

# Change

Reaching Out to End Poverty • Volume 11, No. 5

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## Mr. Speaker

Chopp on Poverty, Power, and Olympia Politics

Inside: Hunger hurts • Rats in  
Belltown • Boing time • African hairitage •  
Truth telling at Tent City • Lip service from Nickels

Interview by R.V. Murphy

PHOTO BY LEMOYNE COATES. COURTESY OF STATE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES PHOTO DEPARTMENT.

**W**hile Washington Speaker of the House sounds like the consummate Establishment position, Frank Chopp often occupies the role of a maverick, tilting at windmills. But Chopp has never been someone whose work is all sound and fury, accomplishing nothing.

A Democrat legislator from District 43, representing parts of Seattle's Capitol Hill, University District, and Fremont neighborhoods, Chopp won his first battle with the Establishment while attending high school. While serving as speaker of the student House of Representatives, he tried to bar the Elks Club from coming to his high school to present citizenship awards. The reason? The Elks Club didn't allow African Americans to become members at that time.

Chopp's empathy with the underdog goes back even further. His parents, both children of Croatian immigrants, met on a picket line while striking against a local coal mine. His dad, Frank Sr., started sorting coal in Roslyn at the age of 12 and spent most of his adult life as a shipyard worker in Bremerton, never making it past the sixth grade. However his mom, Anne, went to a community college and completed her high school degree at the age of 69.

Chopp was a Magna Cum Laude graduate from the University of Washington (1975) and became director of the Cascade Community Center that same year. He's also been administrative director for the Pike Market Senior Center and executive director and (currently) president for the Fremont Public Association.

Chopp is in his fifth term in the State House of Representatives and his second year as its sole speaker. In his first term as speaker, the house was split 50-50 between Democrats and Republicans, and Chopp shared the gavel with Wenatchee conservative Clyde Ballard.

A founding member of the Low Income Housing Institute, Chopp took the ball when LIHI and the Sand Point Community Housing Association wanted to place 24 beds for homeless youth and teens in vacant buildings at the Sand Point Naval Air Station. The

not-in-my-backyard opposition ebbed away as Chopp helped persuade residents to support the proposal.

"I've enjoyed taking on the establishment," Chopp told *The Seattle Times* at that time. "Getting them to pay attention and to do the right thing."

However, Chopp's not an outsider, just making noise and not accomplishing anything.

"Frank Chopp is a better leader than [Governor] Gary Locke is," former Senate Republican leader Jim West told *The Olympian* in 2002 after the House completed its 2002 budget. "He has determination. He articulates what he wants, and he knows how to get it."

After completing the 2002 budget without a tax increase, Chopp walked into the House Democratic caucus room and was greeted with chants of "Chopp! Chopp! Chopp!" The Democrats even presented him with a signed

football, similar to the game's best player receiving the game ball.

At the recent 10th annual Housing Advocacy Day, Chopp received the "Housing Hero Award" from Carla Okigwe of the Washington Low Income Housing Alliance. Chopp told those in attendance at the award presentation, "The federal government's getting out of the housing business. That's what Bush's goal is. We have to come back and fight at the state level and reinstate some of those lost funds."

"Even back in the '70s and '80s, Frank has been working on housing," said Okigwe in presenting the gold-plated award. "Not necessarily at the state level, but at the local level as well."

After receiving the award, Chopp displayed something that's often missing in politics — passion, especially passion for the plight of the disenfranchised. Chopp grew particularly animated as he reiterated his eight-year fight to keep the General Assistance — Unemployable (GA-U) benefit program afloat.

"I assume people down here always want to cut GA-U. It's \$110 million, I think. But that will happen over my

dead body. If it was up to the governor, or the Senate Republicans, or even the House Appropriations Chair, they'd wipe that program out.

I DEFY any of them to live on \$339 a month," he said. "It's gross that they even think about doing away with this program. It's \$339 a month to survive. It's the last lifeline for people."

Before receiving his award, Chopp met with members of the *Real Change* staff for a brief interview.

**Real Change:** *What are your priorities this year for the House?*

**Frank Chopp:** The top ones are improving our education system, which means investing in our schools, and health care, making it affordable and accessible to people. In my opinion, it's critical to protect the people who need the help the most.

**RC:** *What about GA-U? There wasn't as much money being put into it as there should have been? The forecast was off — more people were qualifying for the program than had been planned — and there was extra money that needed to be added into it.*

**"I assume people down here always want to cut GA-U. It's \$110 million, I think. But that will happen over my dead body."**

—Frank Chopp

Continued on page 8

## MAIL BAG

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### Blowback blind spot

Dear *Real Change*,

Great Chalmers Johnson interview on KBCS! I already have my ticket (to Johnson's Wednesday, February 11 reading), since I was so enthralled with reading *Blowback* a couple of years ago.

However, I heard Johnson say the following, which I subsequently found on your web site (realchangenews.org):

"One of the things that appalls me about the current political situation is how none of the Democrat [presidential candidates] seem to be offering an alternative to what American behavior in the

world should be. None of them have any real criticism of the size of the Defense budget, the amount of money spent. Some of them — that is, most of them — voted for war powers to be transferred to the President [in the case of Iraq]."

Dennis Kucinich actually calls for a 50 percent reduction in the Defense budget; he helped spearhead the House members to vote NO on the War! And he has a plan to get us out of Iraq and the UN in, but that we pay for the operation! If you have anything to do with the event on Wednesday, I hope you remind him of this.

**Margaret Casey  
Seattle, WA**

*Ed. replies: Johnson might also have added that Kucinich doesn't have the power to win in November. Meanwhile, none of the Democratic frontrunners are much interested in "standing up to the vested interests of the Pentagon, the intelligence agencies, and the military-industrial complex," as Johnson put it. Right now they (and the primary and caucus voters supporting them) are much more interested in taking back the presidency. We'll see whether Kucinich and his ardent followers come to a point where they can no longer reside within the Democratic Party. Will we see a reprise of the Nader-Gore contest of 2000?*

*Another note: The radio interview with Chalmers Johnson ("Manifest Destiny" RC Feb. 5-19) was aired on KBCS 91.3 FM on Monday, February 9. It's the first in an ongoing collaboration between Real Change and the non-commercial Bellevue Community College station. Stay tuned.*

### On begging

Dear *Real Change*,

I don't like beggars, but most beggars don't like to be beg either. I gladly buy *Real Change* because I have some confidence that the money is spent on

programs (advocacy in this case) that may make a difference. However, *Real Change* doesn't come out every day. For a while, I gave away free bus tickets; that supply is almost gone. Are there things that everybody needs all of the time, like food coupons, that I could give out?

**Jeffrey Bellevue**

*Ed. replies: Two of the most common forms of help provided to homeless people are free food and free clothing. Consequently, no one starves around here and you can always find a secondhand winter coat (especially in August) or a t-shirt (in February). You could hand out gift certificates to McDonalds, where a little money goes a long way. Or if Mickey D's is too gauche, get some Starbucks gift cards. The scarcest forms of assistance are those that cost real money: job training, case management, and housing. Your charity is admirable, but please complement it with advocacy. Resolve to contact your elected officials about poverty at least twice a month. We'll make it easy for you by continuing to publish the Citizens Participation Project on the back page of every issue.*

### Honest

Dear *Real Change*,

I just wanted to say that "A Dream Interred: why couldn't Mona Joyner bury the ashes of the man she loved?" (RC Dec. 24) reminded me of how much I appreciate your newspaper. I used to buy at least one copy of every issue, but after moving from Belltown to the Northgate area about two years ago, I don't run into vendors very often anymore. "A Dream Interred" isn't just a story I can't find in the big newspapers; it's told with an honesty and empathy that is completely out of their league.

Thanks for your continuing commitment to "stuff that matters"!

**John H. Lombard  
Seattle**

## Change

Puget Sound's Voice of the  
Poor and Homeless

*Real Change* is published every other Thursday and is sold by the poor and homeless of Seattle. Annual subscriptions are available for \$35. All material is copyrighted to the authors. Submissions should be mailed to "Real Change," 2129 2nd Ave., Seattle, WA 98121. Tel. (206) 441-3247; fax. (206) 374-2455.

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#### Mission Statement:

*Real Change* exists to create opportunity and a voice for low-income people while taking action to end homelessness and poverty.

#### Goals

- Provide a foundation for grassroots organizing.
- Publish the views of marginalized communities.
- Create direct economic opportunity. Build bridges with a broad range of allies in the struggle against poverty.

The *Real Change Homeless Empowerment Project* is a 501(c)3 non-profit organization. Programs include the *Real Change* newspaper, 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.



**We want  
to hear  
from  
you!**

Bring story ideas, comments, suggestions, and questions to the second monthly open meeting of the **Real Change Editorial Committee**. Wednesday February 25, 4:30 p.m., at the Real Change office. Everyone welcome. For additional information about the meeting, please call Adam Holdorf, editor, at 206-441-3247, extension 207, or email [editor@realchangenews.org](mailto:editor@realchangenews.org).

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# Enough To Go Around

HB 2769 takes a bite out of Washington State's hunger

By Shawn Cantrell

Last December, Mark got laid off from a major company, just a few months after his wife, Cheryl, lost her job. Both were engineers and were fortunate enough to have savings to survive. After continually paying for living costs, their savings could only take them so far. They needed income. Eventually they found themselves in a position that was both unexpected and crushing. They now rely on local food banks to supplement their reduced food budgets and pay their utility bills.

Hunger in America is not the stereotypical images portrayed in developing countries. It's insidious and behind closed doors. Over time, malnutrition causes stunted development in children and takes away people's ability to focus on other parts of their lives. And unbeknownst to many, hunger is a serious problem in Washington State. Over 100,000 households face hunger or are at risk for food insecurity each year. Since the U.S. Department of Agriculture began fielding a survey on hunger and food insecurity, Washington has ranked among the top five states with the highest hunger rates.

With unemployment, high housing costs, and high mobility rates pulling families into a cycle of poverty, people are doing everything to keep their heads barely above the surface. Those with jobs are often not paid enough to cover all of their living costs. Many do not have enough money to buy food without having one family member go hungry. Increasingly, people standing in the lines of food banks are the recently unemployed or low-wage workers. People in this country should not have to worry about whether they are going to have enough food to make it through the month.

Soup kitchens for the homeless and food banks should be commended for their efforts and charity, but they cannot help all of the families in need. Food banks reach only 10 to 12 percent of the people who don't have enough. Washington has the opportunity to utilize federally funded programs at a minimal state cost. If we expect children to learn and parents to work, then their basic needs have to be met. Without food, they are deprived of an equal opportunity.

We can take concrete action, now, to fight hunger. We can implement school breakfast programs in elementary schools and open up summer food sites so that children living in areas where 50 percent or more are under the federal poverty level can eat when school meals aren't available. These federally funded meals improve academic performance and ensure children develop with less health and behavioral problems.

The Food Stamp Program was designed to improve the nutrition level and food purchasing power of people with low incomes. All food stamp benefits are paid by the federal government, and the state only pays for half of the administration costs. People use the food stamps to take care of their basic needs until they are able to find a job and work through difficult financial periods; the average length of participation is less than two years. Make it easier for people to access food stamps, and we enhance a family's ability to stabilize. Families rise out of poverty when there is support, not more obstacles. By lengthening the recertification period, DSHS faces less administrative burdens and paperwork. Granting food stamp benefits for five months to families transitioning from cash assistance to work enables them to focus on their jobs and future.

In addition, we should ensure that every person living in poverty has access to food. People with a former drug-related felony are the only ones who face a lifetime ban on food stamps. This exclusion targets poor people with a drug-related past. Denying food to poor people does not help them improve their current financial status but further entrenches them into a life of poverty. Individuals with a former drug felony conviction aren't the only ones affected but also their children.

Many of these solutions are all contained in the Act for Hungry Families Bill (House Bill 2769), which is currently pending in the Washington state legislature. Bi-partisan supporters of this bill are pushing to have this important legislation enacted this year. Without food assistance, couples like Mark and Cheryl will soon move out of their home to make ends meet because they can no longer afford the high housing costs. For families with children, school meals may be the only place where they receive a solid meal during hard times. Hunger is an immediate reality, and this bill is the first step toward ending hunger in our state. ■

Shawn Cantrell is executive director of Washington Citizen Action, a 50,000-member statewide grassroots group working on issues of social and economic justice. For more info, go to [wacitizenaction.org](http://wacitizenaction.org).

**Food banks reach only 10 to 12 percent of the people who don't have enough.**

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## Olympia: Dead or Alive?

Just past the midpoint in the 2004 state legislative session, here's some not-so-dismal news: a few positive bills affecting housing and hunger are still alive and kicking.

Chief among them is House Bill 2578, a crime victim bill that recognizes that homeless people are especially vulnerable to those who prey upon them. It would authorize judges to consider harming a homeless person an "aggravating circumstance" and to impose exceptional sentences on their attackers. It passed its first hurdle, sailing through a House vote by a margin of 70 to 25.

Also succeeding is House Bill 2818, creating a homeless family services fund. Much reduced from its original goal of \$15 million, the law would now set aside \$5 million in state funding to create support services such as counseling, referrals to employment support and job training services, domestic violence services and programs, mental health, substance abuse treatment, parenting skills training, transportation assistance, child care, and other services identified by the state's Department of Social and Health Services. It passed through the House 78-18.

The House also approved H.B. 2870 by a margin of 54 to 42. It would provide relocation assistance for tenants in substandard housing, like those in the condemned Auburn building ("Truth to Power" Feb. 5). Under it, low-income tenants could receive funds for relocation from landlords who fail to provide safe and sanitary housing. Assistance would typically pay for moving costs and expenses, advance payments required for moving into a new residence such as the cost of first and last month's rent and security and damage deposits, utility connection fees and deposits, and anticipated additional rent and utility costs in the residence for one year after relocation. The compensatory limit is \$2,000.

Having passed in the House, all three of these bills have gone on to the Republican-controlled Senate, where their future is less certain.

Joining them is a House bill allowing women who suffer domestic violence, stalking, or sexual assault to escape their leases without paying fines or incurring a black mark on their credit history. It would also prohibit landlords from evicting them because of disturbances arising due to the person who's after them. Another bill that addresses domestic violence would allow monetary penalties from offenders to pay for advocacy and prevention of violence against women. That bill is before the Senate Rules Committee, waiting to be scheduled for floor action.

Yet a host of bills dealing with poverty appear to be dead at the session's midpoint.

The Senate's "Act for Hungry Families" bill died — and with it, a proposal to allow felons to get food stamps (see "Enough to Go Around" op-ed, page 3). Other hunger issues are addressed in the "Reducing Hunger" bill, which would make it easier for people to get food stamps and participate in school lunch programs.

A few good bills that died in the House include one that was reintroduced from last year and would restore voting rights to felons once their Department of Corrections supervision ends. The bill would not affect any order that prohibits the offender from having contact with a specified person, or coming within a set distance of any specified location. This issue is driven in part by the fact that low-income people and people of color are less likely to have access to good representation in court, and are thus more likely to be convicted and lose their right to vote.

Another dead bill was prompted by a crisis in the capacity of the justice system to meet the civil legal needs of low-income people. To address this crisis, the bill would increase Superior Court filing fees from \$110 to \$200. The funds generated would be used to increase civil legal aid to low-income residents.

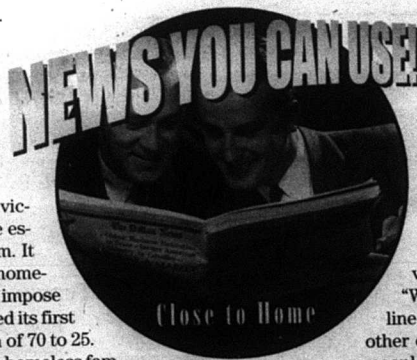
Finally, the House Committee on Children and Families did not act upon a bill that would have provided short-term cash assistance for the homeless. Now, past the February 6 cut-off date, it too appears to be dead.

—Kaye Allard, with assistance from Nancy Amidei's "Policy Watch"

## Belltown's "different café"

In Belltown these days if you see the opening of a new café, you normally might think it's Bar Number One Thousand and One about to swing the doors open. Not this one.

The Recovery Café opened the doors in January with a goal to assist persons in need of recovery. That's recovery as in alcohol, abusive partners,



mental difficulties, and addictions — running the gamut of social problems.

The café is the concept of more than a dozen Seattle residents who've taken a lease on a building at the corner of Second Avenue and Bell Street. Open Monday through Friday, it provides noontime meditation, 4 p.m. AA meetings, and soup, salad, and coffee until closing at 8.

Theron Shaw, director of development for the fledgling project, is among three part-time (really full-time) volunteers getting the non-profit group off and running. "We're basing our program on a non-denominational guideline of similar concepts in New York, Washington and a few other cities. Basically we hope to provide a new contact for area people in need of recovery and a place to hang their hats and talk about problems."

Executive director of the group is Killian Noe, a veteran of considerable time and effort at the Matt Talbot program over the last decade. As a counselor Noe, has seen the depth of problems for persons needing help, rich or poor. Noe is visiting Calcutta to review and learn from the teaching of the late Mother Theresa.

Approached by the organization's leaders, several landlords declined to rent out their spaces when they learned that likely patrons would be addicts seeking help in support groups. Finally, the Archdiocese Housing Authority, which owns the building, agreed to lease the high-profile location surrounded by restaurants, bars, and a few other organizations that help homeless and needy residents. Its food is provided by Fare Start and Northwest Harvest.

From appearances, Recovery Café seems to be headed towards expanding to a full seven days a week and longer hours, with a counselor available most of the time. If it attracts those in need of assistance, it'll soon find its Second and Bell location pouring lots of coffee since virtually everyone admits that Seattle has thousands of low-income, homeless and abused people looking for an open door, a friendly face, and a warm welcome — with professional counseling, to boot. Additional staff and hours means in the middle of trendy Belltown the word 'recovery' might have new meaning. A café dealing with spiritual, educational, and physical nourishment for those in need might provide a journey to a new life.

Recoverycafe.org is on the web and at 206-374-8371 — and if you're among the thousands looking for work, they have barista training along with job placement assistance.

— Ed Cain

## Don't Amend It



HUNDREDS OF PROTESTERS GATHERED IN WESTLAKE CENTER ON SATURDAY, FEBRUARY 14 — VALENTINE'S DAY — FOR A RALLY IN SUPPORT OF GAY MARRIAGE. THE PROTESTERS OPPOSE CONSERVATIVES' CALL FOR A CONSTITUTIONAL AMENDMENT BANNING SAME-SEX UNIONS. BEST PROTEST SIGN: "KEEPING OUR QUEER EYE ON THE STUPID GUY," WITH A PICTURE OF GEORGE W. BUSH. PHOTO BY KEN DEAN.

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

# Kicked to the Curb

## County Jail stops releasing inmates late at night

By Adam Holdorf

Mike Vashi can attest to the fact that, even when a policy changes for the better, things aren't all hunky-dory.

But a policy did change for the better late last year at the King County Jail. On December 18, jail personnel began releasing inmates in the early-morning hours of 6:30 a.m. — not, as was often the case, just after midnight.

Officials with the King County Department of Adult and Juvenile Detention (DAJD), which runs the area's two major facilities, the downtown jail and the Kent Regional Justice Center, say they responded to a hue and cry over public safety.

The practice "did put people out in the community at a bad time," when they might be tempted to commit another offense, says Acting Major Gordon Carlsson, who has been present for inmates releases at the King County Jail. Senior management decided "for the community's well-being" to release people in the early-morning hours.

There was also simmering concern on the part of advocates for the poor that the region's public institutions — notably, jails and hospitals — were exacerbating the misery of people who were homeless.

A report released at a November conference on homelessness detailed the stories of people who found themselves free from jail and back on the streets at a time when there was nowhere to go. Several men and one woman told of being released late at night; all of them concluded that, in the words of the report, they could use

some help "finding a safe place to go upon release from jail, and that they would accept that help, even from jail staff."

In sum, the report's authors (among them First things First, the political action arm of *Real Change*) found that jails and hospitals "contribute to homelessness both through lack of long-term independent living skills development and housing support, and exacerbating short-term crisis when people are released at night with no shelter." Such practices are expensive in the long run, as so-called "frequent cyclers" come back to prison, or people get sick because they lack proper housing.

Vashi, for his part, was not exactly impressed with his most recent treatment within the jail's confines.

The whole thing got off to a very inauspicious start, as these things tend to, when Vashi was awoken from his sleeping bag in a garage on Sunday morning, January 18. A man rooting through Vashi's possessions had found his wallet, and he was counting out the money Vashi had earned the previous day (he customarily sells *Real Change* on Capitol Hill, outside the 15th Avenue East QFC).

Vashi says he pushed the man against the wall and asked a passerby to call 911. When police arrived he told them what happened. The erstwhile thief told them a different story: that the money, backpack, *Real Change* newspapers, and even his blanket were his,

not Vashi's. Because the thief had a current address, and Vashi didn't, he says they believed the other guy. The man was released — carrying away the booty.

"He took my blanket — what the hell does that guy want with my blanket?" Vashi recalls. "My backpack, coat, money, papers, radio. Everything was given to him, and he left with a big old smile on his face." Vashi was booked into jail on charges of assault and theft.

But "going to jail" isn't just a simple trip. That morning, it was a six-hour wait to go from being booked to exchanging his clothes for a jail uniform and heading upstairs to a cell. Inside the post-booking room, staring around at the blank walls, the loss of sleep caught up to him. He awoke abruptly as a guard hosed him down.

Vashi estimates that he spent six hours in the post-booking room. As he got his uniform, the guards took his clothes and, he recalls "they throw them in a little garbage bag and tie it up real tight. And they go, 'We hope your stuff dries pretty good.'"

That was Sunday morning. Since Monday was Martin Luther King Jr. Day, Vashi sat in a cell for 48 hours before going to court. He had made up his mind to plead guilty, trading the plea if prosecutors did not press the assault charge. He's made that choice before: this is Vashi's 12th theft conviction (one felony, for robbery), and it's not the first time he's taken what public defenders call the poverty plea. "I could fight it for 90 days [but] I'm like, why the fuck

should I? As far as I can see, it's a lose-lose situation." The defendant did not show up in court.

Vashi spent Tuesday night in the cell. Instead of being released just after midnight, he was awoken at 4 a.m. and taken downstairs. He got his clothes back — stinking from their prolonged dampness — and put them on. He and other inmates waited for two hours in a closet-sized holding room. And when it was time to go, the jail staff told him, as he said they've told him before, to head over to the Fourth Avenue feeding spot known as The Wall. But no one feeds at the Wall that early in the morning. Just as Operation Nightwatch is not open for shelter applicants past midnight, when jail personnel used to release inmates.

If jail staff were trained to help him make a successful transition out again — with counseling skills or knowledge of available shelter and services available — would he use them? Yes, he says; Provide "a pamphlet saying where you can eat right away. Places where you can get housing. Counselors, rehab, whatever people may need. If it's early in the morning, they ought to give you a bus ticket."

What else would prevent or delay his returning to jail?

"Housing for people with felonies," he answers. "That's my biggest problem. Almost every program I check with, I can't get public assistance with a felony." ■



*Real Change*

Vendor Mike

Vashi says a

few more

reforms to

King County

Jail wouldn't

hurt.



A group of homeless people is seeking to get Denver mayor John Hickenlooper to create a tent city for the city's homeless. With the help of a college professor, the group studied tent cities in Portland, Seattle, and Los Angeles and

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presented a 39-page proposal for their own to the city's Commission on Homelessness, according to the *Denver Post*.

A tent city is a small plot of land where people with no available shelter could sleep without fear of police harassment, bulldozers, or predators. Advocates for the tent city estimate that setting one up would cost \$100,000.

There is no precise census of homeless people in the Mile High City. A survey by the Metro Denver Homeless Initiative, an advocacy group, puts the population at about 9,700. The number of shelter beds has remained at about 1,000 since the early 1990s. Families and children are the fastest-growing segment of the homeless population.

The *Denver Post* and the *Rocky Mountain News* have both come out against the tent city idea. But surprisingly, the idea is drawing criticism from the most unlikely critics. The Colorado Coalition of the Homeless says, "the plan fails to address health, safety and sanitary issues and it doesn't address causes of homelessness such as mental illness, substance abuse, job loss and the lack of affordable housing."

San Francisco Mayor Gavin Newsom recently held the first of many promised meetings of his new "Homelessness Cabinet," made up of representatives from roughly 10 city agencies wrestling with the problem. He told the *San Francisco Examiner* that the planned weekly, or at least monthly, meetings would "connect the dots" and provide accountability so that needed services are delivered efficiently and homelessness can be ended in the coming decade. Newsom also said he plans to save some \$400,000 a year by eliminating the Mayor's Office on Homelessness. "It's disbanded," he said, adding, "I'd rather put those dollars in direct services."

The mayor said he wants to create much closer communication and cooperation among the various city agencies that together spend more than \$100 million a year dealing with aspects of chronic homelessness.

Last week, Dallas mayor Laura Miller held a town hall meeting for the homeless, according to the *Dallas Morning News*. Miller wanted to hear opinions on city plans for a homeless assistance center. The city has narrowed down possible sites to three. Some homeless people and advocates are concerned that one of the sites is eight miles from downtown. "It's like throwing a party and no one will come," Linda Cahanin said. "They want us out of downtown. Out of sight, out of mind." James Waghorne, president of the Dallas Homeless Neighborhood Association, said the group collected signatures asking which site homeless people preferred. The city plans to open a facility for 24 hours, seven days a week, that offers restrooms, showers, laundry, drug and alcohol counseling, mental health services, child care, computer access, lockers and other services. Voters approved \$3 million for the facility in a May bond election, but officials say that does not cover the cost and that they must also raise private money for the facility. The City Council is scheduled to vote on the facility Feb. 25.

Hundreds of migrant workers in Merced County in California could be left homeless this summer, the county's housing authorities have said. The *Modesto Bee* reports that state funding to build new migrant worker housing is in danger, and Planada's dilapidated Felix Torres Migrant Center was in such poor condition it was forced to shut down last October and designated for demolition. Back then, the state had enough cash to build more housing. Now that funding is in jeopardy, and about 400 migrants, their spouses and children could be left without a place to stay.

The department had set aside about \$4.1 million to build the new facility, with another \$3 million promised by the U.S. Department of Agriculture. There has been no official announcement to withdraw the funding, but Nicholas Benjamin, executive director of Merced County's Housing Authority, said he believes the project won't be funded, and that once the state funding goes, the federal money will go as well. Many migrant workers sleep in their cars.

—Compiled by R.V. Murphy

## one chance

Drop it! That's  
the  
idea...  
a  
command.  
Your  
name?  
You've got it. Behind  
you, again...  
you've  
got it

—STAN BURRISS

## Sharing Peace

To live each day, rejecting even the smallest show of violence,  
To look within ourselves the same way we examine and criticize others,  
To foster peace of mind while keeping our feet planted firmly in reality.

To recognize that each of us has a role, rather than completing against each other,  
To become a better person, not just a better worker,  
To become a bit kinder, to share and be mindful of one another;

To never grant war a life within us, though we must live in a world of war,  
To never lose our gentle smiles, even in the face of guns and bombs,  
To respond to violence with non-violence, but to resist until the very end;  
Never to wage a war against war, but always  
To sow the seeds of peace with our warmth and our tears.

—NOHAE PARK

translated from the Korean

Adventures in Poetry with ©Dr. Wes Browning



I'm writing this over the Valentine's Day/ President's Day weekend. The word now is that, at Mayor Gavin Newsom's direction, San Francisco will issue as many as

2,000 marriage licenses to same-sex couples before the courts consider an injunction to stop them. Nearly a thousand have already been married in civil ceremonies authorized by the mayor's office and conducted by volunteers who have given up their three-day weekends for the honor.

And kids these days say we baby boomers had all the fun. Look out, there haven't been this many outraged bigots since those poor, tired White people were deprived of Rosa Parks' seat at the front of the bus in 1955.

At least the White riders of that Alabama bus could justifiably whine that they were deprived of a seat. What with seats on a bus being a limited resource and all, you can strain

your imagination and visualize how some White guy could get all up and righteous that HIS personal racially reserved seat had been usurped.

But today people declare that the "sanctity of marriage" entitles heterosexuals to have all of it even when there's no shortage! And were only talking about civil marriages! Nobody is forcing churches to recognize any of these same-sex marriages.

Speaking of the sanctity of marriage, the last I heard it was still a violation of the U.S. Constitution for either state or federal lawmakers to promote the sanctity of anything or anyone in legislation. So why has the California legislature done so, we wonder idly and pointlessly, with un-bated breath and without question mark.

To me, the really interesting question lies with the clash of morality and legality. This subject is usually subsumed under the categories of "civil disobedience" and "human rights" and in my humble opinion grossly oversimplified at every turn in accordance with the ideologies of the simplifiers.

Not that I am a stranger to simplification. Hey, I took Philosophy 105 and got me a C-plus for the section on John

Stuart Mill. I learned to spell "Stuart."

What I'm trying to say is, the courts have to figure out whether what Gavin Newsom is doing is legal. He says California's law is illegal under the state's constitution, and that he's only upholding the latter. In which case he is merely the only California mayor to take his oath of office literally in this regard.

But there is no question in my mind that he has done what is morally right. Morality falls heavily on the side of the

**Same-sex marriages: and kids these days say we Baby Boomers had all the fun.**

oppressed, and no matter what Christian Fundamentalists may think, Christians aren't oppressed in this country. To encapsulate, Christians are to same-sex marriages as white folks were to desegregation. You can be one of the ones who get in the way, or not.

In the words of Jesus, "Get thee behind me, Satan." When you are oppressed I'll stand with you. When you are the one doing the oppressing you need to hear it plain and simple, so you

can know when to get down off people's backs.

Speaking of getting the plain-and-simple out, and such: I've been obsessing about the practices of certain Christian missions lately, thanks to some semi-private input I've recently received. I'm talking about the practice of requiring poor people who are invited to a "free" meal to attend a church service beforehand.

This practice is wholly legal and justifiable to the extent, and just to the extent, that the meals are intended exclusively for Christians, and that we all are prepared to agree that non-Christians ought to fend for themselves. Let sinners, secularists, Jews, Muslims, Hindus, Buddhists, whatever, set up their own "free" meals for their own poor people, right?

But it has come to my attention that there are some who would go out of their way to call non-Christians to these feasts, without setting aside the church-attendance requirement for them. I just want to go on record as saying that exploiting the hunger of poor people to promote your religion is immoral and reprehensible. Please don't. ■



### Last Home of the Mighty

Quiet dignity pervaded marble halls  
Temples and pillars of the mighty  
Power and wealth permeated these premises  
A lifted finger once caused heads to roll  
Mighty armies followed their lead  
Empires rose empires fell at their behest  
Many had their names engraved in history  
Amid all this dignity appeared  
A little black dog that lifted his leg  
Wagged his trail trotted about his vast domain

—J. GLENN EVANS

### Subliminal Awakening

The red velured divan nestles and conquers  
Inorganic vitality visited in the bunkered dreams  
While plucked for bloomfuls of nourishment  
Devoured from the sacred soya mother load  
Out of the corner of the eye the spinning potter  
Sees the genius and delves into a tailspin

Submarines and dolphins propose to salt the surface  
Breathing and owning the waves of contentment  
Lost in wheatfields amazed by crazed crickets  
Along for the hayride blindfolded but discreet  
Drowning the urchins in a mirage of an oasis  
Voicing the thirst that is animated stained glass

Swaggering in banana peel and gorilla posturing  
Denting a fender with a flea-bomb afternoon  
Ending with a tackle, a racket and a hammer  
Banging studly lightning rods against the Grand Canyon  
Mounted on great whites outlandish to the shore  
Embracing the bottleneck washed up with the algae

—CAROL KOSCHE

### Up in the Frozen Sky

Up in the frozen sky,  
from whence does the spring breeze blow?

Up in the sky, so full of missiles,  
from whence does the skylark fly?

Up in the sky, so full of jets,  
where is our trembling peace hidden?

When will the flower seeds that roam with the wind  
finally land on this earth, so full of weapons?

How much more crimson blood must flow  
before wildflowers blossom on this frozen beast?

—NOHAE PARK  
*translated from the Korean*

### Wandering Youth

A boy a girl  
Two young ones  
Holding hands  
Tightly  
Her man  
His woman  
A hungry  
Lost look  
A strange city  
She carries the bedroll  
He carries the rest  
Fled from somewhere  
A strained look  
In a big town  
That devours  
One moment  
They are gone  
Forever

—J. GLENN EVANS

### streetlamp

While  
passing...  
you see it.  
  
Lines —  
life!  
broken  
  
into pieces  
made  
simple  
by an imagination all  
your  
own... falls...  
your  
own  
(you  
say).

It's all  
in passing.

—STAN BURRISS

## CHOPP, Continued from Page 1

**Chopp:** Under state law, we have to provide that extra funding. If it was up to Governor Locke and the Senate Republicans, GA-U would have been wiped out.

**RC:** In last year's budget?

**Chopp:** Last year, the year before that, and the year before that.

One of the keys to having a House Democratic majority is so long as I'm Speaker, we will never do away with that program. It's too much of a critical lifeline for people in need. It's not that much money, \$339 a month per person, but for that person it's everything when they're having some difficulties in life. A neat thing is in the last month, just by happenstance I've met three folks who've been on GA-U, including someone who's working in Street Outreach Services. She told me her story about a different issue, and she just mentioned that she was on GA-U. And the other folks had used that program to get back on their feet, get a better education, get a new job, get decent health care, etc. So it's a very important program.

**RC:** It seems that people who provide GA-U, while not saying that the program will ever fade away, will push people who really need the money to get on to Social Security.

**Chopp:** Well, let's be very clear. The governor and Dino Rossi [head of the House Ways and Means Committee and a Republican running for governor] were out to screw [people] in the program. They wiped out the program in their budget proposal. So if people have heard it might go away, if it was up to

the governor and Dino Rossi it would have been wiped out. And that would have been morally wrong and wrong in many other ways as well. The public didn't really know that because I stopped it and so it became non-news.

Dino Rossi goes around the state now saying, "I passed a budget with no tax increases and it didn't hurt the vulnerable." His budget cut off \$100,000 in health care and GA-U and other critically important programs. We compromised to \$25,000 to \$30,000 eventually. That's still bad, but his proposal was unbelievably bad.

**RC:** Can you say a little bit about Washington Cares, the group of Democratic representatives who support human services. What was your role in getting that started?

**Chopp:** We wanted to have a way for the [Democratic] Caucus to set priorities in a fundamental area, in terms of providing health care and human services to people throughout the state. There are a lot of people down here in Olympia who lobby on behalf of corporate interests, and their only interest is lining their own pockets. Meanwhile, many House Democrats came to Olympia to help poor people and people in need.

So by virtue of bringing people together in a caucus, we identify what the critical steps are that we need to do to do a better job of helping people. That's how it came about. Rep. Jeannie Darneille of Tacoma is the chair. Rep. Mark Miloscia from Federal Way is the vice chair. We have an agenda — not everything on the agenda will be achieved this session, but the caucus feels very good about it because it's a way of bringing together all the ideas

and concerns that people had about health care and human services.

**RC:** What are your ideas as far as tax reform. How would you go about doing it?

**Chopp:** The main thing we have to do is to figure out what's most important. The most important thing is we need additional revenue to meet critical needs in schools and health care. Then we have to decide, how do we generate that revenue. I'm open-minded on how to do that.

For example, a few years ago we passed Initiative 773, which raised the cigarette tax by 60 cents a pack. I know people who smoke are

sort of addicted, and it increased their cost, but it did raise \$240 million dollars this last budget cycle. If that had not been there, the health-care cuts would have been \$240 million worse. We have to look at a variety of things.

**RC:** What will it take for us to eventually get to fair and meaningful tax reform? And what do you base your decisions on? What are the aspects of any kind of tax exemptions that you decide to give or not?

**Chopp:** The key is, does it work? Very simple: does it create jobs? Does it help the economy? If you have a better economy, generally there's less poverty, fewer people in need. In many cases, people who are poor get jobs out of the effort. If it doesn't create jobs it shouldn't be done.

And there's real debate about whether some things like research and development tax incentives [which are up for renewal in the current legislative session] create jobs. When you look at studies done by independent parties, two-thirds of it — a thing called sales tax on construction of high-tech buildings — is shown to create jobs. The other [one-third] is a Business and Occupation tax cut, which is mixed. So two thirds works, the other third is questionable. But the key is whether it creates jobs and more wealth in the community.

**RC:** You have some ties to the Cascade neighborhood in the South Lake Union area. What are your feelings about biotech in that area and biotech getting tax exemptions?

**Chopp:** We need vibrant development in our urban areas, which includes areas for people to work as well as places for people to live. So what's critical to that effort is that there's enough housing provided in Cascade and South Lake Union. Not just for rich folk but also for average working people as well as people who are really in need. We've done a lot of effort the last 10 years to build new units and also to save a lot of housing units, actually hundreds of units in that community. But we need to do more to preserve the housing and build more housing in that area.

I'm more concerned with the housing aspect to see that that's there. And quite a number of agencies are helping there. I'm the leading proponent for the state's Housing Trust Fund. We have it at \$80 million, which is a historic high in funding for affordable housing. I'm



PHOTOS BY LEMOYNE COATES

really proud of the effort because it's done such good. You can just go around Seattle and look at all the projects. There are great buildings and it's really helping the poorest of the poor.

I'm proud of that. If we weren't in the majority it would be down about \$40 million — if that. Otherwise, the higher-ed folks would steal it all for ivory towers.

The other thing about Cascade, I lived in a geodesic dome in a parking lot there for a year and a half.

**RC:** How come?

**Chopp:** We were protesting the demolition of housing there. The various development pressures were tearing down this housing, so I dramatized this as a way of saying, "Look, we have to stop this," and also we have to look at alternatives as far as how we create housing. I rented a parking stall from the Immanuel Lutheran Church for \$8 a month, and I ran an electrical cord from my dome down into the basement of the church to get my electricity. Right now that property has been redeveloped as housing for the homeless, just west of the church there.

**RC:** How do you see your role as Speaker? You have to balance working with everybody from across the state, looking out for the needs of everyone, with being from probably the state's most liberal district.

**Chopp:** It's a real dilemma. It's a real challenge, because as Speaker you have to work with all the other legislators at the same time I'm the representative from the 43<sup>rd</sup> district and I have to represent that district. But I try to find ways where we can do both. For example, the Housing Trust Fund doesn't just help the 43<sup>rd</sup> District. There are

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projects all over the state, including farm worker housing, senior housing in eastern Washington, in Vancouver. So those things are win/win, and that really helps. Many of these programs that are designed to provide, for example, health care to poor people, there are more people on those health programs in rural areas than urban areas, because there's generally less wealth and more poverty in the rural areas. When I'm an advocate for poor people, which is strongly supported by people in my district, most of those programs benefit the rest of the state because the 43rd is pretty affluent.

**RC:** And other legislators get that. Even the Republicans from rural districts.

**Chopp:** But they don't care. Flat out. They vote against their own people all the time. They vote for corporate issues as opposed to the interests of their own citizens. It's just unbelievable.

For example, the Republicans were vehemently opposed to work-force training programs for dislocated workers. And guess what? There were no dislocated workers in my district, they were more in the rural areas because timber and other natural resource programs were being cut back. So we needed to retrain those individuals to get new jobs. But the Republicans voted against that repeatedly. It's like: What?

**RC:** What's your leadership style?

**Chopp:** It's different for each person that I deal with. I've made mistakes along the way, in terms of how to deal with certain individuals. I've learned along the way.

**RC:** Last year, you were called a bully in the pages of the *Seattle Post-Intelligencer*; they said you have a grouchy temper.

**Chopp:** I was called a dictator, which is absurd. If you ask the staff here, they think I'm really good to work with. But occasionally you try and push an agenda to help people and some other people don't like that. Then they complain you're a dictator.

**RC:** In the same article there was a comment attributed to Ed Murray (another Representative from the 43rd District) that you were "big footing" on a particular issue.

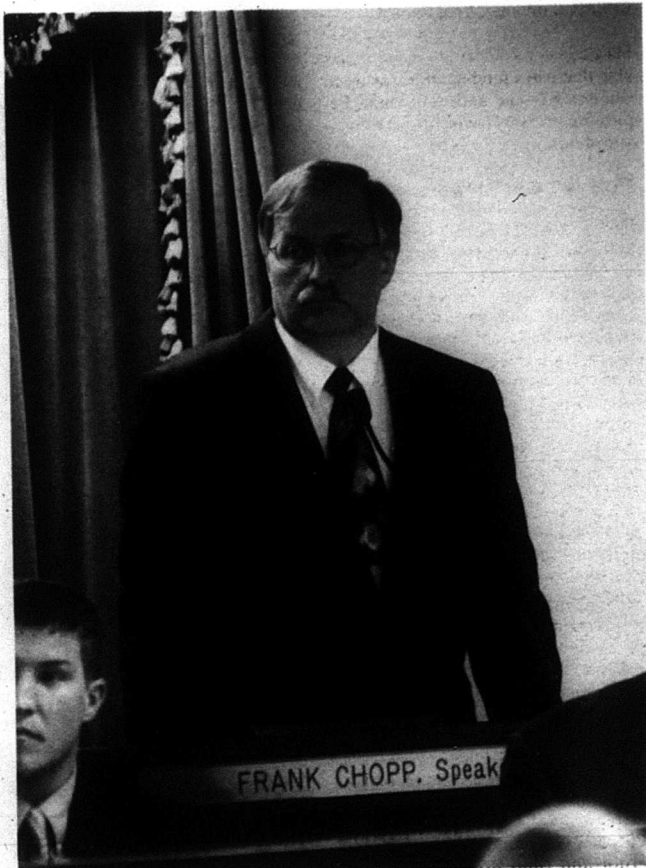
**Chopp:** Ed said he was misquoted. And I asked the reporter and he confirmed that he was misquoted. But the point is, whenever you're trying to do something that goes against the grain politically, you're going to get people complaining about that.

In the *P-I* editorial about me that ran about a year back, they said I was the tool of the special interests. Well, baloney. The special interests I was trying to help were public schools, homecare workers, General Assistance for the Unemployable, people who are really poor — and I'm sitting there thinking these are all public interests that I'm advocating for. It was so absurd to call me a tool of the special interests.

**RC:** There were some nice letters written into the *P-I* in your defense.

**Chopp:** Oh yeah. From a lot of folks. If people know my history, the last thing they think is that I'm a tool of the special interests.

One of the proudest things I've done down here is to stand up to the Bechtel Company. Bechtel is the largest construction company on earth; it is over with Halliburton in Iraq raking in the war profits. They have got the contract for the Tacoma Narrows Bridge being built here, specifically to finance it with private dollars. And I said no way, it's going to be publicly financed, because it saves a billion dollars over 20 years. And everybody was against me there. ■



## Cheap Frills: Things to do that don't cost much

Seattle Art Museum  
100 University Avenue  
First Thursdays

Thursdays are big at Seattle Art Museum because once a month, on the first Thursday, SAM opens its general collections to the public free of charge. That day, you can also attend special exhibits by paying a reduced-price ticket.

The SAM's general collections range from Warhol to Roman and Egyptian art, with exquisite Asian art as well. On Thursdays SAM offers extended hours of 10 a.m. to 9 p.m. Otherwise, Tuesdays through Sundays, operating hours are 10 a.m. to 5 p.m.

To get there, look for the 48-foot-tall Hammering Man, the motorized black steel and aluminum sculpture on the corner of First Avenue and University Street. As one of American sculptor Jonathan Borofsky's series on exhibit in many places throughout the world, the SAM's 26,000-pound "Hammering Man" hammers away four times a minute between 7 a.m. and 10 p.m. every day of the year except Labor Day — even though the museum itself remains open for holiday crowds.

SAM also offers free admission to seniors on the first Friday of each month. Anyone who pays the entry fee gets free admission to SAM's sister, the Seattle Asian Art Museum, in Volunteer Park on the north end of Capitol Hill.

Finally, if you like what you see so much that you can't live without it, maybe you don't have to: There's an art rental program for home, office, or classroom. ■

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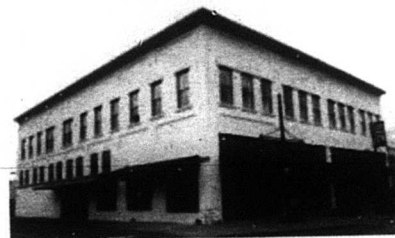
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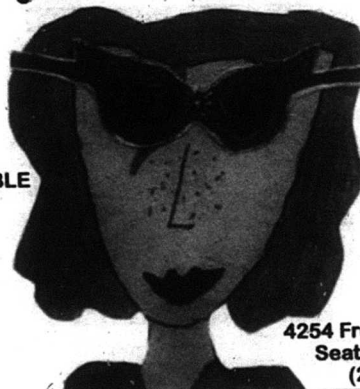
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Spring is on the way, but the season of dormancy lingers in the Belltown P-Patch, where the weather-beaten little garden plots are still snoozing. Last year was a bumper year for corn, but the rats ate it all the moment it ripened, and one day in October the disappointed gardeners pulled up the forlorn, stripped stalks and threw them on the compost heap. Everyone swears the rats were never a problem before this year, but I find that hard to believe. We're just a couple of blocks from the waterfront, where Norway rats first arrived here by ship, and where rats have outnumbered human beings for at least a century.

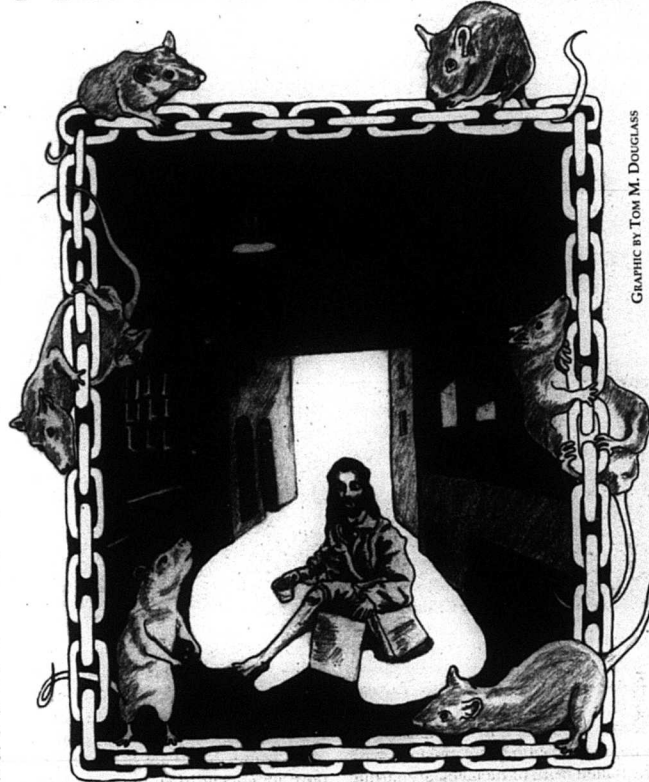
Next door is a parking lot with a weedy slope pockmarked with varmint holes; every alley for blocks around has dumpsters stuffed with restaurant leavings and rich condo trash. When I drive through our alley at night, it disrupts the night shift of rats working beneath the Millionaire Club's dumpster, and my headlights catch them scampering away. That doesn't bother me anymore, but I still get spooked by their furtive movements beneath my feet when I hit the rickety steps leading to the alley from the parking lot next to the Club.

My younger daughter used to raise cute black-and-white rats that ate clean, sweet-smelling kibbles purchased from the pet store for several dollars a pound. Real city rats are connoisseurs of far cheaper and more disgusting foods, including excrement. People and dogs piss and shit in the alley, and the rats eat that up, too. It makes a certain kind of ecological sense, when you think about it.

And I do think about these things, because the alley and the dumpster and the rats are just outside my kitchen door. Along with the down-and-out people who've lived in this part of Seattle for almost as long as the rats. I'm about 50 feet from where people sleep on sheets of cardboard when it's not too wet or too cold. The diehards stake out their favorite places, like the elderly man who sleeps in the grassy strip alongside the parking lot next to the Millionaire Club. About nine o'clock at night he appears out of nowhere, a specter carrying a black trash bag that must contain everything he owns, creeping across the parking lot. I've never seen his face, only his halo of wispy white hair. He moves with the slow, burdened effort of old age, and stands before his special place on the ground looking for all the world like somebody's grandfather getting ready for bed. Arrange the covers, the shoes, sink on creaking knees and lie down, hard against the chain link fence which affords protection from muggers on one side. Make sure you're in the sulfurous glow of the streetlight, to deter attacks from the other side. Lay the bottle beside you and forget about the rats and go to sleep.

People who live in the high-rise condos around here often walk their dogs in the alley at night because the dogs love to chase the rats. As soon as they approach the dumpster, their purebred pooches strain and gag at their leashes, high-strung Jack Russell terriers and

## Postcards from the Edge



GRAPHIC BY TOM M. DOUGLAS

### Darwinian survival in street-level Belltown

By Brenda Bell

schnauzers and Dalmatians. The owners get a kick out of it, and every now and then a dog manages to kill one of the rats, which are plump and lazy. Someone has been putting out poisoned rat bait in the alley, and I've seen a few of those victims, too, hemorrhagic blood spilling from their moribund mouths.

That made me strangely sad. Not only do the rats have a stake here, not only have they established themselves for countless generations, but they have done so with the collusion of humans who created an excellent rat environment. Instead of altering the environment, those humans now seek to eliminate its natural, inevitable products. You don't have to be a scientist to see the flaw in this endeavor. Plus, the rats are nicer looking than you might expect, not oily and sinister at all, but with soft brown fur and buff underbellies, like large hamsters. Recently I saw a very small one running home from the

dumpster, its tail held defiantly aloft, and I silently cheered. The rat was evidence of a new generation, only a few weeks old, which was perhaps already learning to avoid the poison. Darwinism at work.

There's a different sort of Darwinism culling the human beings in my neighborhood, with its whirlwind-inducing contrasts of economic success and abject failure. I'm constantly struck by how our little cottages force on me and Brian Goedde — the other writer-in-residence at the P-Patch — a physical intimacy with our surroundings, in a way that's largely missing in such an aggressively urban environment. People on the streets have to go about their lives in public, and we are privy to their small quotidian details. From my kitchen window this morning, as on most mornings, I saw a man taking a leak by the Millionaire Club dumpster. On other mornings I have awakened to

**"... the rats are nicer looking than you might expect, not oily and sinister at all, but with soft brown fur and buff underbellies, like large hamsters. Recently I saw a very small one running home from the dumpster, its tail held defiantly aloft, and I silently cheered."**

couples tumbling beneath blankets, to little groups huddled on the front porch of the unfinished cottage next door, drinking Natural Ice — Busch beer with an alcohol content of nearly six percent — for breakfast.

One morning I heard the water being turned on at the faucet outside my cottage, and when I stepped out on the front porch, I saw a man with a backpack hunched over the hose, brushing his teeth. A backpack has a different connotation around here than in, say, the university district. It means homelessness, joblessness, aimlessness. Something about him — his slight stature or shock of black hair or the fact that he still had a toothbrush and toothpaste, indicating he was new to the streets — identified him as one of the half-dozen Hispanic men I'd seen the night before, bedding down a little drunkenly on pieces of cardboard on the edge of the parking lot. I had a couple of croissants warming in my toaster, so I wrapped one in a paper napkin and took it to him.

"Buenos dias," I said. When he looked up from his ministrations and smiled, I was surprised by how young he was. His mahogany *indio* face was smooth and unlined; he was probably still a teenager. He probably still thought this was fun, hanging out in Seattle. He hadn't yet acquired the hard-edged look of his compadres, the men who linger on the corners around Casa Latina a couple of blocks away, waiting for a contractor's pickup to slow down and give them a day's work.

"Thank you," he said, when I handed him the croissant. Only then did I realize it was an untimely gift, now he would have to brush his teeth again. It's hard to know what to do for the people on the streets. I'm not supposed to give them money, but sometimes I do. Sometimes I've even given them beer. I know, I know. Especially not supposed to do that. But you can't be this close to human suffering, day in and day out, without it provoking some sort of reflexive response, even if it's stupid or misguided.

These days I think often of my grandmother, Ellie Bell, a well-to-do Texas matriarch whose home was marked during the Depression as a place where a man could go for a meal. My father says she fed everyone who showed up on her back porch, and often gave them little yard jobs to do for extra money. She fixed them full plates from the Bells' amply provisioned kitchen, and then — this was the shocker — she sat with them on the back steps while they ate. She wanted to know their stories, my father said, and she conversed with them as if they were the regular people who showed up at her own table — the college music teacher, her sons' wayward friends, the lonely bachelors about town.

My father recalled one of her yardmen — he described him as "a Jakeleg Mexican" — whom she took on as a special project, visiting him in his tent by the river and spooning soup in his mouth when he lay for days in a stupor. Jakeleg — an old expression I'd always thought simply meant a stumbling drunk. Not until recently did I

learn the origin of the term when I read Dan Baum's story about "jake leg" syndrome in the *New Yorker*. Jake leg was a sign of neurological damage that appeared during the 1930s, the result of drinking Jamaican Ginger, a cheap high-alcohol medicinal "tonic" that had been adulterated with a toxic chemical. Those hobos like the yardman my grandmother nursed had been poisoned with bad hootch. Sort of like the rats in the alley.

My father was the youngest of seven siblings, the only kid still living at home during the Depression, my grandmother's errand boy and companion on her various good-citizen missions. He remembered her kindnesses all his life; they were probably the main reason he became not just a yellow-dog Democrat like his mother (his father was a conservative businessman), but a liberal to boot, a newspaper editor who always took the side of the "little man," the unions, the downtrodden, the blacks, the Hispanics. Not an easy job in West Texas, even then, way before it became rock-hard Bush country.

Sitting here in my cute little cottage in Belltown, drinking zinfandel with a 90-point rating from Robert Parker, typing on my \$1,000 laptop, sleeping on 300-thread count sheets while the old guy in the parking lot rolls up against the fence with his empty liquor bottle, I ponder how far short I've fallen from the Bell family's legacy. Handing out spare change here and there; a surreptitious bottle of beer, the occasional Starbucks money card. Subscribing to every anti-Bush cause on the planet.

Pathetic gestures, really, which cost me next to nothing. But I am a writer, so I write about it. Bearing witness, we call it. Whatever. What will come of it, I have no idea.

All I know right now is that this is where I'm supposed to be. Hiding and watching, as the country expression goes. Far, far from home, from the place I started out, as the dim orb of the sun make its way, too quickly again, over Belltown. When I took my trash out today, there was none of the scurrying sounds that usually accompany my movements in the alley; were the rats still sleeping, or dead? Maybe they'll be back tonight. My guys. I'm rooting for them. ■

*Brenda Bell is a Richard Hugo House writer-in-residence living and working in a cottage at the Belltown P-Patch.*

## Theater In Your Face



Tawnya Pettiford-Wates gets SCCC students to confront issues of race onstage

PHOTO BY WIL BOSSON

### Interview by Toni Sutton

In a few hours dramatist Dr. Tawnya Pettiford-Wates does what all-day "diversity training" workshops attempt: confronting the audience with the naked truth of racial bias, charting its legacy, and calling on the better angels of our nature to repair the wrongs.

In her post as the director of the Drama Department at Seattle Central Community College, a position she's held for 16 years, Pettiford-Wates has brought students to issues of race through The Conciliation Project, a production company which each year documents the history and effects of racism. Drama, she says, is simply a way of bringing people to address racism.

Besides her job at SCCC, Pettiford-Wates has adjunct faculty positions at University of Washington, Evergreen State College/Tacoma Branch, and the Union Institute in Sacramento, CA. Her artistic awards include the Langston Hughes Cultural Arts Award, and Seattle Weekly's Best of Seattle "Most Respected Artist Award." She is also a community activist and member of the Keeping the Faith Project sponsored by The Pat Graney Dance Company, and a former boardmember of the Seattle Arts Commission.

Recently *Real Change* sat down with Pettiford-Wates, and discussed her dramatic work and The Conciliation Project.

**Real Change:** Dr. T., how did you decide to get into dramatic art?

Tawnya Pettiford-Wates: My mother and grandmother would say I was born a Dramatic Artist, but I think it's basically the desire or passion was birthed in church. When I was in the Baptist Church we used to do plays, like the Christmas pageant or Easter Pageant and I always liked to do that, and sing in the choir and be in front of people. I

started taking dance as well, and I really loved performing. All of a sudden though that wasn't enough; I wanted to talk too. So that's how I started getting involved in theater, Community Theater and theater in my high school. I was born in a small town outside of Pittsburgh, and I attended Carnegie Mellon University in Pittsburgh and the Central School of Drama, Speech, and Film in London.

**RC:** And when it comes to your craft, who influenced you?

**Pettiford-Wates:** For me, I really look at the pioneers. People like Lena Horne, Cecelia Tyson, Bert Williams, and Bill Bojangles Robinson. As an African American in their time to be an artist was a political statement in and of itself, and I think art needs to be political, it needs to transform and change, enlighten and provoke and promote society and not just be an entertainment.

**RC:** What made you decide to become a drama teacher?

**Pettiford-Wates:** I just fell into it by accident. I taught at a couple of community centers while I was in college to make a little extra money, and found out that I really did enjoy teaching what I knew and that I was good at it. After college I went on a whirlwind national tour and came back to New York City, I found that I wanted to do more than just act. Teaching in churches, church basements and you know, clubs, community clubs and stuff was something that I just sort of enjoyed on the side, and when I came to Seattle a job opened up and, so I started teaching. First at the Seattle's Children Theater and then I moved on to Cornish College of the Arts and then started getting a reputation for teaching and started getting more calls to do it in other place and ultimately

ending up here in Seattle Central.

Let me say one other thing about teaching, I enjoy passing on the passion for arts. The passion for the craft of acting, the passion for the craft of play writing and the craft of directing and helping people to find that passion within is something that is extremely rewarding. So that's why I continue to do it.

**RC:** When you teach a course or when you're done with a play, what do you expect your students and cast members to come away with or take away with from that project?

**Pettiford-Wates:** We always attempt to do work here that provokes people to think, that exposes things that they don't know about or people that they don't know about or religions, cultures, and places that they don't know about. So I expect them to bring that new knowledge out of whatever project we do. I expect them to come away with their own personal growth and a respect for the artist and the art itself.

**RC:** What exactly is the Conciliation Project?

**Pettiford-Wates:** The Conciliation Project is a nonprofit company that was birthed out of a project that we did here at Seattle Central. It was a play called *Uncle Tom Deconstructed*, which looked at the archetype of the Uncle Tom that was in the book created by Harriet Beecher Stowe, *Uncle Tom's Cabin*. That play provoked so much conversation and dialect about racism in America and the historic legacy of racism, it opened up channels for dialog that I had never experienced before. And people [had] said we couldn't write that stuff. So we birthed The Conciliation Project. Our mission is to promote through active and challenging dra-

*Continued next page*

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**THEATER, Continued from prev. page**

matic work open and honest dialog about racism in America in order to repair its damaging legacy.

We've been in business four years now and are on our fourth project. We deal with people in the basic color groups of black, red, yellow, brown and white in the plays, and using the legacy of each of those color groups to expose America — America's history legacy about race, racism, institutional bias and prejudice. That's the Conciliation Project.

**RC:** *And why is it called The Conciliation Project?*

**Pettiford-Wates:** Well that's a good one. You know, most people know the word reconciliation. It's a common word and you hear people say we need racial reconciliation and my problem with that word is that when you put a "re" prefix on that word that means again. It's a redoing of something. With regard to race, particularly with America, the races have never been together. So conciliation is a much

better word to use because conciliation in its essence means winning, or to gain the good will of someone. That's what we need to start doing, and that's why it's called The Conciliation Project, because we've never come together before. This is about trying to build a bridge that we can come together on.

**RC:** *After seeing the show, what do you expect the audience to take away with them when they leave?*

**Pettiford-Wates:** I expect for them to take recognition that we in America do have a problem, and that we together have to deal with it. It's not one group's problem or the other's group problem; it's our problem that we have to deal with, and the problem being racism. So recognition of that. Some acknowledgement for whatever the people group that we're dealing with, what they have been through because of the systems of racism and oppression that has been opposed upon them for some appreciation and acknowledgement of that. Acknowledgement of that history, acknowledgement of that pain and some responsibility. We expect that every person coming away will take some personal responsibility for how they have contributed to those systems and how they can change.

**RC:** *When the project first started, what were some of the reactions that you received and are they different from how people react now?*

**Pettiford-Wates:** I think that when the project first started people were in shock, in shock because *Uncle Tom Deconstructed*, was our first piece, and we actually used blackface in it and people were a little taken aback by that. Not only did we use blackface, but there were no Black people in the show, so people were very shocked that they believed the stereotype — they thought there really were black people in the show [because] we were using these minstrels.

They're not so shocked at what we do anymore because they're used to it, but they come with the expectation that

we're going to uncover some hard stuff. Sometimes people come with fear and dread and sometimes people come with the expectation that "we want to deal with these issues, what am I going to learn this time?" So the range of responses is all over the place. We do have some people who get upset, but my expectation is that in the emotional state that they are in, they will begin at least to dialog with someone about their feelings. And that's what we're trying to do.

**RC:** *What's the up and coming play for The Conciliation Project?*

**Pettiford-Wates:** The new one that we're working on now is called *Stolen Land: Border Crossing* and it's dealing with the Chicano and Latino-American experience and how we, the U.S., acquired the states of the Southwest: California, Arizona, New Mexico, Nevada, and Colorado. How we moved the border, so in actuality they never crossing the border — the boarder crossed them.

**RC:** *Does the project perform outside of Seattle?*

**Pettiford-Wates:** Yes, actually, we've been across the country. We performed in Indianapolis in November, and we've been invited to come back next year. We've been to Gonzaga in Spokane and some of the suburbs in Seattle as well, like Shoreline and Redmond. We haven't gone to Portland yet, although we've been invited.

**RC:** *What lies ahead for The Conciliation Project?*

**Pettiford-Wates:** My desire is that the project will become a model, and within the next year or two we want to create projects around the country that will be built on this, so that communities can use it to create these pieces in their own community. So that these dialogs will start to open up nationwide. I'm hoping to use some of the students that have been trained here to go out in the world basically and visit other college campuses. ■

**Eight Days at Tent City**

Review by Adam Holdorf

Two years ago, Dee McDonald attended a church service at St. Mark's Episcopal Cathedral. Outside, in the parking lot, 100 homeless people had set up a makeshift home. McDonald ventured over and "met half a dozen people I really connected with," she now recalls.

She formed a film crew, got permission from camp members to bring in the cameras, and the result is *City Without A Home*, a documentary of eight days in Tent City last winter.

In that short time, the film crew recorded intimate confessions and raw arguments. The governance of the nearly four-year-old Tent City, the film suggests, is messier than a dysfunctional *Survivor* tribe. In it, people are barred from camp (the only means of discipline available to the decision-making committee) for not doing their chores, and then readmitted minutes later when the decision was reversed. There are interviews with residents caught unaware by the enforcement of the rules. One man says that when you first move in, "They tell you just enough [about the rules] to hang yourself with."

The movie was shot in the style of *cinema verite* — a way of just rolling film and "letting the viewers decide for themselves," as filmmaker Peter Dauenhauer says. The result, he says, is that there is "no message" in the documentary. Yet *City Without A Home* suggests three things about Tent City and about homelessness. The first is that while the camp is leaderless in theory, in practice it is governed by an in-group of long-timers uninterested in the success or stability of novice campers. The second is that all homeless people are beset by addictions of various sorts (drugs, alcohol, gambling, relationships) — true for some, but by no means all. And the third is that sleeping outside, even in a tent commune, is (surprise, surprise!) not an ennobling experience.

*City Without A Home* should have captured those who hold power (in practice, if not on paper) to defend Tent City's governing style. Is this place run like the band of stranded boys in William Golding's book *Lord of the Flies*? Or is it like John Steinbeck's idyllic Okie camp in *The Grapes of Wrath*, where even the children adhere to Gandhian non-violence? That's a question still in search of an answer. The producers of *Survivor* would have sought out the winning team and interviewed them, too. ■

*City Without A Home* shows at Elliott Bay Book Company, 1st and Main St. downtown, on Saturday, February 21, at 2 and 4:30 p.m.

**Tent City politics: messier than a dysfunctional Survivor tribe?**

**Discrimination?**

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## BECOME A REAL CHANGE VOLUNTEER!

With only a small number of paid staff, Real Change relies on volunteers to keep the newspaper and other programs going. In 2003, volunteers donated over 4,000 hours of their time, writing stories for the newspaper, registering people to vote, selling newspapers to Vendors, designing promotional material, and much more!

We are currently looking for qualified volunteers to fill the positions listed below. Real Change asks most volunteers to commit to at least 40 hours of service, and experience with the people or issues in the poor/homeless community is preferred. All positions (unless otherwise stated) are located at the Real Change office 2129 Second Avenue, downtown Seattle.

If you are interested in applying for any of these positions, please contact our Volunteer Coordinator at (206) 441-3247 ext 203.



**Title: Public Speaking Teacher**

**Duties:** Providing instruction on public speaking to Real Change Vendor Representatives (who are Vendors themselves) and members of the Speaker's Bureau (people who are poor/homeless who will be speaking to schools and civic organization about their experiences with and issues surrounding homelessness). Training should include tips, methodology, practice, and application. Curriculum can be provided if you are unable to provide your own.

**Skills required:** Must be enthusiastic, patient, and friendly. Experience with public speaking and/or teaching required.

**Hours:** Somewhat flexible. You will be teaching one hour-long class a month on a Monday, Wednesday, or Friday between 11:00am - 4:00pm

**Title: Office Assistant**

**Duties:** Provide general office support as needed. Tasks include data entry, typing, filing, doing internet research, cashiering, and preparing mailings.

**Skills required:** Enthusiasm, reliability, good communication skills, and the ability to work well independently required. Proficiency in Microsoft Word and Excel required; database experience extremely helpful. Must be able to multi-task and respect deadlines.

**Hours:** 4 hours per week during weekday office hours.

**Title: Editorial Assistant**

**Duties:** You will be typing, transcribing, and researching stories for Real Change newspaper.

**Skills required:** Good typing skills, proficiency in internet research, and an interest in the issues affecting and surrounding the poor required. Must be able to multi-task and respect deadlines. Strong command of the English language required.

**Hours:** 4 hours a week, during weekday office hours.

**Title: Newspaper Reporter**

**Duties:** You will be researching, writing, and editing stories for Real Change newspaper.

**Skills required:** Enthusiasm, reliability, good communication skills, and a keen interest in the issues affecting and surrounding the poor required. Must be able to multi-task and respect deadlines. Previous non-academic writing experience required. Must be able to provide 2-3 samples of your writing.

**Hours:** negotiable.

**Title: Green Thumb**

**Duties:** Helping to maintain our office plants by watering, pruning, and transplanting as needed.

**Skills required:** Experience keeping indoor plants healthy. We will provide soil, pots, etc.

**Hours:** 1-2 hours every other week, during office hours (Saturdays okay).

**Title: Carpenter**

**Duties:** Build shelves where needed, as well as a wall-mounted ladder that would allow us easy access to an overhead crawlspace. We also need our front door remounted/re-hinged.

**Skills required:** Experience building bookcases or shelves. We can provide wood/equipment; you should have tools and skill.

**Hours:** depends; project-based.

**Title: FileMaker Genius**

**Duties:** Designing and maintaining FileMaker Pro 6 databases for volunteer and vendor management.

**Skills required:** Proficiency with FileMaker Pro, experience building successful databases, reliability, and attention to detail.

**Hours:** depends; project-based.



StreetWatch is compiled by Emma Quinn from reports of the Seattle Police Department.

**Wednesday, January 21, 9:45 p.m., E. Madison 7-11.** Suspect, a transient White male aged 54 was observed standing outside the 7-11 on E. Madison asking people for money. Management asked him to leave, but he refused and continued to panhandle. The police arrived and verified via car computer that the suspect had been previously trespassed from the property for a year. He was arrested and booked into King County Jail for criminal trespass.

**Friday, January 23, 5:15 p.m., Harborview Medical Center.** HMC staff called police to report a suspicious circumstance involving the subject, a transient Hispanic male aged 43, who had admitted himself to Harborview for a mental health evaluation. The man had stated that he had robbed someone last week, and had slit their throat. Officers could find no evidence of this crime, and when they spoke to the suspect, he denied making that statement. His name was checked and a warrant turned up, but it was from California, and there was no extradition order. Officers told Harborview staff that there was no reason for arrest, and that he would be free to leave once his evaluation was complete.

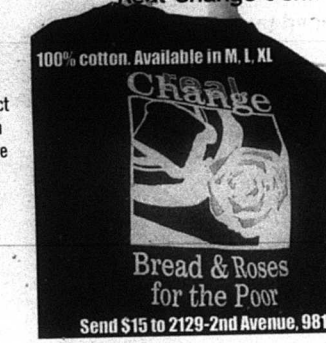
**Friday, February 6, 8 a.m., Sixth Ave S.** A business on Sixth has made several complaints to the police about a transient Black male that has been sleeping in their doorway and will not leave. He has had several trespass admonishment cards filled out for this violation. Officers arrived at the business this morning and found the suspect asleep. Officers awoke him and advised him that he was trespassing and needed to move on and not return. Suspect did not respond during this encounter, and was taken into custody with little resistance. He was advised that he was being arrested for second-degree trespass, and was booked into King County Jail.

**Friday, February 6, 8-10 p.m., Terry Ave. and Lenora St.** Officers observed a vehicle pull into a pay lot on the corner of Terry and Lenora. It is a somewhat secluded area used for vice and narcotics activity. No one exited the vehicle, so the officer investigated. Through the window, he could see an outline of a head going up and down, and observed a White male in the driver's seat. The suspect, a transient White female aged 26 was performing oral sex on the man. She was advised of her rights, and stated that the man had picked her up at Dexter and Denny, and paid her \$30 for oral sex. She also said that she was addicted to heroin, which is why she needed the money. The male was released at the scene, after being warned he would be charged with patronizing a prostitute. The female had no I.D., and was arrested and booked into King County Jail.

**Saturday, February 7, 9-12 p.m., Fourth Ave S.** Suspect, a transient White female aged 43, was observed loitering and drinking beer underneath a large sign that stated "No Trespassing. No Loitering" at a pay parking lot in the 200 block of Fourth Ave. Officers found and verified a warrant for her arrest, and she was booked into King County Jail.

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

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# African Hair-itage

## *Black to My Roots* explores coiffure, culture

By Megan Lee

**P**ushed, pounded, fried, dyed, laid-down, weaved, pressed, twisted, extended, hot-combed, relaxed, locked, braided, hair-rolled, curling ironed... virtually anything is done to the hair of Black women. Anything but just left to be.

*Black to My Roots* delves into what the relationship of African American women to their hair says about their heritage. The play won a prize at the Edinburgh, Scotland 2002 International Fringe Festival — the biggest fringe theatre fest in the world. But back home in Seattle, Tyrone Brown is still struggling to keep the play in the public eye.

"A lot of Black women can't do things because of their hair," explains director/producer Tyrone Brown of Brown Box Productions. "Seattle weather is the worst. They almost have to plan their day around their hair: if it's raining, you need a hat or it gets all crazy. You can't go get your hair wet after it has just been pressed."

The play is a series of 12 monologues written by Reneschia Brown (Tyrone's younger sister) and Kathya Alexander. Reneschia bases her monologues on interviews and discussions with people about hair and heredity. She brings an urban contemporary voice to the scripts, while Alexander's perspective tends to be more rural and historic.

Their monologues are delivered by five actresses each describing how her locks have styled her life. Reneschia is also one of the five performers, though she sees herself as more of a narrator. The brother-sister team is a new experience.

"It is a bit strange that my sister and I are working together," says Tyrone.

"I always remember her tagging along to auditions. But I noticed she loved to write; she was always journaling and writing on napkins. She has a great voice — not only her writing voice, but she has so much presence on stage. She is probably the loudest person I have ever heard."

Reneschia uses that voice in her monologue "Music to My Ears," inspired by an experience she had in school. Someone pulled her beads out of her hair — inspiring immediate shock and lingering reflection.

The play is one of five contemporary theater productions to be shown as part of this year's King County Performance Network (KCPN), a locally funded arts program aimed at bringing great performances beyond the confines of Seattle. *Black to my Roots* began its circuit with a show at Vashon Allied Arts on January 17, in honor of Martin Luther King weekend. It continues with three upcoming shows starting February 27.

The Vashon opening got great reviews. Janice Randall, VAA performing and literary arts publicist comments that Tyrone "offers subtle yet definitive

direction, while allowing actors plenty of leeway to deliver monologues in their own personal style with plenty of attitude. Our audience left smiling and satisfied."

Tyrone, 33, lives in the University District. He enjoys bringing new theatrical endeavors to the public, and he welcomes the challenge of bringing Black theater to popular culture. He says he contends with the implications of producing a play with racial content: it gets special treatment, or is relegated to what he refers to as "the chitlin" circuit."

"I am not complaining," he says, "it's just reality. I want to put out a quality product that is universal."

After completing the four KCPN shows Brown plans to revamp the show a bit, and then continue it later, after a brief hiatus. "Up until now the show has been in control," he says. "But in the future we are looking to try some new monologues, possibly with male actors."

In addition to the Edinburgh production in 2002, Brown Box Productions showed the play in New York City.

The 2002 Edinburgh Fringe Festival was a great experience for both Tyrone and Reneschia. While there, Reneschia began researching a piece dealing with little girls having their curls touched.

She began talking to the mother of a girl with bright red curls. They were struck by the similarities and the cultural significance of strangers wanting to touch your hair — trading stories, dissecting taboos. — "I realized the gravity of touching hair — how it's such a cultural thing," she explains. "When is it OK for a stranger to come up and touch your hair?"

That visit was Tyrone's third to the Fringe Fest. He first attended in 1999 with other students from the University of Nevada — Las Vegas, and in 2000 he co-directed a play there. He hopes to return a fourth time in 2005.

Theatrical inspiration struck Tyrone young: In fifth grade his mother took

him to his first audition, for the folk opera *Porgy and Bess*, in which he landed his first role. Along the way Brown also participated in the Northwest Boy's Choir and in a production of the Seattle Opera's *Carmen*. Early achievement set him on his current path.

"Theater is very unforgiving. If you have a bad experience..." he trailed off with a short, nervous laugh. "But if it goes well, you go and go and go. If that first audition at *Porgy and Bess* would have gone bad, I probably would not be here now."

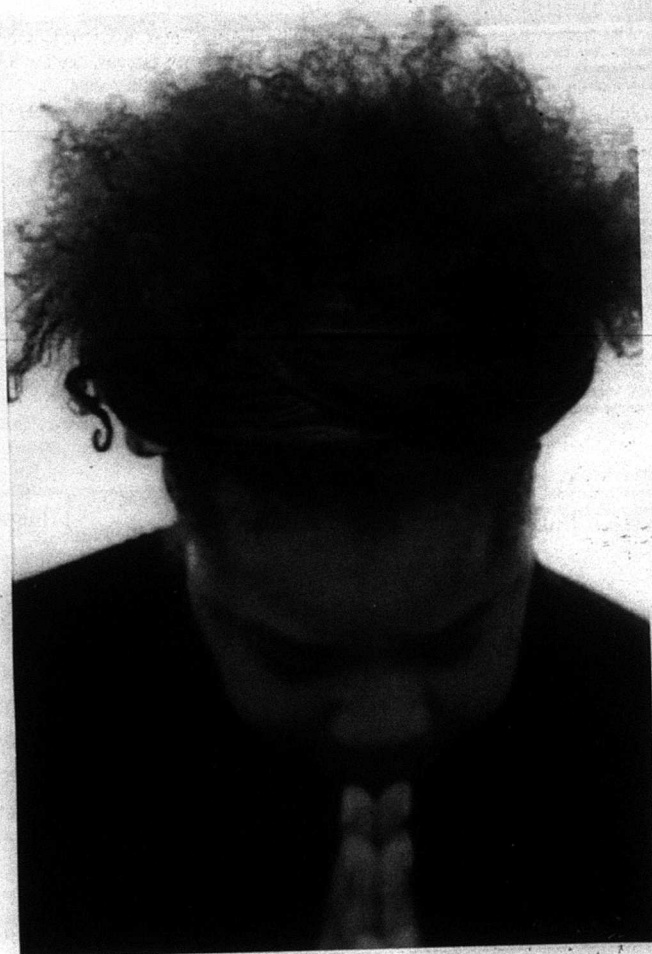
Throughout high school and community college he was involved with theatre, but then it was mainly acting. He experimented with modern dance, hip-hop, and even some ballet before deciding that directing and producing were his true callings.

In the military for Gulf War I, he wasn't able to focus completely on his work until he went to college in Las Vegas in 1998. When attending the Fringe Festival with his fellow students, Tyrone decided UNLV wasn't teaching him what he wanted. So, he migrated back to Washington and transferred to Fairhaven University in Bellingham, graduating in December 2003 with a degree he tailored for himself. He now works as Communications Assistant for the Seattle Symphony.

Tyrone is a poised and ambitious young man who believes in staying true to what he loves. He hopes to have the talent to make his dreams work, here in Seattle or elsewhere. One of the next shows he intends to produce is something he calls *Hamlet X*, a Shakespeare adaptation that compares Malcolm X with the young Dane.

"When Shakespeare wrote [Hamlet] it was theatre for the people — down to earth," he says. "I want to bring a down to earth way of presenting it." ■

**"I realized the gravity of touching hair — how it's such a cultural thing. When is it OK for a stranger to come up and touch your hair?"**



### *Black to My Roots*

Friday, Feb. 27, 7:30 p.m., at Auburn Riverside Theatre, \$10.  
Saturday, Feb. 28, 7:30 p.m., at Foster Performing Art Center, Tukwila, free - \$5.  
Saturday, March 20, 7:30 p.m., Kent-Meridian High School Performing Arts Center, \$10-\$12.

For more information, call Lara Holman at the King County Performance Network: 206-296-8677 or see [www.culturaldevelopment.org/arts/kcpn/index.htm](http://www.culturaldevelopment.org/arts/kcpn/index.htm).

# Late Winter Notables

Thursday 2/19

**Radical Women** general meeting. Learn more about their current activities and campaigns. Dinner available at 6:30 p.m. for a \$6.50 donation. 7:30 p.m., at New Freeway Hall, 5018 Rainier Ave. S. Info 206-722-6057.

Friday 2/20

First Annual **African American Film Festival**, at Langston Hughes Performing Arts Center, 104 17th S., Seattle. \$7 adults, \$5 youth. For a complete schedule go to [www.seattle.gov/parks/centers/langston/activities.htm](http://www.seattle.gov/parks/centers/langston/activities.htm); info 206-684-4757.

Wallingford Neighbors For Peace and Justice present "Friday Night at the **Meaningful Movies**." 7-9:30 p.m., at Keystone Congregational Church, 5019 Keystone Pl., North of 50th. Info [groups.msn.com/wallingfordneighbors](http://groups.msn.com/wallingfordneighbors).

**Seattle Labor Chorus 7th Annual Sing-Along**, everyone welcome. Snacks, song sheets provided, prizes and fun. \$10-\$15, pay as you can, kids free. 7-9 p.m., at University Unitarian Church Community Hall, 6556 35th Ave NE. Info 206-723-6511.

Saturday 2/21

**Michael Randall Ealy Social Justice Foundation** 5th Annual Luncheon/Meeting, to review the current state of wrongful death lawsuits against the

City of Seattle and set goals regarding creating a Citizen's Review Board. Speakers include King County Councilman Larry Gossett among others. Suggested donation \$10. Noon-2:30 p.m., at Ebenezer AME Zion Church, 1716 23rd at Olive, Seattle. Info 206-320-7069.

Local screening of **City Without A Home**, an hour-long documentary on homeless people in Seattle by Honest Eye Productions. This film documents the lives of the people who live in Tent City. 2 p.m., at Elliott Bay Books, 1st Ave. S. and S. Main in Pioneer Square. Info 206-624-6600.

Red Emma Bluegrass concert, admission is free, donations to benefit **Books-To-Prisoners** are welcome. 7-10 p.m., at Allegro Cafe, 4214 University Way in the University District, enter from the alley.

Tuesday 2/24

Public Forum on **How Should Seattle Grow?** Discuss the need for better housing, transportation, public services and other amenities. 5:30-7:30 p.m., at Seattle City Hall, Bertha Lanes Room, 600 4th Ave., enter from 5th Ave. Info Gordon Clowers, Dept. of Planning and Development 206-684-8375.

Thursday 2/26

Home Alive 6-week course on **Basic Self-Defense**. Home Alive is a non-

profit, anti-violence organization that provides affordable self-defense classes and educational events for all people. Sliding scale \$0-\$50. 6:30-8:30 p.m., at 1400 18th Ave., Capitol Hill. Info 206-720-0606 ext. 2 or [homealive\\_classes@hotmail.com](mailto:homealive_classes@hotmail.com).

**Gospel Music** lecture and demonstration by Phyllis Byrdwell, UW Gospel Choir director, funded by Seattle Partnership for American Popular Music. Free and open to the public. 5-6 p.m., University of Washington, Music Hall, Room 213.

Friday 2/27

Movie Night featuring **Fidel, The Untold Story**. People from our community who have been to Cuba recently will hold a discussion after the film. Fun for the family, bring a snack, donations accepted. 7 p.m., at Bethany UCC Church, corner of Beacon Avenue and Graham St., Seattle. Info 206-725-7535.

Saturday 2/28

Cinema Diaspora presents the film **The Untold Story of Emmett Louis Till**, about a fourteen-year-old who was murdered while on a visit to Mississippi from his home in Chicago. The events that followed this murder helped to spark the Civil Rights Movement. Filmmaker Keith Beauchamp will be present and will provide updates on the case. Tickets \$25 in advance, \$30 at the door. 6 p.m. at Langston Hughes Cultural Arts Center, 104 17th S., Seattle. Also shown Sunday Feb 29 at Benaroya Nordstrom Concert Recital Hall, 200 University St., Seattle, tickets \$25. Info 206-860-7764

**Shanti Volunteer Training**, train to provide one-to-one emotional support to people living with HIV/AIDS, cancer, MS and other life-threatening illnesses. The Shanti training and volunteer experience has been described as life changing for many volunteers. Info 206-324-1520 ext 3 or [shanti@multifaith.org](mailto:shanti@multifaith.org).

Tuesday 3/2

Meeting of **Citizens for Overt Action**, educating the public about the threat to democracy here and abroad by covert action. 7 p.m., This and subsequent 1st Tuesdays, at Still Life on the Ave Cafe, 1405 NE 50th St, Seattle. Info 206-547-7735.

Wednesday 3/3

**Jobs With Justice** Seattle Organizing Committee meeting. 5:30 p.m., this and subsequent 1st Wednesdays, at Labor Temple, Hall 8, 2800 1st Ave. Info 206-441-4969.

Ongoing

The M. Rosetta Art Gallery at Seattle Central Community College presents "Legacy: Emerging and Established **Artists from Seattle's African American Community**." Invited artists explore the meaning and manifestation of legacy within the African American community. Gallery hours: M-F 9:30 a.m.-3:30 p.m., 5-7 p.m. Tuesday and Wednesday evenings. The exhibit runs through March 5. Info 206-344-4379.

Calendar compiled from *Jean Buskin's Peace and Justice Events Calendar*, available in full at [www.scn.org/activism/calendar](http://www.scn.org/activism/calendar). Email calendar submissions to Real Change at [editor@realchangenews.org](mailto:editor@realchangenews.org).

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## Tell your state senator to support homeless families

**Issue:** House Bill 2818, creating a Homeless Families Service Fund, has made it though the state House of Representatives. Now, it needs your support in the Senate.

**Background:** With an initial investment of \$5 million in state money, H.B. 2818 intends to create a fund to leverage private resources and ensure the long-term availability of stable housing to support homeless families.

The fund would be a 10-year public-private effort to complement affordable housing with supportive services for homeless families around the state. The bill recognizes that homeless families often need more than just a roof over their heads — particularly when they are fleeing from abuse or trauma and have long periods of unemployment, under-employment, or of not knowing where they'll stay next.

Inspired by the Gates Foundation's \$40 million "Sound Families" program, which helps fund supportive services at transitional housing for homeless families in King, Pierce, and Snohomish counties, the state fund would provide non-profit organizations with money for housing the homeless. It could be leveraged with philanthropic donations at the state and local level. Services — including job training, literacy, recovery from domestic violence or other trauma, childcare, or parenting classes — would be designed to meet the individual needs of families. The investment would aid the recovery of families in 1,000 to 1,200 units of housing across the state. Over its 10-year lifespan, the fund could ensure that hundreds of thousands of recently homeless families stay off the streets for good.

During a House Executive Session, the proposed fund was reduced from \$15 million to \$5 million to keep the bill alive. And on February 13, it passed the House by a margin of 78 yeas to 18 nays.

Having cleared the House hurdle, now it's coming before the Senate. You can take action to support it by contacting your senator and telling him or her to support H.B. 2818 (Creating the homeless families services fund).


Five million dollars is hardly a burden on the state's coffers, even in this tight budget year. Support is strong in the Legislature to renew tax exemptions for high-tech companies — business incentives that will cost state and local governments over \$93 million through the end of the year. And it's not clear that these incentives create the jobs businesses promise.

Approximately 370,000 Washingtonians can't afford a two-bedroom rental in the town or city they live in. And in no community in the state can a minimum-wage worker afford even a one-bedroom apartment. If we can afford to give away \$93 million to high tech, no strings attached, can't we set aside \$5 million for homeless families?

**Action:** Call the Legislative Hotline toll-free — 1-800-562-6000 — and ask to leave a message for your senator. Tell him or her that "The proposal for a Homeless Families Service Fund made it through the House. We need a bipartisan effort to get this through the Senate. Please do everything you can to ensure that House Bill 2818 becomes law."

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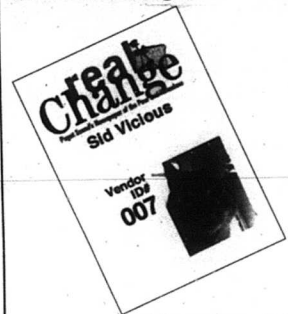
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