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Puget Sound's Newspaper of the Poor and Homeless • Volume 10, No. 12

Seriously Sherman

How did he get so pissed off poet talks
about war, terror, tradition, and what's so
great about America anyway?

Inside: Public Schools in Crisis • Seniors Fight Rem
of the Devil • The Challenge to Compton • Rememberin

PHOTO OF SHERMAN ALEXIE, BY ROB CASEY.

Interview by Timothy Harris

Award-winning author Sherman Alexie has never been one to sit still for long. Over the past decade, this 36-year-old Coeur d'Alene Indian from Spokane has established himself as a major literary voice through his poetry, novels, short stories, and movies. His new book of short stories, *Ten Little Indians*, will be released by Grove/Atlantic in June. It contains "What You Pawn I will Redeem," a story recently published in *The New Yorker* that features a *Real Change* vendor as the central character. Alexie is currently working on two biographies, one on guitar-phenomenon Jimi Hendrix, and the other on his own grandfather, a highly decorated World War II veteran.

Alexie is a passionate, funny, politically committed personality who challenges the certitudes of both right and left, arriving at a politics that transcends easy definition. In this interview, Sherman discusses his own success, politics and identity, and tells us why, after everything, America is still a great country.

Real Change: First of all, I'd like your opinion on something that comes up a lot these days. George Bush: Do you think he's as dumb as he looks?

Sherman Alexie: I don't think he's dumb. I think he has probably slightly above-average intelligence. But that's hardly a qualification for President of the United States and the Most Powerful

Man in the World. I think compared to the average middle-manager, the average CPA, the average lawyer, Dubya fits in well, but compared to Clinton or 90 percent of the men and women in the Senate, Dubya is far less intelligent.

In the words of his own former chief speechwriter, David Frum, Dubya is "uncurious." So it's not so much a matter of his intelligence as

his intellectual ambition.

RC: What do you think got him where he is?

Alexie: (Laughs) Luck. The other day I was arguing with somebody, one of my gym friends and a conservative, and he was talking about Dubya's accomplishment. And I said, "He hasn't really done that much. I mean, if your father's President of the United States, and you become President of the United States, you haven't really done much. To match my father all I would have had to do is have spotty blue-collar employment for 40 years. So he didn't rise above his father. He didn't become a priest, or a poet. He didn't branch out into anything new or exciting. He's daddy's son."

RC: He went into the family business.

Alexie: Yeah, exactly. They just needed a figurehead. I mean, there are conservative politicians I respect and admire, even if I don't agree with their politics necessarily. And then there are those conservative politicians, and liberals too, who completely exist as figureheads, as symbols. Reagan was a sym-

bol. A powerful symbol, but he had nothing to do with his policies. Part of it was due to his Alzheimer's, I'm sure, but he never served on boards. He never was the intellectual they call to speak on this or that policy. It's the same thing with Dubya. After he's done, it's eight and done, and he'll exist merely as a symbol.

RC: You've said that recent events have made you suspicious of tradition, and that you are trying to let go of "the idea of being right." What are some of the questions that the American response to September 11th has raised for you?

Alexie: The idea of responding as a tribe. Immediately, that day, I was suspicious when the word heroes started popping up. That made the victims into symbols and not human beings.

I do a comedy bit about it: don't you think that, out of all the people who died, there was at least one major asshole? At least one major asshole? Don't you think, of all the people who died, there's one whose kids are quietly celebrating? Don't you think there's at

Continued on Page 8

Look for the Mockingbird Times Inside!

MAIL BAG

2129 2nd Ave., 98121
rchange@speakeasy.org

What do you see?

Dear *Real Change*,

First, thanks to *Real Change* for its articles on peace activity in Seattle ("What Now?", May 1-14, 2003). Once again you show yourself to be more informative and proactive in coverage than most all of your more moneyed newspaper competition.

I'd like to respond to Linda Elsner's question about what actions would increase participation of people of color in peace movement activities. The way to increase participation is by per-

sonal contacts: come to our places, meet with individuals and groups, and talk honestly about mutual interests as equals. Yes, even the peace movement has its power differentials. It might take work, including recognizing ignorance, racism, and other biases where they lie: in all of us. The fruits could be plentiful and let's face it, only the Bushes, Husseins, and Sharons of the world benefit by our failure to do so.

What occurred at a peace vigil at Greenlake is precisely what will not bring us together. I am Black and have been involved in varied kinds of peace activity. This day, I was preparing to sit with the meditators as I had many times. I had a candle and holder and wanted to make a small altar. I went to standing vigilers, candle in hand, asking for a match. Physically, I'm a very tall, large, and brown-skinned woman who was wearing a hooded rainsuit (too short) over my clothing. The response I got was one that homeless people and Black teens would immediately recognize.

With few exceptions, the good, liberal, well-meaning White peace folk (and I do believe they were all of these) not only ignored me, but refused to turn their heads to look at me. After walking a few yards away, some made a half-glance back to see if I was following

them. Did they see a poor person about to beg? A gang-banger? A potential thief? An insane person? They certainly didn't see another person concerned about U.S. militarism and loss of precious Iraqi and American lives through war and economic violence.

Dustin Washington was right in refusing to play the "what do you people want" game with Elsner. He and Bert Sacks (for different reasons) seemed to be saying the same important thing: The "peace movement" can only grow weaker until we realize and act on the reality that everyone must be listened to, understood, and have their concerns incorporated in order to develop a less violent, more equal future.

Elaine Rose
Seattle

A quick note

Dear *Real Change*,

Keep up the good coverage, like the story on Martin Luther King's execution ("An Act of State," April 3-16, 2003). And the critical coverage of city government and its impact on housing.

Carolee

(note included with donation to *Real Change*)

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Real Change

Puget Sound's Voice of the
Poor and Homeless

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<http://www.realchangenews.org>
Email rchange@speakeasy.org
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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, 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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Spoiling Our Schools

Olchefske, School Board, Alliance for Education share responsibility for Seattle Public Schools' financial mess

By Sally Soriano

By now, everyone knows that Seattle Schools Superintendent Joseph Olchefske, his senior staff, and the Seattle School Board lost at least \$35 million (and still counting). When the \$35 million loss was first announced, last October, the downtown corporate interest group Alliance for Education gave Olchefske strong support. So did six of the seven School Board members.

Despite his flagrant mismanagement of student education dollars, Olchefske refused to resign all winter. In April, a no-confidence resolution was approved by 85 percent of the teachers. Unbelievably, the Board, except for Board Director Mary Bass, continued to support him. It was only after auditor Moss Adams made Olchefske's role in the debacle clear that Olchefske finally resigned. And what was the straw that broke the camel's back? Olchefske had used fantasy numbers to balance the books and had ignored the state law which requires a "real" budget be submitted to the board every month.

Why would the School Board and the Alliance for Education give Olchefske such high ratings in the face of such clear malfeasance? It is curious that former School Board President Don Nielsen, who runs the Alliance for Education and has been dictating school policy since the days of Superintendent Stanford (when Olchefske was Chief Financial Officer), is now selling educational products to the district. As a local PBS board member, Nielsen is also in the middle of the scandal at KCTS, where, like in Olchefske's case, criticism is being leveled at the station's former top manager for running the operation like a private fiefdom and completely mismanaging the books.

Under the Alliance for Education's Seattle Schools transformation plan, the district is in a dismal mess. This plan has brought to the district a corporate culture of top-down decision-making, changing staff titles to "Chief" or "CEO." The Alliance for Education's arrogant attitude has created situations, such as Adams reported, where people in the finance department have been afraid to even talk to Olchefske.

Even though he resigned, Olchefske is being allowed by the Board to stay on until October. Under his leadership, this corporate culture model continues to impact our schools and classroom teaching. Olchefske and his staff's idea of education is like that used in manufacturing: just produce a product — high WASL scores.

Olchefske, Nielsen, and six members of the current Board still refuse to listen to Seattle Education Association teachers, other school workers, the executive committee of the Principals Association, parents, and students. Yet for each decision, they have no trouble taking direction from the Alliance for Education. The Alliance was fully behind Olchefske and the Board moving the district administration building from prime Queen Anne property to its new location in the old Post Office south of Pioneer Square. This move was unnecessary and costly, but it worked well for Olchefske and Nielsen's real estate friends. It was not in the interest of students and teachers. Several weeks ago, 178 teachers were laid off, drastically increasing teacher workloads and causing turmoil in every school. The cost of the new administration building could have easily paid those teachers' salaries.

An organization that represents concerned parents from North, South, West, and East Seattle, Citizens for Effective Administration of Seattle Education (CEASE), is now pursuing legal action against the district, insisting that:

- Olchefske be replaced immediately so that he cannot wreck the 2003-2004 budget nor continue to lower school district morale.
- A new superintendent be found who understands that education has to be collaborative, that it cannot be autocratic, and who listens to parents and the community and then incorporates their input into planning.

This local corporate attack on the Seattle Public Schools, engineered by Nielsen, Olchefske, and the Alliance for Education, has inevitably reached an Enronesque conclusion. It is time to put an end to the arrogant whims of the few who are ruining our schools and put the "Public" back in Seattle Public Schools. Join with CEASE to change the School Board in this fall's election and to get competent, responsible leadership into our school district now. ■

Sally Soriano is a public interest lobbyist, Coordinator of People for Fair Trade, and a member of CEASE. For more information, call CEASE at: (206)547-4799 or see www.cease.org, www.soscoalition.org or www.seattleschoolsobserver.org.

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5/29/03

The door swings shut

The Seattle Housing Authority (SHA) will temporarily close its waiting list for federal housing vouchers, citing an ebbing tide of federal funds.

Having laid off half its regular staff, the agency's 10-person Admissions Office can't both review new applications and issue vouchers to people waiting for housing, says SHA spokesman Ryan Spear.

"We're trying to get people vouchers as fast as we possibly can. It takes us a long time to get new applications complete, to make sure everything is ready," he says. Without new applications coming in, "We'll speed up and focus just on the people on the list now."

Currently, 4,600 people are on that list — homeless, living in transitional housing, or paying more than 30 percent of their income in rent — waiting an estimated three years for what's called a Section 8 voucher. Vouchers guarantee that the federal Department of Housing and Urban Development will make up the difference between the landlord's monthly rates — in King County, the average rent for a one-bedroom apartment is \$750 — and whatever a low-income tenant can afford.

About 4,500 Seattle residents use Section 8 vouchers. Turnover is small; 18 to 20 of them relinquish their vouchers each month. SHA says that, for now, such turnover will be the only new source of Section 8 available.

In the late 1990s, Congress lessened its emphasis on subsidizing the traditional public housing agencies in order to increase the supply of Section 8 vouchers distributed nationwide. But this spring, the Bush Administration proposed cutting 100,000 vouchers from the fiscal year 2004 federal budget, according to the National Low Income Housing Coalition. As Congress prepares a spending package to accommodate its \$318 billion in tax cuts, it's fine-tuning the details on just how many Section 8 vouchers will survive. It's an important issue: vouchers ease the pain of a high-end rental market and allow poor residents to stay after their neighborhoods go upscale.

SHA estimates that the waiting list will remain closed for at least a year. "We will begin accepting applications for vouchers as soon as it is clear that doing so would benefit the people we serve," says Kathy Roseth, director of PorchLight, SHA's service center, in a prepared statement. "As always, we will do everything we can to award as many vouchers as possible, as quickly as possible."

As the waiting list shrinks, SHA may have an easier time doing its job. "Having an unmanageable waiting list that people stay on forever doesn't really help anyone," says Dan Owcarz, a member of the Seattle-King County Coalition for the Homeless who works at the Aloha Inn transitional housing project.

The voucher cuts come one month after the agency announced its plan to lay off all of its public housing building managers, again citing federal budget cuts. After an outcry by residents and the managers' union, the impact has been softened somewhat; SHA now says that only two-thirds of the management work force will leave, and the remaining staff will take responsibility for three buildings at a time.

SHA's decision comes early; its counterpart in Everett has not yet closed its Section 8 waiting list. The Everett Housing Authority has 2,175 people on its list; the average wait time is almost two years. "Our strategy is to wait and see until we know what the outlook will be," says Bud Alkire of the Everett Housing Authority. ■

— Adam Holdorf

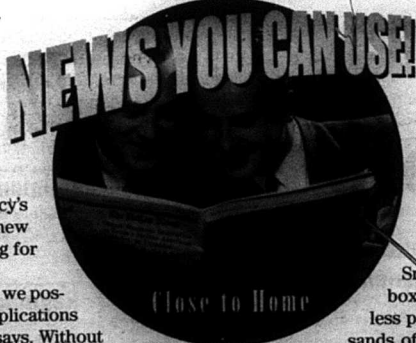
Homeless vs. Post Office

Seeking greater access to government mail services, homeless people are appealing a class action lawsuit against the Seattle branch of the U.S. Postal Service in federal court.

Under postal law, any person without a regular mailing address is entitled to this service. According to the Postal Service's web site, "General delivery is a great choice for you if carrier service or a P.O. box is not an option. Your mail will be held at the nearest post office for up to 30 days, and can be conveniently picked up at any retail window. This is also a great option if you don't have a permanent address." The Post Office also offers P.O. boxes in various sizes and prices — they're even free, if you qualify.

But at this time the Seattle Post Office only permits a homeless person to receive general-delivery mail for one month, and then only at the downtown branch. After that, local policy dictates that you get a mailing address.

Sean Smith, a representative from the local homeless advocacy organization SHARE, which is participating in the lawsuit, points out, "How can you make it off the street in one month?" He says that the average homeless person is on the street for two years. "In order to receive general delivery, I would



have to hang a mailbox on a light pole and call that my mailing address."

The Post Office's policy violates First Amendment free speech and Fifth Amendment rights, say the plaintiffs — they are not receiving equal treatment as defined by law. In addition, this is violating their right to anonymity. Smith claims that this is an issue of discrimination: "By definition, homeless people are inaccessible to normal mail delivery."

The Post Office was unable to comment at this time.

Smith, however, says postal officials claim that free P.O. boxes would constitute preferential treatment for homeless people only. Not only that, but such a service for thousands of people would be costly. Still, he says, "Just because people are homeless they still have to have a mailbox to receive mail."

Why is this a problem? There are a variety of reasons why a homeless person would need access to mail. "People on disability rely on mail for benefits information," says Smith. "People on housing wait lists need mail to see if their housing has come up." This also frustrates job seekers' efforts to stay in touch with potential employers. Finally, homeless people need access to the mail to simply stay in touch with family members.

This particular case, Carl A. Currier, et. al., Plaintiffs-Appellants versus John E. Potter, Postmaster General, et. al., Plaintiffs-Appellees went to the Ninth Circuit Court of Appeals on May 8, 2003. The verdict could take as little as two months or as long as two years. In the meantime, the plaintiffs will continue to educate people about this issue and attempt to spread the word throughout the community. ■

— Lyndsi Barnes

Elderly housing rent hike?

More than 100 senior citizens and other interested parties jammed into the Blakely Manor Senior Apartments a couple of weeks ago for a public hearing concerning proposed changes to the Seattle Senior Housing Program (SSHP) and a City Council Resolution being proposed by Councilmembers Nick Licata and Judy Nicastro.

In 1981, Seattle voters passed a bond levy that created 1,000 units of housing for very low-income and disabled people. The SSHP was originally intended to be financially self-sufficient, but it now serves a lower-income group than originally anticipated. As it faces a budget shortfall on several fronts, the Seattle Housing Authority (SHA) that oversees the SSHP is currently considering increasing rents and giving preference to higher-income seniors.

Nicastro and Licata's resolution calls for the City Council to review SHA's plan before it takes effect, making its own recommendations for the 993-unit low-income senior housing bond program. Resolution 30588 proposes that the SHA provide a report with recommendations concerning the SSHP program by August 1.

"As crowded as this room is, we could fill another 100 rooms with people looking for affordable housing," said Licata, who along with Nicastro is a member of the Council's Housing, Human Service, and Community Development committee. "I see people on the street every day. I don't want senior citizens to end up the same way."

More than 20 residents registered their concerns for almost two hours. Those who put together the event were expecting 50 to 75 people — not the 115 who showed up. Bette Reed, a Blakely resident and a member of the Seattle Senior Housing Program notes, "I knew people from the other buildings and many were bussed in. I'd say there were 22 buildings represented tonight."

"We fear that unless the Nicastro/Licata resolution is approved and the city gets involved, we will lose the program," said John Fox, the head of the Seattle Displacement Coalition that helped sponsor the event. "And if SHA makes changes in the program, it will forever deny access to many low-income seniors."

In order to gain council-wide support, Resolution 30588 must be pushed through the Housing, Human Services, and Civil Rights Committee by Councilmember Richard McIver, the committee chair. Along with Licata and Nicastro, representatives of Councilmembers Heidi Wills, Margaret Pageler, and Council President Peter Steinbrueck were also in attendance. Neither McIver nor a representative from his office were at the forum.

As one of the organizers exclaimed after the forum, "The head of the housing committee wasn't here, and we're pissed." ■

— R.V. Murphy

Do you have any stories we should look into? Call Adam at 441-3247, ext. 207, and just maybe we will.

What Comes Around

Having defeated a neighborhood candidate four years ago, City Councilmember Jim Compton now faces three

By R.V. Murphy and Adam Holdorf

Jim Compton was Johnny-come-lately to the 1999 race for a City Council seat, but a familiar name is a force to be reckoned with. At the urging of local Democratic political consultant Cathy Allen, the well-known host of the local public-affairs television show "The Compton Report" jumped in at the last minute to take on Dawn Mason, a former state legislator from Southeast Seattle.

Mason enjoyed broad support from her neighborhood constituents in a poor, racially diverse district with traditionally low voter turnout. Compton

quickly tapped Seattle's downtown establishment donors and out-fundraised Mason by nearly 50 percent. He cruised to victory.



PHOTO OF JIM COMPTON, COURTESY OF COMPTON'S OFFICE.

As chief of the council's Law and Public Safety committee, Compton has sought to address police accountability and racial profiling. Some would say he hasn't done the job. Since taking office, Compton has chaired the Council's Public Safety Committee while four Black men have been killed by local law enforcement. Landmark protests flared in the wake of these deaths; racial

tension and frustration mounted.

Four years later, the first-term councilmember is defending his seat against three candidates who find their base in the lower-income neighborhood of Compton's former foe. In the second of a continuing series of candidate profiles, *Real Change* interviewed John Manning and Ángel Bolaños in an effort to understand their issues, their experience, and their chances of winning.

John Manning

John Manning's success in the upcoming City Council race could depend on whether voters have the same attitude about Manning's past as he does.

Manning defeated incumbent Sherry Harris for a seat on the Council in 1995 and resigned less than a year after being sworn into office. Shortly after his ex-wife filed domestic violence charges against Manning, he was arrested for trying to break into her house. That was followed by 18 months in a domestic violence counseling program. Manning's remarried, has two small children, and now mentors men with domestic dispute issues.

While recent well-publicized events in Tacoma might give Seattle voters the



PHOTO OF JOHN MANNING, COURTESY OF MANNING.

willies about voting for a former cop who has domestic violence issues, Manning addresses his past head-on. He isn't uncomfortable.

"You can't live in the past, but you can use your past to build the future. I won't be presumptuous to think that

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NORTH AMERICAN NEWSBRIEFS
WWW.STREETNEWSERVICE.ORG

Miami Beach has become the latest city to move towards outlawing panhandling in prime tourist areas. The city joins 46 of the largest 50 cities in the country which already have bans or limitations on who can ask for money and where, according to the *Miami Herald* (www.miami.com/mld/miamiherald). Businesses have been the biggest push behind these changes, arguing that panhandling outside their storefronts hurts their bottom line. Yet such a criminalization of activities that homeless people rely on to survive flies in the face of the protected rights, counters Benjamin Waxman, a board member of both the American Civil Liberties Union of Florida and of Miami. "It's one thing to criminalize me for grabbing your shirt," Waxman told the *Miami Herald*. "It's another to criminalize me for asking you for change.... That violates the constitution."

The American Civil Liberties Union has already won a small victory in Pittsburgh, where it reached an agreement with the city to give homeless people advanced warning of sweeps through their makeshift encampments. Under the three-year settlement, Pittsburgh has to give notice seven days before a sweep, including posting flyers in the area and notifying caseworkers who serve homeless populations, according to the ACLU (www.aclu.org). The city also agreed to store any personal property of value that it seizes from the sweeps for at least one year, and to post notices letting people know how they can collect their property. Any items not claimed after a year will be offered to social service agencies before being thrown away. "A week ago, the city refused to do more than tell one social service worker that a sweep would occur," Witold Walczak, the Pittsburgh ACLU's Legal Director who handled the case, said in a statement, "and insisted that it had a right to immediately destroy homeless people's possessions. Now, the city will have one of the nation's better policies for protecting homeless people's property rights." Flyers for the first sweep under the new agreement went up the end of May, for a sweep scheduled for the Tuesday after Memorial Day, according to the *Pittsburgh Post-Gazette* (www.post-gazette.com).

Homeless people in San Francisco might not get their checks after all. At the beginning of May, a judge threw out the Cash Not Care proposition, which took money that now goes directly to homeless people and funnels into it social service programs, because only the city's Board of Supervisors can make such changes to welfare laws. The supervisors responded in kind by working quickly to implement a version of what the voters wanted, according to the *San Francisco Chronicle* (www.sfgate.com). One version put before the supervisors is exactly as the voters saw it; the other would be more specific about what kind of

services the redirected money would go towards — particularly, that it would fund real, long-term housing and not just emergency shelter beds. The supervisors are scheduled to discuss both proposals in June.

The recent death of a homeless man being held in a Berkeley jail for public drunkenness could have been avoided if the city had a detox center. So say a number of Berkeley's homeless advocates and city officials, who agree that Kevin Freeman should not have suffered the fatal assault from his jail cellmate, who had been arrested for an alleged knife attack. Freeman's death came just after the city released a study calling for the city and Alameda County to establish a detox center for low-income and homeless people, according to the *Berkeley Daily Californian* (www.dailycal.org). Next month, the city's health department will present a report on the feasibility of creating such a center, which is expected to cost hundreds of thousands of dollars to build and run. Five years ago, the city pledged that building a detox center was a priority.

The producers of the *Bumfights* video managed to escape felony charges earlier this year, but in mid-May Michael Slyman plead guilty to a lesser misdemeanor charge of conspiracy to commit a crime. Slyman admitted he paid homeless men to fight each other and perform dangerous stunts, according to the *San Diego Union-Tribune* (www.signonsandiego.com). As his punishment, Slyman has been put on probation and has to perform 225 hours of volunteer work to benefit homeless people. Three other *Bumfights* producers plead guilty to misdemeanor conspiracy to promote illegal fighting. They will be sentenced in June. ■

— Compiled by Molly Rhodes

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Vestige

[to: George Bush, and others]

Yours, made the mistake!

Lights...
fruit

in your hands!
are
the same
(you'll

say)
as,
any other.

Any other part of
circles!
you'll

say...
in your hands, they

are.

— STAN BURRISS

KING OF THE FOREST

— With apologies to George Orwell

Once upon a time there lived in the forest
A mighty band of squirrels
There was a little runt who said
I am your commander-in-chief
His friends put a band on his leg that read
You are it — all others must split
To reward his friends he said to them
Go gather up all the hickory nuts
Destroy all nests of others who would take them
We are a mighty band in this wood
No others must stand against us
Other animals lived in the forest
They said *He's not our commander-in-chief*
He doesn't pay dues to United Animals
He won't push us around, we'll sneak behind
Bite his ass and twist his tail
Hear him squeal then watch him flee
Back to his old hollow tree
We've taken care of runts before
Who scratched at our den door in the night

— J. GLENN EVANS

Adventures in Poetry with ©Dr. Wes Browning



Finally homelessness is in the news again, sort of. Kissimmee, Fla., made the national news last week by having a couple of police officers pretend to be homeless guys hanging out at an intersection. They were there in order to spot traffic offenders, for ticketing by cohorts a block away. This trick has probably been done thousands of times elsewhere, but Kissimmee officials were decent enough in this instance to allow reporters to watch the proceedings, so we get to know about it.

Before going on, let's pause to make our expected crack about the name of the town: No, Kissiyouou, Fla. There, now we can relax and get to this story about fake homelessness.

Back to "Operation Vagrant." Two things seem to irk homeless advocates about this story. First is the fact that it shows once again that people are quite thoroughly aware of the problem. I mean, if the Kissimmee police thought that homelessness were uncommon, they wouldn't have imagined that by posing as homeless people they would have blended into the scenery, would they? But what are they doing about that realization? They are exploiting the ubiquity of homelessness to catch people who turn right on red without stopping. This doesn't help homeless people.

The other thing that irks is that now when someone is driving around northern Osceola County and happens to see a homeless guy in the median, instead of thinking, "When am I going to do something about the homeless problem in this country?", he'll think, "Uh-oh, better slow down to the speed limit." There is a certain dilution of concern that can be expected.

Some homeless advocates, namely those who are uncomfortable with the police altogether, may fear that a pervasive distrust for the cops could rub off on the homeless population. So you're walking down the street and you see a disheveled guy sitting by the curb on a milk crate. In the past you would have said, "Get a job, bum!" Now you would say, "Get off our backs, pig!" That is, if you were already inclined to say things like that. So for these homeless advo-

cates, the fear would be that the homeless all might be confused with the police, creatures held in lower esteem.

I see the problem more as a personnel issue.

Let's consider a similar issue and see if we can spot the problem. Everybody remember blackface minstrel shows? Remember why they were so offensive? Because it was racism, right? Yes, but what else was it?

It was a personnel issue. The issue was, they already HAD Black people who could sing and dance. They didn't need to hire White people to put on

Now when someone is driving around and happens to see a homeless guy in the median, he'll think, "Uh-oh, better slow down to the speed limit."

blackface and pretend to be Black. They could have hired the existing real talented Black people instead.

It wasn't so much the blackface itself that was so bad as it was the usurping of roles. Why

does Pat Boone give us the creeps? Because he was getting the radio play when we should have been hearing Little Richard, that's why. He was usurping Little Richard's place at the table. And while we're at it, I think Little Richard should have been in *Journey to the Center of the Earth*, too, and shot out of a volcano, and landed naked up a tree. Who really wants to see Pat Boone's skinny white ass up a tree?

Likewise, what we have right there in Osceola County is a pair of police GETTING PAID THE BIG POLICE BUCKS to pretend to be homeless people and use a two-way radio (or I don't know, a stupid cell phone) just to call up their buddies and snitch on drivers.

I don't know very many actual homeless people who can't sit on a median strip and snitch on bad drivers. So why won't Kissimmee hire the real thing? Why do they pay for fake teeth and fake tattered clothing and fake ripped-off shopping carts when the real deal is already out there courtesy of the real people? ■



Obituary for Tent City

(located six months at El Centro De La Raza on top of Beacon Hill)

Beacon Hill, the playground
the dirt, the lonely pavement
a stark area mourns the loss
of its recent inhabitants
the laughter, the tears,
the cries at night go unheeded
no one drives by
sees their plight across the lot
from Red Apple Grocery,
children, working people,
Latin, Black, and White people
all lived here once
men and women
working together kept the peace
made a haven for the have-nots
voices, flashlights, sounds of love,
and soft dark light filtered
from inside their tents,
survivors include cold-blooded
city permit enthusiasts

— ANGIE VASQUEZ

P.O.W.

No. He wasn't crazy
he just had to tell non-stop
his story over and over
to dissipate the pain
that ached like a boil.

Out of his pile, this baggy jacket
and cap with earlaps
a face in the shadows
burst a strong voice —

*I was beaten in 'Nam.
I bit so hard on a bamboo cane
my teeth broke.*

He turned his head
and gnashed at the steel pole
of the bus to demonstrate,
pulled down his lower lip to show me
where he had bitten through.

*I saw my buddy skinned alive
and wondered why
the man didn't pass out.
Only mean people like war
I don't trust them anymore
don't trust them anymore.*

He took off his knit glove
and reached across the aisle
to shake my hand before I got off
Now I could see his eyes
in the silver light of the bus.

*What's your name?
Mine is Walter, a Baby Boomer...
He smiled a man's smile.
And you are a Depression Baby.
No, he wasn't crazy
Wasn't crazy at all.*

— LEONARD L. TEWS

Last Night

Oh, god, last night I dreamt that I was writing my new novel and I called it
"fit for misery" and there were praying hands clutched on the cover. There was an
underground cave for the hounds and my friends all dressed in tuxedos. Somebody
called and needed money and I told them I could only give them money for beer.
My best friend's girl from Iowa came to see the library I had built in the cave for the
hounds and I. I was underdressed and it was always midnight and we didn't care
that we'd missed the dance.

— SHANE SULLIVAN

CANDIDATES Continued from Page 5

everyone is going to forget about my past," says Manning. "But I've picked myself up, gotten the help I've needed, and moved forward. I'm against all criminal activity and domestic abuse is high on that list. [The Brame case] says that no one is above the law. Whether you're a police officer or Joe Blow on the street, you have to be held accountable for your actions."

It's not coincidental that Manning's running against Compton, who has been chair of the Council's Public Safety Committee for the past four years. On Compton's watch, programs such as the crime prevention unit, which helped people start block watches and deal with crime in their neighborhood, and the gang unit, started by former mayor Norm Rice in the early '90s when the city had gang problems, have been disbanded. The city has halved the number of Community Services Officers who deal with families, juvenile runaways, and women who have been victims of domestic disputes.

If Compton had been more of an advocate, Manning says, some of those programs could have been saved. "I'd like to redefine how we look at public safety. It's not just police officers and firefighters," he says. "It's an investment in people, families, and human services. We cut our public safety budget, we cut essential services that could keep people from falling through the cracks."

If Manning were the Council's Public Safety chair, he would be a former Seattle cop overseeing the Seattle Police Department — a unique position. That might raise a few eyebrows of those looking for more police accountability.

But "I think police officers want more police accountability too," says Manning, who served as president of the Black Law Enforcement Association and was board director for the Seattle Police Guild. "For every officer

who's out there misusing his authority or doing something wrong, there are 700-800 who are doing it right.

"Racial profiling occurs, but I don't think as much in Seattle as it does in big cities like Los Angeles, New York. Having policemen write out reports on the race of every person they stop" — another City Council plan — "is just more paperwork."

Since leaving the City Council, Manning has worked for Windermere Real Estate and volunteers at a food bank near his home in Rainier Valley. While volunteering at the food bank, he sees people coming in who have just recently lost their jobs and never thought they would come to a food bank. "The biggest problem Seattle faces right now is the lousy business climate," says Manning. "We're losing so many businesses right now because we're not a business-friendly city. Especially small businesses" — they're the heart and soul of our community."

By the numbers: As of last Friday, the Manning campaign had listed only two contributors: Eugene Oliver, \$300 and Blake Gayle Johnson \$50. A spokesman from the Ethics Commission told Real Change that they were expecting more contributions from Manning, but first-time candidates who are working with the electronic filing system for the first time are given more leeway in filing.

Ángel Bolaños

The first thing Ángel Bolaños brings up when we ask why he's running for City Council is the drinking water. The city's water supply is "not as clean as it could be," he says; he wants Seattle Public Utilities to switch from chlorine to less toxic chemicals to purify the water. Chlorine "is a very dangerous chemical," prone to tampering from potential terrorists.

It's a weird way to start off an interview, but it turns out that Bolaños' campaign isn't constituted on a single-minded zeal for a clean drinking glass.



PHOTO OF ÁNGEL BOLAÑOS, BY ADAM HOLDORF.

He's had real-world experience in working for poor people, setting up CASA Latina, the non-profit agency that helps Latino workers find jobs and improve their English. He has counseled single mothers who've left abusive husbands and searched for work for welfare recipients. "They are forced to find jobs that pay \$7 or \$8 an hour," he says. "I know how hard that is."

Thus, a central plank in his campaign platform is a city-wide living wage. Yes, that's city-wide — not just for the employees of the City of Seattle, or those of the businesses that the city contracts with, but for all of the some 2 million of the people who work in the city.

Bolaños is taking his campaign to the streets in what seasoned political advisors would probably call a blind walk. He's not just cherry-picking the regular voters out of the county elections record; he's walking door-to-door through entire neighborhoods, standing at peoples' thresholds and saying, Let me tell you why I'm running for City Council.

Who knows? It might even be a winning strategy. In 2001, Seattle Mayor Greg Nickels gained a narrow edge over

his opponent by tapping into immigrants in precincts with traditionally low voting turnout.

Reflecting his work experience, Bolaños is a strong supporter of human services to the poor; he says unambiguously that, if the state of Washington cuts financial assistance to very-low-income people (as is being discussed in Olympia now), the city should come up with enough money to replace it. "Why repave the streets? Why not reprioritize?" The state Legislature's angst over the economy has been too channeled into meeting Boeing's demands, he says; officials are capitulating to narrow economic interests. "We must create a systematic way of diversifying the economy," he says.

Why go after Compton? Because, Bolaños says, he's too cozy with the Seattle Police Guild and not aggressive enough against racial profiling. The city plan to install video cameras in all patrol cars never seems to have got off the ground, he notes. "Money was allocated; things were said — but what happened with that?" Even if the video cameras had been installed, Bolaños would prefer greater measures for police accountability. "Continuous, rigorous" training for all SPD officers, regardless of race, is the way to "create mechanisms for officers to be aware of racism and violence."

And Bolaños sees the up-skirt photography ban, one of Compton's most publicized efforts, as a bunch of hoo-hah. "I don't believe that by having this, you make a woman any safer."

Why should poor people bother to vote for Bolaños? "I am an immigrant, and I know what it's like when people come after you."

By the numbers: Raised \$6,631 as of May 20. Employers of biggest contributors include Plymouth Housing Group and United Brotherhood of Carpenters Local 131 (\$650 each). ■

A profile of candidate Susan Harmon's campaign will appear in our June 12 issue.

ALEXIE Continued from Page 1

least one murderer in the bunch who got away with it? A rapist, a child abuser, or a pedophile? But instead, they were immediate icons, and that's dangerous.

We canonized them immediately, just as asshole terrorists are canonized by their tribes. Nobody's responding individually or asking "Why did this happen and what can we do to prevent it from happening again?" Instead it was "What can my country do? What can my tribe do? How can I defend it?"

War is all about the idea of tribes and defending your country, so I've been trying to let go of the idea of basing my politics on the good of a small group. I've become less and less Indian-centric as the years have gone on. After September 11th, I barely talk about it. I talk about poor people; I talk about disadvantaged people, and that sort of covers everything I need to cover. It becomes not about race, region, or

country, but about a particular group of people sharing the same circumstances. I talk about the universal condition of the poor, and thinking and talking about it that way helps eliminate the negativity of tribalism. That's been my response: to see people by their power or lack thereof, rather than the color of their skin.

RC: It's the double-edged sword of identity politics.

Alexie: Yeah. Exactly. That's why liberals are losing elections. We've gone over to that completely. We're marching for ourselves, and no one's really extending. We're not basing our policies on also changing the lives of people who don't agree with us.

RC: Your last book of short stories, *The Toughest Indian in the World*, was mostly about professionally successful urban Indians, which makes sense since it's pretty much what you've become; you've taken on that frame of

reference. You're one of those rare people who've been able to transcend the limitations of their class, and I'm wondering how that feels for you: if you've become comfortable with who you are now, or if you still feel like a visitor?

Alexie: Well, I'm happy. What did Mae West say: "I've been rich and poor. Rich is better." My own variation on that is, "Money doesn't solve all your problems, but it solves most of them, and gives you a fighting chance at the rest." Anybody who says poverty is ennobling is full of shit. It's debilitating and demoralizing and destructive. So, regardless of my emotional feelings, my self-esteem and etcetera, the fact that I have money and comfort is only a plus.

On the emotional side, there's a lot of guilt. You grow up poor and then get this kind of power and privilege, and of course you're going to feel guilty. There were kids I grew up with who were ambitious and intelligent, and for various reasons, most often not of their

own design, didn't have the kind of success I did, so I think about that. I see them when I go home to the rez, and they have admiration and rage and hatred and love for me. So, I'm skilled, and I'm lucky. And sometimes I feel much more lucky than skilled. Some mornings I wake up thinking I don't deserve it. Other mornings I wake up and think, "Yes, I do."

I wouldn't be doing what I do if I wasn't already half-crazy anyway. The thought of being half-crazy and successful makes me crazier, I think. Personality-wise, with my particular handbag of disorders, I'm not much different from a lot of people on the street. I'm just well enough to manage.

RC: But you must be fairly driven. It seems like you always have six projects going. You're insanely busy.

Alexie: Yeah, but I have to be. I'm obsessive — it's the obsessive-compulsive

Continued on Page 16

The Person He Was

Wayne Marshall Kalmen, 1952-2003

By Jodi J. Kalmen

My father raised me in Anchorage, Alaska, but when he and my mother divorced he moved back to Seattle. Having a very hard time with the divorce, he drowned his sorrows in alcohol. Then, in about 1992, I moved to Capitol Hill. Coming to live with me every few months, and trying to sober up, he got to know the Hill and the people around it. Finally he moved up to the Hill to be closer to me. With his transient nature, he adapted quickly. He got to know every person, every squat, and every resource available to him.

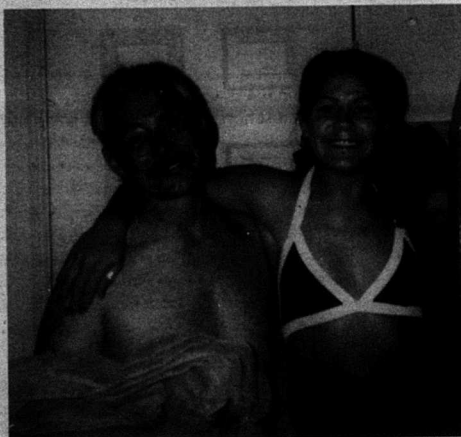
For many years, he and his friends John, Hoyt, and George hung out on 15th Avenue, by the big Safeway, selling *Real Change* newspapers. Around that time, in 1997, I joined Alcoholics Anonymous and got myself got off of the Hill, but I attended most of my meetings there. Many nights I would go and track down my dad in squats by Value Village or in the alley east of 15th Avenue — wherever he was. One night he got rolled pretty bad, for three bucks. Paramedics took him to the hospital and found him to be in bad shape, with spinal meningitis and a badly disabled arm. We weren't sure if we would lose him at that time, but he made it through good as new.

From there he decided to get sober. It was a long road ahead. I hooked him up with a man who sponsored him. Mark, a guy from Reach [a case management program provided through the Dutch Shisler Sobering Center] was a great help. They got him hooked into the William Booth Center, where he lived for a year and made a lot of friends, waiting for housing through the state Department of Social and Health Services. He was staying sober, doing his steps, going to AA meetings with me, and making money selling *Real Change*. He was saving up for a place of his own; he hadn't had one in seven years. When that day finally came, he went out and sold papers with his friends and, with the money he made, would get a little this and that for his new apartment. He had finally made it!

From then on, he would live in his apartment and during the day go do his favorite thing — sell his *Real Change* papers with his friends. Since he had such a badly disabled arm, my father really couldn't do much for work. But he loved being around people and his favorite thing to do was sell his papers. One day I remember he and a couple of his friends showed me their spiels for selling their papers: "Get yer *Real Change* newspapers!" and they'd do a little dance.



THE AUTHOR, JODI J. KALMEN, RIGHT, AND HER DAD, WAYNE MARSHALL KALMEN, IN FAMILY SNAPSOTS. PHOTOS COURTESY OF JODI J. KALMEN.



I loved my father and the person he was; he was an "Urban Camper." Though his life was different than mine, I still loved and accepted him as he was.

In late March my father called me; he had been sober again for 30-something days. It's very hard for people who have a homeless lifestyle and a heavy drinking problem to stay sober. Progression was the best my dad could do; any sobriety is better than no sobriety. He said he was sick and didn't know what to

do. I was waiting with my very sick mom, who was in a coma at NW hospital, waiting for a liver transplant. I couldn't take him to Harborview, so he took a taxi.

He had the same illness as my mom: Hepatitis C, liver failure. But he had cancer from it. I was devastated, and so was he. He had so many plans: he was looking to go back to school to be a chemical dependency counselor, and he was ready to quit drinking and smoking for good. So I left my stepfather to tend to my mom while I lived with my dad on Capitol Hill for three weeks. The cancer was very acute and spread rapidly. But it was such an amazing experience to get to spend the last days of my father's life with him. My dad was one of my best friends and I am so thankful for the relationship we shared.

On Thursday, April 17, Wayne Marshall Kalmen, 49, passed away. He stayed home until the last two days. He was a happy person and a joyous spirit and he will be Greatly missed by everyone who knew him.

I would like to thank the *Real Change* newspaper for providing a way for my father to create an income when he had no other resources. And thank you to Reach, the Sobering Center, Food Lifeline, Pioneer Square Clinic, and the William Booth Center, for all of the help and support you have provided to my father through the years. All of his belongings will be donated to these charities. We had a small ceremony at his father's house in Renton, and his cremated remains reside with me. If anyone wants to come pay respects, please contact me at jodijeastar@hotmail.com.

God Bless You All. ■

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Speak of the Devil

By Cindy Carlson

Life is odd! Why do things happen how they do and when they do? I am sure it is a question that many people have asked themselves. I had cause to stop and ask it again, just yesterday.

I was sitting in one of my Graduate Studies classes discussing a big adventure; it was a homework assignment about processing the life-learning each of us goes through. I chose to talk about the time I went into the Air Force. I mentioned that it was after a really abusive marriage. That all happened in 1977, a very long time ago, long before domestic violence programs and battered women's shelters even existed. I thought that it was all in the past and would stay in the past. I have processed it throughout my life: counseling, a thousand self-help books, journals, and the personal transformations of life. Life moved on; another marriage, another divorce, and now two grown children later, my life is pretty cool.

I leave class early so that I can travel to Concord, N.H., where there is currently no outreach worker available to the city. I had arranged for Joe, who has been with the Under The Bridge project about four years, to meet me at school to go to Concord. I know Joe well, even knew him before he was homeless.

The night before, I went down to Joe's place, a sofa under a bridge, and invited him up to my sofa. Joe doesn't go to shelters or into unfamiliar closed-in surroundings.

On the way to Concord, we talk about my class and another homework assignment. The idea of who would get a degree from HKU, or the University of Hard Knocks? What would be the criteria for such a degree? It is an interesting and stimulating conversation.

We arrive at Concord's Friendly Kitchen and Joe went off to get something to eat. I see two guys, one named Jeff, that I know live in places not fit for human habitation. One is staying in an unheated cellar and the other in a tent.

I go to talk to the guys. I tell them about the directive from the state Office of Homeless and Housing, which has additional funds to ensure that no

one freezes to death. As a result, we are to house everyone in a heated environment. I ask the guys if I could help house them for the next couple of days. There is a bit of conversation. "Nah, I am all set," one says.

"Don't you want to go inside and warm up, maybe get a hot shower?" I ask.

"I ain't going to no shelter!"

"It doesn't have to be a shelter. There are funds for a hotel room. Let me call the hotline and see what I can

side table. Then it happened. My past smacked me in the face; just like the old saying, speak of the devil.

There is a man standing in front of the coffee table, and he says "Hi Cindy." I say hi back and was looking at his face, trying to figure out why it is faintly familiar. What camp does he live in? What agency does he work for? He reminds me of a guy in Manchester that I avoid — a man who burns cigarettes into the arms of homeless women that he gets drunk. Though I know it isn't

I leaned over and whisper to Joe, "my very abusive ex-husband is over by the coffee table."

I hear a voice behind me that says "Does this mean you don't want to talk to me?"

Without turning around, I say, "No, I don't want to talk to you."

"Go away and leave her alone," says one of the guys. I hear him walk away; the front door opens and closes.

Panicked thoughts run around in my head, can he recognize which vehicle parked out front is mine? Am I safe? I had recently read his name on the Manchester Police Department's web page, while scanning the "wanted" list. He was wanted for a violation of a restraining order indicating that while I had worked really hard to change my life over the past 27 years, he had not.

One of the kitchen workers brings me the phone. It is the Homeless Hotline calling me back. He has a hotel room for the guys and is faxing the hotel over a voucher. They need to check in the front desk with their identification, or I do if they don't have any.

The guys need to finish eating. Jeff is done and I ask him if he wants to go have a cigarette on the porch. Outside, there are a few other people crowded around under the porch roof. I find a spot in the middle as I look around for Lee. I don't see him. Maybe it was a hallucination because I had spoken about the marriage today in class. Maybe he was never really there at all? I turn to Jeff, who knows what a hallucination is, having to deal with his own at times, and ask him, "Did you see a guy come up behind me at the table and try to talk to me?" Jeff says the guy was really there.

When we are all ready I drive the guys to the hotel. On the way the conversation is about Lee: not to worry, because if he begins hanging around the kitchen, there will be some street justice. I thanked the guys for their loyalty but I will handle it with the Concord Police Department.

After dropping off the men at the hotel, Joe and I head back to Manchester. I fill his ears with memories of that marriage: I was a naive 15-year-old when my mother signed guardianship

arrange for you," I said.

I walk into the kitchen area and ask the volunteer to use the phone. I make the call to the line worker and give him the names of the guys. He asks if they were banned from the shelter. I tell him no, but that these guys were service-resistant; they choose not to go there. The worker tells me he would call around for a room and then call me back.

I go to get a cup of coffee from the

him, I can't help but feel something yucky and familiar about the guy.

He says, "You don't remember me?" The instant he touches me, I feel ill. He pulls me into a hug and says in my ear, "It's Lee."

I think I will vomit right there. I push him off and back away. Panic runs through my body. I walk quickly away and into the safety of some street men that were gathered at a round table in the corner of the room.



ILLUSTRATION BY ROBIN LINDLEY

over to this man. He was just a regular run-of-the-mill drug pushing pimp who convinces girls that he will protect them and love them, then gets them addicted to crank and turns them out to the street.

Crank: Readily available, affordable (at first), easy to hide and carry, quick and easy to do, relatively safe. All these are things that make it the thrill seeker's drug of choice. With a rush and a feeling of "I can do anything" that really can't be matched, even the most desperate, the most afraid, the most timid user becomes that which they wish to be.

It requires no special tools: The bureaucratic government requires that I carry a laminated ID card to prove my identity, but it can also be used to both chop the rocks into a fine powder and form it into lines, so that I can now use the dollar bill they also expect me to have in my pocket as a makeshift "tooter," simply by rolling it up end for end into a tube. These are the only tools I needed, and both are quickly and easily wiped clean. (Usually on my tongue), and if and when I was stopped and inspected by the police, I had nothing on me they can use or suspect.

I am proud that I made it through that. Many don't. In the end, it was an experience I am glad of. It taught me many things about myself as well as other people. Because of it, I learned of another side of life you simply can-

not understand unless you have gone through it.

Lee decided to marry me at 16, and my abusive mother signed the documents for permission. She wanted me out of the house, away from my also

It requires no special tools: The bureaucratic government requires that I carry a laminated ID card to prove my identity, but it can also be used to both chop the rocks into a fine powder and form it into lines.

very abusive stepfather. She wasn't doing it to protect me; she was doing it because she was in denial. She chased me and all of my older sisters out of the house by the age of 16 because we were causing her husband to act in cer-

tain ways toward us.

I tell Joe about being dragged around by the hair in my old apartment building's hallways, no one calling the police. About being handcuffed to a bed for three weeks and things that went along with that. I just keep vomiting out all the horror, trying to get control of myself.

We arrive in Manchester and head for the river to check camp sites, hoping everyone had enough sense to go inside somewhere. We park and go out to walk. I yell over a wall, "Hey Dino, are you guys down there?" He grunts. "Come out and talk to me." He skips up the snow-covered hill and I tell him about the directive of heated shelter. He and a buddy are still in the camp. I tell them to get in the van and we will go use the phone at my apartment, since I don't have a cell phone.

Upon arriving at my building we notice firemen, my daughter, and my neighbors in the hallway. Inside the hall, they explain that the pipes burst in the laundry room and the water to the building has been shut off; no one can get ahold of the landlord who lives about 30 miles from the city. The water was pretty much cleaned up, but we had to throw rock salt onto the hall floor.

Upstairs in the apartment, I make the calls to the Hotline. Again, arrangements are made for the guys. One man is banned from the shelter. The other has lived outside for the past six years

that I have known him. They both get a hotel voucher. I ask Joe if he wants to go to the hotel too. He says no, mumbles about unfamiliar places, and I understand but simply wanted to make the offer.

We head off to the hotel, get them in, and return to my apartment. The fire alarm goes off sporadically for the next several hours. That's all I need, a fire to send me into homelessness again.

I call the Hotline again to check on arrangements for tomorrow. There was one guy missing at the Friendly Kitchen; the guys said they saw him earlier and he was intoxicated. I hope he makes it through the night okay.

I ask my daughter: If success is the best revenge, what would it be like for all of my ex's to be standing in the room as I graduated with my Master's degree?

Would they think that they had no impact on my life and that I did just fine? Or would they say it was because they did what they did to me, and that is why I am who I am?

My daughter said it would be the latter. Like the old Johnny Cash Song, "A Boy Named Sue" — I am one of the lucky ones. I made it out, at least for a little while. I just spoke to my landlord and he said rent is going up again in June. ■

This story is reprinted courtesy of Under the Bridge Newspaper in Manchester, New Hampshire.

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ALEXIE Continued from Page 8

disorder (*laughs*). If I'm not writing a book, I'm taking a shower. I'm washing my hands if I'm not writing a poem, so I try to write the poem. The impulse is to wash my hands, but I use that energy to write a poem.

RC: You're working on a *Hendrix biography*. Do you feel any particular connection to Jimi?

Alexie: Well, being from the Northwest, and into the music, but my big connection was my sister who died when I was 14 and was a huge fan of his music and the psychedelic rock of that era. She got pregnant at Altamont and was hanging around Berkeley. She was an Indian Hippie, big time. I really admired and envied the life she was living at that time.

Looking back, it was random and chaotic and emotionally devastating, but back then it seemed romantic, so I'm writing the biography with two eyes. There's the romantic side — and, I don't want to sound like a neon, but I also talk about the destruction it caused, not only for the individual, but also for the culture and

the country. I'm a liberal with a healthy respect for self-discipline. I believe self-discipline is directly connected to self-esteem. We've heard all the liberal, artistic takes on Hendrix. I want to do the liberal Dale Carnegie take on him.

RC: When you wrote the screenplay for *Smoke Signals*, your strategy was to create a very accessible film that would resonate with mainstream audiences. The Business of Fancydancing, really, was anything but. It's much more thematically ambitious; it's much more challenging. It was kind of an art house film.

Alexie: It was so arty the art houses didn't want it.

RC: So, what led you there?

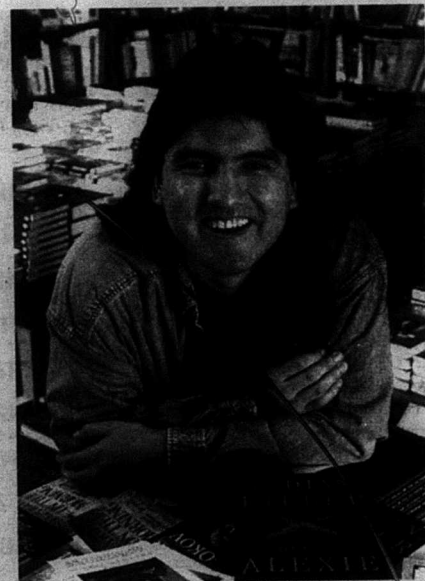
Alexie: Rebellion. As much as I like *Smoke Signals* — I love it in some ways, and I certainly love what it's done for my career — it's not really consistent with my art. And maybe some part of it is poverty guilt.

RC: So, "Now that I've done something successful, I need to do something that will be completely marginal and flop?"

Alexie: Yeah, exactly (*laughs*). To prove that I don't belong. *Fancydancing* was this really mentally ill blast of insecurity. I mean, that's what my wife said.

RC: I find my wife is usually right.

Alexie: Yeah, I know. She said, "Make *Smoke Signals* again. People love it. It's a good movie." And I might. But it seemed important to me to make a statement about who I am and what I do and my ambition. I think it's really interesting, and I think it's really flawed in many ways, but I also think it has something to say. So I like to think of it as this noble experiment, and a sign of things to come. This is where I'm going. This is what I want to do. It's an economic failure, but in the end we only spent a couple hundred thousand dollars, which is



SHERMAN ALEXIE WITH HIS "BINGE" BOOK, *INDIAN KILLER*, WHICH IS CURRENTLY BEING TURNED INTO A MOVIE. PHOTO COURTESY OF THE SHERMAN ALEXIE WEBSITE, WWW.FALLSAPART.COM.

Beautiful Losers

Ten Little Indians
By Sherman Alexie
Grove Press, June 2003
288 pages, \$24

Review by Timothy Harris

Sherman Alexie says he doesn't think much of humanity, but he's wrong — not about humanity of course (we're every bit as bad as he says and worse) — but about what he thinks. *Ten Little Indians*, Alexie's latest book of short stories, depicts our species as flawed at best, but also capable of monumental efforts toward decency. This, easily his most hopeful work to date, has moved past the darkness and divided identities of his last collection, *The Toughest Indian in the World*, to embrace a more mature vision that is generous and unifying, beautiful and kind.

Many of these new stories are concerned with the small struggles of everyday domestic life and the epic proportions these can assume. In "Do You Know Where I Am," a lovely meditation on how hard it can be for even above-average people to live with passable integrity, the main character reveals a long-held ambition to "learn magic and open a 24-hour supermarket that sold resurrection and redemption." This could be described as the idea that underlies this entire collection.

With *Ten Little Indians*, comparisons to Raymond Carver, another Northwest writer who excelled at short stories and poetry, become inevitable. Carver's vignettes focused nearly exclusively on the White working class. His

characters, it seemed, all lived in Everett, drove 10-year-old cars, and smoked too much. Yet his stories are full of the beauty of the everyday hero — the two-bit loser who's doing the best he or she can to live with dignity in an absurd and god-forsaken world.

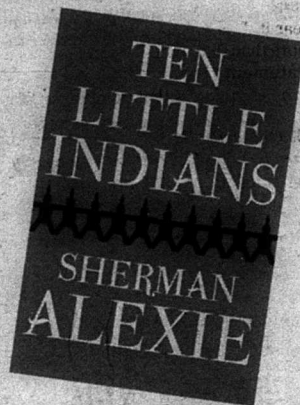
Alexie seems to pick up where Carver left off, but with greater range and a hopefulness that seems almost, well, Catholic. Along with the original sin is the possibility of daily redemption and final resurrection. And the politics are more interesting. Sprinkled among the wreckage of the everyday are the persistent weeds of race, gender, and class, pushing up between the cracks and returning year after year to

choke the marigolds and forget-me-nots.

Yet the message never overwhelms the art. Even the most explicitly political stories, like "Can I Get a Witness," which begins with a terrorist bombing in Pioneer Square and delves into the events and aftermath of September 11th, never veer from their human context. This tale of an unhappy woman and her hapless rescuer owes much more to Sappho than Chomsky. Abstractions have no place here. These stories live down near the gut and groin, far from the airier regions up above. This is a place we all know, where nobody is allowed to claim innocence.

None of which is to say that this work suffers from a surplus of seriousness. Underneath all the pain, the betrayal, the struggling for redemption, is the irrepressible urge to laugh. Grief, silly White people, self-delusion, and

death, apparently, are all ultimately pretty damn funny. So go on. Have a laugh on us. ■



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a lot of money but it's not a lot of money for a movie. And we're gradually making it back. By the time the video and DVD play out, we will break even.

RC: Do you still have plans to do a movie around Indian Killer?

Alexie: Evan Adams, who was in *Smoke Signals* and *Fancydancing*, is writing and directing that. I gave it over to him. I just sort of lost the fire for it. So it's his project. I don't even know what they're doing. I stepped away completely.

RC: I read somewhere that Indian Killer is the book you've written that you still feel like you haven't come to terms with.

Alexie: Yeah, I don't know where it came from. I remember writing it. I was so angry. My career was really blasting off then, so there was that sort of heady rush and people's questions, and the responsibility of being an artist and a spokesperson for my race. And I just lost it. It was a huge binge.

RC: It was on overstock at University Bookstore so I sent copies to relatives, and I think it freaked them out. They didn't know what to make of it.

Alexie: Nobody does. Nobody will go near it. I mean, my poetry books sold more than that. I think it was a sort of a statement. *Indian Killer* was my *Fancydancing* at that point in my life.

RC: One critic has compared you to Latino writer Richard Rodriguez, saying you both have "a profound inter-

est in looking at ugly things." Do you think that's true?

Alexie: (Laughs) Whoa! Who said that?

RC: I dunno. It's on your website.

Alexie: Is it? I don't even look.

RC: It's in a long review from some London paper. I think it was *The Guardian*.

Alexie: Wow! It's probably true. No one ever praises, you know, the lyric beauty. No one ever says, "We need someone to write about a tree! Call Sherman Alexie!" Yeah, I would agree with that. Hopefully I find some beauty inside the ugly stuff. Not very often. Generally I'm a pessimist. Generally I'm cynical and disillusioned. So...

RC: You know, there's something really fascinating about a train wreck.

Alexie: Yeah, and I guess that's what I do. I watch the human train wreck. I always think it's funny when people accuse me of being a liberal romantic, or a liberal dreamer. That's hardly true. I think human beings are by and large despicable. And I think the world is by and large an awful place. So my liberalism is certainly not based in romanticism. I don't think anything we do is going to change a damn thing.

RC: So that leads me directly to my next question.

Alexie: Uh huh?

Continued on Page 18



Thursday, May 8, 1:45 p.m., 1500 block Boren Avenue. Officers were on routine patrol along Boren. Just east of the 1500 block is a small park with several benches. The suspect, a White male aged 43, was sitting on a bench with an open can of Steel Reserve malt liquor in his hand. He was contacted for liquor violation, and a routine check of his name was run through the computer. He was found to have an outstanding warrant and was taken into custody, and booked into King County Jail.

Thursday, May 8, 8:07 p.m., Kobe Park. The suspect was contacted by police for having a fire in a city park. A routine name check came back with an Auburn Police Department warrant. The warrant was verified, and Auburn police officers arrived and took the suspect into custody.

Thursday, May 8, 11:35 p.m., S. Washington Street. Officers saw the suspect, a 45-year-old Black male transient, trespassing in Occidental Park after the posted closing time of 11:30 p.m. They contacted the suspect, and discovered an outstanding warrant. This was verified, and he was booked into King County Jail.

Friday, May 9, 4:45 p.m. 16th Ave E., Group Health. Group Health security officer called 911 to report that the suspect, a 40-year-old Black male transient who had been previously trespassed from the Group Health campus, had returned. The suspect was loitering in the

courtyard. He was detained and identified. Officers also verified the previous trespass admonishment provided by the security officer. The security officer requested the suspect be arrested, and he was. He was booked into King County Jail for trespass. The officer also noted that the man appeared to be mentally impaired, and was unsure if he had understood the trespass warnings, either in the past or currently. The officer thought it highly likely that the subject would return to the Group Health campus as soon as he could.

Friday, May 9, 12:38 a.m., Freeway Park. The suspect, a 46-year-old Black male transient, was contacted for trespassing in Freeway Park after hours. His Department of Corrections officer was contacted, and he was found to be in violation of his parole terms. The DOC officer directed the police to arrest the man, and he was taken into custody. He was booked into King County Jail.

Saturday, May 10, 2:49 p.m., 8th Ave. and Seneca St. Officers were dispatched on a report of a Native-American male walking southbound on 8th with a fixed-blade knife in his hand. He was contacted at 9th and Madison. The suspect (a transient male aged 23) was concealing the knife in his hand, but dropped it at the officer's request. The complainant arrived on the scene, and identified the man. He was taken into custody. The suspect stated he was carrying the knife for protection, as he had been threatened earlier and was afraid. He said he had not openly displayed or brandished the knife, and there was no report of him doing so. He was taken to the East Precinct, where his knife was disposed of. He was then released. ■

Streetwatch is compiled from Seattle Police Department incident reports by Emma Quinn.

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ALEXIE Continued from Page 17

RC: Can you name three redeeming things about the human race?

Alexie: The first thing that pops into my head is the last one minute of any college basketball game. Then, iambic pentameter. Who would have thought you could write like your heart beats? And, uh, antibiotics.

RC: There's a level of honesty in your work that pisses some people off. An example would be "What You Pawn I Will Redeem." In this story, Jackson Squared comes into Real Change and talks his way into 50 free papers, but after an hour he tosses them in the trash because, when it comes right down to it, he'd really rather be drinking. Then he rolls his passed-out friend for his last buck-fifty. It has the ring of truth, but why is this a useful sort of truth-telling?

Alexie: Part of that story for me was to be sure that in representing a homeless man, I show all of him. I mean, he's not homeless by accident; it's going to part of who he is to always fuck up. No matter how true and honest his ambitions, his actions are always going to trip him up. So, that was the point there, to be sure I didn't romanticize him. He wasn't some down-trodden oppressed man stumbling through the streets. Here was a guy fully participating in his own destruction.

Homeless people don't need to be romanticized and they don't need to be vilified — there's plenty of both — what they need is to be humanized. And to humanize somebody you show everything. Everything. The best of who they are and the worst of who they are.

Hate happens when we romanticize and vilify. As soon as we humanize people, it's really hard to go to war against them. You start identifying yourself with their strengths and weaknesses.

That story's had such an amazing response because I wrote it in a way that people can identify with this homeless guy. I didn't want to demonize anybody around the homeless guy either. Like the Korean convenience store guy, who could easily be vilified; the cop, the pawnshop owner. To take everybody out of the realm of symbol and make them human beings. All these people in the end are basically decent. I think people are responding to that, especially in this time, where everything is in the language of hate and war. Here was this story that spoke the language of individualization and decency.

RC: Last question. What gives you hope?

Alexie: (Sighs) It's the little things. First, that my sons are incredibly comfortable. That I live in a country that enables somebody like me to transcend class and race, all those categories, to become, simply, a success. Now it's up to them. There's nothing holding them back. No poverty. No addiction. They're at the same starting line as everybody else. They're not a hundred yards back. And that gives me hope, for them.

Worldwide? Countrywide? Art. Books. Poems. When I get letters from people who disagree with me but say interesting things. I get much more hate mail, but when I get respect mail from someone who disagrees it gives me hope.

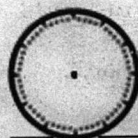
That I could wake up and drive here in 20 minutes to have breakfast with you. In a lot of places in the world you can't do that. I'm so happy I live here. I don't like anti-Americanism. I think right-wing Republicans often refuse to see the bad, but liberals often refuse to see what's great.

Antibiotics. Doctors, nurses. We complain about our healthcare system but look at what SARS and AIDS is doing in the rest of the world. My children's pediatrician. Immunization. That gives me hope.

RC: Yeah. Bill Gates is wiping out diarrhea in Africa.

Alexie: There you go! Yeah. Bill Gates gives me hope. There's an example of somebody having an awakening. Eddie Vedder impaling Dubya's mask on a mikestand. That gives me hope. I'm happy for Oprah Winfrey. I'm happy for Michael Jordan. I'm happy to see so many people transcend race and class. Richard Rodriguez. He and I can look at ugly things together and get a lot of respect for it.

One of the great things for me is *Real Change*: the interactions I have almost everyday in this city with people selling it. I give them whatever I have in my pocket — whether it's \$10, \$20, or \$50, I'll give them whatever's in my pocket for the newspaper. You sneak up on the vendors, I think; they don't realize they're part of the capitalist system. I mean, if you can stand on a corner and sell *Real Change*, then you can sell anything. You could have any job, because that's a tough gig. It's the interaction: looking at the nametag, then calling people by their name, looking them in the eye. You know: seeing them. That gives me hope. ■



Timeless Astrology

by R.W. Reid

June 1 - 30

Finding a penny on the ground can feel like finding not just money, but luck itself. That's because humans believe ideas are magic. We think we can pick up a penny of pleasure and discard the worn nickel of suffering and somehow change reality by the stories we tell about what we find. Think again. Believing a thought can alter how we feel but not reality itself. Surrender to whatever shows up, within us and without us, can show us the value and use of every coin we find. Then, like Alice, we can go through the looking glass, behind the shiny surface of life, and see what is real. We can see that luck and love is what we are made of — instead of some experience, feeling, or thought that we find — out there, on the street of life. That, an enlightened Gemini native might tell you, is a very good idea, and in fact the only true, useful, and magic idea there is.

Aries: As the month begins you feel an urge to sail away — away from the stagnant puddle you picture yourself stranded in. The sirens lure you toward the illusion of safety on shore and your mast is toppling. Prop it up and start climbing, kid. You'll need a crow's nest view wherever you find yourself — on sea or on land.

Taurus: Bored with your current emotional raiment, you've been looking for a new outfit in a gloomy closet. Take off those sunglasses and back out of that dark space. You'll see many new stylish garments laid out before you if you turn around. It's hard to dress wisely or see clearly in a small space, without the light of reason or hope.

Gemini: I see a small child on a large red tricycle moving with unbridled social volition towards a busy intersection. By all means, don't rush into this whole slowing-down-and-growing-up-thing. New toys are great. Just brake slightly and look both ways before you cross the street this time.

Cancer: Someone is going to make you an interesting offer and you'll need to think fast. Outlandish schemes that would have seemed ridiculous last month become quite desirable and doable now. Some things really are good enough to be true, even if they do come quickly. Trust your intuition.

Leo: You are tempted to be the go-between in a family or group dispute. You see yourself repairing the raveled sleeve of discord with a dose of your usual sunny joie de vivre and unstinting support. Hold that good thought for others for later, while you re-knit your own tattered emotional edges. Nobody likes an untidy philanthropist.

Virgo: Finally, your ship has not only come in, but it is docked securely with the cargo of your

choice on the docks, ready to go. Take this opportunity to share the bounty with your fellow crewmembers and it will multiply beyond your dreams into the true security of mutual cooperation and trust.

Libra: Finally, in one way, shape, or form, you get asked to the Prom. Please say yes. I promise you it will be different than Fred what's-his-name and that bad champagne experience. This time it's vintage wine, no bad hair — on you or your date — and the satisfaction of a waltz in perfect time, without the hangover. Enjoy!

Scorpio: No, not even you, Miz or Miz laser-brain, can change a situation or person by the sheer force of your will. No matter how many lonely hours you spend gazing intently at that tadpole, it will turn into a frog or a prince in its own sweet time. Avert your eyes and the magic will happen all by itself.

Sagittarius: You feel the urge to be the judge and jury and perhaps executioner on a case close to your heart and wallet. Gather all the evidence with care. Your security rests in your readiness to cut the remaining strings that bind you to what is no longer serving your growth and make a space for true judgment to be revealed.

Capricorn: You start remembering past gestures you've received that were completely undeserved. Suddenly you're the one that brings cookies and the extra bottle of wine to the party. You add an extra dollar to the stingy tip your date left when they went to the bathroom. There's extra love interest building rapidly in your account. Giving back can be healing — so give away.

Aquarius: Your inventive mind turns whimsical this month as your eccentric visions collide with others' ideas of good taste and the proper time and place to be as creatively weird as you are currently determined to be. Carry on. They will get used to it and even like it soon. Just give them time to get used to the new hot pink and chartreuse mindset you are ready to manifest.

Pisces: You get ready to take arms against a sea of troubles and intrigue out there and find, instead of a pride of lions ready to rip you to shreds, a few scrawny white mice hitting each other with toothpicks and squabbling over stale cheese. The cheese stands alone is good advice for you to take at this moment. Take a tour of your own personal zoo before you leave home. ■

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School's Out

Thursday 5/29

Jobs With Justice hosts a peaceful and disciplined activism and civil disobedience training. Potluck snack before and after training. No one turned away for lack of food or funds. 5:45 - 8 p.m., at UW School of Social Work Building, Room 305, at 41st St. and NE 15th Ave. Info JwJ 206-441-4969 or wsjwj.org.

Capitol Hill/Montlake Neighbors for Peace educational forum on the Patriot Acts, with Michael Schein of the ACLU and Rita Zawaideh of the Arab-American Community Coalition. 7 - 9 p.m., in the Parish Center at St. Joseph Catholic Church, 732 18th Ave. E. at Aloha on Capitol Hill. Info Diana Forman diana.forman@lakesideschool.org.

Saturday 5/31

Nicaraguan Ecumenical Health Action Project (NEHAP) annual dinner to benefit displaced coffee workers in Nicaragua. Adults \$10, children under 12 \$5, \$25 per family of 3. 5 p.m., at St. Mark's Cathedral, Bloedel Hall, 1245 10th Ave. E. Info and tickets Bobbi Nodell 206-527-3288.

Notables

Seattle Peace Chorus 20th Anniversary Concert, featuring two newly commissioned works dedicated to the Americans and Iraqis who were killed in the recent war. Suggested donation \$12-\$15. 7:30 p.m., at St. Joseph Catholic Church, 732 18th Ave. E. at Aloha. Info and tickets Geoff Cole 206-632-9569 or <http://www.word-ware.com/spc>.

Sunday 6/1

An Impact Forum on the Palestinian/Israeli Conflict, with Linda Bevis and Ed Mast, nonviolent peaceworkers resisting the occupation and the current Roadmap. 9:30 a.m., at University Unitarian Church, 6556 - 35th Ave. NE. Info Jerome Chroman 206-522-9384.

Big brother comes to town: The Law Enforcement Intelligence Unit (LEIU) and the New Surveillance Society. Suggested donation \$5-\$15, no one turned away. 7 p.m., at Town Hall, 1119 8th at Seneca. Info 206-652-4255.

Monday 6/2

Demonstration and rally to protest police spying. 6 p.m., at Westlake Mall, Pine and 4th Ave., Downtown. Info 1-877-570-2709.

Tuesday 6/3

Washington Health Foundation community round table. 8:30 - 10:30 a.m. and 5 - 7 p.m., at Seattle Center, Center House, 3rd-Floor Conference Room 8.

Foster families are urgently needed for the Refugee Foster Care Program. Free information night, 6 - 8 p.m., at Lutheran Community Services, 433 Minor Avenue N. Call 206-694-5713 for more information and to RSVP.

Wednesday 6/4

"Human Security in a Time of Terrorism and War - the Canadian View," with Dr. Lloyd Axworthy, Director of the Liu Centre for Global Issues at the University of British Columbia. 7:30 p.m., at University of Washington, Kane Hall, Room 210.

Preview for the *Laramie Project*, a theatre piece about the brutal murder of a gay teen in Laramie, Wyoming. Presented by the Seattle Central Drama Department, Wed. - Sun. through June 15 at the Little Theatre Off Broadway. \$10-\$15; tickets at 206-325-6500 or www.ticketwindowonline.com.

Thursday, 6/5

Join the kick off exhibit opening the ERAC Galleria (El Rey Art Collective). ART: "Images for the People" showcases original work by artists out of the El Rey transitional living facility. Opening 5 - 8 p.m.; regular hours Tues. - Sun., 10 a.m. - 8 p.m.

2119 Second Ave. For more info., contact Marc at 206-461-6923.

Saturday 6/7

A fun Walk-a-Thon designed to raise public awareness around health promotion for the Seattle Indian Health Board's SpiritWalk. 8:30 a.m. - 2:30 p.m., at the Seattle Center Mural Amphitheater. Info <http://www.sihb.org> or Steve Gallion 206-324-9360 ext. 1106.

Sunday 6/8

"A Children's Gathering For Peace," a giant sing-along with groups of children from within the area. 2 - 3:30 p.m., at the Seattle Center Mural Amphitheater. Info Mary K. McNeill 206-517-5566 or mkmcneill@mac.com.

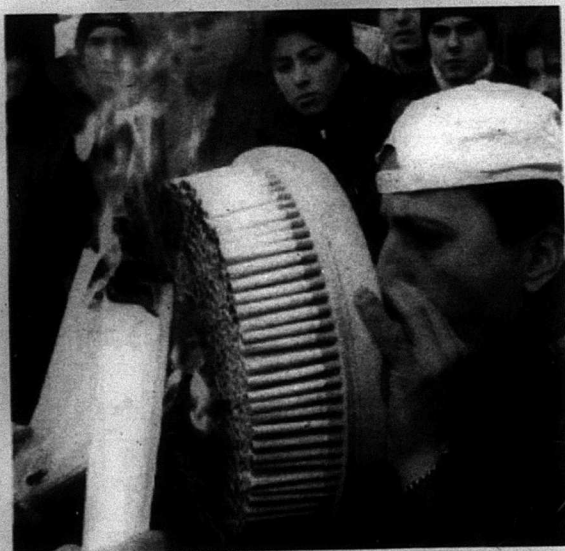
Monday, 6/9

Foster-adoptive families urgently needed for the Permanency Planning Program. Free information night, 6 - 8 p.m., at the Family Support Center, 6330-195th SW, in Lynnwood. Call 206-694-5713 for more information and to RSVP.

Thursday 6/12

"It's About Time Writers Reading Series," beginning and experienced writers read from their work. The series is dedicated to peace. 7:30 - 9:30 p.m., this and subsequent 2nd Thursdays, at Ravenna's Third Place Books, 6504 20th Ave. NE. Info 206-527-8875. ■

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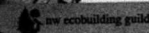
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PUBLIC NOTICE



SHA will temporarily stop accepting applications for its Housing Choice Voucher Program (Section 8)

Effective July 1, 2003, the Seattle Housing Authority will temporarily stop accepting applications for its Housing Choice Voucher Program. Everyone who applies on or before June 30 will remain on the waiting list. Waiting lists for SHA's public housing program and other programs remain open and applications are encouraged at all times.

Why did SHA make this decision?

Federal budget cuts will reduce the number of vouchers available to SHA over the next year to about 350. Since there are about 4,600 people on the voucher waiting list now, SHA estimates that someone applying for a voucher today would wait almost three years before his or her application is considered. Halting new applications for a limited time will allow SHA to focus its resources on serving current applicants. SHA will begin accepting new applications as soon as it is possible for new applicants to receive assistance in a reasonable time period. It is likely that voucher applications will not be accepted for at least one year.

How do I apply for a voucher before the deadline?

People interested in applying for a Section 8 voucher before July 1 can obtain an application in several ways. Application forms are available for pick-up at SHA's PorchLight Housing Center, and can also be downloaded from SHA's Web site at www.sea-pba.org. To request an application by mail, call PorchLight at 206-239-1500.



PorchLight

907 N.W. Ballard Way, Suite 200 | 206-239-1500

www.sea-pba.org (click on "PorchLight")

Hours (effective through June 30): Mon. to Fri.: 9:30 a.m. - 4:30 p.m.

Sat.: 9 a.m. - noon (Closed Memorial Day weekend, May 24-26)

citizens participation project



Stop Violence Against Homeless People

Issue: Crimes against homeless people have risen dramatically in recent years. One of the best ways to defend against these crimes is to make attacking a homeless person — simply because they are homeless — a federally recognized hate crime.

Background: Over the past four years, violence against homeless men, women, and children has become a national epidemic: Of the 212 known crimes that specifically targeted homeless people, 123 homeless people ended up dead, subject to attack in 98 different cities across 34 different states. These statistics, compiled by the National Coalition for the Homeless, are likely not the full story, as many homeless people have admitted to not reporting crimes because of the already negative stigma of being homeless.

The best way to allow homeless people to defend themselves is to call on your federal legislators to recognize the spate of crimes against homeless people and to pass laws that deem such crimes as hate crimes and punishable by federal law.

Action: Use the following letter as a template for your own letter to your Representative and Senator. Please personalize this letter. Handwrite the letter, if possible, and also include any personal stories you might have:

Dear Senator/Representative [insert full name],

I am requesting your assistance in seeking a U.S. General Accounting Office (GAO) investigation into the nature and scope of violent acts and hate crimes against people experiencing homelessness. The National Coalition for the Homeless (NCH) is supported in this request by over 400 organizations, including the National League of Cities, National Organization of Women (NOW), and Volunteers of America.

Throughout the nation, people experiencing homelessness, advocates, and service providers report an alarming increase in the number and scope of violent acts against people who lack permanent housing. These accounts include beatings, murders, arson, harassment, and damage to personal property. Homeless men, women, and children around the nation are particularly vulnerable to crimes against them because they represent an easy, visible target and often lack a place to retreat for safety and protection.

A GAO investigation would assist Congress and the public in obtaining much-needed information on the extent and scope of violent acts and crimes against people experiencing homelessness. Furthermore, such an investigation would help federal, state, and local officials identify actions that could be taken to prevent and reduce such crimes.

NCH recently released a four-year (1999 - 2002) study that documents hate crimes and violent acts committed against people experiencing homelessness. The full report can be found at <http://www.nationalhomeless.org/>. Between 1999 and 2002 there were 123 deaths and 89 non-lethal attacks representing 98 cities and 34 states and Puerto Rico. The youngest victim was four months old, the oldest was seventy-six years old. (insert state information if relevant, such as the ranking for your state or city) A study by the GAO would aid in protecting one of the most vulnerable populations in our society.

Please send a copy of any letter and response you receive to Michael Stoops at the National Coalition for the Homeless at mstoops@nationalhomeless.org, or let him know via phone at (202) 737-6444 x19. For more information on hate crimes against homeless people visit www.nationalhomeless.org or contact Michael Stoops at the email or phone number provided. For Representative and Senator info go to www.house.gov and www.senate.gov. ■

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Mockingbird Times



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



JUNE 2003

Foster Care and Homeless Youth Speak out Across the Nation

VOLUME III, ISSUE 6

VISIT US ONLINE AT WWW.MOCKINGBIRDSOCIETY.ORG

Bringing a Community Together with Music

SHAY DENEY



THE VERA PROJECT of Seattle is what you could call a success story. In 1999, while attending college in the Netherlands, James Kebbas and Shannon Stewart,

and the United States' best talent. It still maintains a low-key, welcoming community — all run by volunteers and founded by the Dutch government. When Kebbas and Stewart came back to the U.S., they believed that they could create a program like Vera in Seattle, Washington.

In 1987, a law was passed in Seattle that restricted the mixing of people of different ages where there was dancing or music. In 1999, the Music and Youth Task Force (MYTF) responded to a number of complaints made by young people, musicians, and local promoters. Then, two of Seattle's last all-ages clubs (i.e., music venues that were not bars) closed their doors permanently. Not a single music venue existed for people under 21.

The MYTF decided to do something about it. They brought together representatives from the music community, Police Department, and City Attorney's office who proposed a compromise to replace the very restrictive Teen Dance Ordinance (TDO) with a new All-Ages Dance Ordinance (AADO). Although AADO never got approved, Seattle's former mayor, Paul Schell, did approve two other recommendations made by the Task Force, one of which directed the city of

The Vera Project's attention. Music is his passion and he wanted to be in the scene no matter what it took.

Other than producing music, The Vera Project also collaborates in several special community forums and offers skill-building workshops. Topics include "Activism and the Arts," "City Politics and Music," and "Awareness Building and Education on Violence Against Women." They also put on break-dance battles, spoken-word nights, movie nights, political panels, and weekend-long conferences. They put together a 'zine that they publish

VERA PROJECT CONTINUED ON PAGE 2



The Braindead play at The Vera Project. Photo by Shay Denev.

founders of The Vera Project, found a wonderful little place called Vera. Vera is a Latin acronym of Veri et Racti Amici, meaning "true and sincere friends." It is a globally well-known venue that attracts some of Europe

Seattle to create a city funded all-ages music and performing arts venue.

James Kebbas and Shannon Stewart, now joined by 10 additional founding members, had a proposal to create a performing arts venue in Seattle modeled after Vera in Holland that was responsive to the needs of audiences under 21. In November 2000, the city of Seattle agreed to give The Vera Project a portion of what was needed to run its first year of programming.

I wanted to get a better feel for what The Vera Project was really about, so I set up an interview with James Kebbas. He agreed to the interview and also invited me to stay for the show that they were putting on later that night. I felt that this was a great opportunity for me to see what really goes on inside The Vera Project.

During our interview, James talked about The Vera Project's mission. He stated that their mission was to take people interested in music, whether they be actually playing on-stage or just watching, and bring them together in a community where youth can feel safe and accepted while exploring their interests.

Although James is one of the founding members, he says that nothing could have been accomplished without the volunteers. The Vera Project has volunteers do everything from working at the front door to running sound and lights for the stage.

I also had the chance to interview one of the volunteers that had the job of stage manager and security that night. His name was Hank and he seemed to really enjoy being there with The Vera Project. I asked him how he got involved with The Vera Project. He said that he found an ad in the *Stranger* (a Seattle Weekly) and then e-mailed Shannon Stewart. He stated that being persistent was the trait that really caught

Goodbye, Mockingbird

JESSICA GUNNING



THE J BIRD HAS LEFT THE NEST.

As my four-month internship quickly winds down, I would like to take some time to thank Jim and the rest of the crew at The Mockingbird Society.

An internship is something that is done when someone needs to gain experience, usually for a career. Well, this internship isn't for a career, just for the experience. I came, I learned, I conquered!

Experiences at a job can be good, bad, or otherwise, and all of them came to me while at The Mockingbird Society. But that's not what I am here to talk about. Instead, I want to take the time to let everyone know that no matter what I learned here, I got the chance to learn it from Jim and his wonderful Bird crew.

I have never had a job like the one I've had here. All of the skills I've learned here I've learned for the very first time. Everything I've learned at The Mockingbird Society I will be able to take with me and apply to every job or any career I will have in the future. And for that reason alone, I thank you, Jim.

I also want to take the time to express my feeling towards my co-workers: I just want all of my M-Bird homies to know that I very much enjoyed the time I've spent with all of you. When I wasn't in a very good mood, you guys knew how to cheer me up. When I was in the mood to laugh, you all laughed right along with me. When I needed someone to talk to, I knew I always had someone there for me. I know that four months is only a short period of time to get to know someone, but four months or four years — I'm glad I did and you will all be missed greatly!

So here's to bigger and better things for Jim and all who make The Mockingbird Society possible. Cheers and good luck in the future. 🐦

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| Founded in Seattle, Washington, 2001 | |

Letter from the Editor

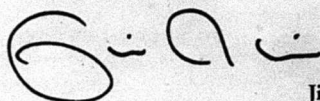
THE CELEBRATION OF GRADUATION: This time of year is special for so many reasons, including planting gardens, evening walks, and the eagerness for summer months. Another reason this time of year is so special is the thousands of ceremonies that celebrate the achievement of high school graduates. For many kids in foster care, this celebration is often one of many that they miss out on. In fact, it's estimated that less than 35 percent of all kids who exit foster care do so with a high school diploma or GED.

The Mockingbird Times wants to celebrate any young person who has experience in foster care and is receiving a high school diploma, GED or college diploma. **Please send us the graduate's name, city, state, the school or program that the graduate attended, and the type of diploma (high school, GED, college), and we will publish them in the next issue of the Mockingbird Times.**

ADULTS WHO WERE IN FOSTER CARE AS CHILDREN: The Mockingbird Society is looking for adults who were in foster care during their childhood and/or adolescence. We want to hear from the "Alumni" about your experiences, ideas, and hopes for the kids

currently in care. We have been discussing the idea of including an "Alumni Corner" in the Mockingbird Times and would like to hear your thoughts about that as well. You have an important story to tell and there are kids who need to hear it.

WELCOME TO MOCKINGBIRD: I'd like to welcome **Bridgett Siroshon** and **Courtney Konietzko** to the Mockingbird Times staff. I'd also like to add a hearty welcome to **Shannon Barello**. Although she has been with Mockingbird for awhile, she now is the Program Supervisor for the Mockingbird Times. Knowing these young people as I do, I am excited about what they have to offer to the Mockingbird Times and the effort to improve the lives of kids who are in foster care and/or homeless.



Jim Theofelis

jim@mockingbirdsociety.org

VERA PROJECT CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

every three months. All of these activities are organized by the volunteers themselves.

In conclusion to my story, I would like to say that The Vera Project is truly a program that works. While I was there for the show, I felt a sense of unity and an overall feeling of acceptance. It also touched me in a personal way because it flared my interest and compassion for the performing arts. Thanks to The Vera Project, youth in Seattle can have a safe, accepting

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 26,500 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 2003 The Mockingbird Society.

Letter to the Editor

Jim,

We have just received your May issue of Mockingbird Times and I have to tell you, even though you have always had a great product, I can say for sure that this was one of my favorites. Your reporters address real issues with such a straightforward, get-your-head-out-of-the-sand way, drawing on their real life experiences; it is refreshing.

I wanted to especially comment on the two articles on the front page regarding dependency and custody hearings. Even as an adult, I found these court appearances overwhelming, intimidating, and frightening. I felt very fortunate to have had a friend who worked in the court system who could guide me through the system. Thank God she was able to coach me through

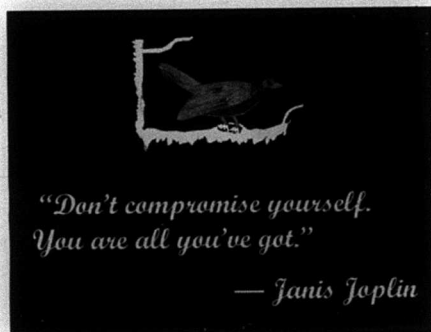
LETTER CONTINUED ON PAGE 4

place to go to express their artistic talents. Youth who want to get involved, really can get involved.

To find more about The Vera Project or to volunteer, visit the website www.theveraproject.org.



Photo of Hank, a Vera Project volunteer, by Shay Deney.



Meet Our Staff

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

Jim Theofelis

STAFF ADVISOR

Shannon Barello

TECHNICAL ADVISOR

Molly Rhodes

STAFF WRITERS

Shay Deney, Dennis Fisher, Jessica Gunning, Felecia James, Courtney Konietzko, William Nelson, Bridgett Siroshon

CONTRIBUTING WRITERS

Rachael Lamoureux

VOLUNTEERS

Valerie Douglas, Siri Throm Saxe

THANK YOUS

Seattle Post-Intelligencer, James Kebbas and The Vera Project, Alfie Susman at Peace for the Streets by Kids from the Streets, Rachael Lamoureux, Tina Guevara

The Mockingbird Times
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Meet our Newest Mockingbird Reporters



Bridgett Siroshton

Tell us a little bit about yourself:

I am a very funny girl, but I can be way serious at times. I love music and into a specific genre, called Trip-Hop. I am an aspiring singer and have been in bands like Ice-cold, and I plan on being in the music industry someday, and moving to Berkeley, California soon,

because the sun is there!

What are some issues you find important:

Homelessness, addressing it and getting people homes, like everyone else has. And having parents and authority figures actually listen and not just to listen to one side of the story. Also just because we're young doesn't always mean that we are wrong.

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

My experience is that I never got along with my step-father and I chose to leave home several times until I finally ran away and started a new life, the way I thought would make me happy!

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

For the police to actually listen and make something happen. Social workers to actually have feelings, and not to be rude because they have authority. And everyone to have homes.

Why did you join the Mockingbird Society?

Because I have heard nothing but good things about the paper and the people behind all those cutting edge stories.

Courtney Konietzko



Tell us a little bit about yourself:

I'm 20, I enjoy reading the work of Jeff Noon, Jonathan Lethem, Scott Turow and Clive Barker. I like to eat chocolate and cheese. I like Industrial music, good jokes and pretty kitty cats.

What are some issues you find important:

1. Organic food, herbal supplements and the price of being healthy. Money shouldn't be needed to have a healthy body.
2. Homelessness and lack of transitional housing for minors.
3. Lack of shelter for youth 18 and over in Seattle.
4. Mental health and Drug and Alcohol Counseling cost and availability for homeless people and low-income people.

What is your experience being homeless or in the Foster Care System?

I was homeless at age 15 and moved into my own place in January of 2002.

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

- 1) I would make drug and alcohol counseling services more readily available to homeless youth.
- 2) I would make there be more beds for youth being released from psychiatric hospitals.

Why did you join the Mockingbird Society?

I want to make a difference and help youth not end up on the streets.



What Do You Think of Homeless Kids?

COURTNEY KONIETZKO



MAY 5, 2003 — Today was my first day at work. I went with my co-worker out into the great, big, wide world — the U-District in Seattle — and interviewed its fearsome inhabitants. Our assignment was to find willing participants to answer the question, "What do you think of homeless kids on The Ave?" Approaching strangers and talking to them successfully is not my strong point. It was interesting figuring out which people to approach. We looked around and decided to start with two people I knew. They were the most comfortable for me to approach — homeless youth. Then we window shopped for non-threatening and neutral looking people to talk to.

We interviewed five people and got turned down or ignored by more. I don't know if it was the time of day, or it was a "hurry-up" day for everyone, or if they didn't want to talk to me because of the metal in my face. Probably none of these things. I think people don't like to talk about homelessness because it makes them think about what could happen because of poverty or illness in their own lives. Perhaps they had a negative experience with a homeless youth on The Ave, and it's tainted their willingness to address it.

It felt weird being a formerly homeless youth and getting ignored by people. It was a similar feeling to when I was ignored as a homeless youth. I received the same "you are not like me" and "I am not comfortable around you," "sub-human, weirdo, freak, beggar, etc." looks. I was homeless on The Ave at age 15, fresh from small town Port Angeles. I identified with the attitude and culture of the other kids out here. That attitude and culture consisted somewhat of displays of rebellion. I can see now how this could have been perceived as surly and made people uncomfortable.

Our camera died within the first five minutes that we left to go to The Ave. It was disappointing not being able to take pictures but there's always next time. I thought it would be funny to take pictures of some of the people who ignored us and write bubble captions over their heads like, "my shoes are too tight, I can't talk to you."

Out of the five people who we interviewed, the most positive responses came from business owners of the Red Light Clothing Company, who said shortly and simply, "We don't get super bothered by homeless kids."

The owners of the Gargoyles Statuary said, "We have a pretty good relationship with a number of the kids who spare change. We think the new sidewalks will help everyone. The major question is how does the community respond, not whether they are here or not. If everybody is treated with respect, the entire place benefits."

What Is P.S.K.S?

BRIDGETT SIROSHTON

WHAT IS PEACE FOR THE STREETS by Kids from the Streets? I asked myself that same question, so I gave them a call and talked to the Food Program Director and core member Alfie Susman.

P.S.K.S. was started by a teacher, Elaine Simons, and her students. It was just suppose to be a summer project but students didn't want to stop. One of the most recent programs the students created is C.H.H.E.W, or Capital Hill's Homeless youth Eating Well. In this program, the youth take classes to achieve their food handler's permits, they cook, and also get experience in the food field.

According to Alfie, C.H.H.E.W hand wrote a grant to the United Way; they currently have two grants pending. Aside from grants, C.H.H.E.W relies on volunteers and donations. Recently, the P.S.K.S. youth were given an opportunity to give back to the community by feeding 78 youth on Easter.

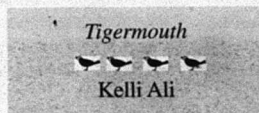
P.S.K.S. will be in its 3rd year this November. Along with C.H.H.E.W, P.S.K.S. also provides support and runs programs for youth at the R.I.S.K. Learning Center and the Heights Center. P.S.K.S. has a school, a place to get your GED, or just to get food.

It sounds too good to be true, but it is true. P.S.K.S. has a direct impact on people's lives, not just on the youth volunteers, but also on the hungry kids who are getting food. It's great that this program exists. I wish I had known about it when I was on the streets; I would have been able to take advantage of this program about 3 years ago when I was living in my car with my best friend behind Reservoir Park. We could have had food and not had to spange just to get something to eat.

The program is located at 1411 E. Olive Way; two confirmed C.H.H.E.W. sites for teen feeds are the Miller Community Center and the Cascade's People's Center (the times of both of these feeds have yet to be determined.) P.S.K.S. also offers youth programs at the R.I.S.K. Learning Center, Mon. - Fri., 2 - 6 p.m. More information on P.S.K.S. can be found online at www.psk.s.org.

Why Fire the Other Fighter Kelli Ali?

BRIDGETT SIROSHTON



IF YOU RECALL IN LATE 1997 a band busted out of the music scene from England. This band was christened The Sneaker Pimps and followed the commercial success of Portishead's albums, a trip-hop band. Trip-hop is experimental hip-hop with only female singers. Kelli Ali, member of the Sneaker Pimps, fit that mold with the hit singles "Spin, Spin Sugar" and the melancholy "6 Underground."

In the heat of their success, the other members fired Kelli. According to Phase 9 music, this was because, "Kelli stole the limelight from the poor chaps." This was probably the best move the boys in the band could have done because she is more popular than ever, collaborating with Linkin Park, Bootsey Collins, and the much-respected Japanese house musician, D.J. Satoshi Tomiie.

Now five years in the making, the album *Tigermouth* experiments with almost everything, from rock and trip-hop to electronica, a feel for '60s music, and my favorite, the spacey guitar riffs. Producer Rick

Knowles, who helped Madonna and No Doubt with their hits, believed in Kelli and wanted to give her the glory she deserved. Together Kelli and Knowles wrote *Tigermouth* in Los Angeles. Kelli Ali's album somewhat fits within the trip-hop scene. There are remnants of trip-hop in the songs "Angel in L.A." and "Fellow Man," with the drum beats and symphony orchestration.

A reporter for *Designer Magazine* recently asked Kelli, "You had toured round the world with the Sneaker Pimps, then this happened, there must have been that sense of betrayal?" Kelli's response was "I felt a bit nonplussed to tell you the truth. Like I say looking back in hindsight it does make a lot of sense. All those times I'd go down to the lobby thinking we'd go for dinner and

they'd all gone."

Nevertheless she is back and better than ever. The highlights of the album are the tracks "Queen of the World," with the beautiful lyrics "she's got starlight in her hair, people see her everywhere... she has a secret that they all want to know." And the song "Infinite Stars," a rock melody that starts off hard and goes into a great breakdown. "In your arms the infinite stars, collide and come together... if the world is going to end, then I'd feel so much better if you love, love me."

Tigermouth is out on the record label One Little Indian, and is available at Tower Records as an import. Buy this album. It's great, and instantly puts you in a good mood, unlike the gloom and doom of the Sneaker Pimps days.

LETTER CONTINUED FROM PAGE 2

many of these legal matters involving the two foster children in my home.

She taught me how to write a letter to the Judge in legal format so that my input was heard prior to arriving in court. She taught me the importance of finding out

the court case number and including that in the letter so that it would actually make it to the right Judge prior to the hearing. I always gave the Judge a progress report documenting a variety of things, and she helped me to determine what content was important and what wasn't. She was able to help me figure out who was hearing the case, the time, date, what courtroom,

because the caseworker never seem to know these things. This woman was not only a good friend but an advocate and mentor, helping me decipher the confusing and unravel the mystery of the court system.

I remember thinking, when all of the hearings were over, how do other foster parents, kids, and concerned folks navigate this system that is so complex. I know I would have never made it without my friends support. As I walked out of the courtroom for the final time, I could not contain the tears. I had felt beat up by the complexity of the system, the lack of preparation in order to know what to expect and relieved that the

stressful court appearances were over. I was an adult; I can only imagine the trauma felt by a child.

One of the most horrific situations was going into a hearing after the girls had been with me for four years and hearing the guardian ad litem recommend that the girls be split up even though they were biological sisters because one was making better progress emotionally than her sibling. She had not discussed this with me or with the caseworker. I can't imagine what would have happened had I not been present that day or there had not been several letters in the file to show the judge the history of systems supporting them

— evidence that there had in fact been some progress and lots of support put in to place to help both of these young ones heal.

I totally agree with Dennis Fisher; these hearings are traumatic. Someone needs to set up an advocacy program with some grant monies to help youth in care, foster parents, and concerned parties feel better served by the courts system.

Thanks to all on the staff there at *Mockingbird Times*, for the work you do is an important gift to the world.

GLENA FELKER



Poetry Corner

Your scent is the fragrance of beauty
 your smile is the start of success
 Your walk is the road of bravery
 Your words are the heart of strength
 Your nurturing hand is the sign of unity and future
 your running legs are the spirit of freedom
 Your watching eyes are the power of trust
 Your listening ear is the fight for knowledge
 Your stumbling heart is the flight of love
 Your struggling life symbolizes
 The feeling of overcoming obstacles
 knocking down broken memories
 The feeling of greatness,
 Because you're the one who has accomplished
 the hardest goal of your life
 Yet you're living with your biggest fears on your shoulders,
 So remember to keep your head high and your feet on high ground.

— RACHAEL LAMOUREAUX

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