valley public housing

project and a party in the suit.

Now, the Rainier Vista Citizen Review Committee, composed of plaintiffs, members of a neighborhood business group, residents of the new housing, and representatives of other community groups, can file a motion with a federal judge if SHA violates the agreement.

Other terms of the settlement reach beyond the Rainier Valley. SHA will postpone a rent increase on a unique city-funded housing system for low-income seniors, the Seattle Senior Housing Program (SSHP). Approximately 1,000 seniors live in SSHP apartments constructed with money from a 1981 city bond levy. Saying the housing program can't pay for itself, SHA announced it would increase the minimum rent for the units from \$210 to \$390. That would put the housing out of reach to anyone with a monthly income of less than \$1,300, excluding many seniors.

At a November meeting in the Seattle City Council chambers called by councilmembers Judy Nicastro and Nick Licata, housing developers, seniors, and councilmembers expressed concern about the plan. Experts suggested that SHA conduct in-depth research to better understand which apartment complexes merit higher prices. One advocate told SHA, "You're asking low-income seniors to be working seniors."

But SHA deputy director Al Levine told the group that SHA would proceed with the rent hike regardless. The settlement put a temporary stop to that,



DEMOLITION AT RAINIER VISTA RESUMED AFTER A SETTLEMENT WAS REACHED IN THE LAWSUIT AGAINST THE PROPERTY'S OWNER, THE SEATTLE HOUSING AUTHORITY. IN THE BACKGROUND, INTACT HOMES AWAIT THE WRECKING CREW. PHOTO BY SIGNE DRAKE.

at least until September 30.

"It is a great settlement," says councilmember Nicastro, who's asking fellow councilmembers to find city money to keep the housing accessible. "I'm really grateful to the Seattle Displacement Coalition for getting this into the agreement and buying us more time."

SHA spokesperson Virginia Felton says senior housing was unrelated to the court case — but "if that's what it took to resolve this, we'd put it on the table," she says.

John Fox, chair of the Seattle Displacement Coalition, another party in the suit, disagrees. He points to the 100 units of senior housing planned for the new Rainier Vista. As SHA builds new senior housing in public housing neighborhoods, he says SHA wants the high-quality units in the old SSHP program to fetch a higher rent.

SHA also agreed to set up a community review council if and when they consider redeveloping the Yesler Terrace public housing project, perched above downtown Seattle in the First Hill neighborhood.

Both the Yesler Terrace and the SSHP issue weren't relevant to the court case. But the Seattle Displacement Coalition, which has monitored the threats to low-income housing for more than two decades, drove a hard bargain. Fox says that, originally, he fought for more money for new public housing.

"Our first priority was to get more money for replacement housing" to strengthen SHA's efforts to replace public housing lost at Holly Park and Rainier Vista. SHA wouldn't concede. So instead, the plaintiffs went for a promise to preserve public housing in future renovations. "They knew we were not going to settle if we didn't get either more replacement housing, or a promise on other projects in the future," says Fox.

The plaintiffs had other disappointments; they had to drop all concern about the property's grand old deciduous trees. Colter says she regrets the loss of those trees, but "they're in the wrong place, and it's way more expensive for them to re-route traffic and replant homes than even an extended lawsuit." Instead, SHA agreed to plant 8- to 12-inch juvenile trees on the property. Young trees dampen noise better than saplings.

There are other conflicts on the horizon. SHA's public housing property in West Seattle, High Point, is about to undergo its own massive renovation into a mixed-income community. Holly Park, Rainier Vista, and High Point have received over \$100 million total from the federal government's HOPE VI program, designed to remake "severely distressed" public housing. Activists around the country hold HOPE VI responsible for displacing tenants and diminishing the nation's supply of housing for the poor. ■

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# poetry

## All Homeless Song

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

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

— ROBERTO VALENZA

(originally published in *Real Change*, March 15, 2000)

## A BIG LIE

I live in a nice apartment  
on Beacon Hill  
oriental rugs, crowded bookshelves  
a fourposter a fireplace Ming dogs  
you know: old money

## ANOTHER BIG LIE

I live in a duplex apartment  
on a street of identical houses  
in a bleak little town in South Dakota  
where it gets so cold it can't even snow

## ANOTHER BIG LIE

I live in a bungalow on an island  
where it never gets cold  
I have a verandah where lush red flowers  
climb on vines... my woman  
lives here with me... in season  
we run a small café.

— ELIZABETH ROMERO

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



**T**oday I want to talk about ignorance.

A lot of people are going to read that and get entirely the wrong idea. They're going to think, "Uh-oh, here goes, the smart-mouthed columnist is going to go making fun of our president again. Hasn't our poor president suffered enough from being called a moron by that Canadian woman? Who does this guy think he is, thinking he's so much smarter than our elected president?"

No, really, I don't care about George Bush's ignorance. It's my own that interests me. As 5 out of 6 girlfriends have put it, I only care about myself. This is in fact the source and substance of my ignorance. If it isn't about me, it must not be important enough to know.

At this point it is entertaining for me to reflect that I am ignorant as hell, and yet I write this column. Ha. I know incredibly little about everything but I write these tiny mini-treatises every other week and some of you actually read them all the way to the end. I know because three of you have told me so. What gives?

I like to think that my ignorance is a light, a shining beacon for others. Because if I can turn my affliction into a proud asset, what else is not possible? Cannot then the blind lead us to greener pastures? Cannot then the lame trample our foes? Cannot then the Honda total the SUV instead of vice versa?

This is my promise to America. I will remain ignorant as long as it takes to achieve my dream in which everyone, not just the rich, can live their lives without having to know what it's like to have to know too much. We should all be able to say, "My tuition is paid for; you have to give me an A." Let me show the way.

The most important thing I ever learned in life, I learned in kindergarten. No, I'm kidding, I learned it in graduate school. But I could have learned it in kindergarten. It was that stupid. The stupid thing I learned was: if you need to know something, ask.

You might think, "That is counterproductive. If I ask questions, pretty soon I'll start knowing too much and then I won't be ignorant anymore. I will lose my identity. The next thing I know I'll start speaking with a foreign accent and wearing purple scarves, if I don't already."

No you won't. You only have to pay attention to the answers you receive long enough get things done. Then you can forget them and go back to being yourself.

**"The next thing I know I'll start speaking with a foreign accent and wearing purple scarves, if I don't already."**

Isn't that what it's all about? It's about being yourself and nobody else. If you learn a lot of stuff that doesn't have anything to do with you then you won't be you anymore. You'll be one of those pinheads that gets interviewed whenever Jim Lehrer doesn't know why

Americans are too fat. The trick is: be Jim Lehrer, and you won't have to be the pinhead.

In the meantime, you may be surprised at how much you can learn just by thinking solely about yourself. For example, I like to sit on my butt and stare at the ceiling. Because of this, and because of the delight that I take in contemplating this fact, and because I am alert and receptive to sympathetic delights, I have learned in time that G. K. Chesterton once wrote 20 pages about a ceiling. Some day, or in another life, I may read those 20 pages. Later, I may learn who or what G. K. Chesterton was. Likewise, I once had sex in the front seat of a Dodge Omni, so I know what a pain parking brakes can be.

The thing that's annoying about George Bush isn't that he's the dumbest bubble in the fizz. What's annoying about him is that he's defensive about it. Like Clinton with his "I didn't have sex with that woman," Bush could benefit from outing himself. He could admit that he never wanted to speak to Gore because he was afraid Gore would know something he didn't. If Bush would publicly admit that he was ignorant he could prove himself to be the great leader that he so far has only pretended to be. ■





## Greenwood Avenue Cacophony

There are strangers in the street  
who know who you are —  
a string of laughter  
randomly wounding the air,  
flowing like a stream through your ears.  
Greenwood Avenue is filled  
with electronic  
chirping of cars  
and blaring of trumpet coughs  
setting your tranquility ajar  
like notes of a green whistle —  
tiny daggers  
piercing the quiet of your brain,  
tilting a balance  
you sought to maintain.

The cars keep running  
under the chrome sun of summer  
and the rainy shroud of winter  
marking the days,  
roaming by houses and fir.

People see your cast down spirit  
from across the street  
and laugh or remark  
at your flesh Halloween mask —  
so odd looking out of the dark.  
Sometimes you think they can read  
the thoughts you have  
whirling in your mind  
as if there were a window  
in your forehead with no blinds.  
Then they could see the rooms fill  
with haunting deaths  
and love forsaken —  
a collage of past scenes —  
a winding storm unspoken.

The cars keep running  
under the chrome sun of summer  
and the rainy shroud of winter  
marking the day,  
roaming by houses and fir.

— JOHN GORSKI

## The Don't Worry Blues

Woke up this morning with the don't worry blues  
Woke up this morning with the don't worry blues  
Everybody says don't worry  
That's why I got the don't worry blues

My life could be over while I'm crossin the street  
My life could be over while I'm crossin the street  
Rent and the landlord be a thing of the past  
That's why I don't worry 'bout crossin the street

Death come in the water or in a Big Mac  
Death come in the water or in a Big Mac  
Pain in my knees wouldn't seem so bad  
That's why I don't worry 'bout my snack

Earth could be hit by a meteor today  
Earth could be hit by a meteor today  
Everybody left standing'd have a job right away  
That's why I don't worry 'bout my resume

Woke up this morning with the don't worry blues  
Woke up this morning with the don't worry blues  
One kind of trouble cancels the other  
That's why I got the don't worry blues

— ELIZABETH ROMERO

## What The Children Write On The Sidewalks

Josh died here  
intersection of Plummer and Corbin  
Northridge corridors cross arms  
extended out San Fernando Valley  
Josh died here  
say his friends in black ink  
on sidewalk fence power poles,  
and gray metal electrical circuit box,  
artfully inked anguish  
Josh man I can't believe you're gone  
sing the dusty sparrows of Northridge  
on their knees remembering Josh  
who died here on nine three  
more important than nine one one  
to the ragged sparrows  
and querulous jays of Northridge  
remembering Josh who died  
here at the intersection  
of Plummer and Corbin

— DAVID THORNBRUGH



# It Ain't Camping, and It Ain't Fun

## How winter's chill treats a north-country family

By Cindy Carlson

With an invitation for a visit and forty pounds of good bananas donated from a local grocery store, I drove out to the campground. On the way I reflected on my own experiences in summers of difficult times, when I was forced to live homeless at various campgrounds with my kids. In times when we didn't own traditional campers, no one knew that we had no home to go to at the end of the season. I remembered how my kids would whine once the traditional camping period had ended, and they were done having "their" little vacation; remembering the questions: "But why can't we have our own place?" and "How come I can't go to my old school?" as the summer ended. It seems so long ago, but the memories remain fresh. My heart sunk, wondering where all these families now without housing will go when the weather turns cold.

I drove to the owner's house in the front of the grounds. S, the lady who invited me out, was standing in the front yard with another woman, herself disabled and a mother. I had met S's friend and her friend's husband over a year ago; she now tells me that they have now been homeless for fifteen months. We chatted for a little while in the office. The owner wanted to charge me a four-dollar visitor's fee, until we convinced him that I wasn't going to stay too long.

They jumped up into the van and we crawled down the dirt road at five miles per hour. As we got near the back of the grounds, I wasn't prepared for what I saw. S began pointing out tents and campers of people she knew who were without permanent housing. Some had very large tents; others had pup

tents and tarps strung up the best way they could. Still a few more had older model campers and pop-up trailers.

We stopped at one tent, and two young ladies were sitting at a picnic table under a tarp. S called out, "Where's your mom?" The girl responded quickly about her mother's whereabouts, and then said, "I can't talk now, I'm trying to get my homework done before it gets dark." Their heads went back down to their work, and we continued to travel slowly down the road.

We passed another site where

someone was breaking camp. S yelled over and the woman came to the van. I handed her a flier on the Gimme Shelter program and then realized I knew this woman too. She had been working at a corner store in my neighborhood, but I hadn't seen her lately. She said they were moving away from the campground because the trailer they had been borrowing had to be returned to their friend, who uses it for hunting season. They didn't know where they were going to go yet; they just knew they had to leave. She was waiting for her son to get home and then they were off. I asked her to call me when she lands, and gave her an Under the Bridge brochure. I wished her good luck, and we continued down the road.

Finally we near the latrine, and I am told to pull over and park. Three children immediately run out from the tent, wanting attention from their mother. Dad had apparently just brought them back from school in the city. The normal after-school chatter begins, and papers are handed over. The oldest is looking for markers so she can make a poster for homework. No one has any markers, including me, though I turn the van upside down looking for one.

Dad hauls out the bananas and the girls immediately take one and then two. The youngest comes back two more times until her mother tells her,

"Enough, you're going to get sick." Another child questions, "What's for supper?" Her mom replies sadly, "I don't even know."

A child comes to tell Mom that she has a fundraiser for school. Mom looks at it and tosses it into the fire pit, explaining to the child why it isn't possible for them to contribute.

Another child cries about a school project, due yesterday, which requires pipe cleaners, a Styrofoam ball, and some beads. I inquire about which schools they attend and make note of it. Mom pulls out a little booklet on the McKinney-Vento Act, explaining that she knows that the schools are supposed to help her with transportation but no one is helping. The kids go off to do their other homework; the smallest of the three runs down to the water to throw rocks.

Now two of the dads are sitting at the table with us three women. Both

just got out of work. One is a painter, and the other works on the hot top crew at the airport. They express their frustration about who they see getting housing and who isn't. They are frustrated at not being able to care for their families. One gentleman said that his family is being denied help at town welfare because they didn't meet the requirement of having all their receipts. He stated that they are being sanctioned because of the loss of a twenty-five-cent receipt and a two-dollar lottery ticket. He said he wants to win the lottery, just like everybody else, so he can buy a home for his family.

The guys walk off to finish loading the truck with the things that their neighbors are taking to storage. The moving family is going to a hotel because

the mother is disabled and can't take the cold anymore. They will be paying \$800 a month for the hotel and paying an additional \$208 for their storage, Mom explains, leaving them with \$34 in cash for the month for gas, laundry, and other non-foods. She said it is a good deal, because the hotel will give them clean towels, toilet paper, and hot showers.

Meanwhile, S begins telling me that the campground is closing for the season on October 15th, and most of the families (including hers) still don't have a place to go. She lists the agencies she has contacted since the beginning of the summer and states her outcomes:

- Security deposit application — pending.

- State welfare—Her food stamps are ending soon because they make too much money. Her kids will retain Healthy Kids insurance, but she and her husband are without medical insurance.

- Town welfare — denied. S was told to go to city welfare, as they are looking for housing in-city and the kids go to school there.

- City welfare — S was told to come back when the camps close, because the shelters are all full and the hotels won't take any more homeless families.

- Social worker at one child's school

— S saw no outcome from this.

- Church — She was told that since they don't live in that city, the program is unable to help.

S states that the kids have no clothes, and they can't afford to do the laundry they do have. At the campground they have to pay for showers, laundry, and firewood, as well as their space. Add in gas for driving back and forth to work and school, food, ice, and paper products. They don't have refrigeration, so food goes bad quickly. Worst of all, they have been unable to save any money with three growing kids.

S is desperate for a home. She states that "It all happened so fast: we were doubled

up with a friend first, and then we ended up out here. It's hard mentally because when I first got divorced, I told my children that no matter what happened I would always make sure they had a roof over their heads, clothes on their backs, and food in their tummies. Then I met my new husband. He is a good hard worker, and we still aren't making it."

In total, S knows of 14 adults and 11 children who are homeless, but she states there are other families on the other side of the campground that she suspects are also homeless. Though S doesn't know them, she explains that she has seen the same kids all summer and now into the fall. As I am leaving, a limousine with Vermont plates pulls into a campsite. S states that it is all that is left of the man's business. And the only car they have.

S was just about to introduce me to another family when up pulled the campground's maintenance man. He asked me if I was going to stay much longer. I told him I would get going. He said the owner is worried that I might disclose the location of the campground, because it will wreck his business. I told him I would not, and made my way back home. ■

*Cindy Carlson lives and works in Manchester, New Hampshire. She is the Project Coordinator for Under the Bridge, a voluntary homeless empowerment project made up of the homeless and formerly homeless people.*

The guys walk off to finish loading the truck with the things that their neighbors are taking to storage. The moving family is going to a hotel because the mother is disabled and can't take the cold anymore.

A child comes to tell Mom that she has a fundraiser for school. Mom looks at it and tosses it into the fire pit, explaining to the child why it isn't possible for them to contribute.



# Running Scared

Even when you find a safe place, the past keeps following

By Sue Anderson as told to Jackie Renn

I became mentally ill when I was very young. It grew and it grew and it grew. I misbehaved, ran away from home, and began using drugs and alcohol as a way of self-medicating. Eventually, I dropped out of high school. I admitted myself into Harborview at the age of 26. I was diagnosed with chronic depression and post-traumatic stress disorder — and I was having suicidal ideation.

My father sexually molested me when I was 12 years old. I remember him examining me by putting his fingers in me and feeling my belly. That's how he found out I was pregnant. He took me to a doctor, where I was drugged and given an abortion. He then brought me home with pills, and told me not to let my mother see the bottle and to take the medication as prescribed. I didn't know what was going on. After the abortion, he took me to Planned Parenthood, where I had to use a different name and get condoms. The sexual abuse went on for years.

When I was 18 I began sexual abuse therapy. I enrolled in a program where I was able to receive my GED and have a part-time job. However, I was still drinking and taking drugs. I was running from everything and everyone, especially myself.

I worked odd jobs here and there, and found it increasingly difficult to stay employed as I became sicker and sicker. My mom didn't know where I was. She would find me now and again and try to intervene and bring me back to her house. But that never worked. I was stubborn and angry and I didn't want help from my family.

My father, that asshole, he had a lot on his mind. He committed suicide before I turned 18.

My mom tried to get me some help through DSHS, but I was denied because I was living with family. So I continued to live with friends and relatives for several years.

I was finally rescued by my mother and her husband from a squalid living from halfway house to halfway house. There were times in between halfway

**I can't keep telling a different person my story over and over again.**

situation and taken to their home. I became more depressed. It was then that I was first hospitalized for my mental illness.

houses when I was homeless and stayed in shelters. At some point I was placed in a respite bed, and an advocate or counselor worked on getting me into

tance, I would go into the DSHS office and wait for hours and days on end, not knowing who or when I would be helped. It was a mess. Screaming kids, chaos, a blaring PA system. It was a nightmare during the day. And these people that work there. They hate their jobs, they hate you, they look down on you. They don't treat you well at all.

As for the mental health system itself, I don't trust it. They say one thing and do another. The therapist that I had been seeing for over nine years was yanked from underneath me when the agency that I was going to wanted to give her more responsibilities and a cut in pay. The therapist was told that if she didn't agree with the new circumstances she could leave, so she did.

I am so upset. The one person that I trusted, who knew every nuance about my life. There was no backup. I was told that they would eventually get me a therapist, but that person may be a male. No way!

I haven't talked to anyone about my past or present problems in months. I keep holding everything in. I don't like case managers. I don't trust them. They come and go so rapidly. They're not trained. They don't know me or take the time to know me. I can't keep telling a different person my story over and over again. They're too busy keeping up with paperwork.

I was told that I could go outside the agency to find a therapist. But I don't know where to begin. This is something that the case manager should be helping me with. But I don't bother asking, because the last

thing I asked her to help me with she screwed up.

To this day I still struggle with my past. There's not a day that goes by where the thought of suicide does not enter my brain. ■



GRAPHIC BY ELEANOR O'NEILL.

While I was in the hospital I saw a social worker, who set me up on public assistance. I was then discharged from the hospital and moved into a halfway house.

I spent the next several years going

subsidized housing. I have been living in my own subsidized apartment now for several years. At some point I stopped receiving public assistance and began receiving Social Security.

When I was receiving public assis-



## COLLINS Continued from Page 1

tort a self-governing democratic society.

The estate tax encourages people to pass on wealth up to a point — a point at which they're not only just passing on wealth, they're passing on power. Power to engage public policies, power to distort our democracy. So the origins of the estate tax were in our rejection of the notion of a hereditary aristocracy.

**The estate tax encourages people to pass on wealth up to a point — a point at which they're not only just passing on wealth, they're passing on power. Power to engage public policies, power to distort our democracy.**

**RC:** How do the rich owe what they've earned — even what they make "by the sweat of their brow" — to society at large?

**Collins:** It's important to say up front that individuals do make a difference in the creation of wealth. Some people do work harder, some people have made sacrifices, have brought a special creativity to the leadership of some enterprise. They should be rewarded for that. But in our culture, we overvalue the notion of individual effort and we undervalue the contribution of society, luck, or God's grace.

Society — our society in particular — creates very fertile ground in which wealth is created through public investment, through investing in education, through investing in a system where we can register property, hold mortgages, create modest investments. As well as this framework of public safety and protections that society makes. We the people make substantial investments in building a good society. It's a myth that the individual does it all himself.

**RC:** Can we explain the opposition to the estate tax in terms of opposition to government itself — that it's just a libertarian response?

**Collins:** There has been 30 years of well-funded anti-tax, anti-government organizing. Activist groups have promoted a very individualistic way of looking at the world: "It's my money, I don't get anything from government." There's no question that government could be more effective or more responsive, but the reality is we have made a lot of progress thanks to a strong and humane government. Fifty years ago, the number of elderly people in poverty, who didn't have adequate food, who had to

work until the day they died, was very high. We as a society said people should live in their old age with dignity. So we established Social Security and health care. Do we really want to roll that back?

We have a lot of unfinished business. Why should children today be born into such varying futures? Can't we create better opportunities at the starting point in life? I think that's what's missing from the anti-tax, anti-government, can't-I-just-build-a-wall-around-my-life people.

**RC:** You indicate that taxes on the wealthy increase during hard times — war, depression. Yet here we are, facing both, and some in Congress

tions that there would be a \$5.6 trillion surplus. That evaporated within weeks of the passage of that law.

One of the reasons that Mr. Gates and I wrote this book is that we feel like the opponents of the estate tax got a 10-year head start in defaming and attacking the estate tax. We want to crack open the public debate about what kind of a society we want to be: Do we want to have the grotesque inequalities of the Gilded Age of more than 100 years ago? Do we want to be like Brazil, where everybody lives behind walls and the rich take helicopters to the shopping centers? Is that the kind of society we want to become? And if the answer's no, how are we going to create a society with more shared prosperity? We think the

wealth dynasties.

Another reform I would propose, though, is raising the top rate. Fortunes over \$50 million should be taxed at 70 percent or higher. Right now, the top rate kicks in at about \$3 million. That's too low; the estate tax could and should be more progressive.

**RC:** So anyone with more than \$3 million in assets is taxed at 55 percent.

**Collins:** Yeah, but actually that rate goes down to 45 percent [because of the 2001 tax bill]. I'm not sure my co-author shares this position, so this is more of an independent statement, but I would say just like in the 1930s, a 70 percent estate tax on fortunes over \$50 million would encourage the dispersal of wealth in a way that would really benefit the society.

Say you have \$100 million. How much could you possibly pass on? Andrew Carnegie said that passing on wealth to your children is like a curse. It's one thing to pass on the family pharmacy, or the bakery, or the small farm. That's an asset that will create a livelihood, you hope. But to pass on massive amounts of inherited wealth — five, ten, twenty million dollars — that's not good for society and incidentally not good for the children either.

**RC:** What do you think of the case of Seattle Times owner Frank Blethen, who has organized other newspaper owners across the country to push for elimination? They estimate their business wealth at \$600 million, and say these are non-liquid assets. Are there reforms that they could be happy with?

**Collins:** Probably not. If you have a \$600 million or a billion-dollar enterprise, you can afford to plan for succession. That's what they're doing, that's what they should do. But they should not pretend that a \$600 million business is a



PHOTO OF CHUCK COLLINS, COURTESY OF COLLINS.

want to finish off the estate tax. How will the issue of abolition be framed in coming debates?

**Collins:** Well, the proponents of repeal will say that we need to make [the gradual repeal] permanent so that people can plan, so that it's predictable, so that its negative effects will go away.

And on the other side there's a whole bunch of arguments. I think some people will say it's fiscally irresponsible — that when the 2001 tax cut passed, there were these rosy projec-

estate tax is a key piece of that.

**RC:** How should the tax be reformed?

**Collins:** Before the 2001 tax package passed, the exemption level [the minimum amount of wealth taxed] was \$1 million. Now, it's scheduled to rise gradually from \$1 million to \$3.5 million in 2009, and then it vanishes in 2010. I say, sure, let it go up. Smaller businesses and family farms shouldn't have to even think about planning for it. It should be clearly aimed at the

**I would say that the most important inheritance that you can leave your children is the sense that they can make a difference in the world.**

small, independent business. It's a very substantial business with a substantial amount of money and a substantial amount of power.

Businesses in that situation take out insurance and pre-pay the estate tax. When the Hershey's owner passed on, he gave an ownership stake to a school. That's a form of dispersing wealth that is socially valuable.

*Continued on Next Page*



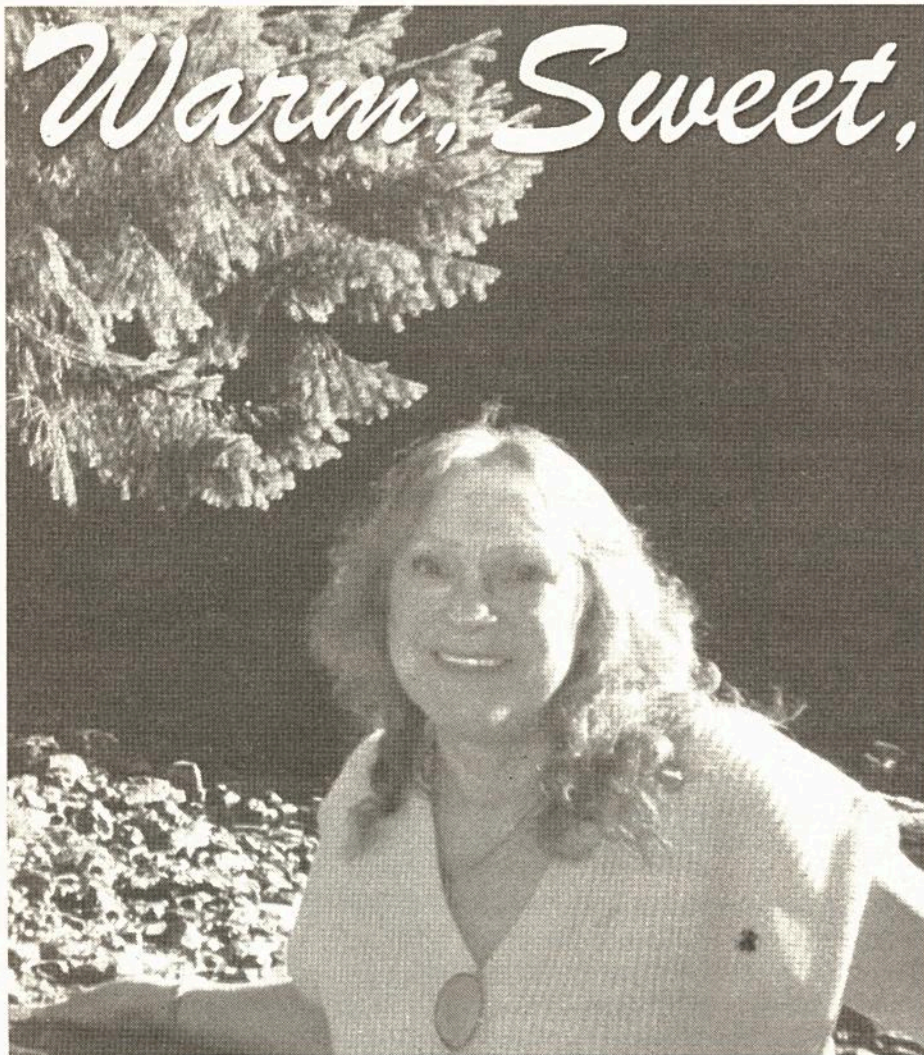


PHOTO OF JONNA TAYLOR, COURTESY OF ANITRA FREEMAN.

**Jonna Taylor**  
 April 3, 1947 — December 8, 2002

By Anitra Freeman

Jonna was one of the first residents at the Union Hotel, subsidized apartments managed by the Downtown Emergency Service Center, moving in

from the homeless shelter Noel House in July 1994. There are 40 other residents at the Union, including Wes Browning and myself. Her death has

stricken everyone. She was a warm, sweet person, and no one expected this.

The most stricken of us here is Carl. He and Jonna were sweethearts since he moved into the Union two years ago. They were planning to be married next Valentine's Day.

I met Jonna at StreetLife Gallery in 1995. She had been there since 1994, discovering the Gallery while she stayed at Noel House. Jonna was one of the featured artists in a now out-of-print StreetLife Gallery book.

Jonna had created a "found art" table display of popular culture, starring Jimi Hendrix. In the book, she says, "I moved to Seattle from Los Angeles one year ago [1993] to be near Jimi Hendrix's family. Jimi and I are writing a book about what it's like to be dead, tentatively titled *The Bad Book*." When I moved into the Union Hotel in January 1996, I found Jonna was one of my neighbors here. Every time I saw her for the next several years, she was holding a picture of Jimi Hendrix.

There is an old word that I wish was still current: "fey." It describes something, or someone, that is a little wild and strange and not-quite-of-this-world. That was how I saw Jonna. I didn't think of her by the same rules of reality that I thought of other people. I

could believe that she was writing a book with Jimi Hendrix. I just wish I could have read it.

Jonna let go of the picture when she met Carl. She bloomed, and so did he. "She changed my life, I did things I thought I'd never do," he remembers. "I got straight. I got a checking account. I don't know what I'll do without her. But Jonna believed. She told me she would always be with me."

More than a year ago Jonna got a computer, and I got to help her figure out how to use AOL. She insisted on paying me for the lessons. We were both on a very limited income: at that time I was still on state disability, and Jonna was on Social Security.

That was like Jonna, generous at all times.

Claudia Boles, who was also at StreetLife Gallery, and has lived at the Union since 1994, says: "Over the years, we became like sisters. I was so broken up, I had to leave the memorial service. She always wanted me to teach her to draw bamboo, but we never got to it. She loved all kinds of art. She read tons of art books. She liked Deep Purple and the heavy metal bands, heavier than I had. She'd get mad at me because I didn't have any of the music she liked."

Wes remembers Jonna telling him that she had danced backup for Frank Zappa and the Mothers of Invention. I have no way of verifying that, but I like to think that she's dancing with Frank Zappa now. And she's got that great big grin, and she's saying, "Believe." ■

**Someone who's a little wild and strange and not-quite-of-this-world. That was how I saw Jonna.**

**COLLINS Cont. from Previous Page**

**RC:** *What kind of life should wealthy people who are writing their wills want for their heirs? How does inheritance thwart their dreams?*

**Collins:** I wouldn't dare to speak for other people. But I would say that the most important inheritance that you can leave your children is the sense that they can make a difference in the world. That they can inherit the world without glaring, grotesque inequalities of wealth and power. And that they can live in a world that has a healthy ecological and social environment in which they can grow up. As opposed to being raised in a bubble or behind a wall of wealth.

There are limits to the islands that we can create for our children. They

need to go forth in the world and make their own way. And in some cases a substantial inheritance can be utterly debilitating.

**RC:** *Tell us about Bill Gates, Sr., your co-author. It seems like his family has made some conscientious decisions about how to use its wealth.*

**Collins:** The Gateses come

Why America Should Tax  
 Accumulated Fortunes

**Wealth and Our Commonwealth**

William H. Gates, Sr.,  
 and Chuck Collins

from the Andrew Carnegie tradition, which understands that too much inequality is really bad for the country. There's not much you can do about the fact that you develop a great product and, all of a sudden, whoosh! the money comes in. But what you do after that is really where you get to measure what somebody's about. He's not waiting for an estate tax —

they've been moving substantial amounts of wealth for years.

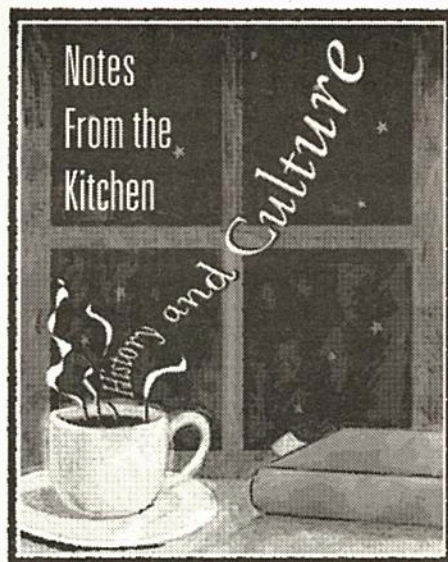
**RC:** *What differences do you two bring to the table?*

**Collins:** We both just feel very passionate about it. I think like a community organizer: how do we unite people around this issue and get them to take action? And I think he thinks long-term: what kind of country do I want to leave for my grandchildren?

It's the same impulse: that we can do better as a society. We both take offense at the inadequate public debate that has taken place around this issue. Things may not work out the way we'd like them to, but we want to at least make sure that we revisit the historic reasons why we have an estate tax, and really weigh them, before we decide to take it to the gallows. ■

**Join Chuck Collins, Bill Gates Sr., and members of the Washington Tax Fairness Coalition on Wednesday, January 29, 2003, at 7 p.m. at New Hope Missionary Baptist Church, 124 - 21st Avenue (corner of Fir Street) for a free forum on the state tax system, the estate tax, and the hope for a more just economy.**





# Something for Rover

By Liz Smith

The year was 1952. The Republican party had selected Richard Nixon as the Vice-presidential candidate to run with Dwight Eisenhower. The New York Post, in a fine piece of yellow journalism, ran this headline: "Secret Rich Men's Trust Fund Keeps Nixon in Style Far Beyond His Salary." The truth was, the money, about \$18,000, was publicly raised by a group of California businessmen to defray the senator's political expenses. The voting public was outraged. It seemed likely that Nixon's political career would be ruined.

Nixon's handlers arranged for him to make a speech on prime-time television. Not only did he read a statement by Price Waterhouse and Company, which audited the fund and absolved him of any blame, he revealed every aspect of his finances. He made sure to mention that his wife, Pat, did not have a mink coat, but "a respectable Republican cloth coat." The high point of the speech came when Nixon, in a voice full of pathos, uttered these words: "We did get something, a gift after the election. A man down in Texas heard Pat on the radio mention the fact that our two youngsters would like to have a dog. We got a message from the Union Station in Baltimore saying they had a package for us. It was a little Cocker

Spaniel dog in a crate that he'd sent all the way from Texas. Our little girl Tricia named it Checkers. And you know, the kids, like all kids, love the dog, and I just want to say right now that regardless of what they say about it, we're gonna keep him."

It was a brilliant example of restorative public relations. Viewers all over the country, including some of Eisenhower's aides, were reduced to tears. The Senator, with one bold stroke, had lifted himself out of the political mud. Eisenhower welcomed him back with open arms. They went on to win the Republican ticket, and all because of the little dog and the humble appeal that became known as "the Checkers speech."

It is interesting to speculate on what might have happened in the world of politics had Senator Nixon not swayed the electorate with his touching broadcast invoking his children's dog. He might not have been elected President in 1968, and again in 1972. Another man might have gotten us out of Vietnam, and another man might not have ordered the bugging of the Democratic headquarters at the Watergate Hotel.

Of course, most dogs don't change the course of history, and most dogs aren't used as part of a calculated political strategy. Instead of the dog saving the person, sometimes it's the people who save the dog. That's the case with my friends Sarah and David and their dog Salem, an English Springer Spaniel. Someone abandoned her over the fence at the PAWS (Progressive Animal Welfare Society) shelter in Lynnwood, where they knew she would be taken in. While Salem was in the care of a PAWS foster family, Sarah saw her picture on the internet. After speaking with the "foster mom" by phone, Sarah and David went up to Lynnwood, and an hour later they brought Salem home. After a dramatic first week, in which they spent over \$600 at the veterinarian only to discover that the dog had a simple case of canine nerves, the three settled in together. Salem is a wonderful dog, very sweet-natured and well behaved.

To ensure the best possible match between animal and adoptive family, the PAWS Companion Animal Shelter has a two-page adopter profile application, and they try to know as much as possible about each animal. They do not euthanize their guests. They were instrumental in passing a spay and neuter law, which has greatly diminished the number of unwanted and doomed creatures. With the assistance of more than 200 volunteers, they have sent more than 100,000 dogs and cats home since 1967. With Salem, make that 100,001.

You might like to try making these easy dog biscuits. They are a lot softer than the ones you buy in the store. Among dogs polled, the biscuits enjoyed a 100-percent approval rating.



SAVED BY THE SHELTER: THIS ENGLISH SPRINGER SPANIEL, SALEM, MADE IT TO A LOVING HOME WITH THE HELP OF THE PROGRESSIVE ANIMAL WELFARE SOCIETY. PHOTO COURTESY LIZ SMITH.

## Dog Biscuits

Follow the directions below to make either kind of biscuit: Plain or Peanut Butter.

### Plain (yield 16 biscuits)

2 eggs  
1/2 tsp salt  
2 TB wheat germ  
2 TB brewer's or nutritional yeast  
2 TB soy flour  
1/4 cup milk  
1/2 cup whole wheat flour  
3/4 cup all-purpose flour

### Peanut Butter (yield 22 biscuits)

2 eggs  
1/2 tsp salt  
2 TB wheat germ  
2 TB brewer's or nutritional yeast  
2 TB soy flour  
1/4 cup milk  
1/4 cup peanut butter  
1/2 cup whole wheat flour  
1 cup all-purpose flour

1. Turn oven to 300 degrees. Mix ingredients in order given. Knead dough for a minute or so to completely blend. Let rest five minutes to relax the gluten.

2. Pat into a rectangle 3 inches wide and 1/2 inch thick. Cut into 1/2-inch strips. Bake on ungreased cookie sheet for 20 minutes; turn over and bake 20 minutes more.

## Canine Canticles: books about dogs

### *Julie of the Wolves*

by Jean Craighead George

### *Old Yeller*

by Fred Gipson

### *Where the Red Fern Grows*

by Wilson Rawls

### *The Incredible Journey*

by Sheila Every Burnford

### *Lassie Come Home*

by Eric Knight

### *The Call of the Wild*

by Jack London

### *The Social Lives of Dogs*

by Elizabeth Marshall Thomas

### *Metrodog: A Guide to Raising Your Dog in the City*

by Brian Kilcommons

### *The Hidden Life of Dogs*

by Elizabeth Marshall Thomas

### *Dog Eat Dog: A Very Human Book About Dogs and Dog Shows*

by Jane Stern

### *My Travels with Charlie*

by John Steinbeck



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**2002 Year in Review**

**Tuesday, March 27, 12:04 a.m., Volunteer Park.** An officer responded to investigate a 911 call. Upon arrival, the officer found the subject, a homeless white male age 21, standing by the phone waiting. He told the officer he was feeling depressed as his grandmother had just kicked him out of the house because he was gay. He told the officer he had attempted suicide several times this year, by lying in front of traffic and by attempting to overdose on his meds. He requested to be taken to Harborview Medical Center so he could talk to someone, and was transported without incident.

**Monday, April 23, 6:41 p.m., S. Main Street.**

Two officers were conducting a premise check — the area is an overgrown field on Seattle Housing Authority property, and complaints have been received about narcotics and prostitution activity here. When they arrived, they found the subject, a transient white male age 44, in an area that was posted "No Trespassing." He had no reliable ID, but supplied a name and DOB. A computer check revealed a warrant for someone with the same name but a slightly different DOB. Suspect was fingerprinted for ID, and was found not to be the warrant subject. He was interrogated and released with an admonishment for trespassing.

**Friday, May 10, 11:40 p.m., 3200 block of W. Howe St., under City Bridge.**

The officer found the suspect, a transient white male age 53, asleep under the bridge, and photographed him sleeping in his blanket. Suspect was also photographed in front of the "No Trespassing" sign. He was warned by the officer not to stay under the bridge or he would be arrested. Suspect has mental problems, and SPD has received numerous complaints from residents who have seen him in their yards. Many residents are scared because of his size and mental health problems. He is often seen talking to himself. Officer has been in contact with the suspect many times in the last three years.

**Thursday, June 23, 5:23 p.m., Harrison Avenue apartment.**

Officers responded to a 911 call from a man in the apartment saying that his friend, a transient black male age 53, had made a suicide attempt. He was depressed about being evicted from his apartment, and took a razor and attempted to cut his arm. His friend took the razor and threw it out the window, along with a knife. He then called 911, but the subject left the apartment in an unknown direction. Officers checked the area, and found the man in an alleyway by the apartment. He stated he did not want to live, and would end his life by any means. He was transported to Harborview for an involuntary mental health evaluation. ■

*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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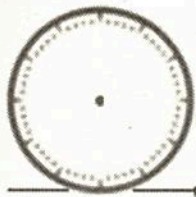
**Democracy Now!**  
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 weekdays 7:30 - 8:00pm





# Timeless Astrology

by R.W. Reid

For Entertainment Purposes Only

"Be not forgetful to entertain strangers; for thereby some have entertained angels unawares"

— Heb xiii.2.

People who read astrology columns fall into three categories: enlightened masters, common folk, and bozos. Enlightened masters realize that time and space don't exist. They don't fret about bad hair days or romance. Knowing that Love is the only true reality, they are certain that the bad video tape that our tiny primate brain keeps playing over and over will eventually crackle its way into oblivion. They are at peace.

The common folk are good-hearted souls who make a valiant effort towards living a conscious life. They occasionally consult a higher power and nearly always avoid hitting others with a large heavy object when agitated. They seek knowledge, but often find the attempt resembles trying to fire up a string of Christmas lights circa 1952 — if one bulb is bad, the whole tree goes dark. Still, they are more open to making new choices than the last group: the bozos.

Bozos comprise most of the human race and, in addition, the entire U.S. Senate. They bumble through life, perversely denying their true essence as beings of light by pursuing their pathetically unimaginative desires to absurd lengths. They crave knowledge — specifically, the future acquisition of money, sex, or the opportunity to watch more reality TV. Whenever you read Timeless Astrology time will stop, providing a space for change. Consequently, whichever category you think you fall into, and no matter how misguided that knowledge is, this column is still for you. Read on.



## Aries

Good news: This month it IS all about you.

Possibilities for satisfaction will abound. The catch is that the thrill of glory found through action and will that you crave can only be realized through the alchemical reaction caused by the acceptance of the dreaded "other." Spend some time this month observing the life around you and saying, very sloooowly, "Life is living itself — others do exist." This will safely start your personal love campfire without burning down the whole forest.



## Taurus

This month will bring opportunities to heal the sense of emptiness that you so often try to fill with all that swank furniture and yet another

helping of crème brulee. I see two children sitting on a bridge and one drops his Tootsie Roll into the water. What do you do? Which child are you? Find out. Place your current favorite object of beauty in your hand or mind and ask: "Why do I value this?" Maybe the river always gets the Tootsie Roll. Maybe that's OK.



## Gemini

At this time you can give yourself permission to move so fast that you actually become totally still.

Don't be satisfied with just thinking outside the box; be the box. Be the box and then be the box that the box came in. Buy one and place it in a prominent place in your home. Five minutes a day, ask yourself, "What's in the box?" You were born to give the answer to that particular question to the world.



## Cancer

You are the last to know: The whole "Inner Child" craze is now officially over. Your inner blanket has been sent to Goodwill. Total bummer, huh? Take heart. Soon an inner Mother and Father (once they are over the rather tempestuous honeymoon phase) will give birth to your reintegrated and more joyful worldview. That old blanket is still always waiting in the linen closet of your heart. Cut off and carry a small square daily. Say to yourself: "This piece is big enough to keep whole galaxies warm."



## Leo

Has the fun gone out of being the unquenchable Yule Log of the Universe?

Does a cold mist mask the warmth and comfort you can usually count on? Fire is always born from water, so fear not. That swirling fog is just the steam from your heart melting. It's only the outer shell. Soon, when it dries out, it will start beating again with a softer and steadier light.



## Virgo

This month's theme is much like the old Benny Goodman song, "It's Gotta Be This or That." To judge is

to always stay dissatisfied, bitter, and tied down. Sometimes, even the perfection of a healthy body or a new bottle of Clorox Clean-up doesn't help lighten the strain. Next time, hover in the space between alternative perceptions, until what is eternally pure and spotless steps forward and reveals itself.



## Libra

It is always unnerving when faced with the possibility of acquiring love,

beauty or, at the very least, a really hot pair of shoes, to realize the necessity of also facing reality. Remember what happened to Isadora Duncan and her famous scarf. Death by beauty is still death. Accessorizing appropriately is not always the answer to everything. Sometimes love means going to the opera in your bathrobe to help a friend. Maybe you will get lucky and the color won't clash with the shoes.



## Scorpio

This month Eros will tap-dance into your life like Ruby Keeler in the movie Forty-Second Street —

slightly heavy-footed but still charming. Relax your usual reticence about gifts.

Passion accepted freely without grasping can reveal wonders and transform any dance number into a state of grace act that can sooth your laser-like intensity. Enjoy the show.



## Sagittarius

After all these years of gathering information so you really could "know it all," the result

is rather like a heavy book you carry about or perhaps an overripe fruit just ready to fall. You could make like Alice in Wonderland and eat the book or do an Eve with the apple. You might then discover that ripeness itself is bigger and more satisfying than any mundane knowledge of words, books, or fruit.



## Capricorn

Admit it, you would love to run a monastery. The daily regimen, the assurance of power, all those people in their

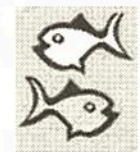
cells, wearing black and respecting your rules. It's your idea of fun. You are now being challenged to outgrow being a container for other people's security. Your real role is to be the door out of those cells and to commune outside in the sun with your friends.



## Aquarius

Just when everyone thought you could not get any weirder, you are drawn into activities that seem odd

— even for you. Once life was good if you could rant on about your new Bavarian cable channels and experience only a modicum of eye rolling. Now you find yourself wondering about poverty and world peace — and even notice something that you could do about it personally. These feelings will persist and you will like it.



## Pisces

No more wandering through the woods in diaphanous clothing and washing your face in the dew from hawthorn

branches to remain forever young. It's going to be more like being jolted awake by the sound of wolves howling in the distance and wondering if the dawn will ever come. You have an old resentment that is festering, and it's getting cranky. Feed the wolves. Surrender and relief are the best facelift ever, and it's wisest to save that see-through number until next spring when we are done with the flu season. ■

### 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?

Our Speaker's Bureau is available for small or large group presentations about the homeless experience. Sponsoring organizations pay speakers a \$35 honorarium.



Weaving together stories from the homeless community, our homeless writer's performance group — **Bedless Bards**—can bring their street poet medley to your organization.

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).

Writers, photographers, illustrators wanted. Call Adam at 441-3247

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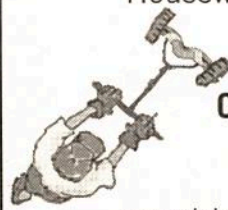


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# January

# Notables

## Thursday 1/9

Bert Sacks, a nine time citizen diplomat to Iraq, will kick off a Thursday night series "Peace on Earth: How?" Co-sponsored by The Center for Contemplation and Nonviolence and Keystone Church, free, donations invited for the presenter. 7:30 - 9 p.m., at Keystone Church, 5019 Keystone Pl. N. All are welcome. Info Eric Calberg 206-632-6021.

## Friday 1/10

Joey Pipia's "Delusions of Grandeur: Physic Surgery for World Peace." Joey will "psychically" attempt to enter George W. Bush and insert a human brain. Everyone will enjoy Joey's skill and zany critiques of today's politics. 7:30 p.m., Friday, Jan. 10 and Saturday, Jan. 11, in the Center House Theater, Seattle Center. Tickets are \$19.50 and available through TicketWindow at 206-325-6500 or <http://www/ticketwindowonline.com>.

## Saturday 1/11

The 2003 legislative session is near. Learn how environmental issues play out in our state legislature and how to impact them by attending the Washington Environmental Council's (WEC) annual **Legislative Workshop**. 9 a.m. - 3 p.m., at the Mountaineers Building, Tahoma Room, 300 3rd Ave. W. Free, please RSVP, Amy Zarrett 206-622-8103 or [amy@wecprotects.org](mailto:amy@wecprotects.org).

## Sunday 1/12

Chellis Glendinning, a recognized political activist, author, poet, and original thinker, will discuss history, psychology, and the environment. A free presentation sponsored by Antioch University Seattle's Center for Creative Change. 2 p.m., at Antioch University, Room 100, 2326 6th Ave. Info 206-268-4906.

## Monday 1/13

Rally to protest the round-ups and detentions of immigrants through INS "Spe-

cial Registration." 5 p.m., at Hing Hay Park, 423 Maynard Ave. S. in the International Dist. Info: Not In Our Name-Seattle 206-984-6256 or <http://www.notinourname-seattle.net>.

Seattle Radical Women are hosting a weekly study group on the book *Revolution, She Wrote*, a collection of essays and speeches by Seattle's Clara Fraser, the founding mother of socialist feminism. Ongoing Mondays, 7 - 8:30 p.m., at the Ethnic Cultural Center, 3931 Brooklyn Ave. N.E., UW campus. Info 206-722-6057 or 206-524-9353.

## Tuesday 1/14

Presentation by Steven Hill, author of *Fixing Elections: the Failure of America's Winner-Take-All Politics*. Mr. Hill will discuss how we can organize locally to take back our representative democracy. 7:30 p.m., at Elliot Bay Books, S. Main and 1st S. in Pioneer Square. Info 206-624-6600.

## Wednesday 1/15

Gabriela Network presents Filipinas Not For Sale, *Modern Day Heroes, Modern Day Slaves*, first of four films on the trafficking and labor export of Filipina women. This film is a behind-the-scenes look at the situation of overseas contract workers. 6 p.m., at Independent Media Center, 1415 3rd Ave., suggested donation \$5-\$10, no one turned away. Info 206-853-8902 or [seattle@gabnet.org](mailto:seattle@gabnet.org).

Splitting the Sky (John Hill), a Mohawk National who was involved in the milestone Attica Prison revolt, and Mark Cook, a former Black Panther and member of the George Jackson Brigade, will speak on life behind bars as political prisoners. 7 p.m., at New Freeway Hall, 5018 Rainier Ave. S., \$3-\$5 donation requested. Info 206-722-2453 or [FSPseattle@mindspring.com](mailto:FSPseattle@mindspring.com).

## Thursday 1/16

Bellevue Community College cel-

brates the life of Dr. Martin Luther King. The primary address will be presented by Carl Mack, newly elected head of the Seattle Chapter of the NAACP. 11:30 a.m. - 1 p.m., at Bellevue Community College, Carlson Theatre, 3000 Landerholm Circle S.E. Info Kathy Colasurdo 425-564-2208 or <http://www.bcc.ctc.edu/mcs/>.

Radical Women hosts a celebration of the anniversary of Roe v. Wade with a special video, *The Pill*, a documentary chronicling little known chapters in the history of oral contraceptives. 7:30 p.m., at New Freeway Hall, 5018 Rainier Ave. S., hearty winter meal with vegetarian option at 6:30 p.m., for \$6.50 donation. Info 206-722-6057.

Glen Milner, of the **Ground Zero Center for Nonviolent Action**, speaks as part of the "Peace on Earth, How?" series. 7:30 p.m., free, all welcome. Keystone United Church of Christ, 5019 Keystone Place North, 206-632-6021.

## Saturday 1/18

Seattle Young People's Project 4th Annual **Martin Luther King Jr. Hip Hop Show**, "Feel Me 2003: Remember, Recognize, Act." 7 p.m. - midnight, at the Vera Project on 4th between Virginia & Stewart. Info 206-860-9606 or <http://www.sypp.org>.

## Sunday 1/19

Seattle Chapter Fellowship of Reconciliation program, with Leah Iraheta, the Executive Director of NW Immigrant Rights Project on "Saints and Sinners: How U.S. Immigration Laws and Policies mythologize and dehumanize immigrants." Potluck dinner 5 p.m., program 6:30 p.m., at Woodland Park Presbyterian Church, 225 N. 70th. Info 206-789-5565.

## Monday 1/20

**Martin Luther King Jr. Rally and March**, with music, talks, and workshops; one of the largest celebrations in the nation. The theme is MLK's "Call to Consciousness: Support the Poor, No More War." Workshops 9:30 a.m., rally 11 a.m., march noon starting at Garfield High School. Info 206-314-0719 or CAMP 206-812-4940. Wednesday 1/22

## Wednesday 1/22

Gabriela Network presents Filipinas Not For Sale, *A Saudi Slave*, 2nd of four films on the trafficking and labor export of Filipina Women. This film follows a Filipina woman's journey from a recruitment center in Manila to her horrific existence in Saudi Arabia. 6 p.m., at Independent Media Center, 1415 3rd Ave., \$5-\$10 suggested donation, no one turned away. Info 206-853-8902.

30th Anniversary of Roe v. Wade celebration, a comedy-variety show featuring Suddenly Susan star Kathy Griffin and Peggy Plat: "Fighting for Choice One Joke at a Time." Co-sponsored by Feminist Women's Health Center and Community Abortion Information and Referral (CAIR). 8 p.m., at Town Hall Seattle, at 8th and Seneca, tickets \$35. Proceeds benefit CAIR and Feminist Women's Health Center, both are charitable non-profit organizations. Info <http://www.fwhc.org/Kathy-griffin.htm>.

## Friday 1/24

"The Fair Hearing Process: How to successfully represent your client or help your client represent him/herself," a workshop for social service providers working with homeless clients by the City of Seattle Human Services Dept. Homeless Training Program. Presented by Anne Dederer, JD. 9:30 a.m. - noon, at East Cherry YWCA, 2820 E. Cherry St., bus lines 3 and 8. RSVP required, call 206-386-1146.

## Ongoing

Peace Vigil and leafleting to protest U.S. policy in Afghanistan, Palestine/Israel, and Iraq by Women in Black. Women wear black, men welcome to stand on the side or leaflet. 5 - 6 p.m., every Thursday, at Westlake Park near 4th & Pine. 206-208-9715 or <http://www.scn.org/~wibnw>.

Vietnam Veterans Against the War Anti-Imperialist will be doing anti-war tabling. Noon - 3 p.m., every Saturday, at Westlake Park near 4th & Pine. All are welcome to help. Info [vwvawai@oz.net](mailto:vwvawai@oz.net). ■

## Computer Corner



### Sign up for Classes NOW!

The Mac Workshop has two FREE classes open to all:

**Introduction to Macintosh:** Learn or brush up on your word-processing and writing skills while using Microsoft Word and Internet-based tools like email and online search engines. Students are encouraged to bring in specific projects or areas they need help with. Mondays and

Wednesdays, 3:30-4:30.

**Introduction to Photoshop:** Receive basic training on Photoshop application, an ideal program for artists and others who are interested in graphic design and publication. Clients have used Photoshop to create greeting cards and have work published in the *Real Change* newspaper. Saturdays, 1:30-2:30.

All classes will be on Macintosh computers and will be held at 2129 Second Avenue, Seattle.

For more information, contact Sal at (206) 441-3247 ext. 205, or [macworkshop@realchangenews.org](mailto:macworkshop@realchangenews.org).

## Need help around the house?



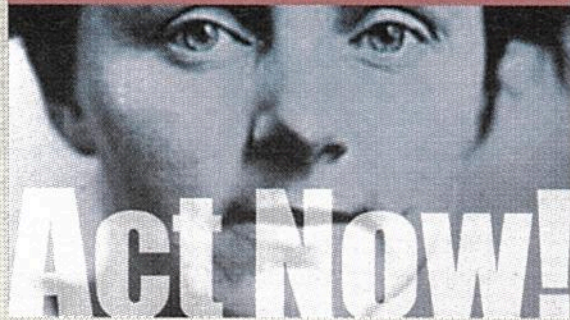
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## Help Increase Access to Education for Low-Income Parents

**Issue:** The Washington state Gaining Independence (GI) bill for families will create a program to help low-wage parents access the additional financial aid necessary to help them succeed in accessing higher education at our state's colleges, and therefore getting the training necessary to qualify for a living wage job.

**Background:** Many parents in our state struggle in low-wage work, unable to afford the education they need to get a living wage job. Simultaneously, businesses need more educated workers to fill skilled positions. The GI Bill not only helps to train the workforce but also addresses one of the root causes of poverty: lack of access to education.

This new state policy would recognize the high-quality training opportunities provided by our community, technical, and four-year colleges and the important role they play in helping working families achieve a better future. The GI Bill for Families helps address the following four conditions that are making it increasingly difficult for many low-wage working parents to adequately support their families and gain independence.

1. Tens of thousands of low-wage working parents in our state do not earn adequate wages to provide the essentials of life and adequate financial security for their families. Many of these working parents are employed in occupations, firms, and industries that do not offer realistic opportunities to substantially increase their earnings without additional education and training.
2. The equivalent of just two years of post-secondary education and training provides the minimum skill level needed for most living wage jobs in our increasingly technological economy. About 40 years ago, a high school diploma and a willingness to work allowed most Americans to support their families in an adequate way. Today, many hard working low-wage working parents need better opportunities to obtain these higher levels of skills and education.
3. Workers need to upgrade their skills periodically in order to remain competitive in our rapidly changing economy. The days of workers spending an entire career with one firm or within one occupation are largely gone. Consequently, large numbers of low-wage workers, as well as many higher paid workers, face periodic threats to their economic well-being based on industry restructuring and technological changes.
4. Our federal and state financial aid programs create major barriers for low-wage working parents to gain access to critically needed post-secondary education and training to find and retain family wage jobs.

**Action:** Contact your state representative by phone, fax, or email and let them know that they should support the GI Bill for Families. Feel free to use some or all of the following text in your message to your legislator.

Dear Representative,

As a voting resident of your district, I am writing to ask you to support the Gaining Independence Bill for Families. Many parents in our state work in low-wage jobs, unable to afford going to school to get the education they need to get a living wage job. By providing financial aid for low-income parents to go to school full time, the Gaining Independence Bill gives parents the opportunity to spend time with their families while also working toward self-sufficiency.

This investment will give families economic opportunity while expanding our tax base and boosting our state's economy. Please support the Gaining Independence Bill for Families. I look forward to receiving a response from you with your position on this proposal.

For a list of your local state Representative's contact information, go to [www.leg.wa.gov](http://www.leg.wa.gov). For more information on the proposed bill, visit the Statewide Poverty Action Network's website at [www.fremontpublic.org/SPAN/gibill\\_form.html](http://www.fremontpublic.org/SPAN/gibill_form.html). ■

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# Mockingbird Times



Building a world class foster care system while serving our neighborhood youth



JANUARY 2003

Foster Care and Homeless Youth Speak out Across the Nation

VOLUME III, ISSUE 1

VISIT US ONLINE AT [WWW.MOCKINGBIRDSOCIETY.ORG](http://WWW.MOCKINGBIRDSOCIETY.ORG)

## Helping Kids Before They Lash Out

BRITTANY V. LUCAS

**ALEX AND DEREK KING** were only 13 and 14 respectively when they killed their father, Terry King, with an aluminum baseball bat and set fire to their Pensacola, Florida, home. By that time, both the boys' family and the Department of Children and Family Services (DCF) had already abandoned the two brothers. As a result of their father's inability to provide care and their mother's refusal to take responsibility for them, the boys were placed in a receiving home in 1994.

Both boys endured separate fates without the support of each other. Derek King was placed into foster care until his foster parents gave up on him, saying that he was a "trouble maker" and "perpetual con-man." When Alex was then placed back with his father, Alex reportedly suffered physical abuse from his father and sexual molestation at the hands of a neighbor and long-time friend of the family, 40 year old Ricky Chavis.

When Derek was sent home to live with his father, he reported that he was shocked at the treatment that Alex was suffering from his father. Derek alleged that Chavis encouraged his younger brother to skip school and run away from home. Alex admitted to being "lovers" with Chavis and that Chavis encouraged them to kill Terry King.

Both Alex and Derek were found guilty of second degree murder and sentenced to life with the chance

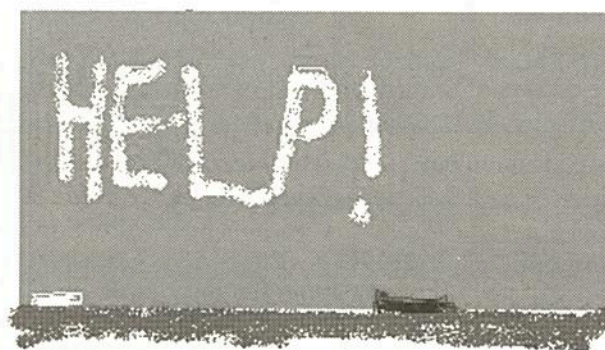
of parole. Rosie O' Donnell, led by an advocacy group for youth in foster care, hired a team of skilled lawyers and was able to get the ruling appealed. The boys were ultimately convicted of third degree murder — with only the intent to batter — resulting in Alex's sentence decreased to six years while Derek's was decreased to seven years. Both teens will be serving their sentence in the state prison.

This isn't the first time children have been sentenced to rot in jail. Lionel Tate was 12 when he killed his 6 year old friend Tiffany Enick by imitating wrestling moves he saw on television. He was tried as an adult and sentenced to a mandatory sentence of life in prison. Soon after Tate's trial, 14 year old Nathaniel Brazil was tried as an adult for first degree murder for the classroom shooting of teacher Barry Grunow.

### Foster Youth Graduates

All the above mentioned youth, though different in race and crime, had one similarity: At one time or another, they all were involved in the DCF system. The Child Welfare League of America conducted a survey in 1999 and found that 12 year olds involved in foster care or out of home care are 67 times more likely than other youth to be arrested for any given offense.

Though the foster youth system has advanced from the days when residential facilities like the Institution to Reform Depraved and Vicious Youth in Washington



State (the name says it all) was one of the few placements for foster youth having difficulties, the system still has too many potholes.

You have to question the management of a system where 60 percent of the youth exiting do so without a high school diploma or GED and where the average pay of direct service and group home staff is only \$9 an hour. Social services doesn't retain too many skilled people willing to work for peanuts in high stress situations.

The fact is that the foster care system in many states are overwhelmed and under funded. These are systems that are breeding the largest percentage of criminal, homeless, psychologically traumatized, and damaged youth. Often adoption is not an option for foster kids.

KING CONTINUED ON PAGE 3

## It's Like Stealing Candy from a Baby... or Is It?

DENNIS FISHER

**THE CASE** has been going on for more than 10 years, and has gone through the Okanogan Superior Court, and the Washington State Supreme Court, and as of December 3, has landed into the hands of the U.S. Supreme Court. The case is a complicated one. Can the Washington State Department of Social and Health Services (DSHS) take the Social Security benefits from foster care youth and spend them to provide care for the youth?

### The Current Case

The current case originates from a Washington youth who was placed into the foster care system after his mother died: Danny Keffeler. Because his mother had died, he began to receive Social Security benefits. His grandmother became a representative payee, and set up a trust fund, with the benefits being deposited each month. But then the state stepped in claiming representative payee status due to the fact that the state was paying for Danny's foster care. The checks stopped coming, prompting Danny's grandmother to bring about a lawsuit against DSHS. The suit has since gained class action status, and has gone through several courts before landing in the U.S. Supreme Court.

Thirty-nine other states, the Children's Defense Fund, Child Welfare League of America, and Catholic Charities have all taken the states' side.

### Possible Repercussions

Since the case is class action, the ruling from the Supreme Court will be affecting all of the foster youth in Washington (and possibly all U.S. foster youth).

If the courts rule in favor of Danny Keffeler, then the states may have to pay back billions of dollars in benefits taken since 1975. This would likely lead to enormous cuts to current services, for two reasons: not only would the states be taking a huge chunk out of their budget to pay back past benefits, but they would be receiving no future benefits, reducing the long-term budget. 🐦

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*No one to see me*

By Aurora Jellum

Founded in Seattle, Washington, 2001

### About Social Security Benefits

**ONE TYPE** of Social Security Administration (SSA) benefits that are under scrutiny is Survivors Benefits. If a family member that was supporting them has died, a child can receive Survivors Benefits if he or she is unmarried and under the age of 18, or if he or she is no older than 19 and is in full time elementary or secondary school. The other type of SSA benefits that are currently being looked at is Supplemental Security Income (SSI). To qualify for SSI, the child in question must be disabled, as well as meet certain income requirements.

In both cases, the information on [www.ssa.gov](http://www.ssa.gov) suggests that the money is for immediate care. In the case of Survivors Benefits, this makes sense since the reason they are being paid out is because the benefits are to replace income that was generated by the deceased family member. In the case of SSI this also makes sense, as it's generally harder for disabled individuals to find work, and when their income reaches a certain level they are no longer eligible for SSI.

For either type of benefit, a representative payee can be appointed. To quote the SSA's website: "Generally, we look for family or friends to serve in this capacity. When friends and family are not able to serve as payee, Social Security looks for qualified organizations to be a representative payee." 🐦



## Letter from the Editor

**"EVEN IF YOU'RE on the right path, if you're not moving you're bound to get run over."** (Will Rogers)

2003 finds the *Mockingbird Times* flying to virtually every state in the nation. Thanks to a lot of hard work and a grant from the Jim Casey Foundation, the *Mockingbird Times* may well be the only monthly newspaper distributed across the entire country that is written and produced by youth who are or have been in the foster care system. The first issue of the *Mockingbird Times* hit the streets of Seattle and parts of Washington State in August 2001 with a circulation of 11,000. This current issue has a circulation of 26,000 and, have I mentioned, will be delivered to every state in the USA.

The Mockingbird Society is dedicated to building a world class foster care system, where kids can do more than survive but actually thrive. The agenda of the Mockingbird Society includes

reducing multiple placements, keeping siblings together whenever possible, recruiting and retaining quality foster parent(s), and improving culturally competency, family involvement, and educational achievement among foster children. The *Mockingbird Times* is the vehicle, and the power is in the voices, experiences, and knowledge of the young people who have lived in foster care. The experience of being removed from one's family because of abuse and/or neglect only to be separated from all siblings and extended family, "placed" with strangers only to be moved again for reasons that make no sense to a 15 year old much less an 8 year old.

**"Give a fish and feed them for a day; teach them to fish and feed them for a life time."**

Beyond being a public education and advocacy tool, the *Mockingbird Times* is the quintessential youth development program. The *Mockingbird Times* pays youth employees between \$7 and \$8.50 an hour for up to 15 hours per week. Youth receive training and mentoring from professional journalists and writers as well as training from legal experts in the areas of the First Amendment and the Freedom of Information Act. Youth from across the nation are enthusiastically invited to submit their articles, poetry, artwork, or photography and will be paid up to \$25 for anything we publish.

Providing meaningful and challenging

employment promotes hope, confidence, and marketable skills, which are the seeds of self-sufficiency. What an amazing gift it has been to watch some of the most marginalized youth respond to a *real* job with *real* expectations in the effort to make a *real* difference while earning *real* money.

**"I never wanted to join any club that would allow me as a member."** (Groucho Marks)

Don't wait! Contact the Mockingbird Society ([www.mockingbirdsociety.org](http://www.mockingbirdsociety.org)) and join the social justice movement to build a foster care system that is based in unconditional care. Subscribe to the *Mockingbird Times* so it comes directly to your home or program. Distribute the paper to your neighbors, colleagues, or policy makers. And of course, you can donate and help us keep this bird flying.

On behalf of Mockingbird, I thank all of you wonderful folks in Washington State who have supported us, and I welcome all of you across our great nation who care about the fate of kids in foster care. We're on the right path — let's get moving!



Jim Theofelis



**"If opportunity doesn't knock,  
build a door."**

— Milton Berle  
1908-2002

Do you have a story for the *Mockingbird Times*? Or a comment on a story you've seen in our paper?

Let us know!

Give us a call at (206) 323-5437 or email us at [news@mockingbirdsociety.org](mailto:news@mockingbirdsociety.org).

### ABOUT US:

The Mockingbird Society is a private non-profit organization dedicated to building a world class foster care system and improving the other systems that serve children and adolescents in foster care. The *Mockingbird Times* is a monthly newspaper that is written and produced by youth who have experience in foster care and/or homelessness. All youth employees of Mockingbird Society are paid between \$7 and \$8.50 an hour. Additionally, youth from across the country submit articles, art work, poetry and are compensated up to \$25 per published piece. The *Mockingbird Times* has a monthly circulation of 26,000 copies being distributed across Washington and the U.S.A. Youth involvement is key to the philosophy, values and success of The Mockingbird society and as such youth are involved in all aspects of organizational development and decision-making. All donations to The Mockingbird Society are tax-deductible and greatly appreciated. No part of the *Mockingbird Times* may be reproduced without the written permission of The Mockingbird Society. All contents copyright 2002 The Mockingbird Society.

## Meet Our Staff

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### TECHNICAL ADVISOR

Molly Rhodes

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### CONTRIBUTING WRITERS

Aurora Jellum

### THANK YOUS

*Real Change*, Valerie Douglas, Siri Throm Saxe, Virginia Mason-Bellevue Clinic staff — Dr. Alan Rothblatt, KayCee Olson, Lynn Rabe

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## Join the Mockingbird Society: make a difference in the lives of Washington's most vulnerable youth

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**Meet the Staff**  
Brittany Lucas



**Tell us a little bit about yourself.**

I am an 18-year-old college student who is aiming for higher things. I have been working for the Mockingbird Society for a year and as the *Mockingbird Times* has grown, so have I.

I have received my GED, finished my first semester in college, moved into my own residence, and held steady employment during the last year. I am an avid writer and reader of anything, except for poetry. A year ago, my favorite writer was V.C. Andrews and now it is Maya Angelou. In addition to reading and writing, I also enjoy typing, public speaking, swimming, running, traveling, and thinking.

**What are some issues you find important?**

One of the issues that I find most important is the plight of homeless youth in third world countries. I also feel that human rights are often disregarded in the pursuit of power and profit.

**What is your experience with being homeless or in the foster care system?**

I first got involved in the foster care system as a young teenager. I eventually found myself so displeased with the system that I began to runaway. After running away cross country from two placements I was put into, I was cast into the uncaring hands of the juvenile justice and residential care system, which led me to seek refuge on the streets of Seattle. Drugs and crime never appealed to me. I was on the streets to seek a better life, which through perseverance I eventually found.

**If you could change one thing about the system, what would it be?**

I would get rid of rigid treatment facilities and completely reform the juvenile justice system to be less of a punishment and more of an aid for youth to improve their lives through seeking out employment, educational, and counseling opportunities. I feel that the best way to help a youth who is having trouble is to give them a way out instead of building walls around them.

**Why did you join the Mockingbird Society?**

I joined the Mockingbird Society to get paid for what I love doing and to advocate for social change in the out-of-home care system.

**What is your biggest New Year's Resolution for 2003?**

My New Year's Resolutions for 2003 is to complete my freshmen year in college, improve my algebra, and make more money! 🐦

**Meet the Staff: Jessica Gunning**

**Tell us a little bit about yourself.**

My name is Jessica and I am 18 years old. I've been in foster care since I was 14. I currently live in Bellevue, WA, in a foster home under a voluntary placement agreement. Since I am still in high school, I can continue to live in a foster home until I graduate. Before I came to live in the home I am in now, I was staying in an emergency teen shelter here in Bellevue.

**What are some issues you find important?**

I think that issues about school are important, issues about children and animals are important, and issues about foster care and shelter programs are important, too.

**What is your experience with being homeless or in the foster care system?**

I was taken away from my parents after a trip to the emergency room caused by my mom. The doctor reported to Child Protective Services that my mother had hit me. Since then, there has been no more abuse and things in my life have improved dramatically. I would have to say that my foster care experience has been a good experience for me.

**If you could change one thing about the system, what would it be?**

If I could change just one thing about the foster care system, it would have to be the money side of it. I would definitely make sure that there were more funds available for all aspects of the system.

**Why did you join the Mockingbird Society?**

I joined because the opportunity was there for me, and because I feel that this will be a great learning experience!

**What is your biggest New Year's Resolution for 2003?**

I would have to say that my biggest New Year's Resolution for 2003 is to learn to manage my money better! 🐦



**KING CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1**

Babies and young children are sought out in abundance, while too many older children and adolescents are rejected and forced to spend years being passed between dozens of foster care and group homes. Unstable living conditions could cause anyone great mental discomfort, much less young people who are already suffering from abuse and neglect issues.

**The Mockingbird Society Advocates for Change**

The current system in foster care is not working. The voices and concerns of kids are not being heard and so the system continues to hinder the success of potentially hundreds of thousands of young people. The problems in the foster care system that hurt the King brothers are the problems that the Mockingbird Society hopes to fix with its model of community based foster and group homes. The Mockingbird Society is an organization that was founded on not only giving young people a forum to voice their concerns and experiences in the foster care system, but to also advocate for dramatic change in the organization of the foster care system itself.

In addition to addressing major dilemmas in the foster care and homeless youth system — such as lack of funding, sibling separation, multiple placements, and education — the Mockingbird Society also wishes to provide training for foster parents and group home staff. Because there are many youth who come into the system already traumatized, it is important to make sure that service providers are skilled and prepared for those issues that many youth present.

The Mockingbird's name was taken from the book written by Harper Lee, *To Kill a Mockingbird*. In her book, she pondered upon an interesting thought, "Why would anyone want to hurt a mockingbird if all they do is sing beautiful music for all of us to hear?" Harper Lee was addressing a very crucial argument in the support for human rights. Why can't people be treated with respect and dignity without fearing to be themselves? So if mockingbirds are allowed to sing without being shot down, then why can't kids in the system be allowed to grow without being shot down either? 🐦

**Meet the Staff:**  
Kevin Griffin

**Tell us a little bit about yourself.**

My name is Kevin Griffin and I'm 21 years old. I like to try new things. I like to set my goals and accomplish them. I like to go to the movies, hang at the mall, and spend time with my brother Robert and my cousin Shaun. I love music and to volunteer in my community.

**What are some issues you find important?**

I'm concerned about what is happening with older foster kids, what is happening in group homes, and how I can make a difference.

**What is your experience with being homeless or in the foster care system?**

My experience was bad; I was the oldest of 8 kids. I was 13 and the rest were 6 to 9 years old. I couldn't call or see my friends because their families didn't want to have to go through a background check.

**If you could change one thing about the system, what would it be?**

I would have them listen to the opinions of youth of all ages.

**Why did you join the Mockingbird Society?**

I want to make an impact and a change in society. I want to change the system of group homes and foster care.

**What is your biggest New Year's Resolution for 2003?**

I want to succeed in everything I do. 🐦





### Meet the Staff: Shay Deney



**Tell us a little bit about yourself.**

My name is Shay Deney. I am a student at UDYC Interagency School. I am currently working very hard to earn my diploma at the end of this school year. I am honest and reliable. I also volunteer at

the Seattle Aquarium and I am hoping to eventually earn my Ph.D. in marine biology.

**What are some issues you find important?**

Homelessness is definitely a huge issue. I also think that hate crimes, pollution, the loss of natural habitats, child abuse, and education funding are big issues.

**What is your experience with being homeless or in the foster care system?**

I was homeless between the ages of 14 and 17 years old. I depended fully on the help of shelters, feeds, and drop-in centers.

**If you could change one thing about the system, what would it be?**

I don't believe the system is very honest all of the time. I would change that honesty issue.

**Why did you join the Mockingbird Society?**

I joined the Mockingbird Society because I love to write and to educate people. I'm hoping that through my writings I can expose some serious issues and educate people about them.

**What is your biggest New Year's resolution for 2003?**

My biggest New Year's resolution for 2003 is to finally earn my diploma and enroll in a community college.

### Meet the Staff: William Nelson



**Tell us a little bit about yourself.**

I am currently 19 years old, living outside of foster care. I plan to go to massage school sometime in the near future.

**What are some issues you find important?**

I think that it's important for foster children to have a safe and appropriate place to live while still in the foster system and after they have left.

**What is your experience with being homeless or in the foster care system?**

I was in the foster care system from 1998 to 2001. I had many different caseworkers, but not always a place to live.

**If you could change one thing about the system, what would it be?**

I think that people should have a little bit more involvement and a say in what happens to foster children in their community. If they were more aware, negative situations might be avoided.

**Why did you join the Mockingbird Society?**

I joined the Mockingbird Society to be a part of a group of young adults who have been through what I have been through and would like to make a difference for current and future kids in the system.

**What is your biggest New Year's resolution for 2003?**

A few of my New Year's resolutions would be to:

- Win the LOTTO ☺
- Cut down on nicotine and caffeine
- Gain weight ☺ 🐣

### Meet the Staff: Dennis Fisher



**Tell us a little bit about yourself.**

I'm 18 years old, and I've been between shelters, the streets, and transitional homes for the past four years. I like reading, writing, computer games, computers in general, and music. I listen to industrial, pop-punk, ska-core, and some weird type of orchestra that I don't know how to name

(Godspeed You Black Emperor is one example though.)

**What are some issues you find important?**

I find issues with the foster care system to be important; anything and everything. I've never been in

foster care, and I'd never considered it, because I'd heard nothing but bad things about the state. Therefore I find fixing the foster care system important.

**What is your experience with being homeless or in the foster care system?**

I've been out of home since I was 14, and in that time I've lived on the streets, in shelters, in transitional housing, and in one case a boat.

**If you could change one thing about the system, what would it be?**

I would try to get more homes for foster youth, with an emphasis on getting homes where siblings could live together.

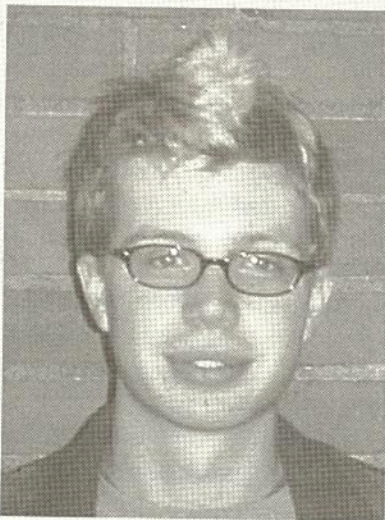
**Why did you join the Mockingbird Society?**

I joined the Mockingbird Society because it seemed like a good place to be able to write, and gave me an ability to make a difference while I did so. I was also enticed with the incentive of being able to work on the website, which I have since done.

**What is your biggest New Year's resolution for 2003?**

I don't like the idea of having one time a year to make a resolution, but I'd have to say my current resolution is getting things together to get out of transitional housing and into my own apartment. And drink more Pepsi Blue. I'm only averaging one liter a day out of two liters total, which is unacceptable! 🐣

### Meet the Staff: Joshua Passmore



**Tell us a little about yourself.**

My name is Joshua. I am 19 years old and I am a Free and Independent person. I love to read and I believe that's where I get most of my knowledge. Books by Jack Kerouac, William Burroughs, and Jim Carroll inspire me to write. I am also a singer/songwriter, and I am in the process of becoming an independent filmmaker. I want to be known and understood one day. I want to be pure.

**What are some issues you find important?**

I find it important that people advocate and stand up for what they believe in. I understand if you want something done, and you find issues important, you must speak out. I believe everyone has something to say.

**What is your experience with being homeless or in the foster care system?**

Being homeless can be hard. Everyone seems to think you put yourself in the situation. Most people don't choose to be homeless and face tough decisions that people who are not homeless or not in foster care don't have to deal with.

**If you could change one thing about the system, what would it be?**

I believe more services should be out there to get vulnerable youth off the street and into a more stable environment.

**Why did you join Mockingbird Society?**

I love to advocate for human rights and speak my mind on things that I find important.

**What is your biggest New Year's Resolution for 2003?**

To understand my purpose in life and to make myself known. 🐣

### Poetry Corner

● I look around  
 ● And I see groups of friends  
 ● I look at me  
 ● And see no one  
 ● My heart is aching so bad  
 ● No one understands me  
 ● They look at me  
 ● I wonder what they see  
 ● I don't cut and I don't cry  
 ● I hold it all in  
 ● It is hard  
 ● I wish it would stop  
 ● It brings me to my knees  
 ● I am rotting away  
 ● And just disappearing

— AURORA JELLUM