

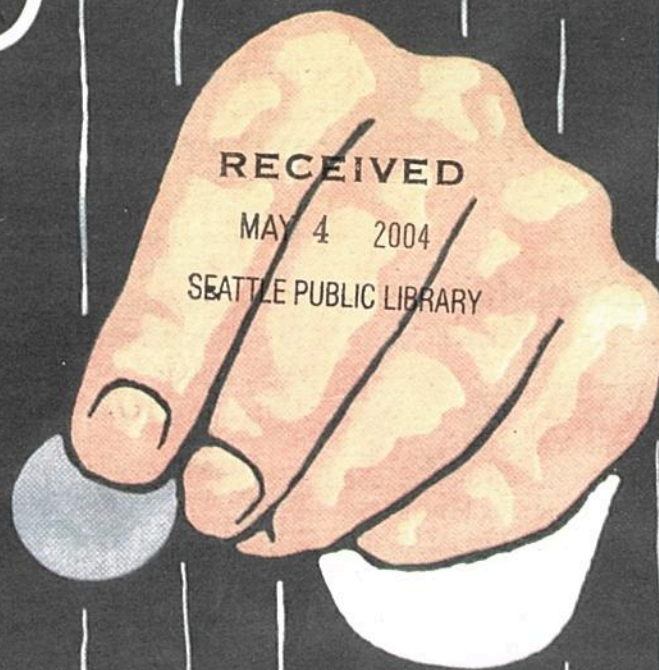
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Change

Reaching Out to End Poverty • Volume 11, No. 10



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ILLUSTRATION BY CRAIG UPDEGROVE.

by Polly Keary

Like an alcoholic at an intervention, Washington state is being forced to confront the gross flaws of its tax structure. In 2002, the Gates Commission, charged by the state legislature to examine the current tax system and make recommendations for its improvement, found it overburdened low-income people and small businesses. Last year, the Institute for Taxation and Economic Policy in Washington D.C. found our state to have the single most unfair tax structure in the nation. Budgets are reeling from shortfalls brought about by an overdependence on excise taxes. Grass roots movements to overhaul the tax structure have sprung up like mushrooms. Yet another legislative season has ended with no serious reform in sight. Here is a look at what is wrong and what it will take to fix it.

The more you make, the less you pay

I don't make a lot of money. Last year I lived on about \$20,000. Washington State took about \$3,100 of that away from me in taxes. In the 46 states that have income taxes, I would have gotten most of it back. The reason Washington gets to keep my money is be-

cause I paid it in sales tax, not income tax.

"The sales tax system we live under is very, very regressive," says Representative Al O'Brien, 1st District, Bothell area. "The low end of the economic totem pole pays a larger portion than anyone else."

Because the poor have no choice but to spend a certain amount on taxable goods, they wind up paying a far greater percent of their income — around 16 percent for people who make less than \$20,000 — in sales taxes than do those who earn more.

"The more you make, the less you spend on items that are subject to sales tax," says Mike Gowrylow, spokesperson for the state Department of Revenue. "And the more you invest or spend on things like services, which are not subject to sales tax."

In fact, people earning \$140,000 and up only pay about 4.6 percent of their income on excise tax (which includes the 6.5 percent state sales tax, the additional sales tax that cities and counties tack on, the gas tax, and the "sin tax" on things like cigarettes). For example, my computer programmer friend who earned \$150,000 last year, more than seven times what I made, only paid about \$7,000, a little over

twice what I paid. It's a good state to be rich in.

B&O: railroading small business

Not only is the sales tax unfair, the Business and Occupation (B&O) tax, is extremely small-business unfriendly. Washington is the only state in the union to tax businesses on gross, not net, earnings.

"Say I have a furniture-making business," says Tim Hatley, campaign manager for Ron Sims, who is running for governor partly on the platform of tax reform. "I gross \$200,000, but I had to pay \$150,000 to make my product, so I only made \$50,000. In Washington State I'm taxed on the \$200,000, not the \$50,000."

Businesses typically lose money in their first year or two as they establish a clientele and pay for startup costs. Mom-and-Pop stores are hit harder than chain stores that can better afford to sink money into startup costs and already have name recognition.

A year of losses at a particular store may not spell doom for Wal-Mart. A small apple orchard hit with hail that wipes out half the crop right before harvest may end up devastated, selling

the remainder of the crop for less than the year's total investment and still paying thousands of dollars in taxes.

Not only is this tax system grossly unfair, it weakens the state's financial health. The best way to maintain a stable tax base, says Lois Canright, Education Chair of the Washington Tax Fairness Coalition, is to think of it as a three-legged stool, with excise taxes on sales, income taxes on earnings, and property taxes on ownership. "Right now we're unstable because our tax system stands on two legs, excise and property tax," she says. "We have no tax on income."

The vast majority of Washington's revenue comes from excise tax, which means that when times are lean — as they are now — the state goes hungry. There is a sad irony in this; when the state goes hungry, services are cut, and those cuts tend to affect the poor first — the very people who bear the heaviest tax burden.

"When the recession hits, people stop spending," Canright says. "The next thing you know, we're throwing 30,000 people off Basic Health."

The burdensome B&O tax has also created a byzantine system of tax exemptions and secrecy. Many businesses

Continued on Page 4



Look for the Mockingbird Times Inside!





Prison issue: family matters

Dear Editor,

The current issue of *Real Change* (April 15-28) presents stories on the Washington prison system that should make citizens really re-think where their tax dollars are going.

I know that all your stories are valid because I've been involved in the prison system since 1976, when I married an ex-offender. I also began sponsoring ex-felons in work release at that time, and from 1976 through 1980 I sponsored at least 30 ex-felons, almost all of whom were convicted murderers.

In 1994, my own son was arrested and incarcerated as a result of his addiction. He was released and then arrested again in 1995 and did three and a half years, mostly at McNeil Island. He relapsed again six months after release in 1999, but quickly caught himself, entered a treatment program, and has been sober and successful ever since.

I have two small stories that may be of interest to your readers. It must be kept in mind that when the state hands over your relative to DOC, then you also become suspect and a potential criminal, because that is how DOC treats you if you write, send packages, or attempt to visit.

These two incidents stand out in my mind from 1997: I went to visit my son on a Saturday. Visitors to McNeil must first check in at an office on the Western State Hospital grounds, have their IDs checked, and be checked as an approved visitor. You must lock most of your possessions in your car, and board a bus for transfer to the docks for boarding to McNeil.

A search of visitors does not occur until you reach the docks. Since it was a rainy day, I had on jeans, a sweater, loafers and a raincoat. I also carried enough money for the food machines in the visitor's room. However, I'd forgotten to check my coat pockets closely, and I had about 40 cents in my raincoat pocket. The guards found the 40 cents and denied me admission to the loading area for the boat. I was told that I would have to take the bus all the way back to Western State, put the extra coins in my car, and then return by bus for the next boat to McNeil. Soooo — even though I'd driven for an hour and a half, gone through processing at Western State, and been driven to the

docks, I had to wait an extra two hours to get to McNeil.

Second incident: In about 11/97, I had been processed through Western State and the dock search, and was sitting in the waiting room waiting for the ferry and boarding. An older couple, perhaps 60 or 70 years old, had traveled on the same bus and had driven from a farm in Eastern Washington to see their son. The woman had on an old quilted overcoat, and she had forgotten five dollars that was in an inside pocket. The guards denied them entrance to the ferry loading area, and since it was the last boat of the day, they were in danger of not seeing their son at all. The husband told his wife he would take the five dollars back on the bus to Western State and wait for her there, so that at least she could go over on the boat and see their kid.

All of this bullshit could have been solved with some small pay lockers in a room close to the ferry boarding area. It doesn't take a genius to see that. At Monroe, there are lockers available in an outer room for visitors to simply stow their possessions away before processing. But my impression was that some of the guards got kind of a power trip out of making things more difficult.

And the bottom line is, what could someone inside really DO with an extra 40 cents, or even five dollars? It's not that much extra money.

By 1998 I was really infuriated by all the insults, and I detailed them in a letter to Representative Adam Kline. I can only say that when we talked in person, Kline seemed absolutely stunned by my disclosures. So I say we suggest to the Legislature that they all role-play both a prisoner and a visitor for two days each at some state institution, so they can see what they, themselves, have conceived. Of course the real idea lady, Ida Ballisiotes, has retired from the Legislature, thank God. It can only get better for inmates without the Avenging Mother in Olympia.

My son thinks he passed the 10 year

mark of an LDO last month, so he, too, may be permanently disenfranchised.

Sincerely,
Mitzi Green
Seattle

Grocery workers: sick of this

Dear *Real Change*,

I noticed the full-page ads in the daily papers taken out by several of our area's largest grocery stores. It seems they are looking for new employees. It seems they are gearing up for a "labor dispute." It seems these stores are about to cut health benefits for their employees. Needless to say the employees don't want their health care cut. But the employees are replaceable and they too can be cut.

I can relate to the employees. I'm still one of the lucky ones. I still have health care for my family. It costs me \$15,000 a year to have benefits for my family of four. Next year it will cost me more and the year after even more. Perhaps one day I will no longer be able to afford health care. I might just have to "risk" that my family will stay healthy. Or, find that I too am replaceable.

All of which is to say that these large grocery stores, all of whom are making profits, none of whom are in financial crisis, are screwing their employees again. When grocery chains like Fred Meyer, QFC, and Safeway disrespect their employees they are also disrespecting the public. They are creating a class war that pits labor against management and investors. It is a war of all against all. Such a war turns neighbor against neighbor as each claws their way ahead of the other in a frantic losing race that wins the victor only crumbs. Meanwhile, a tiny few eat the substance of the cake. These stores are, in effect, creating a capitalism of poverty rather than of opportunity.

When employees lose benefits, food

bank lines increase. Public morale and citizenship is diminished. And the chances of us lucky ones losing our own benefits increase. And that's why I will support labor in its dispute with these large grocery-chains. That's why I'll stand with them. I'll take the \$450 I spend per month on groceries out of the large chain store that I frequent (because it is convenient and it is cheaper and they do have unions) and I will boycott. I'll take my little store-card that gets me benefits and cut it up and send it to the manager of the store alongside this letter. And then I will diet. I'll spend the same money at a more expensive store, buying less but knowing that the store I frequent will treat its employees as if they really were human beings created in the image of God. And I encourage every one of you to do the same.

Sincerely,
Rev. Rich Lang
Trinity United Methodist Church
Seattle

Send letters to editor@realchangenews.org.

Change

Reaching Out to End Poverty

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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.

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The People Speak

Everyone needs high-quality health care

By Will Parry

Late last year, we in the Puget Sound Alliance for Retired Americans asked ourselves a basic question: Given our membership's burning interest in the outcome of the 2004 election, what could we do that might make a measurable difference at the polls in November?

We decided to inject the issue of U.S. health care — the abysmal inadequacy of it, the imperative need for structural change — squarely into the election. The instrument we chose was a petition directed at the Seattle City Council. Our petition calls on the Council to place this simple advisory measure on the November 2 ballot:

"Every person in the United States should have the right to health care of equal high quality. Congress should immediately enact legislation to implement this right."

Joining us in this campaign is Health Care for All — Washington, an organization of health care professionals and concerned laypersons dedicated to the establishment of a single-payer health care system. Among the growing number of organizations that have endorsed the petition are the Church Council of Greater Seattle and the King County Labor Council.

Our campaign was initially inspired by a proposed Constitutional amendment introduced in Congress by Rep. Jesse Jackson, Jr., Democrat of Illinois. We borrowed the text of Jackson's amendment almost word for word for the text of our petition.

At this writing our all-volunteer effort has produced well over 5,000 signatures. We've scheduled major mobilizations at the University District Street Fair, the Seattle Folklife Festival, the Fremont Fair, and the Gay Pride Parade. Our rock-bottom goal is to guarantee 10,000 names.

We have every expectation that the City Council will put this measure on the ballot. Even if they do not — and a refusal would surely carry negative political repercussions — the fact of several hundred volunteers raising the issue of quality health care one-on-one with thousands of Seattleites can only improve the political atmosphere.

The impending collapse of our health care system is shaking up people who used to think the system was pretty darn good. Labor, for example, has justifiably taken pride in the employer-paid health coverage it has negotiated. Now, however, that coverage is being eviscerated by endless health care hyperinflation. At every bargaining table, wage increases are sacrificed in a foredoomed struggle to keep health care premiums, deductibles and co-pays from bankrupting the membership. Confronting this grim future, many union leaders recognize the need for a sweeping legislative solution.

So do a growing number of health care professionals. The prestigious Institute of Medicine has just issued a scathing critique of U.S. health care and a call for universal coverage. An article persuasively advocating a single-payer solution, published last fall in *The Journal of the American Medical Association*, carried the endorsement of 7,784 physicians and medical students.

Our petition to the City Council is a grassroots effort to nourish this growing demand for radical restructuring. Health care in our country is enormously complicated. Efforts at change have been frustrated because people fear that any change will cost them the shreds of coverage they now have. Our petition avoids the complexities. It simply sets forth a fundamental human right that any person of conscience should be able to support. *Every man, woman and child has a right to quality health care, and the people we elect have a duty to make this right a reality.*

We envision the emergence of a movement, national in scope, with the fervor and staying power of the civil rights and women's movements. Health care is everybody's issue. As people become convinced, from their own experience, that profit-driven "market medicine" is a disaster beyond redemption, streams of opposition will coalesce into a mighty river. Representative Jackson's simple, unifying proposal may well be the rallying cry for the millions. ■

For more information, to get copies of the petition, or to take part in one of the signature-gathering events, call the Puget Sound Alliance for Retired Americans at 206-448-9646. The petition can also be downloaded at www.healthcareforallwa.org.

March for Healthcare

The "Quality Health Care for All" campaign presents two events on Saturday, May 22, with a visiting Representative Jesse Jackson, Jr. At 9 a.m., the Illinois Democrat keynotes a major health care conference at Plymouth Congregational Church. The conference will be followed by a march to Westlake Park, where Jackson will address an open-air rally at 2 p.m. The rally will be attended by big delegations of health care and grocery workers — workers whose unions are currently locked in negotiations to preserve their members' health benefits.

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4/29/04

The End is near

Ending a 30-year-old arrangement to honor the efforts of local governments to house the poor, the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) is cutting short its funding of the Section 8 voucher program.

In mid-April, HUD issued an administrative rule capping the number of vouchers issued under the Section 8 program. Though it's paid for with federal money, local housing authorities administer Section 8 by giving out vouchers to elderly, disabled, or poor individuals. A voucher guarantees its holder will pay no more than one-third of her income in rent; the landlord will get the rest of the rent money from the government.

Housing authorities issue Section 8 vouchers kind of like airlines issue tickets: they overbook. In a hot rental housing market, poor households with Section 8 vouchers have a tough time finding a landlord who will agree to rent to them. Some frustrated would-be Section 8 renters continue paying inordinate amounts of their income for rent — or keep staying in homeless shelters.

But in a cool market (the kind the nation is experiencing now) landlords are happy to get a Section 8 renter; the number of vouchers in use goes up.

HUD's new rule scales back the dollar amount it will reimburse to local authorities to what they had been getting in August 2003, plus inflation. And no more. Effectively, HUD has said that it will end the 30-year-old practice of reimbursing a local government for all its efforts to get poor people into housing.

The local result of the rule change is not yet clear. About 1,000 households with vouchers issued by the Seattle Housing Authority (SHA) stand to lose their Section 8 assistance or see a rent increase. King County Housing Authority could lose about 290 vouchers. One official with the Association of Washington Housing Authorities estimates that around the state, more than 800 families may lose their Section 8 assistance.

Rhonda Rosenberg, spokeswoman for the King County Housing Authority, explains how HUD's stance is changing. "It used to be that could over-lease" those Section 8 vouchers, meaning, get more landlords to accept Section 8 vouchers than was originally expected. "But now, at end of the fiscal year, if you have over-leased you are going to hit a wall."

"Then, it's too bad so sad" from the feds, she says. "And then what do you do? Do you take vouchers away from people?"

HUD's move has been met by protestations from Capitol Hill and from the office of Governor Mitt Romney of Massachusetts, where as many as 650 renters may indeed have their vouchers taken away. Cindy Rowe of the Boston Citizens Housing and Planning Association said of those tenants: "They are going to be homeless — there is really no other choice."

In an April 13 letter to HUD Secretary Alphonso Jackson, Romney, a Republican, wrote that "it is unrealistic to expect states to implement such a historic change in a matter of weeks, particularly given the tenuous economic circumstances of many who will feel the effect of the implementation. I respectfully ask that you do everything in your power to prevent this potential crisis from occurring."

In another letter, Senators Paul Sarbanes and Gail Collins noted that last year, Congress had not only provided HUD with an extra \$1 billion for Section 8 vouchers, but also told the agency "to take all necessary action to ensure full utilization" of the vouchers.

Yet in an April 26 telephone conference with the press, HUD Assistant Secretary for Housing Michael Liu said that there would be no aversion. "Any agency that is in a deficit needs to look at what they can do in-house before they blame outside agencies," he told a reporter with the *Boston Globe*.

"Can't you take a little more time? Aren't you concerned about people losing their homes?" the *Globe* reporter asked.

"The law is the law," Liu answered.

The press conference was over.

—Adam Holdorf



An instant alternative

Here's a new companion to the Montana Primary, the Cajun Primary, and the Blanket Primary. Get ready for one of the lesser-known initiatives in the 2004 political season: Initiative 318, an all-volunteer signature drive to replace Washington's primary and general elections with the instant-runoff voting.

"Our motto is: the best primary is no primary," says Seattle lawyer Jerry Cronk, who is filed the initiative and is now working with a coalition of minor parties to get it on the November ballot. He sees instant-runoff voting (IRV, for short) as a way to avoid the so-called "spoiler" effect created by third-party candidates like Ralph Nader and Ross Perot.

IRV is a means of ranking each candidate in a race according to the voter's preference. The way IRV works is rather difficult to explain, but here's a good-faith effort: Under our current system, voters are allowed only one vote per race and the winner of an election is the candidate with the most votes. In three-way races (e.g. between multiple Presidential candidates), whoever got the most votes wins. In IRV, voters rank candidates. If no single candidate is the first choice of a majority of voters, the least popular candidate is eliminated. The ballots that belonged to that candidate now go to whoever was the second-choice preference.

Here's a real-world example of how IRV might work: in the 2004 election, a voter who shared the ideals of Ralph Nader, skeptically approved of Al Gore, and abhorred George W. could have ranked the three candidates in order of preference. Since no single candidate held a majority of the first-choice votes, the least popular (Nader) would have been eliminated and his supporters' second choices (likely Gore) would have been tallied up.

"Voters won't be faced with these dilemmas of 'wasting' their votes voting for the favorite candidate who might be a long-shot," says Cronk. "They can select their long shot as a first choice, and if they don't have a majority, the counting process views their second choice."

Cronk says he first heard of IRV at a meeting three years ago. He then cobbled together his own proposal for such a system based on a failed Alaska citizens' initiative and a report from the San Francisco-based Center for Voting and Democracy. He sent it to State Senator Adam Kline, a southeast Seattle Democrat, "and lo and behold," he says, Kline introduced it in the legislature. Rep. Hans Dunshee has also expressed his support for IRV. Despite repeat attempts, though, Kline's bill has never made it out of committee.

Cronk attributes its unpopularity to the sense of "conservatism and over-caution" among the powerful.

"My supposition is that people who have held political office for a while are suspicious of anything new," he says. "They're not going to look favorably on something that would change the system that got them elected."

Linde Knighton, co-chair of the Progressive Party of Washington, says that that type of conservatism is reflected in the fate of the blanket primary. In the new Montana primary, individuals select a certain party's ballot. She claims that offering individual ballots for individual parties will effectively shut out small parties who don't have the money or power to put forth a range of candidates for each office. A slim ballot won't appeal to independent voters, she says. This, combined with new state elections laws that require a higher number of valid signatures for a candidate to get on the ballot, means that the state is "asking the people to pay for a primary for the Democrats, the Republicans, and the Libertarians, and have everyone else pay for their own."

In their spare time, Knighton, Cronk, and others are gathering signatures for Initiative 318 in King and Pierce Counties.

—Adam Holdorf

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

SHORTCHANGED continued from page 1

appeal to the state for exemptions before setting up shop here, but voters are unable to evaluate the necessity of those exemptions because they are kept secret, as proprietary business information.

The B&O tax doesn't exactly present a welcoming climate to companies that might bring badly needed jobs to the area.

"It's a negative when it comes to bringing new businesses to Washington," O'Brien says.

Suspicious minds

The obvious solution, the one recommended by the Gates Commission, is to scrap the current tax system in favor of one that includes some kind of income tax. Such a tax system would certainly benefit the poor. In a state with a six per-

cent flat tax, I would have paid about \$1,200 on my meager \$20,000 income last year, saving me \$1,800. My programmer buddy would have paid \$9,000 or so on his \$150,000. We both could have deducted our state income taxes from our federal income taxes, mitigating his increase and saving me even more.

"With an income tax, we could keep \$1 billion in Washington State that we send to the Federal Government right now," says Hatley. "Sales tax is not deductible from federal income tax, but state income tax is. Why should people who live in Michigan, Oregon, and Illinois get to take advantage of that and not us? Washington taxpayers are at a disadvantage."

Yet in spite of nearly universal recognition of the flaws of our tax system, a

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It's the Constitution, Stupid

ACLU Alleges that Seattle's Free Speech Laws Are Too Restrictive and Vague

By Jess Grant

In a federal lawsuit against the City of Seattle, filed in April on behalf of the October 22 Coalition to Stop Police Brutality (O22), the American Civil Liberties Union (ACLU) has challenged the city's Parade and Special Events Ordinances. ACLU's Legal Program Director Julya Hampton says they've targeted these laws because "officials have set up unreasonable obstacles when people try to obtain a permit for a march."

The O22 Coalition is an interesting mix of people. Some are new to politics, but have lost family members to police violence and are now seeking justice for their loved ones and the solidarity of those who understand their pain. Other members are seasoned activists concerned about issues of police accountability for equally valid but less personal reasons. The group has dozens of affiliates throughout the U.S. and each year they hold a national march on October 22. Their book, *Stolen Lives: Killed by Law Enforcement*, is now in its second edition and chronicles over 2,000 victims of what the coalition calls "a nationwide epidemic of police brutality in the United States."

Last October, Seattle O22 obtained a parade permit and a special events permit to march from Seattle Central Community College to a rally in Hing Hay Park. Organizers of the march had expected more than the 80-100 marchers who ended up attending — but their disappointment turned to bewilderment when the police decided to revoke their parade permit, citing the low turnout (the permit itself had no requirement stating a minimum number of attendees). Forced onto the sidewalk and frequently separated by stoplights, the

marchers then watched the police take up an entire lane of traffic and close the very street they weren't being allowed to march in.

The ACLU's lawsuit seeks an injunction barring the City of Seattle from violating the rights of the coalition, and seeks a court ruling that Seattle's Parade and Special events Ordinances are unconstitutional because they "allow city officials and police to place arbitrary conditions on permits and to revoke them without notice."

The ordinances may or may not be constitutional, but as a quick review reveals that they are certainly labyrinthine.

Anyone planning a Special Event in the City of Seattle receives a 35-sheet booklet from the City's Special Event Coordinator outlining the many steps required to exercise one's free speech. There are 17 possible permits one can receive, so the trick is to figure out which agencies to approach. The Street Use Permit, for instance, comes from the city's Department of Transportation, but the rally permit is obtained from the Parks Department. Any large-scale event requiring the coordination of multiple city agencies requires the Special Event permit, issued by a quasi-agency called the Special Events Committee.

Other permits you may need to acquire before you can hold your constitutionally protected event include a Fire Department permit (for parade floats), a generator permit or noise variance (from the Department of Design, Construction and Land Use), and a parade permit (issued by SPD's Traffic section and separate from the DOT's Street Use permit). You may also need to get a Public Health permit, a marine permit, an outdoor cooking permit or a tent permit, depending on the nature

of your event. And if you're marching through a historic district like Ballard, Pioneer Square, or Capitol Hill, you'd better get the green light from the relevant historical district authority.

The Special Events Permit can be revoked for a variety of ill-defined reasons. These rules are full of amorphous qualifiers like "reasonable, adequate, substantially, and significant," words that are wide open to vastly different interpretations. What (or whose) standards will determine what an "adequate site... management plan" is, or what "reasonable terms and conditions" are?

The ACLU is on a roll, having recently won several local cases supporting free speech rights. A settlement last year forced the City of Tacoma to amend its ordinance regulating parades so that groups are not required to pay unduly burdensome fees in order to exercise their free speech. In Spokane — home of the Wobbly Free Speech Fights nearly a century ago — the ACLU and the Center for Justice reached an agreement with the Spokane Transit Authority that protects free speech at the downtown plaza.

Beyond the immediate goal of streamlining Seattle's permitting process to make the streets more accessible to activists, ACLU communi-

tions director Doug Honig sees another possible benefit from these legal cases. "When you file a lawsuit and win a settlement, it has a healthy effect on city officials. They're forced to examine their conduct in related situations."

Others see these lawsuits as just one part of a larger struggle for civil rights. Arthur Miller, plaintiff in the ACLU's suit against the City of Tacoma, is also the coordinator for the Tacoma Leonard Peltier Support Group. Last year when his group tried to hold their annual march in support of Peltier (the imprisoned American Indian activist), the city demanded \$1,000 for police escorts, a figure that was twice the group's annual budget. Eventually the lawyers forced the city to allow insurance waivers for free speech activities and limited the fees to related administrative costs.

Miller tries to look at the big picture. "If you view things from the standpoint of the lawsuit alone, then that may not have much of affect, but you need to look at everything that came out of it," he says. "The purpose of our Peltier marches is to keep Leonard's case in public view and on the minds of the government. Everything they have done against us has aided that purpose... in the last year I have spoken at a number of schools and a church because of it." ■



The ACLU is on a roll, having recently won several local cases supporting free speech rights. A settlement last year forced the City of Tacoma to amend its ordinance regulating parades ... In Spokane, the ACLU and the Center for Justice reached an agreement with the Spokane Transit Authority that protects free speech at the downtown plaza.



NORTH AMERICAN NEWSBRIEFS WWW.STREETNEWSERVICE.ORG

An annual count of homeless people in and around Denver, Colorado finds there are fewer people homeless but **43 percent of them are children.** According to the survey children represent a growing percentage of homeless people living in motels, emergency shelters or other temporary housing in metro

Denver. The count also found 60 percent of all homeless people lived just outside of Denver. While the number of homeless in the county is down this year, the survey revealed 8,668 people are homeless, 43 percent of whom are under the age of 21. "Some of the homeless children live in cars at night. Some are in shelters. Some of them are in schools, but **don't know if they're going to be at the same school the next day,**" Metropolitan Denver Homeless Initiative president Tom Luehrs tells the *Denver Post*. The survey also counted 2,442 people in transitional housing, where they may remain for six months to two years.

A recent community march in Raleigh, North Carolina focused on ending homelessness, saying that a recent plan of city leaders to **end homelessness in 10 years** would take too long. Supporters of the plan tell WRAL-TV of Raleigh-Durham-Fayetteville that the city's 10-year plan is a progressive commitment that consists of two points: focusing on sources of hardship like domestic violence and drug abuse, and allocating more money to shelters. "The situation is much harder today because a lot of jobs are going overseas, and mass immigration has taken a lot of entry-level jobs," homeless Vietnam veteran Ritchie Hammond tells WRAL. Raleigh Mayor Charles Meeker **remains optimistic** that the city can actually end

homelessness. "It's an attempt to try and solve the problems of the homeless person," Meeker said of the plan.

Aboriginal housing advocates from across Canada met in Winnipeg recently to search for solutions to homelessness. Native leaders say the number of **aboriginal people in Winnipeg** has increased over the past decade and it hasn't helped that 10 years ago the government stopped investing in programs that built low-rent homes for urban aboriginals. "Because of the lack of housing in Canada, the lack of social housing, the lack of affordable housing, it's very frustrating for them," says Larry Wercherer, who runs an emergency shelter. He tells CBC that waiting lists for existing properties have long caused an increase in the number of native people living in motels, shelters and on the streets. A random sample of around 350 homeless people found that over 75 percent of those in shelters, requiring intervention or on the streets were aboriginal people.

Meanwhile, elsewhere in Canada, the city of Ottawa will receive \$17 million toward ending homelessness as part of the National Homelessness Initiative started in 1999. The money will be granted over two years. "**Canadians coast to coast have identified homelessness as a major concern,**" Defense Minister David Pratt told the CBC. Funding to continue the program was allocated in last month's federal budget, but it requires a locally designed plan. The city of Ottawa did approve a plan that includes \$11 million for capital development projects, \$4 million for services preventing homelessness and aiding the homeless, and \$2 million for research and working with other local service providers.

—Newsbriefs compiled by Patty Lane.



Today's News

Well, the poor took a hit in the kisser
 a hefty tax break broke even
 and the rich got 300% richer
 manna from Congress,
 in the leave no children behind act
 free school lunches ended,
 starvation commenced and
 the national debt bamboozled
 to elephant proportions
 while war waged on in a desert,
 once again poor people fought for men
 too afraid to fight who put
 their subordinates on the lines
 charging multiple bombs to fall from the sky
 littering old villages, erasing dreams, loves, innocent lives
 from their easy chairs and red telephones,
 men, women following orders to kill and die,
 some people with heart rallied at home
 in the streets and under watchful eyes,
 spies, M16s, got arrested, filled the jails,
 spreading to the Civic Center in San Francisco
 all trying to spread peace,
 which is outlawed during war times
 when human sacrifice is required
 and police in Darth Vader attire
 parade around in formation, herd the people
 with batons, horses and potential tear gas canisters
 chasing us down the street coming
 from all directions, snipers, helicopters,
protecting us from our ideas, preserving our
 freedom of speech in war time.

—ANGIE VASQUEZ

Sleeping Outdoors

Homeless people have a hard time sleeping outdoors. They lose their jobs and then their home and there's nowhere to go when the money is gone. Tired and sick but what can you do. Friends can't help — they're hurting too. Homeless people have a hard time sleeping outdoors.

Too many shot and killed on the street — some dear souls while they're asleep. Sleeping under bridges, doorways and sheds, cardboard boxes for a bed. Plastic bags to carry their all and no place to go when nature calls. Homeless people have a hard time sleeping outdoors.

Turned away when the shelters are filled, but given a blanket and minus a meal. Told good luck, you're on your own, under the Viaduct hungry and cold with one eye open and one eye closed. Homeless people have a hard time sleeping outdoors.

Most homeless people really try, work every day for smaller pay. But let me set the record straight 'cause there's been too many lies and too much hate. Called Bums for just being poor, they fought the wars when you and me were scared to go. They served their country for honor and peace, some lost their lives for you and me.... Homeless people have a hard time sleeping outdoors.

—ESTELLE WALLACE

Adventures in Poetry with ©Dr. Wes Browning



We here at Adventures in Poetry want to proudly go on record as being firmly opposed to eating babies. We are also against torturing animals, raping in general, pillaging, maiming, arson, stealing, and breaking other people's things for the fun of it.

We bring this up now because this week a bunch of folks suggested that I write today in support of the *Seattle Times*' decision last week to run Tami Silicio's photo of flag-draped coffins of deceased U.S. soldiers on their way home from Iraq. Yes I, Dr. Wes Browning, will personally stick my neck out right here on this page, and take a stand in favor of free speech and opposed to totalitarianism.

Let me sum up my position right now, so that those of you who need no convincing can go back to eating your egg salad sandwich or making out or whatever you were doing before this column interrupted you: Totalitarianism, bad. Government propaganda, bad. Government censorship and lies, bad. Free Speech, good.

As you surely know by now, as it's been in all the papers, Tami Silicio put the *Seattle Times* on the fast track to its next Pulitzer by giving them the opportunity to defy the Pentagon's ban on printing photos of flag-draped coffins of U.S. soldiers.

I'll tell you how clueless I was. I was so clueless it never occurred to me that the Pentagon had a ban on printing such photos. Oh, I figured there was a rule against printing photos in which the identities of the fallen soldiers were indicated, sure. But surely not photos where you couldn't tell who was in the coffins.

But, no. Our government has a rule against it, and commercial military contractors like Maytag Aircraft are understandably afraid to defy the Pentagon that hires them, so they let Silicio and her husband go, and they would have fired her little dog too, if she had had one and it was in range.

Now, some kinds of censorship I expect. I'm not saying I'm in favor of any kind of censorship, but I won't get all huffy about it if the press is denied their

First Amendment right to show naked people copulating on their front page. While personally I believe it should be up to the *Times* to decide whether that would be a good choice, I'm willing to let the opposition have that one.

But this instance of censorship is inexcusable.

Yet, the government is making an excuse, and we are forced to answer it. The excuse is that the photo could offend some people among the families of the dead.

Answer number one: Very few relatives of dead U.S. servicemen have stepped forward to claim offense in this particular case, probably in part due to the fact that YOU CAN'T TELL WHO THE DEAD IN THE PICTURE ARE, FOR PETE'S SAKE. Hello, you can't even tell if the coffins are occupied. Sheesh.

Answer number two: The freedom at the press is at stake here. The first amendment doesn't say its OK for the government to practice censorship if someone might be offended by something.

Maytag Aircraft is understandably afraid to defy the Pentagon that hires them, so they let Silicio and her husband go, and they would have fired her little dog too, if she had one and it was in range.

By the way, it probably would offend George W. Bush's sensitivity were he to read this column (which can't happen 'cause he don't read, he only looks at pictures) if I were to say that he deserves to be impeached for dealing with the Saudi oil producers to influence the next election. Should I therefore be prevented from saying it? No, because the importance of being able to say such things outweighs any offense it may give George W. Bush.

I care much more about the feelings of the families of fallen servicemen than I do about those of Bush, but the principle remains the same. Their feelings, whether appropriate or not, don't trump the national interest. And in this case the national interest does not lie with the Pentagon. It lies with freedom of the press and the freedom of speech. ■

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Sunday March 14, 11:06 a.m. Terry Avenue – St. James Cathedral. The suspect, a transient male aged 45, is known to the church authorities and has been asked to leave the church premises several times for panhandling church patrons. He was observed loitering in the courtyard of the church, and as officers were aware of his previous trespass admonishment, he was arrested for criminal trespass and transported to King County Jail.

Thursday April 15, 10:09 a.m., 16th Ave. South and S. Washington St. Officers observed the suspect, a transient Black female aged 21, asleep under a blanket in the park. Upon contact, she stated her name, but could not provide I.D. as her card had been stolen. Officer checked on his computer, but could find no one with that name. After questioning, she stated her real name, and when this name was checked it was found she had an outstanding warrant. She was arrested and booked into King County Jail.

Friday April 16, 3:11 p.m., Jefferson Street Bus Stop. Officers on routine patrol saw three males seated in the bus shelter. Upon closer inspection, officers noticed one of the men had an open can of malt liquor. As they approached, the police noticed that another of the men had an open bottle of beer. A name check showed that the first suspect, a transient Black male aged 18, had an outstanding warrant. The other two men were trespassed and released; the suspect was transported to the King County Youth Services Center.

Friday April 16, 3:46 p.m., Dick's on Broadway. Officers on bike patrol spotted the suspect, a White male aged 38, walking into the Dick's drive-in lot. He had been trespassed earlier in the year, and the officers were aware that there was a warrant out for his arrest. The warrant was verified, and the suspect was arrested. His trespass card was updated, and he was booked into King County Jail.

Saturday April 17, 5:57 p.m., Broadway QFC. Complainant, a transient White male aged 24, stated that he and his wife had been panhandling outside QFC. The suspect, a Black male in his early twenties, approached them and struck the man in the head with his backpack. The suspect then stole \$3 and three bus tokens from them, and left in an eastbound direction. The victim was unhurt. The suspect could not be located.

Sunday April 18, 2:34 p.m., Ninth Ave. – Harborview Medical Center. Officers were dispatched to HMC security to help with a trespasser. The security officer stated that earlier in the week he had told the suspect, a transient Black male aged 35, not to return or he would face criminal trespass charges. The suspect admitted that he knew he was not supposed to be there, and admitted to smoking sherm earlier in the day. He refused to give his real name. He finally gave his real name, and officers found he had a DOC [Department of Corrections] warrant for his arrest. He was booked into King County Jail for trespass and obstruction.

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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The Time is Now

The case for a tent city in suburban King County

By the Real Change Editors

[Ed. note: We sought a pro/con piece on the plans to start a new tent city on county land, but no "con" writer was forthcoming. However, opposition is out there: on April 14, the King County Journal editorialized that while "homelessness is a real issue in King County ... tarps and tents are not the answer. A permanent solution is needed." The United Way and local governments are already well aware of homelessness, says the Journal; they've brought people together to draft a 10-year plan to solve the problem. Here's the case for why King County citizens should welcome a suburban "Tent City4," by the editorial committee of Real Change.]

Emergencies require emergency responses. That's why we need tent cities.

Let's put this emergency into perspective. We, as Americans, are as alarmed and concerned as any about the deaths that occur among our servicemen and women every day in Iraq. As of mid-April, 10 Washington state military service members have been confirmed dead among the 130,000 troops on duty in Iraq.

Compare the homeless situation. For every American soldier in Iraq, there are more than 20 Americans back home who were homeless during that year. Death rates for homeless people in the entire U.S. are unavailable, but King County alone suffered at least 35 in the past year. Almost one third of those homeless deaths were murders. So for people on the streets, the comparison to war is not at all frivolous.

Our people need shelter tonight, not 10 years from now. As armies need shelters and can't wait until beautiful barracks are built for them, so homeless

people can't wait either. Too many of them are dying.

The tried and perfected military solution is for the soldiers to build their own temporary shelters (tents!), until permanent shelter can be provided. That has also been a proven method in Seattle for the few the city allows to join Tent City3.

Tent City3 has shown that there are no security problems with tent cities in neighborhoods, but that tent cities provide assets to neighborhoods with their security patrols and litter pickups.

Tent City3 has been well received in all the communities it has visited, even where there had been significant prior opposition to it. Because of that, it has become part of the long-term solution, by destroying some of the myths about homelessness and motivating the general community to take further steps to end homelessness.

Without tent cities, there would still be people living in tents, but they would be hidden away and out of sight and more vulnerable to violent crime. Some

would say that not having to see the tents would be preferable. But even if we could ignore the dangers of sleeping out alone, we ask which is more motivating toward a permanent solution to homelessness: 100 invisible people, or 100 visible people? Will the general public ever bring themselves to solve a problem they can't see? Do they have a right not to see it?

We don't believe that the public has the right to remain ignorant of the emergency of homelessness. It is, in fact, the public's problem, requiring a public response. The social and economic conditions that have given rise to the current high levels of homelessness in this country come

from choices made by society as a whole, not merely by individuals.

Some in King County would pass the problem of emergency housing on to faith-based organizations. This is an abdication of moral responsibility. Homelessness isn't a Catholic or Protestant problem. It would be great if a new church donated some land to set up a tent city, but King County should not shirk its responsibility to help on that account.

If King County were doing enough to provide shelters perhaps a county tent city would not be so urgently needed. Yet, the county funds only one shelter. It's open only in the winter. It's

only for men. Astonishingly, there are those who expect homeless people to wait for the county to step up and provide permanent housing, when it hasn't even begun to provide adequate temporary housing.

One of the most frustrating myths about homelessness we encounter at Real Change is the notion that homeless

people can't or won't do anything to solve their own problems. Tent cities prove what nonsense that is. The labor to build them, to maintain them, to keep them clean and secure, comes almost entirely from the participants themselves. It is really a case of people doing for themselves.

Would recreation be a better use of public lands? Yes,

if there were no emergency. But there is an emergency. When there's a fire down the street we stand back for the fire trucks. We don't whine that we can't fill our pools because the water is diverted to fire hoses. If we can help in any way, we pitch in. If we can't help, we get out of the way so other people can do what it takes.

All people are asking is to be allowed to do what it takes to alleviate an emergency that affects them more than anyone else. ■

We welcome everyone's opinions.

Please send submissions to editor@realchangenews.org.

SHORTCHANGED continued from page 4

climate of suspicion seems to prevent any cure. To wit:

- The Republicans suspect the Democrats of trying to raise taxes.

"People who want an income tax are doing it because they want more money," says Chris Vance, Chairman of the Washington State Republican Party. "If they want to make taxes more fair, that's one thing, but no one's trying to do that. Obviously the sales tax hurts the working poor, but what hurts them worse is taking more, instead of taking \$100, taking \$101."

- Taxpayers suspect the government of the same thing. "People absolutely will not institute an income tax with the sales tax still there," O'Brien says. "People think that when the state gets a couple dollars behind, it will jack up the sales tax."

- And pro-reform politicians suspect voters of being too ignorant to know what's good for them, which may or may not be true. "The fact is, when people are unemployed or teetering on the edge, they don't like the idea of being taxed on income," says Representative Sharon Tomiko Santos, 37th District, Rainier Valley and Madrona. "What we are trying to do is educate the public about the flaws of the current system."

Yet these problems of trust may not be insurmountable.

Several groups, including the Washington Tax Fairness Coalition and Citizens for Tax Justice, are working to ease the climate of mistrust between voters and legislators.

"We go out and remind people that government provides tremendous services, a safety net that we take for granted, like air," says Canright. "It takes taxes to pay for it. But the 40 percent of Washington that makes less than \$29,000 will benefit from seeing an income tax. It's a much better deal."

Although Sims proposes eliminating the state sales tax altogether, Canright admits that there are no guarantees that all excise taxes will permanently vanish.

"I don't think anyone in policy thinks it's possible or even desirable to eliminate all sales tax," she says. "And government requires constant watching. You can't pass something and expect to be able to turn your back on it forever and have it never change. But to say 'If we have to watch them, let's not even try,' is to throw the baby out with the bath water."

If voters are informed and prepared to be vigilant, politicians may be less afraid to take a stand on the issue. So

far, only Sims has made the state income tax a part of his campaign platform. "He will be the leader and inform people of why we need this," says Hatley. "The governor is the lead advocate. It's his job."

Vance says he would cautiously consider reform, if it didn't raise taxes overall.

"Speaking for myself, not for my party, if someone proposed eliminating the sales tax in favor of a flat-rate income tax that is constitutionally capped so it can't be raised, and revenue neutral so it raises the same amount of money that's being raised now, I would say that's an interesting proposal," he says.

And although Hatley says that some taxes may need to be raised to fill budget shortfalls and address crises in education and transportation, Canright says she would be pleased with any reform that resulted in greater tax fairness, even a revenue-neutral flat tax.

"The fairest tax is a progressive tax, like federal income tax, where you pay relative to your ability to pay, but it's likely not what we'll start out with. We're likely to start out with a flat tax," she says. "Higher incomes now pay about a quarter as much of their income as lower incomes do. We need a

baseline at which, when you add all the taxes up, the higher incomes pay, at minimum, the same percent."

As for the B&O tax, the Gates commission recommended replacing it with a value-added tax, commonly used in Europe, which is assessed every time a product is resold at a higher price. Thus, apples would be taxed at perhaps five percent when they are turned into applesauce, and five percent more when the applesauce is turned into fruit leather. The fruit leather maker could deduct the cost of the applesauce from his or her tax bill, paying taxes only on the value added to it, not on the gross sales.

Ironing out all the differences and resolving all the issues of mistrust won't be easy. Nor will passing the legislation. It takes a constitutional amendment to change the tax system, which requires two thirds of the state legislature to vote in favor of it. Then the voters must go to the polls and pass it to make it become law.

Yet, confronted with the knowledge that Washington has the worst tax structure in the country, the state has no reason not to try to change its ways. Having hit bottom, there's nowhere to go but up. ■

The Making of a Movement

Jesse Jackson Jr. aims to give his fellow Democrats a reason to exist

Interview by Patricia Gray

Representative Jesse Jackson Jr. is scheduled to visit Seattle on May 22 to rally support for equal, high-quality healthcare for every American and to gain momentum for the issue in this year's presidential election. His visit is co-sponsored by the Puget Sound Alliance for Retired Americans and the Health Care for All - Washington. Rep. Jackson will lead a conference at the Plymouth Congregational Church and a rally to follow at the Westlake Park. In a telephone interview on April 26, Rep. Jackson laid out his agenda for a constitutional right to every American.

Real Change: According to a public poll conducted by the Harvard School of Public Health, the issue of the nation's 44 million uninsured was only the third-most important health-related issue, falling behind health care costs, Medicare problems, and tying for third with prescription drug costs. What is your strategy to rally the American public in support of universal coverage?

Jesse Jackson, Jr.: First and foremost, I believe health care is a right. Under our system of government, unless a right is written in the Constitution of the United States, it is a state right. The idea that health care in America is a state right is the first problem in the dialog over the coverage of 44 million Americans. As long as health care in America is a state right, there are going to be 50 different systems; 3,067 different county systems and 20,000 different municipal systems. The only way to assure that every American has health care as a right, is to fight for it as a constitutional right.

I have filed House Joint Resolution number 30, which would guarantee all Americans the right to health care of equal high-quality and address the states' rights problem. The second half of the amendment says that Congress shall have the power to implement this article by appropriate legislation because our first contention is that 50 governors cannot do it and 50 different state legislatures cannot do it. So rather than approaching this piecemeal, we need a plan for the best health care system the world has ever known, and the first juncture in the dialog is to fight for health care as a right.

RC: How likely is it that a constitutional amendment guaranteeing health care would pass?

Jackson: I think we have a higher probability of passing my amendment than President George W. Bush has of amending the Constitution to redefine marriage in this country. President Bush is fighting for an amendment to redefine marriage; I am fighting for an amendment to cover the 44 million Americans with no coverage and the other 41 million Americans with inadequate coverage.

Those 85 million Americans have a dire need for my amendment and that runs contrary to the few thousand people who are trying to get married, who care for each other and love each other. If we as a party, and we as progressives, can be as obsessed in trying to provide health care for all Americans as President Bush in trying to decide who marries who, I think I have a stronger chance of success.

RC: What would health care for all Americans look like?

Jackson: That is what is so wonderful about fighting for constitutional rights. The First Amendment of the Constitution says freedom of speech, but it did not say CNN, NBC, CBS, it doesn't say AM radio or FM radio, it doesn't say *Washington Post* or *New York Times* or *National Inquirer*; it simply says freedom of speech. And freedom of speech manifests itself in huge industries to accomplish that freedom for every American.

I imagine first and foremost that health care must be an individual right, just like freedom of speech, and behind that language in the Constitution, there would be huge industries funded by the federal government and the states and others funded by the private sector to provide that basic right for all Americans. So it will take on a variety of different forms. But one thing is for sure, if you check into a hospital anywhere in America, you will be able to get high-

quality service and never be turned away.

When I get on a plane in Massachusetts and fly to California, when I get there I don't lose my freedom of speech. And at no point in time when I flew from Boston to L.A. did someone ask me to stop being a Christian and become a Muslim or an atheist. In other words, freedom of speech, freedom of religion, freedom of association flew with me. At no point in time as an

American citizen, under my approach, would you ever have to give up your right to high quality health care just because you happen to be in Indiana when you got sick, but you live in Texas. In other words, it is an interstate right. If our nation can build a highway system from Maine to California, then why can't we build a health care system from Maine to California that insures that one third of our population is covered?

RC: Per capita, the United States is actually spending twice as much as other industrialized countries that do have universal health insurance. Are we using our funding in incorrect and

inappropriate ways?

Jackson: Most of our funding that we are using, or at least a significant part of it, is going toward advertising and not toward providing high-quality health care for every American. If a lot of the advertising component, alone, could be taken out, a large chunk of the 44 million uninsured Americans would be covered.

RC: What are the results you see from the Bush administration on the low-income health care sector?

Jackson: The Bush Administration first and foremost believes in states' rights. They do not believe in health care as a human right, and because they believe in states' rights they believe in the separate and unequal health care system

that is presently the status quo. And the same that is true for the Bush Administration is also true for the Clinton administration, and the administration before that.

So what is the best use of our time? Let's say they pass universal coverage in Congress. What is to stop the next Congress from turning it back around? Just like 40 years ago Congress passed Social Security and another generation later, they call it a disaster — even though we borrow from the trust fund, we bankrupt the trust fund, the trust fund is paying for war overseas, the trust fund is rebuilding Iraq. Social Security doesn't work because we've raided it hundreds of times — that's why it doesn't work. So to protect health care from being raided, it has to be right.

RC: What do you think needs to happen for Americans to understand the importance of equal rights to health care?

Jackson: It begins with the leadership at the top. John Kerry has said that he believes health care is a right, but he has not said he believes it is a constitutional right. If you don't believe it is a constitutional right, then by definition you believe it is a state right — and that's the problem.

RC: You hold the highest voting record in Congress against Bush legislation, but you're also known for challenging your fellow Democrats. How do you view the current state of the Democratic Party?

Jackson: Obviously, it's better than what Bush is doing, but it's a long ways away from where it should be. It is supposed to be a party that is fighting for new rights. It has to offer bold new programs and bold new initiatives, and nothing is bolder than constitutional rights. George Bush is vying for constitutional rights like: no burning the flag; he wants to change the Second Amendment — more guns for everybody; he wants to discriminate against gays; he wants term limits for all members of Congress; he wants tax limitations amended into the Constitution.

John Kerry is not fighting for one constitutional right, not one, but Bush and his team have got a constitutional agenda. Democrats have a legislative agenda. Constitutional agendas will beat legislative agendas every single time. Constitutional agendas mean: "This is what I stand for."

RC: What are you hoping to accomplish as the long-term goals of your political career?

Jackson: I want to add some amendments to the Constitution of the United States for a more perfect union; it would be the highest accomplishment of anyone in our lifetime. It is more important than any other office, because as long as there is a Constitution of America, all future presidents and senators will uphold it. That's what I'm after. ■



Constitutional agendas will beat legislative agendas every single time. Constitutional agendas mean: "This is what I stand for."

A Person of Some Regard

Letter to a well-known stranger



ILLUSTRATION BY MIKE RAINEY.

By Bettie Nyschens

I've seen you often in the four years I have lived in this neighborhood. Day in and day out, you've walked through each season again and again. In the winters I have seen you wrapped in an old fatigue-green Army blanket, dirty and motheaten. In the summers you wear very little, no shirt, the same torn ill-fitting pants that hang midway or lower down your hips — sometimes you have underwear on, sometimes you don't. You walk in a purposefully aimless kind of way. I figure you have no place to go. But truthfully, I don't know that, it is just one of my many assumptions about you. You don't seem old; you're not young. You just seem in some space that appears lost.

Most often when I've seen you, your head is down, never looking right or left. Instead you stare at the ground, and you are talking... to yourself? To voices in your head? You can be quite animated. Your hair used to be a long, frizzy, matted, dirty, and (I imagine) putrid mass of muck. One time when I saw you, it looked as if you had cut your hair. As you moved closer, I changed my mind. Your patchy red and oozing scalp looked as if you had pulled your hair out by the handful.

In the beginning when I'd see you, I'd look away, especially if I was passing on the sidewalk in your immediate vicinity. I felt repulsion, fear, confusion

— feelings I would quickly push down in an attempt to not feel anything about you at all. My only thoughts were of all the ways you needed to change.

A couple of years ago, around Easter, I was sitting by the window in my favorite coffee shop, writing. I was writing Eastery kinds of musings around Jesus coming into Jerusalem, being cheered and Hosanna'ed as the fickle crowd parted to let him pass. I gazed out the window, imagining it all, and at that very moment you walked by. You were wearing that same old holey blanket I'd seen you wear many times before, and the people on the sidewalk were parting to make way for you. However, there was no cheering in this scene. There were only people trying hard to not see you as they moved out of your way, pretending you weren't there. I know because I had been one of them.

At that moment, something in my heart snapped. It was as if a dark heavy stone called "us and them" was rolled away. All along I had wondered how you could be fixed, what your problem was, why you were the way you were. These questions served to ease my own discomfort and free me from any responsibility.

From that time forth, whenever I saw you, I no longer looked away. Instead, I would intentionally look right at you. I wanted to see you, I wanted to

All along I had wondered how you could be fixed, what your problem was, why you were the way you were. These questions served to ease my own discomfort and free me from any responsibility. From that time forth, whenever I saw you, I no longer looked away.

learn what you had to teach me. Instead of feeling repulsion, seeing you now made me smile. Not that you ever noticed, since you were always looking down. Somewhere along the way, I began to pray for you: wordless, formless, but prayers nonetheless that surrounded you in love and light. Prayers drawing us together in a common space.

In all your amblings, I've never seen you look directly at anything. Until today. Quite unexpectedly, we passed each other — me in my boxy blue van, you with your bowed head walking in the street. When I pulled up even with

you, you looked up, right at me, and I could have sworn you smiled and nodded. I smiled and nodded, too. There seemed no malice or vacant space in your eyes. There was no fear or pity in mine. My four-year journey led me to this place, where there were just two very different people, able to acknowledge one another, paying respects in a neighborly kind of way. ■

Bettie Nyschens lives in Portland with her husband, two sons, and two dogs. After writing this essay, she began volunteering with the homeless advocacy organization JOIN.

Early May Notables

Thursday 4/29

"Computerized Voting: **Danger to Democracy?**" Behind their user-friendly interface, Direct Recording Electronic voting machines present a great risk of error and fraud. This is a community forum sponsored by Phinney Neighbors for Social Responsibility. 7 p.m., at Woodland Park Presbyterian Church, 225 N. 70th St., just off Greenwood.

every Saturday through Oct. 2. Carpool from the Fremont Public Association, 1501 N. 45th, at 10:15 a.m. Info Anne Yen 206-694-6794 ext. 4 or anne@povertyaction.org.

Sunday 5/2

Farmworker Solidarity March presented by the Farmworker Solidarity Committee of Skagit County. This event is a celebration of the contribution farmworkers make across the nation. Co-sponsored by Whatcom County Rainbow Coalition and People for a Peaceable Planet. 11 a.m., meet at Maiben Park on Holly S. between Greenleaf and Washington in Burlington. Info Rosalinda Guillen 360-738-0893.

Wednesday 5/5

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

Thursday 5/6

Amy Goodman, author of *The Exception to the Rulers: Exposing Oily Politicians, War Profiteers, and the Media That Love Them*, reading and book signing. Ms. Goodman is a tough-as-nails journalist with a bulldog spirit and a daily radio round-up of all the hypocrisy around us. Tickets are \$5 and available at all University Bookstores. Noon, at UW HUB Auditorium. Info 206-634-3400 or <http://www.ubookstore.com>.

Radical Women general meeting. Learn more about their current activities and campaigns, everyone welcome. Dinner, with vegetarian option, available at 6:30 p.m. for \$6.50 donation. 7:30

p.m., at New Freeway Hall, 5018 Rainier Ave. S. Info 206-722-6057.

Friday 5/7

"Word of Mouth: A Celebration Benefit for **KBCS Radio**," with Amy Goodman, Christos Govetas, UrbanScribes, and Forgotten Sol. Ms. Goodman is the host of Democracy Now, which airs on KBCS. Tickets are \$25 and are available at Elliott Bay Books, Silver Platters, Dusty Strings, or the KBCS website. 7 p.m., at Town Hall, 8th and Seneca, Seattle. Info <http://www.kbcs.fm>.

Saturday 5/8

Welfare Rights Organizing Coalition's 7th Annual Mother's Day Auction, "Bread and Roses," celebrating 20 years of **activism for low-income families**. Featuring silent and live auctions, music by the Seattle Labor Chorus, and hors d'oeuvres by Pacific Northwest Catering Company. Many wonderful items to bid on including champagne cruise for 8 on Waterways Cruises, a week at the Los Abrigados Lodge and Spa in Sedona, AZ, and more. Tickets are \$30. 6-10 p.m., at Capitol Hill Arts Center, 1621 12th Ave., Seattle. Info and tickets WROC 206-324-3063 or wrocsea@wroc.org.

Seattle Peace Chorus presents **Great Peacemakers**, a choral story that reminds our leadership of the power of peace. The concert will invoke peace icons Gandhi, Martin Luther King, Jr., and many others. Tickets \$12 in advance, \$14 at the door. 7:30 p.m., at University Temple United Methodist Church, 1415 NE 43rd St. Tickets and info 206-264-5532. Also Sun. May 9, at 7:30 p.m., at the same location.

Sunday 5/8

Impact Forum on "Quality Health Care: It's Everybody's Right," with Brian King, a long time health care activist and vice-president of Puget Sound Alliance for Retired Americans (PSARA). 9:30 a.m., at University Unitarian Church, 6556 - 35th Ave. NE, in the Social Hall. Info Jerome Chroman 206-522-9384.

Wednesday 5/12

Northwest **Labor Employment Law** Offices sponsors a current affairs show, Speaking for Ourselves, to Each Other. 7:30 p.m., on SCAN TV Channel 77. Info LELO 206-860-1400.

Friday 5/14

Wallingford Neighbors for Peace and Justice present "Friday Night at the Meaningful Movies." This evening's film is **Fast Food Women**, which tracks the lives of women working in four different fast food restaurants in Kentucky. Free, donations welcome. 7 p.m., at Keystone Church, 5019 Keystone Pl. N., just north of 50th in Wallingford. Info wfnfp@comcast.net.

Saturday 5/15

Delridge **Affordable Homebuyer Initiative** Information Session. Pay less to buy a home and possibly receive a grant to help you buy a house in Delridge. For more information come to an information session. Registration is required, call 206-323-1227 or email info@homesteadclt.org. 11 a.m.-1 p.m., at Homestead Community Land Trust offices, 2017 E. Spruce St. Visit www.homesteadclt.org to learn more about them.

"Voice of Conscience," a documentary in progress about **conscientious objectors** that sprang from a feature story in the May 15, 2003 issue of **Real Change**, will hold a fundraiser at the Delridge Community Center, 4501 Delridge Way SW (between Genessee and Alaska), 1-3 p.m. There will also be a panel to discuss the conscientious objector movement, counter-recruitment efforts in the high schools, and the possible reinstatement of the draft. Information, jackierenn@quidnunc.net.

Calendar compiled from Jean Buskin's *Peace and Justice Events Calendar*, available in full at www.scn.org/activism/calendar. Are you holding an event? Email calendar submissions to Real Change at calendar@realchangenews.org. Please allow three weeks' notice.

Friday 4/30

Friday Night at the Meaningful Movies presented by Wallingford Neighbors for Peace and Justice. This evening's film is **The Nuclear Danger**, about Dr. Helen Caldicott, who serves to educate a new generation on the dangers of the nuclear age. 7 p.m., at Keystone Church, 5019 Keystone Pl. N., just north of 50th in Wallingford. Info wfnfp@comcast.net.

Gimme Shelter, a Battle of the Bands to benefit the Downtown Emergency Service Center. The DESC works to eliminate homelessness step by step. Scheduled bands are Muckner, The Plains, The Psychotropics, and the Setbacks. Suggested donation \$6-\$20. 8 p.m., at About The Music, 6010 Airport Way S. in Georgetown. Info 206-762-5518 or www.desc.org.

Saturday 5/1

Rally and March for **Worker's Rights** on May Day. 10 a.m., march from Seattle Central Community College to Westlake Park.

Volunteer to increase registration and turnout of low-income voters. Join the **Statewide Poverty Action Network** as they register voters door-to-door in Auburn and Kent. Transportation from Seattle provided. 10:45 a.m. - 2 p.m.,



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citizens participation project



Children in poverty need health insurance

Issue: Medicaid stands to become even more inaccessible for low-income families.

Background: A recent state audit found that seven percent of those receiving Medicaid benefits in Washington were actually ineligible. Coinciding as it did with our seemingly perpetual budget woes, this discovery prompted state legislators last April to place some new restrictions on Medicaid in hopes of freeing up ill-spent revenue.

The new restrictions demand that, among other things, all Medicare beneficiaries must have their incomes verified with state workers on a bi-annual (as opposed to annual) basis; pregnant women and children must provide proof of low-income status, where before all they had to do was declare; and children whose families are deemed ineligible lose health care benefits immediately instead of retaining coverage for an additional 12 months, as was previously the case.

Since the state adopted the new rules, Medicaid enrollment has dropped substantially. The number of children in the program whose families are at or above the federal poverty level — children, that is, who belong in the program — dropped by 20,000 between last February and December alone. At the same time, Medicaid spending has remained about the same. It now seems as if all that the new paperwork has accomplished is to discourage otherwise-eligible Medicaid recipients while failing to save taxpayers any money.

Despite the general ineffectiveness of the reforms to this point, more are on the way.

The federal government recently granted Washington state a waiver to begin charging monthly premiums for families earning a minimum of one-and-a-half times the official poverty level of \$18,850 — around \$27,000 for a family of four. Families making between this and 200 percent (or around \$37,000 annually) of the poverty level will be required to pay \$120 in monthly fees annually per child, up to a maximum of \$360. For families in the next income bracket up — between 200 and 250 percent — the annual figures jump to \$180 per child with a maximum of \$540.

By national standards, low-income families in Washington have in the past enjoyed relatively easy access to Medicaid. When these premiums go into effect, some working poor families will succeed in paying them. Others will fail, and lose out on the peace of mind that health insurance provides. Now, in the midst of a recession, it's imperative that we prioritize maintaining affordable and accessible health care for all of this state's low-income residents.

Action: Tell Governor Gary Locke to withhold from instituting monthly healthcare premiums for state Medicaid recipients. Pen an editorial to the *Seattle Times* or *P-I* citing the injustice of attempting to balance the state Medicaid budget on the backs of low-income families.

To contact Governor Locke: email him by logging on to www.governor.wa.gov/contact/contact.htm or call 360-902-4111.

The website at the end
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Bring story ideas, comments, suggestions, and questions to the fourth monthly open meeting of the **Real Change Editorial Committee**. Wednesday May 26, 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.

Real Change Homeless
Empowerment Project
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Seattle, WA 98121



Seattle Public Library, Serials Unit
1000 - 4th Ave.
Seattle, WA 98104

Mockingbird Times



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



May 2004

Foster Care and Homeless Youth Speak out Across the Nation

Volume IV, Issue 4

Visit us online at www.mockingbirdsociety.org

Homeless Youth Illustrate Endurance

DARIUS REYNOLDS



Endure: To carry on through despite hardships.

Endurance: The act, quality or power of withstanding hardship or stress.

-dictionary.com

ON MARCH 30, 2004, the City of Seattle Office of Arts and Cultural Affairs held a forum called *Personal Story to Policy: Voices for Change/Addressing the Needs of the Homeless*, moderated by Lori Matsukawa and covered by King-5 News. Many community members, including young people currently and formerly homeless, were in attendance.

What impacted me the most about this forum was when PSKS (Peace for the Streets by Kids from the Streets) employee and formerly homeless person Mama Sara (CHHEW Program Director) told her story. It was so inspiring to hear from someone who went through so much and survived it all—who is now doing all she can to help the people who are in the same position she was in. Mama Sarah gives them strength. At the end of the forum anyone who had something to say on the subject

of what could be done to help homeless youth had a chance to speak. One young person talked about how it's hard to get a Washington state ID without an address. Elaine Simons, PSKS Executive Director, spoke about the importance of taking care of service providers who work with homeless youth. I thought it was great that this forum gave people a chance to get their opinions and suggestions heard because we need as many ideas as we can get to help end homelessness.

Work from the *Civic Endurance* exhibit, a collection of photographs and video that document homeless young people in Seattle, was shown at this event. Attendants were invited to see the exhibit after the forum.

The *Endurance* exhibit is a collaborative effort by artists Bradley McCallum and Jacqueline Tarry and participants and staff of PSKS. It took a lot of courage for the 13 young people who participated in the exhibit to allow strangers to videotape them spilling their guts and talking about their personal life for other strangers to see. The *Endurance* exhibit is an inspiring eye opener and a reminder of the things people have to go through to survive in this world.

The message that I got from watching those 13 people stand up for an hour and from listening to them tell their story was to never give up on yourself, no matter what obstacles get in your way; whether it is a drug addiction, homelessness, or constant ridicule from strangers.

Stand tall for what you believe in; whether it is your friends, your lifestyle, or your religion. Watching the film of the 13 young people talking about their experience was very intense. I almost started crying a couple times.

I would like to thank everyone who worked hard to put together the *Endurance* exhibit because it was beautiful, poetic, and artistic and that's what this world needs more of. As a former homeless youth, it really made me happy to see homeless young people getting together and speaking their minds, both at the forum and the exhibit. Now all people have to do is listen so they can get a better understanding of what they go through.

With more understanding, there is nothing to fear. People can help these young people help themselves or just be there for support. You never know what can happen; you could be in this position tomorrow.

May is National Foster Care Month

According to Casey Family Programs, every year approximately 170,000 families care for over 500,000 children whose parents cannot take care of them. Foster care parents and workers deserve to be appreciated for the hard work and dedication they provide to ensure the care of so many children across the nation. To show your appreciation or to get involved as a foster parent, volunteer, mentor or employee, check out www.fostercaremonth.org.

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Alumni Corner



RENEE PRATTE

WHEN I WAS ONLY 17, MY LIFE CHANGED COMPLETELY. In February 2001, I had a choice to make. I could run away or tell someone about what happened to me. I chose to save myself and tell. I had no idea what would happen to me, but I did know that I was never going to go back home to the unbearable abuse from my father.

I had known nothing about foster care except that it had a negative image. The general public also doesn't know much about the foster care system but they need to. There needs to be more awareness about this issue, about the kids in care and about the kids transitioning out of care.

If I hadn't been taken out of my home and placed in a safe environment, it's scary to think what circumstances I would be in right now. My whole childhood was full of verbal abuse and watching my mother being physically abused. My life was controlled and I hardly was given the opportunity to participate in social activities.

I was not sexually abused until my senior year of high school, and that's when I told the school counselor everything that had happened to me. I was placed in a teenage foster girl group home. My first foster parents, Harold and Nancy, were there for the start of my healing process. I remember that I didn't cry for a whole month and one day I just broke down and let the tears fall. Everyone in the house was supportive and helpful. I had a lot of good talks with them, and I gained a tremendous amount of patience and strength that I never had before. In foster care you have to take life day by day.

Months after I turned 18, I moved to my second foster home. My foster parents Sue and Steve helped me get a

car, a driver's license, and full-time employment. I also took my first college class while living there. I was able to experience a normal family setting that was very healthy for me. Sue and Steve helped me get through the trial I faced against my biological parents.

I testified at the trial with my parents in the room. It was probably one of the hardest things I had ever done. However, the jury found my father not guilty. I found out afterwards that even though the jury had believed me, it could not be proven beyond a reasonable doubt. Shortly after the trial, my parents tried to run me down while I was in my car. I had no choice but to get restraining orders against both of them. The restraining orders will be in effect until May 2005.

I have been in therapy for almost three years now; trying to get over everything that has happened to me. Two months after my 19th birthday, I transferred to (a new school). I have been here since June 2002 going to school year-round. I will have my Associate of Arts degree in May. I also work at Hagerty Insurance full-time. I am Vice President of the Let Our Voices Echo foster youth board, a group of youth who are part of the Jim Casey Youth Opportunities Initiative, which advocates for foster youth transitioning out of the system.

In the fall of 2002, the Jim Casey Youth Opportunities Initiative hired Lake Snell Perry & Associates (LSPA) to conduct a study exploring public knowledge of and about perceptions about the challenges facing young people leaving foster care. This study had two components: a nationwide telephone survey and five focus groups. This study shows little awareness – but a significant level of concern

CONTINUED ON PAGE 2

Letter From the Editor

MAY IS NATIONAL FOSTER CARE MONTH and I encourage you to find some way to celebrate and honor the thousands of good folks who work tirelessly on behalf of the children and adolescents involved in foster/kinship care. Mockingbird's vision of "building a world class foster care system" demands that we not only change what is not working but that we acknowledge and support what is working well for kids.

Send a card, email or voice mail thanking a foster parent for their commitment and work, send a donation or volunteer at an organization that serves kids in foster care or find some other creative way to "take good care of the folks who take good care of kids."

Foster Care Alumni in Active Duty: Mockingbird is looking for individuals who were in foster/kinship care and are currently serving in the U.S. military. If you have any ideas on active duty personnel who would want to receive correspondence from a pen pal, including copies of the *Mockingbird Times* please let us know their name and contact information.

Youth Leadership at Mockingbird: I want to thank **Liz Gelin** and **Joshua Kaplan-Lyman** for their great work on behalf of The Mockingbird Society. Liz and Josh are both seniors at Franklin High School in Seattle. To fulfill their graduation requirements Liz and Josh chose The Mockingbird Society for their Senior Project. The

focus of their project was a fundraiser on behalf of Mockingbird, which included organizing, coordinating, procuring and all of the innumerable tasks involved in orchestrating a major event. Nearly 200 folks attended and were treated to scrumptious desserts, beautiful music and great presentations from guest speakers. Washington state **Representative Eric Pettigrew** joined *Mockingbird Times* reporter **Jennifer Eboh** in sharing with the audience the hope and promise within The Mockingbird Society.

Nearly \$5,000 was collected, with an especially generous contribution made by the **Ken and Marleen Alhadeff Foundation**.

I want to express my appreciation to Liz and Josh for recognizing the work of The Mockingbird Society and sharing their energy and talents on our behalf. I also want to thank all of you who attended the event as well as the many family, friends and business owners who supported Liz and Josh and made the event so successful.



Jim Theofelis

jim@mockingbirdsociety.org

A Special Thank you to our April Donors

Ken Alhadeff, Roger and Christine Armstrong, Janis Avery, Linda Baldwin, Jonathan and Rose Betz-Zall, Marlon Buchanan, Laura and Leonard Bull, Larry Crim, Peter and Linda Dahl, Patricia Dawson, Frederick and Joserita Dean, Davidson Dodd, Valerie Douglas, Shawn and Elizabeth Ungar Mintek, Gary and Ann Snell McNeil, Jean Gorecki, Marjorie Hillson and Jon Kirch, Molly Thompson and Joseph Casalini, Joseph and Jill Morrison McKinstry, Leonard and Beth Kashner, Aleta Kennedy, Therese Kumasaka, Ann Lennartz, Beth Light, B. Lippit and Liz Van Volkenburgh, Patrice Lindquist, Ruth Maxwell, Marylou Metzger, Richard and Sandra Monroe, Betsy and Robert Murray, Douglas and Nancy Nelp Steers, John and Lee Neff, Norman Hollowell and Martha Kaplan Hollowell, William Lavelle and Patrice Claire Lavelle, Raleigh Bowden and Peter Morgan, Elizabeth Upton and Rayburn Lewis, Denise Redinger, Leslie and Chris Richardson, Belinda Butler-Bell and Samuel Bell, Victoria Ries and Samuel Saracino, David True and Sarah Hufbauer, Gloria Sailer, Alan Rothblatt and Sima Kahn, James and Jane Skrivan, Doug and Joan Stewart, Lisa Taylor, Harry Thomas, Cappy Thompson, Virginia Thompson, Charles Williams, Kathryn Wright, and Ann and Kenneth Zeman.

ALUMNI CORNER CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

— about the challenges facing young people transitioning from foster care to adulthood.

The foster care system and the issues facing its alumni are not top-of-mind issues for most Americans. A two-thirds majority say they know little or nothing about the system. Most people also agree that 18 is too young for anyone to be on their own. Yet the foster care system cuts us loose at 19, sometimes 18. Americans' feelings about the importance of assisting young people leaving foster care are captured well by this quote from a focus group participant:

Once the child reaches 18 he is grown physically but a lot of the time they are mentally unprepared because of the lack of experience of being independent and being a productive member of society. Instead of just throwing them out there, they need a couple of more years in some type of support system. The system may not be as intensive but something to give them a step up. Everyone will benefit, not only the child but also the community will benefit.

It seems that the media, mainly the news media, is where most people get their knowledge about foster care. Six in ten Americans (62%) say they have learned a lot or some of what they know from the news.

Our voices must be heard and people must listen. My story is just like thousands of others. I have already spoken at conferences and public events about my life experiences. I have also been published twice regarding my life.

The public must know what really goes on in the homes of so many children, and they must realize how desperately we need the system to be more productive. Every day in the newspaper there is an ad about needing more foster homes.

Somewhere out there is a child that needs to be saved. I have met several people who never were, and because of that, they didn't turn out okay. We have to stop the cycle of abuse and neglect. 🐦

Meet Our Staff

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ABOUT US: The Mockingbird Society is a private non-profit organization dedicated to building a world class foster care system and improving the other systems that serve children and adolescents in foster care. The *Mockingbird Times* is a monthly newspaper written and produced by youth who have experience in foster care and/or homelessness. All youth employees of Mockingbird Society are paid between \$7.50 and \$8.50 an hour. Additionally, youth from across the country submit articles, art work, poetry and are compensated up to \$25 per published piece. The *Mockingbird Times* has a monthly circulation of 28,000 copies being distributed across Washington and the U.S.A. Youth involvement is the key to the philosophy, values, and success of The Mockingbird Society and, as such, youth are involved in all aspects of organizational development and decision-making. All donations to The Mockingbird Society are tax-deductible and greatly appreciated. No part of the *Mockingbird Times* may be reproduced without the written permission of The Mockingbird Society. All contents copyright 2004 The Mockingbird Society.

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Positive Power: Finding a Job

BRIDGETT SIROSHTON



The manager said that she put my resume aside and that she would be calling for interviews next week. Hopefully I get called for the interview, because I think I would be a great employee. I have good attendance and I'm a team player.

WHEN LOOKING FOR A NEW JOB you may say to yourself, why is this so hard? Why can I never get a hold of the managers to see where I'm at on the list? When looking for a job you might get exhausted, frustrated and even depressed, but you have to think positively or you will end up nowhere. If you have hope, you will get by. If you apply everywhere, you're bound to get a job somewhere!

Here is my story and what I learned in my own job search. I know I might sound picky but I originally only wanted to work at certain places like record stores. I had to expand my search to include Hot-Topic and places like Red Light and Metro (Seattle clothing stores) because I found out that all the places I called on my list of record shops weren't hiring. I said to myself, "Bridgett where else do you want to work?"

This last week I went into a couple of stores and asked to speak to their manager. Only one place said they were still hiring, and that was Metro on Capitol Hill (Seattle).

Here is what I learned on my job search: when turning in your resume or application, ask to speak to the manager on duty. They will know if the company is hiring or not, and you can give a good impression. First impressions are important. Wear nice clothes to set that impression, keep your head up and be polite. If they say they are not hiring, still fill out an application so they can have it on file, and call back and tell them that you would make a great employee.



You have to set your sights high and have standards if you want to get a job you like, but expand your search if needed. Just remember, fill out applications everywhere you want to work and a few where you could at least see yourself working. Call back to see if they had time to look over your resume or application. And always ask to speak to the hiring manager. Make a good impression, and good luck!

Surviving the System

ECHO SPEED



WHEN I TURNED 18, I WAS FINALLY FREED FROM THE SYSTEM. I owned my life again. Things were going great now that I was home again with my family and friends, plus my workers had hooked up my case so I wouldn't even have to attend court for my release out of the Kansas State Care system. I didn't care that I wasn't finished with school, and that I had in reality very few useful skills in being independent, and neither did anybody else care for that matter.

I was just thankful to be out of a system that had caused a great deal of pain and heartache for me through years of excessive carelessness and avoidance, and although I could've chosen to remain in their clutches longer, I was much too sick and disgusted with THOSE people to, quite frankly, give a damn.

Now only 8 months later, I have two jobs to keep up with and I'm struggling to find another place to live. Although this should be my senior year, I'm not attending school. I don't even have a Drivers License yet because it would've been impossible for me to get while I was bouncing around back and forth between different group and foster homes. My situation is currently stable, but could get really bad from this point if I don't get off my "arsch" and start doing something that's more beneficial to my future. It's going

to be hard work, but never will I turn back to a system that I feel crippled me for any help at all.

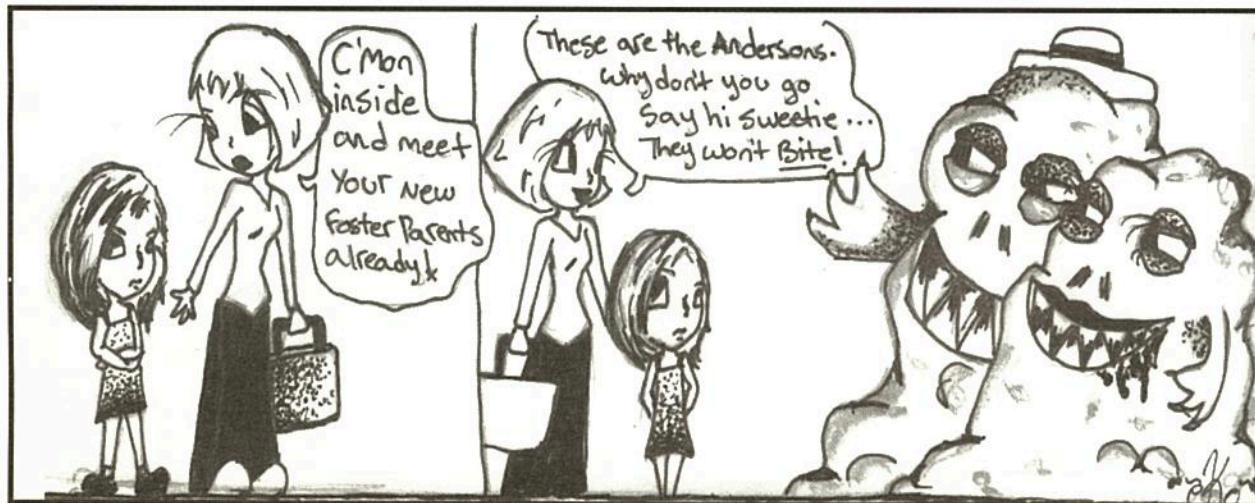
However, I know that I missed out on a lot while I held on in the system. There were plenty of opportunities I missed out on that would've helped my independent skills or maybe even my education. The one Independent Living Program my workers allowed me to try only lasted a few months because I got kicked out. And even though I rarely stayed in one school long enough to earn much credit, I should have definitely tried a lot harder to get my workers to let me take my GED or attend some sort of alternative schooling.



I now realize that the whole time I was feeling sorry for myself I should've been milking the system for all they were worth. I shouldn't have walked away empty handed...no one should.

In a way, leaving the system was the best thing I could've done for myself, but at the same time the worst. I enjoy life with a passion and look forward to being free enough to make good and bad decisions. But then again, no matter how miserable I'd be, I probably would be in school right now if I had chosen to stay in the system after I turned 18. I'm happier now than I've been in years, but in the long run that might not be true.

In next month's article, I plan on exploring what options youth in state care have before and after they turn 18. There were a lot of options I didn't even learn about until it was too late, and since knowledge is power, maybe a healthy dose of information will motivate some of you out there.



Lillix is a Super-Group!

BRIDGETT SIROSHTON

LILLIX IS A NEW ALL-GIRL BAND (i.e. the anti-Spice Girls) on the scene. How often does that come around? Lillix is from Cranbrook, British Columbia and started playing around with instruments at an early age. Like most new bands coming out of the pop-punk scene, Lillix members all take turns singing (except the drummer).

With their first single "Tomorrow", from their album *Falling Uphill*, they kick a**, singing, "Tomorrow's just another day another way to spend my day, all by myself. Staring at the TV screen flipping through my magazine, everything is unclear...and I wake up, put on my make-up, pick up the phone nobody's home...stand outside the crowd and scream that I'll be okay." I like this song because it's uplifting and motivating. Lillix has also worked with great producers like Linda Perry (who has pumped out hit after hit, working with artists like Pink and Christina Aguilera), The Matrix (a group of three producers who busted out the hit "Complicated" for Avril Lavigne), Philip Steir and Glen Ballard (both Steir and Ballard worked with No Doubt).

When Lillix sings, it's pure magic, and a great pop song usually is born. In "It's About Time," the single that first won Lillix recognition, they sing "think I sound crazy/ maybe whatever, what's it all about? It's about life, it's about fun, it's over before it's begun, and it's about time that I make up my mind!" Lillix is very lucky to have worked with famous producers like Perry and The Matrix—it's so rare for an unknown band to work with well-known producers!

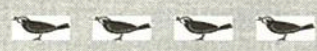


Photo Courtesy of lillix.com

My favorite song on *Falling Uphill* is called "Dirty Sunshine." It's kind of a heavy rock sound with strumming clashing guitars. They sing, "What's that breeze upon my face, how did you invade my space, you hit me it all turns to sunshine, dirty sunshine, you walk in, it all turns to sunshine, dirty sunshine." It's a really good song and the melody has got to be the best on the entire album, because it just flows—it's not forced. These girls are very talented, and Madonna herself signed them personally to her label, Maverick Records.

Lillix has many influences, ranging from Radiohead and the Beatles to Weezer. This influence shows with every song. The song "24/7" was produced by the genius Glen Ballard. My favorite part in the song is when they sing "but right now 24/7 I wait 24/7...is there someone here, but I feel it in the air, don't know the feeling so please give me a sign, I know you don't care...just get out of my mind". Lillix has only made one album but they have been around for a long time. They are a success story, and I'm sure they will be around for the long haul if they can keep together. Buy this album if you love pop-punk, because Lillix is a great band.

Falling Uphill



Lillix

History of Foster Care

J. EBOH



"[America's Foster Care system is a] quagmire that is spawning a generation of forgotten and forsaken children. Thousands are being neglected, abused, even murdered under what is ostensibly government protection." - TIME magazine, November 13, 2000.

MAY IS NATIONAL FOSTER CARE MONTH. The foster care system has existed in the United States in both structured and unstructured forms for over a century. This system affects the lives of over half a million children and families daily. The intention of today's foster care system is to provide children with a safe home on a temporary basis until family reconciliation or permanent care can be established.

In the past, the safety of our children has not always been seen as a societal priority. Children with no one to take care of them were often exploited for labor, sold into indentured servitude, beaten and abused because the children were considered property. As time went on, new methods were found to deal with children who were sometimes viewed as being "depraved" or "vicious". Children were often sent to live in dehumanizing conditions in orphanages. Native children, believed to be savages, were forcefully taken from their families and placed in institutional boarding schools. Once there they were often abused—physically, sexually, spiritually and emotionally. The goal of these schools was to force these children to assimilate into the dominant American culture.

The Nineteenth Century brought about some positive changes for youth. After the child abuse case of Mary Allen Wilson, a young girl in New York who was abused by her foster mother, the Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children was founded. Around the same time, foster homes started to be formally established for children.

The Twentieth Century brought about many changes, particularly in the form of legislation for foster youth. In 1912, under the Roosevelt Administration, the U.S. Children's Bureau was created. The bureau's responsibilities included topics pertaining to the welfare of children; which included legislation, oversight of children's institutions and statistics on birth rates and infant mortality.

In 1959, the Child Welfare League of America conducted a national study on foster care and found an uneven and discriminatory method of social service delivery. This report found that children were being removed from their homes without reason, and that there were more children of color and children from low income backgrounds in the system. The study also established that children were placed in foster care settings that were unstable and undesirable. Biological parents were largely ignored, and few attempts at reunification occurred, while adoption was typically reserved for white children.

Main Entry: **2** foster
Function: *transitive verb*
Inflected Form(s): **fos-tered**;
fos-ter-ing /-t (&-) ri [ng] /
1 : to give parental care to :
N U R T U R E
2 : to promote the growth or
development of : **ENCOURAGE**

Source: <http://www.m-w.com/cgi-bin/dictionary>

In 1974, The Child Abuse Prevention and Treatment Act provided model legislation for states to pass mandatory child-abuse-reporting laws and set up procedures for investigating abuse and neglect reports. In 1993, the Family Preservation and Support Initiative was passed in order to fund state family preservation and support programs. In 1997, The

Adoption and Safe Families Act was passed. This act required social workers to make a reasonable effort to reunite children with their biological parents within a year. Social workers were also required to start developing permanency plans while attempting to reunite children with their parents. For children under the age of three, the family reunification timeline was lowered to six months.

The foster care system has seen many changes over the years. Many individuals may see this month as a time to reflect on the history of foster care, their own experiences with the system and changes that may be made in the future.

Resources for data: Pecora, P.J., Whittaker, J.K., Maluccio, A.N., BARTH, R.P.(2000) *The Child Welfare Challenge: Policy, Practice and Research*. New York: Aldine De Gruyter; WA State Legislature website, Revised Code of Washington from www.leg.wa.gov/rcw/index.htm; Kremkau, K. (2002) *Historical Perspective (Instructor Presentation for SW 536 YD) A History of Social Services (2002)* from www.wa.gov/dshs; *Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention Program* from <http://www.cole.state.la.us/jjdp.htm>.

For J. Eboh's detailed timeline of the foster care system, visit our website online at www.mockingbirdsociety.org!

JOB OPPORTUNITY!

The King County Kinship Care Gathering Planning Committee is looking for 8 young people to help plan an event for Kinship Care families. This is a paid position where you could earn up to \$100/month from May to September.

To apply you must:

- Be between the ages of 12 and 18.
- Have experience living in a kinship care arrangement (being raised by a relative other than a parent).
- Live in King County, WA.

Check out the full job description at www.mockingbirdsociety.org, or call Anna at 206-323-5437 x2132

Street Links Still Exists

DENNIS FISHER



ON MARCH 12, THE STREETLINKS VAN MADE ITS LAST RUN, "providing some of Seattle's estimated 1,000 homeless youth with food, hygiene supplies, warm clothes and blankets, friendly smiles and listening ears. (www.seattlechildrenshome.org - 2001)" Seattle Children's Home (SCH), the operator of the StreetLinks and SafeLinks vans, gave them to YouthCare (a non-profit agency serving homeless youth) as a part of a partnership, with YouthCare taking on the outreach program, and SCH hiring a mental health professional to be part of the outreach team "to expedite mental health assessments and referrals from the street. (www.seattlechildrenshome.org)" SCH chose to form this partnership with YouthCare because SCH decided that its focus should be on mental health.

Previously, YouthCare had one van that served the University District, Capitol Hill, Aurora Avenue, and downtown Seattle. The newly transferred StreetLinks van will operate at least at the level of the current YouthCare outreach van, and will allow for better coverage of the existing areas. One significant difference between the services of StreetLinks and YouthCare outreach is that, although YouthCare gives out blankets and sandwiches just as StreetLinks did, they do not give out hot food (StreetLinks provided hot tomato soup and hot chocolate). Instead, they provide transport to other places that serve hot food—places which usually close well before StreetLinks' I AM stopping time.

"The integration of the street outreach teams will increase services for youth served by both programs to transition them from street life," said Debra Boyer, Ph.D. of YouthCare. "More youth will be provided comprehensive services and a full continuum of care to assist them in leaving the street including basic needs, meals at YouthCare's Orion Center, transportation to medical services, stable housing and improved access to mental health services." (www.seattlechildrenshome.org)

As of an interview in late March with Debra Boyer, Associate Director at YouthCare, YouthCare was still exploring possible ways to utilize the SafeLinks van.

It's sad to know that such a wonderful program has been cut, but it is comforting to know that some of the resources from it have gone to good use.

Poetry Corner

Family Photo

YASMINA DAMJAN ELLIS

I remember the afternoon
My mother put me up for adoption-
I was 13,
maybe 12,

I don't remember for certain.
She said:

"Let's get in the car-
Let's drive real far..."

"Let's go get ice cream"
and also, "Isn't it a lovely day?"
How strange.

I looked toward my father,
who was not looking at me.
He would not offer an answer.
In the car, we did drive far.

The day was lovely, the wind was in my hair.
We turned into the police station,
there was no ice cream there.

She turned to me then,
Eyes streaming,
Cries filled with knives-
"You ungrateful thing!"

You go live with someone else now."
Someone else? There was no one else.
There were only the overstuffed chairs
in the station's waiting room.
And the yellow line
Painted on the curb.

Mockingbird Fundraiser



Mockingbird Staff Jim Theofelis, J.Eboh with Representative Pettigrew and Liz Gelinas. Photo by MBT Staff

A Special Thanks to JoshKaplan-Lyman, Liz Gelinas, Rep. Pettigrew and the following who made this spectacular event possible: Joan Stewart, Molly Thompson, Bothways Cafe, Le Fournil French Bakery, Rusty Pelican Cafe, North Hill Bakery, Cafe Solstice, Cafe Flora, Simply Desserts, Tuttabella.