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Change

Reaching Out to End Poverty • Volume 11, No. 18

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Gypsy Shoppers The drifter devotees of Wal-Mart

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by Tom Cogbill

“It has been great for us,” says Pierre from the comfortable confines of his huge RV, parked in the corner of the Wal-Mart lot in Renton. “We stay at Wal-Marts all the time. They are very convenient.”

Pierre and his wife, retired French Canadians from Quebec, are on an extended trip across the U.S. Besides their spacious home-on-wheels, they piggy-back a full-size SUV behind. The mammoth outfit that results requires a truck tractor with a powerful diesel engine to pull it all. Pierre admits they could afford to stay in pay-for-use parks, and sometimes do so, but, “because we are self-contained, this works out fine for us.” They can go a full week before needing to empty their waste tanks. Besides, they like Wal-Mart’s prices and are happy to spend their money there. “Why not, if we are right here anyway?”

Witness the birth of the “Wally Worlder,” and with it, another chorus of boos from those adversely affected by policies of the world’s largest discount-store chain. While Wal-Mart’s plan may be working to perfection with Pierre and hundreds of like-minded “boondockers,” as the non-paying park-overs are sometimes dubbed, not everyone sees it as universally beneficial. For several years now the company has been allowing overnight stays on property it owns. The original idea, apparently, was to generate business by allowing the camper- and RV-set a free place to spend the night (albeit

without services). The grateful travelers would reciprocate by filling their shopping and supply needs right there at the store. Since Wal-Mart makes sure it carries most everything a camper or RV-er typically needs — many even include gas, vehicle service centers, and food stores — the idea seemed like a win-win situation for all concerned.

Unless you happen to be an RV-park or campground owner. Businesses catering to overnight campers complain that they are regulated and taxed as service providers based on their number of rentable spaces. Their overhead does not change much if those spaces go empty. Furthermore, unlike a retail store parking lot, they must provide water and disposal facilities. When a local Wal-Mart siphons off customers, not only are they affected, but so are neighboring stores and restaurants that the campers might use instead of Wal-Mart.

David Gorin, President of the National Association of RV Parks and Campgrounds, pops up on numerous websites discussing the issue. On www.newrules.org he complains, “Wal-Marts eat up [our] business, just as they do with other folks.” Gorin estimates Wal-Marts may be sucking up as much as 10 percent of his members’ business. He believes retailers who allow overnight camping should be subject to the same rules as other facilities: get a license and provide restrooms, water, waste disposal, and so on. “It’s one thing to pull over for a couple hours’ rest, and another to spend the night,” he says.

And it may not be just one night, either.

“This is my third night here,” admits one “full-timer,” as RV-ers with no other home call themselves. A genial, balding widower in his 60s who asks that his name not be used, he is grateful for the Wal-Mart service, as he terms it. “Heck, they aren’t doing anything with the lot anyway. Why not let people park on it overnight? It’s just good business.” Besides, he admits to using it to meet other single RV-ers and spread the word about get-togethers of the itinerant singles’ group he belongs to, “Loners on Wheels.”

“I’ll have to move tomorrow, though.” He points to a sign next to where he has parked, “Campers Maximum Stay Three Nights,” then to a small pickup truck driving by with yellow bubble-gum lights flashing on top. “Here in Renton they have a security patrol, which keeps track of license-plate numbers and makes you move on if you try to overstay the limit.”

When asked how he knows this, he says, “I’m from the area. I’ve stayed here before. Each Wal-Mart, the rules vary. You take Auburn, for instance. There, the store is part of the Super Mall, and the mall has an ordinance

prohibiting overnight camping, so that store doesn’t allow camping. But the one down in Federal Way does, and at that one, no one checks on how long you’ve been there.”

Sure enough, a visit to the Federal Way store a few days later reveals a slew of vehicles — among them, two trailers that have been there all summer and one lady who has been in the parking lot for two years. Their occupants weren’t around when I stopped by. Other campers familiar with them said they had full-time jobs and were probably at work. Apparently, this patch of asphalt was “home” for them. There was no lawn to water, no real estate taxes, and the view of Mt.

“Wal-Marts eat up our business, just as they do with other folks.”

David Gorin, President, National Association of RV Parks and Campgrounds

Rainier was killer. Snail-mail? Mailboxes are easy to rent.

“You can stay as long as you need,” Vicki Brook assures me.

“No rules at all?” I ask, to be sure.

“Just keep the noise down. And if you have a party, you have to invite us,” she winks at me, laughing.

Brook, the customer service manager at the Federal Way Wal-Mart for the past two years, can’t recall anything resembling an incident involving their

Continued to Page 8



A symptom, not a problem

Dear *Real Change*,

On Wednesday afternoons this spring, I trekked up the hill from the bus tunnel on James and Third Avenue to the King County Jail for my weekly tutoring session with inmates.

The path to the bleakest building in the city is littered with refuse and human waste from the green space on Third and Yesler. Every week, I dropped my gaze and walked quickly past the homeless gathered there.

The park's residents are the poorest of the poor; their stooped shoulders and heavily lined faces speak volumes about lives lived beyond the margins of society. Shaking off a familiar mixture of guilt, despair, and discomfort, I stepped up the pace and crossed the street without looking back at the broken souls behind me.

Few bright lights survive in City Hall Park. Up until recently, an elderly couple kept a candle burning in the darkness, serving nightly meals to the homeless and hungry who gathered in the park. Kay and Art Abe eke by on Art's pension, using the rest of their meager income to run The Lord's Table in the green space. Most citizens, myself included, couldn't face the pain and discomfort we witnessed at the park; Kay and Art embraced it and chose to feed the hungry rather than avoid them.

So, what message does it send when the city responds like I used to instead of emulating its finest citizens like Kay and Art? The city cites public safety and concerns about violence as the underlying reasons for restricting programs to daytime operations. Unfortunately, their initial "solution" — to cite people like Kay and Art for operating after 4 p.m. — only exacerbated the problem. Thankfully, after an unexpectedly vehement response from Seattle citizens, the Mayor subsequently announced that public feeding programs could return temporarily to their former site on Fourth Avenue and Cherry Street.

Regardless of this quick change of heart, Mayor Nickels' initial decision still indicates his failure to approach homeless issues with compassion. Did he even consider other options which could have kept outdoor feeding programs in operation regardless of their locations? The city could have elected to step up police patrols in City Hall Park, which would have protected passersby and homeless people with or without the presence of feeding programs. Now, the city's attention will be focused on the Fourth Avenue site — and City Hall Park will still be dangerous.

Regardless of this quick change of heart, Mayor Nickels' initial decision still indicates his failure to approach homeless issues with compassion.

Concurrently, the mayor could have had the prescience to recognize that the park's trouble is only one symptom of Seattle's chronic inability to deal effectively with homelessness. For example, Mayor Nickels could stop courting the South Lake Union streetcar and turn his attention to developing a strategy that could provide permanent, safe shelters and meal programs for all homeless people in the city.

Instead of attempting to address homeless issues on any meaningful level, the latest oscillation still solves nothing — although it does make a clear statement about the city's priorities. The Mayor's website contains a banner proclaiming, "Together we are making a difference in people's lives." Does he really want to be remembered for a decision that only hurts others?

Megan Matthews, Seattle

Blame goes around, then comes around

Dear *Real Change*,

I have not been so compelled to write a response to an article in this paper than I was when I read the article, "I Wouldn't Feed That To My Dog!" (RC July 22).

In the article Mr. Trotter said the fact that people had to stand in line to get free food was a contributing factor as to why he and other people were locked in a homeless situation. Well it sounds to me that Mr. Trotter is playing the role of the victim. Since I'm a real change vendor, I would like to let the readers know that Mr. Trotter doesn't speak for me. As we all know, there are various reasons for homelessness: drug and alcohol abuse, mental and physical illness, domestic violence. I didn't know standing in a free food line was one of them.

I myself know about being homeless because I've been there on and off since 1997. Like I said, there are a lot of different situations, but for myself and some people I know, we didn't blame our homelessness on any thing or any body else but ourselves. We made the mistakes that put us there and it was up to us to pull ourselves together and move out of it. Yes, help is good but be thankful for that help. It made my rear-end blow bubbles when I heard him make such a lame excuse for people being stuck in homelessness. Mr. Trotter went on to tell the readers that he's done volunteer work for 20 years and that he's a volunteer *Real Change* editor. But what he failed to tell the readers is that he also is a *Real Change* vendor. Maybe if Mr. Trotter spent more time selling the paper and making money, he wouldn't have to stand in line for free food, and at that point he could free himself from being homeless.

Van Crowder
Real Change Vendor #2085

Real Change

Puget Sound's Voice of the Poor and Homeless

Real Change is published every other Thursday and is sold by the poor and homeless of Seattle. Annual subscriptions are available for \$35. All material is copyrighted to the authors.

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Email rchange@speakeasy.org

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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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Getting Creative

What it takes these days to replace and expand Seattle's low-income housing

By Virginia Felton

Seattle desperately needs a reliable inventory of low-income housing. All who care about housing issues recognize this. Therefore, when Seattle Housing Authority began demolishing its worn-out housing at New Holly, Rainier Vista, and High Point, the agency committed to replacing every unit lost to redevelopment. This practice has since expanded beyond the major redevelopments. What does this mean, and how is it being carried out?

The Seattle City Council, the Mayor's office, SHA, and Seattle's low-income housing developers have agreed on how to define "replacement" housing:

- ◆ A replacement housing unit is an **identifiable housing unit** — a "hard" unit that is guaranteed to be available for at least 40 years.
- ◆ It is housing that serves "extremely low-income people," those who earn less than 30 percent of the area median income (about \$16,000 for a single person). This means that it must have on-going subsidy to keep it affordable. Subsidy may be traditional public housing subsidy, Section 8 subsidy specifically assigned to the unit, or some other on-going subsidy.
- ◆ The household's portion of rent and utilities must be no more than 30 percent of their income.

Replacement housing is not a Section 8 voucher chosen by a tenant who moves out of a redeveloped community. While many residents do choose to claim a voucher and live elsewhere, this is their choice and a totally separate issue from replacement housing.

When the Seattle Displacement Coalition says that "over 1,000 public housing units are being lost" ("Everyone Stays: a worthy goal for Yesler Terrace" *RC* June 24), they are referring to housing that is subsidized under the "low-income public housing program." This is housing owned by Seattle Housing with subsidy from the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD).

While the low-income public housing program works well, it is only one of several federal programs available for housing subsidy. The Section 8 program provides vouchers that can be specifically assigned to housing units for on-going subsidy. The Section 811 program subsidizes housing for the physically disabled. The Section 202 program allows non-profit housing providers to house the elderly. Even though there are fewer units subsidized through the "public housing" program, this *does not mean* that the inventory of housing for low-income people is declining.

Seattle Housing is employing creative strategies to expand low-income housing. For example, a partnership with Providence Health System created Peter Claver House at New Holly — 80 units of elderly housing. SHA donated the land, which allowed Providence's project to get funded. Without this partnership, this project would not exist.

In other cases, SHA is providing vouchers to non-profit housing developers to subsidize some of the units in their developments. Plymouth Housing's Colwell Building is an example of this. Project-based vouchers allow 25 of the 124 units in this building to serve the lowest-income residents.

SHA is also acquiring additional apartment buildings using bond financing, and assigning Section 8 vouchers to some of the apartments. This allows for on-going subsidy of these units. In this way, SHA replaced housing lost at Yesler Terrace when construction on the new community center began. Through these strategies, SHA is creating high-quality replacement housing without using federal, state or local capital dollars.

The Roxbury redevelopment is now complete, and all of the replacement housing for that development is in place and occupied. Sixty-six percent of the original Holly Park housing has been replaced so far, and most of the remainder is currently under construction on site. Replacement housing programs are also underway for Rainier Vista and High Point.

Some advocates have suggested that "If it isn't 'public housing,' it shouldn't count as replacement." Sadly, it appears that ongoing federal support for the public housing program continues to be shaky. It has been declining steadily, and has declined every year for the past five years. Last year, HUD provided the Seattle Housing Authority only 93 percent of what was needed to operate public housing. This will continue next year.

The important thing is not which kind of federal subsidy applies to a housing unit. What is important is that the housing remains available and affordable to low-income people into the future. As uncertainty regarding federal funding sources continues, SHA is committed to using every available strategy to sustain low-income housing in the long term. With tax cuts and current spending priorities in Washington, D.C., no federal housing program is secure. What is clear, however, is that we will all need to work together to house our community effectively. ■

Virginia Felton is Seattle Housing Authority's communications director.

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Martin Court opens

An enthusiastic crowd applauded and cheered at the opening of Martin Court, a new low-income housing development in Georgetown. The celebration, held on August 12th, was held in honor of Joe Martin, a local homelessness activist and the inspiration for the housing project.

Formerly the Pine City Inn, the apartment complex was built in 1941 to house the weary drivers traveling along the old Route 99. The dilapidated building caught the eye of the Low Income Housing Institute (LIHI), which renovated and furnished what is now Martin Court.

"They have done a complete transformation," said Sharon Lee, LIHI's executive director. "This place was a total, total dump."

The project was suggested after a plan to house Seattle's homeless on floating barges on the Duwamish River were deemed unrealistic. It was also brought to fore by the efforts of Initiative 71, a citizen's initiative for more shelter launched by *Real Change*. After getting funds from the city, LIHI began the reconstruction of the hotel with the Georgetown Community Council's blessing.

Located at the corner of Fourth Avenue South and South Michigan Street, Martin Court will provide housing for homeless families and individuals whose yearly incomes fall below the bottom third of Seattle's population. For example, a family of four with an annual income of less than \$23,350 would qualify. Residents can remain at Martin Court for up to two years before making the transition to more permanent living situations.

"Some people call it a stepping stone," Jeanette Alexander, one of the new residents, told the assembled crowd. "But I call it a big boost on the ladder."

Of the 41 units available at Martin Court, about half are currently occupied. And while the units are mostly furnished, LIHI is still looking for the donations of many items, including kitchen cookware and utensils, children's toys, toiletries, and some furniture (for more information about donations or to inquire about low-income housing, contact LIHI through their web site, www.lihi.org).

The opening celebration included several speakers, many of them community leaders, as well as some of the current residents. The event drew to a close with a performance by Seattle activist and musician Jim Page and a rousing speech by Joe Martin himself. (A longtime advisor and writer for *Real Change*, Joe wrote the article on 9/11 that appears on page 10 —ed.)

"Although I'm very honored, the creation of affordable housing should not be a big event," said Martin, who helped to found Pike Market Medical Clinic and the Displacement Coalition. "It should be an everyday occurrence."



but his committee spearheaded the passage of two bills which drew the applause of streetcar supporters.

"We want to promote streetcars but protect the taxpayers," said Conlin, just before the council passed a bill releasing \$2.4 million in state and federal funds for the design and engineering of the streetcar. Conlin stressed that the city wasn't letting Mayor Greg Nickels use money from the city's General Fund for the streetcar. At the same time, he admitted that the council has opened the door for the mayor to do exactly that, some time in the future.

Also passed was an amendment proposed by councilmember Nick Licata for a special benefit study for a potential Local Improvement District (LID), which would lead to South Lake Union businesses paying for the streetcar. Both bills passed 7-0, with councilmembers Jim Compton and Peter Steinbrueck not in attendance at Monday's meeting.

Nickels had originally wanted to use General Fund money for a streetcar through the neighborhood, a fundamental shift in how that money had been spent. The General Fund is comprised of money collected from sales and property taxes and fines, which the city spends on police, fire, libraries, and basic services. The city already has a backlog of repairs to bridges, streets, and sidewalks totaling \$5 million.

State Representative Ed Murray (D - Seattle) secured \$2.4 million for the streetcar from the last legislative session. Murray is head of the State Transportation Committee; his district includes the South Lake Union area.

"It's not the city's role to promote transportation," says Conlin. "And with an estimated 30 riders an hour it's not cost effective. These are difficult fiscal times and other neighborhoods have projects."

"But on the positive side, people like streetcars. They're helpful, though not required, for neighborhood growth. The businesses in South Lake Union seem to support it and the city can get grants for it. There are exceptions to [the city taking money from the] the general fund. It would have to be a new idea and something specific to South Lake Union."

"About 75 percent of the property owners in South Lake Union support the streetcar," says Jim Falconer of the "Build A Streetcar" organization. "They would pay [for] a property tax LID."

John Fox of the Seattle Displacement Coalition got over 300 signatures from citizens opposing city funds going to the SLU streetcar. Fox felt that the three new councilmembers — Tom Rasmussen, David Della, and Jean Godden — helped water down Conlin and Licata's original proposals. "There are three councilmembers who are fundamentally on our side: Conlin, Licata and Steinbrueck," notes Fox. "But the three new councilmembers screwed us."

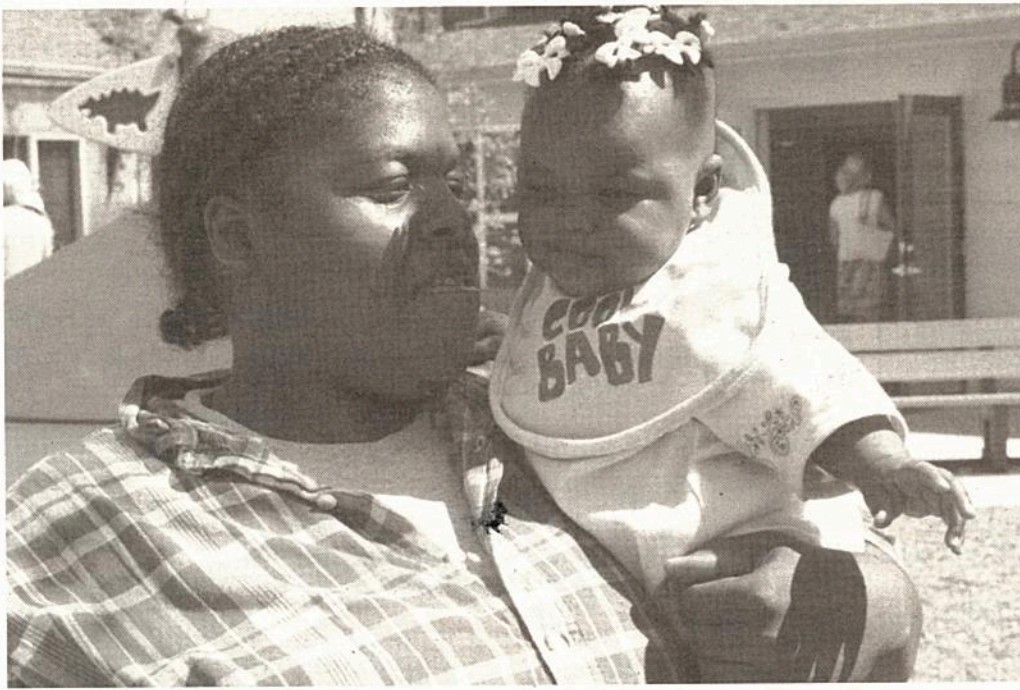
Another remaining problem is who will run the streetcars. State law prohibits the city from operating a transportation system. Streetcar supporters suggest that Metro take the helm, but it may not be that simple. Metro has promised the city a certain amount of hours through the year 2007; if the agency took over, transit operations in other neighborhoods would be shortchanged.

—R.V. Murphy



"The three new councilmembers screwed us."

John Fox, Seattle Displacement Coalition



JEANETTE ALEXANDER AND HER BABY, APRIL, HAVE BEEN LIVING AT THE NEW MARTIN COURT APARTMENTS FOR A MONTH. PHOTO BY JACKIE PRICHARD.

City Council: trolly folly

If politics is the art of compromise, then the City Council meeting of Monday August 16 was a textbook example of the political process. Councilmember Richard Conlin, head of the Transportation Committee, didn't sound very much like a supporter of the South Lake Union streetcar,

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

The Take-Back

Nickels reverses his shutdown of the evening meal program

By Adam Holdorf

On Friday, August 6, meal providers to the homeless met with staff from the office of Mayor Greg Nickels to discuss the downtown Seattle food line for the poor. Earlier this summer, the food line had been moved from the plaza on Fourth and Cherry outside the Public Safety Building, to City Hall Park, the treed green space just south of the King County Courthouse. Since then, there had been a series of possibly dangerous incidents.

A knife confrontation. Someone wielding a baseball bat. A man following a volunteer's daughter around the park. The attempted theft of a police squad car. And for each call to 911, an inadequately slow police response.

Nickels' staff proposed a solution: since most of these incidents took place in the late afternoon and evening, they said, you must stop the feeds after 4 p.m. on weekdays and 2 p.m. on weekends. Any volunteers feeding the homeless after those times would be in violation of Health Department rules, and they would be ticketed accordingly.

The evening meals ended Monday, August 9. At least 200 people accustomed to eating a hot dinner suddenly went without.

Meals Partnership Coordinator boardmember Danette Allen expressed the popular sentiment this way: "We're pretty irate," she told *Real Change* on August 9. "Most of us are not going to say we're not going to eat after 4 p.m. on weekdays and after 2 on weekends."

On Tuesday, Nickels' shutdown was front-page news for the *Seattle Post-Intelligencer*. Columnists and editorial writers at both daily papers weighed in against the ban; *Times* columnist Danny Westneat compared the city's move to Bothell's anti-Tent City paranoia. Politicians began rallying 'round. On Wednesday, August 11, City Councilmembers Tom Rasmussen, Jean Godden, and Peter Steinbrueck joined other volunteers to dish food at an evening meal, in defiance of the mayor's edict.

But by the time the victuals were warming, the dinnertime feed was no longer the subject of controversy. Acknowledging the public pressure, that day Nickels moved the meal program back where it came from, to the Public Safety Building's plaza. The brouhaha was over before it really gathered steam.

Advocates for the poor and homeless have expressed relief at the mayor's decision. With the city's cooperation and financial support, the Public Safety Building plaza has been the site of free feeds for years. City personnel

clean up the public property; a sink is available. a video camera is mounted to one wall, allowing security to watch. If there's a problem, a loudspeaker broadcasts what one advocate calls "the voice of God": a security officer telling the troublemaker to desist.

This set-up ends in October, when a construction crane will be placed on the plaza for the final phase of the new

Municipal Building, across Fourth Avenue. By then, another site must be found. So the city and the meal providers have five weeks to re-review a list of potential feeding sites — a list staffers had compiled about two years ago, then winnowed down, to the troublesome City Hall Park.

"We're going back to square one," said Edsonya Charles of the Mayor's office. "We're going to revisit those earlier sites and see why they were dismissed."

Public Health - King County regulates outdoor meal programs; its rules require that food be served on ground that can be cleaned easily (not, for example, a lawn), and that there be running water and a port-a-potty or other toilet nearby. Advocates for the dinners would like to find a place only a few blocks from the plaza. Staff in the Mayor's Office would like to find an indoor facility with a

courtyard or walk-up window for those unwilling to come inside.

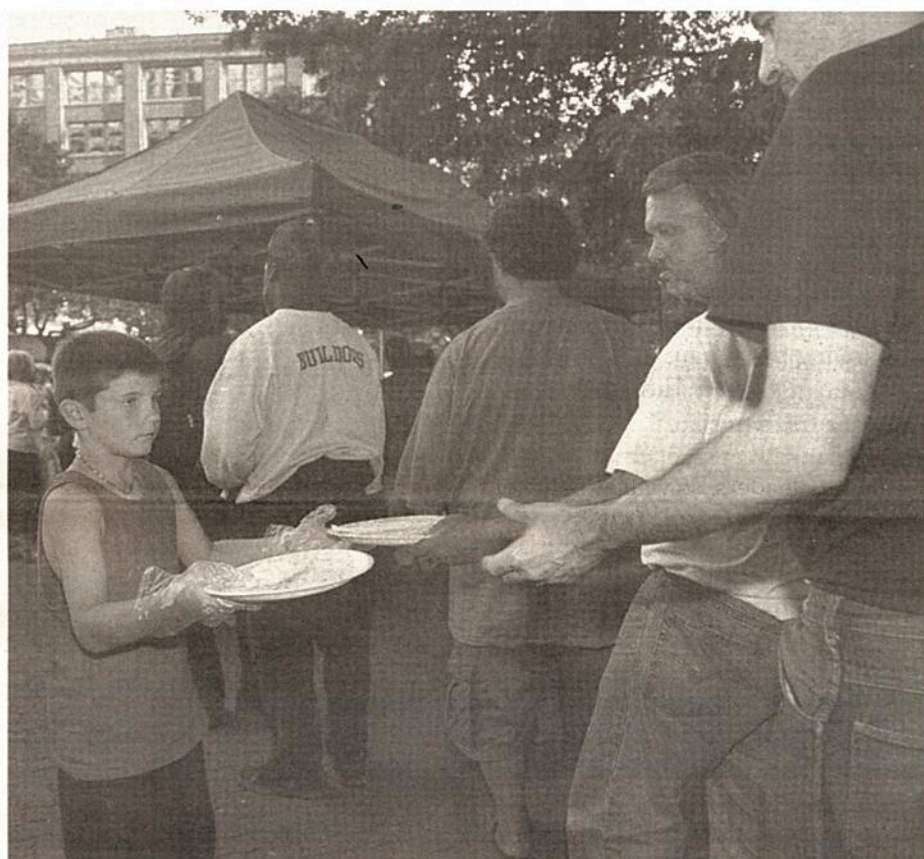
SuJ'n Chon, program manager of the Meals Partnership Coalition, says she is optimistic that a workable replacement will be found within the short time allotted. But Danette Allen, who had been involved in the two-year search for another site, is a bit doubtful: "I believe that everyone wants to find the site. I'm hopeful, but... history has shown us that it's not that simple."

Allen also wonders about the city's in-kind support of security and cleanup — an asset that makes the Public Safety Plaza work. "It won't do us any good to find a site and then have the city say, 'Sorry, we're not paying for it there.'"

The evening meal program may be back where it started, but for the next five weeks, its future is in question. ■

"We're going back to square one. We're going to revisit those earlier sites and see why they were dismissed."

**Edsonya Charles,
Policy Advisor to
the Mayor**



PASSING OUT PLATES AT CITY HALL PARK DURING THE "DEFIANT" EVENING MEAL, AUGUST 11. PHOTO BY BRUCE SAVADOW.



NORTH AMERICAN NEWSBRIEFS

WWW.STREETNEWSERVICE.ORG

Two national groups are working to get the homeless involved in this year's presidential election. "The message that the poor and homeless are voting is part of a bigger strategy to get the issues of the poor heard," Donald Whitehead, executive director of the National Coalition for the

Homeless, tells *The New York Times*. In a one-day drive his group has helped register around 1,150 homeless people nationwide in 16 states and the District of Columbia. They also worked with local shelters to train volunteers and educate the communities about voting rights. Their goal is to register 25,000 poor and homeless people by November. "There is a lot of confusion around how or even whether someone who is homeless can register to vote," Kim Schaffer, also with the national coalition says. You do not require a permanent address to vote, although some states require an address for registration purposes. This national effort "provides the opportunity to make sure people understand how what happens in Congress affects people's daily lives," says Schaffer. Those living on the streets say it's important to be part of the election process. "I think it's great; in order to affect homeless issues they have to have a voice, they have to vote," said James Davis. He has been homeless for several months after being laid off by the Department of Defense, where he worked for 23 years. He's now a vendor for a newspaper produced by the National Coalition for the Homeless, and says, "I know it could happen to anybody."

A U.S. appeals court in San Francisco has handed down a ruling against homeless people getting mail through the U.S. Post Office. According to Reuters, three homeless men from

Seattle complained the postal service did not make sufficient arrangements for them to receive mail. They maintained that general delivery services for those without a physical address denied them proper access to their letters. The Ninth Circuit Court of Appeals backed a lower court finding the postal system acted properly. A three-judge panel found that the postal service's limitation of general delivery service is a rational response to the "inefficiencies and increased costs that would result from expanding general delivery to branch offices."

A man police say admitted to beating a homeless person to death has been charged with first-degree murder. Investigators in Chicago, Illinois tell ABC-7 that James Cotton gave a videotaped confession to beating 63-year-old Floyd Johnson. Johnson was kicked and beaten with pieces of wood while he slept on the sidewalk. Police do not know why he was attacked.

Four hundred ex-service men and women who are homeless are getting everything from haircuts to medical help as the annual "stand-down" takes place in Dublin, California. Veteran Denver Mills says stand-down, which is military talk for stopping all activity to address a certain situation, is a way to give vets whatever they need to get off the streets. "We bring every resource possible to help them here, right literally at their doorstep," Mills tells KCBS. Other services include meals, clothing and eye exams. Among those volunteering are judges, district attorneys, and public defenders working to clear veterans' misdemeanor citations. San Francisco Superior Court Judge Tomar Marson says he and other legal professionals are they're doing this to get those who have served the nation out of the criminal justice system.

—Newsbriefs compiled by Patty Lane

in promise

You have one in your
hand.
Your
best
service
(raise the handle!)
is
made
public,
only by
policy.
Cam-
paigns!
Then...
it's
possible...
—STAN BURRISS

Untitled

Do you remember me?
I've lost myself
I am abandoned amongst strangers.
Excuse me, can you tell me who I was?
I'm moving but where and why?
I'm still, yet dizzy in thought.
Do you remember me?
The real me.
I haven't seen myself in years.

—MELISSA GRAHAM



Mark Twain

If the ashes of Mark Twain
lie in the Mississippi River
then I'm sure he does rise up some days
emerge from dark polluted depths
to walk over water to land
and scans the horizon for change
being a curious sort,
he sees the crisis rise again
another war on the horizon
and shakes his craggy head to say no not again
he hopes truth-sayers still exist
who don't have to wait until they're dead

—ANGIE VASQUEZ

Shipping

Mess with God
on a sunny day,
but the dead
don't really go away.
They fool with
the clocks,
and they know
how to say
and get their way.
Is it only
they've crossed
beyond the wide,
let go,
gone under,
like a skull
in a tide?
And reached
that-oh
Jordan, I've
called and
I've cried.
I've waited
for arms
to demand
with a wide,
and pour from
the walls,
from the cracks
and the drips,
and steer
my bones
like a long
gone lost ship.

—LORAIN CAMPBELL

Adventures in Poetry with ©Dr. Wes Browning



It's getting close to primary election time. That means it's time for one of my columns full of insightful and astute observations in connection with the Washington State Primary.

My first insightful and astute observation is that the Washington State Primary is happening at all. How's that for a kick in the pants?

A while ago, there were political parties suing us for having a primary that let non-members choose their candidates for them. Then the members of those parties (called politicians) voted for the state to have a new kind of primary where non-members could still choose candidates for their parties. Then our governor, a member of a party, decided that the parties' first choice for a primary system was no good. That left us all with a second choice: namely, a system that lets nonmembers of the political parties choose their candidates for them.

Here's how you do it: when you go to the polls, you lie and put down that you're a Democrat. That's because this is Seattle, and Seattle is a "blue" city, so your vote has the biggest "impact," vote-wise, if you are a Democrat. Or, let's say this was Bellevue. Then you would lie and put down that you were a Republican. I'm just so glad that the parties now have a primary they like, so they will quit whining about freedom of association and get back to doing politics and making all our lives miserable.

The subject of politicians making our lives miserable brings me to Mark Sidran and my second insightful and astute observation, which concerns the "Frankenletter" I received yesterday by email. That is the letter of endorsement for Mark Sidran for Washington State Attorney General written by Al Franken, my hero, sent to me from Al's very own personal email address (alfranken@marksidran4ag.com). For those of you who haven't got one of these (maybe you aren't someone Al would know, like I am), Al Franken was

a big shot writer and performer on "Saturday Night Live" who wrote a very funny book about Rush Limbaugh and who went to Harvard the same time Mark Sidran did, and who may or may not have once been in the same classroom with him. Therefore Al is endorsing Mark for Washington State AG, even though Al lives in the Bahamas or the Azores or Malibu or someplace like that, and none of us really care who he thinks should be AG, anyway.

My only insightful and astute observation regarding all this, besides observing that I wish Mark Sidran had been a Yale grad, is that Mark and Al could have relieved themselves of a lot of that tension by renting a motel room for an hour or so, and that way I wouldn't have to think of the Frankenletter every time I think of Al Franken, my hero.

My third and final insightful and astute observation concerning the Washington State Primary, which will be held on September 14th, is that the pamphlets King County sent out to explain the King County ballots are way cool.

Right away the pamphlet is exciting to me because it has a freaky talking blue lady pen on the front of it, wearing a clicker on her freaking head. She is saying, "There's a change in our primary, not the General Election, just the primary." (I know she's a lady because she's wearing makeup and she has hips and her feet are microscopic. She's definitely someone's hot mama.) On the back page is the ringing endorsement of *The Seattle Times*, from their July 23 editorial, which said, "Ballots are more approachable than expected." That's what you need: ballots you can approach.

Hint: when approaching a skittish ballot, hold your hand out with your palm up and fingers extended. That shows it you mean it no harm and wish only to "pet" it. Then, when it smells the tips of your fingers, you can grab it by the scruff of its neck, pin it down, and fill in its ovals.

Just above the reassuring *Times* endorsement is this fantastic quote from Citizen Robert Marum: "No matter how you feel about the open primary system, your vote is too important not to take part in the election."

That's right Washington Staters, your votes mean so much, you should vote them. So don't forget to do that. Obey the freaky talking blue lady pen. ■

**Obey the
freaky talking
blue lady pen.**



Ronald Is “Dead”

No more
Letters or phone calls from Ronald

(Burden And Gift
as they were ...)

Has he assumed/his/Spirit
...yet?

Is he (yet) Able to
walk-thru-the-walls
of this metal-clad God-forsaken trailer?

Will he slither thru
the windows?
the screens?

Will he Want to visit me?
(Still Alive
Still waiting
for some form of communication ...)

Has he (Finally) Abandoned me?
(steadfast and loyal
as he Was to me
throughout our Many mutual-lives ...)

I wonder all this
As grad students
Dissect his
Hollow corpse
At UCLA Medical School

—MARION SUE FISCHER

Along Highway 99 — September

The burned out brain hears
the highway half a block away;
after a troubled sleep,
there is a cry for shelter in the new day —
repeating in the waves of traffic.
Outside the summer’s magic
is fading above the blanketed man
sleeping in its chill
on a foot bridge over 99.
His mind begins to fill
as he walks on in sorrow
for the vanquished thrill
that dreamed of tomorrow
and the shrouded way back he can’t follow.

There is a black light
in his head today
that won’t fade until
it has blotted out his will.

The sky pours the cold wine
of its azure above the scene;
burgundy and ocher
wait to inflame the slowly dying green
haze of leaves that halo the trees.
The wild, golden leprosy
of his thoughts have healed in a vacuum
now where his words turn
into dust at edge of Autumn.
And later, a truck horn
will blare through the long murmur
of distant voices that mourn
within the stream of water
running from the faucet in the night hours.

There is a black light
in his head today
that won’t fade until
it has blotted out his will.

—JOHN GORSKI

Coming to Our Senses

I’ve figured it out.
We should be laughing at Shakespeare
And *Citizen Kane* is the worst film ever made.
I’ve figured it out.
B-movies, creature features, cardboard throwing Hercules
Represent the pinnacle of human achievement and art.
We’ve gotten it completely wrong
And that’s why the world is so screwed up.
I’ll tend to this and keep it from rotting,
When you come to your senses.

—CHRISTOPHER J. JARMICK



WAL-MART, Cont. from Page 1

overnight visitors. At this particular Wal-Mart, there are no roaming patrols, only video surveillance (which may or may not be monitored). In any case, she is oblivious as to how long anyone stays there. Clearly, it is not an issue with her.

Back in the lot, which is set off from the main shopping lot and has maybe eight or 10 rigs parked on it, everything looks tidy and unlined in. I am told a big no-no is pulling out "sliders" or setting out awnings or furniture of any kind. You don't want to look like you are actually camping out — just parked, like any other customer.

Gary Malthouse and his wife, also retirees from Canada — Calgary, in this case — are rendezvousing with their daughter and son-in-law here. "It's just common sense," he says, "to keep a low profile." He says he and his fellow Canadians, who make pilgrimages south throughout the winter, frequently stop over at Wal-Marts.

"Rand McNally even makes an atlas sold at the store," he says, "showing all the Wal-Marts it's legal to stay at."

"We use the booklet showing all the ones that *don't* allow it," says Wayne Thompson of Vancouver, WA. "It's a lot skinnier and only costs a few bucks. The other one costs something like \$20." Obviously, there is more than one way for a boondocking Wally Worlder to home in on a site for the night.

This is the Thompson family's first time staying at a Wal-Mart. They have borrowed his father's camper. "He stays at them all the time," Thompson says, "so we thought we'd try it." He, his wife, and two grade-school children spent the day at Wild Waves amusement park and are about to head out to the Moses Lake Wal-Mart to spend another night there. They'll move on to an Idaho amusement park the next day.

Thompson is won over to the Wal-Mart stores. "Love them," he says, nodding over at the sprawling, neon-lit super-store where he just bought dinner for the family. "Don't hardly shop anywhere else."

I explain how the chain's overnight policy might be affecting other businesses. He appears troubled. "Well, I

guess other businesses have to make a buck, too, but it would cost us \$25 or more to hook up down at Dash Point," — a nearby state park campground. "I think it's \$16 without services. We're going to buy our stuff from Wal-Mart anyways, so it's really a no-brainer."

Thompson frowns and shakes his head when informed that some people use Wal-Mart lots for long-term stays. "That's just abusing the system." It is a sentiment I have heard from others just passing through. Most seem genuinely grateful for the store's policy allowing them to stay for free, and are all too happy to purchase their

needs there. But why anyone would want to return night after night makes no sense to them.

At the Renton store, I notice another but separate parking area nearby, next to an abandoned Burger King. A dozen or more vehicles are parked in it. Several look like overnights.

I walk up to the occupant of a battered old van, the only person who seems to be around. He's a tattooed man with a New York accent who looks a firm 60. Smoking a cigarette and swigging a Snapple, he says he has been living there for "a while." He points out a decrepit camper across the lot.

"[They have] been here two months, at least," he says. He motions to a couple other vehicles also used as shelters. The rest, apparently, were bought cheap at auctions, and the lot is being used to refurbish them for sale. Or else their owners are simply taking advantage of temporarily free space to stow them there longterm. When I ask the man why he is spending the night there, he says, "Because Wal-Mart kicks you

out after three nights." Then he lowers his voice, conspiratorially: "But you can stay as long as you want if you get there after midnight and leave before eight. There's no guard then."

When I ask, why he is camping out in a parking lot instead of living in a place of his own, he gives me several conflicting answers. Sifting through them, it turns out, he doesn't want to pay for housing — he saves money sleeping in his van. "You're throwing

your money away, living in an apartment," he chides me.

"How long have you been doing this?" I ask. "Oh, eight or 10 years," he says matter-of-factly, as

though asked how long he'd owned his van or had his tattoos. He keeps talking about setting up a home for at-risk youth, but some kind of obstacles always crop up that keep him and some partner he alludes to from accomplishing this.

"Just a lot of bullshit," he says of the obstacles. "But I'm getting sick of this, that's for sure," he gestures at his ramshackle surroundings.

After a bit I wish him luck and walk back to the Wal-Mart side. It is dark now. Two big trucks that were there earlier have moved on. Wal-Mart doesn't allow them to spend the night. Maybe their marketing research shows truckers don't spend enough money at the stores. Or maybe the rigs are just too loud. After all, Wal-Mart has an image to maintain. The roving security guard slows down to scrutinize me. I get the message. I don't have a camper, so it's time to be gone. ■



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Seattle, WA 98121 • 206/443-9935, ext. 136 or donate on-line at www.lihi.org

Diamonds in the Rough

Your Official Unofficial Guide to Bumbershoot, Sept. 3-6

By Kaye Allard

Bumbershoot fills the Seattle Center with four days of music and the arts every year, and we've chosen a few of the off-the-beaten-path attractions for you to consider checking out if you find yourself among the crowd.

Friday, September 3rd

The Kitchen Syncopators

This band has evolved its own unique, honest sound: a blend of rural and urban oldtime string band, blues, ragtime, jazz, and jugband music. Check them out in advance at www.rustys.web.aplus.net/kitchensyncopators. 4-4:45 p.m., Busker Stage

Jim Page

A lyrical genius with a guitar and a gift for biting political commentary, Seattle's Jim Page is one of the most relevant topical songwriters of the day. You might hear echoes of Dylan and Guthrie, but Page is truly an original — sometimes improvising his songs on the spot. 5-5:45 p.m. and 7-7:45 p.m., Busker Stage

Chris Dodge

Dodge's "Street Librarian" column in *Utne* reports on and celebrates publications and 'zines that fly under the mainstream's radar. He also publishes a website of the same name that serves as a resource for alternative press links, activist librarian networking, a modicum of autobiography, and a few surprises. 6:15-7 p.m., Starbucks Literary Stage.

Saturday, September 4

Paul Loeb

Loeb has spent 30 years researching and writing about citizen responsibility and empowerment. His new anthology on political hope, *The Impossible Will Take A Little While: A Citizen's Guide to Hope in a Time of Fear*, is forthcoming from Basic Books. Look for an interview with Loeb in the September 16 issue of *Real Change*. 12-12:45 p.m., Starbucks Literary Stage.

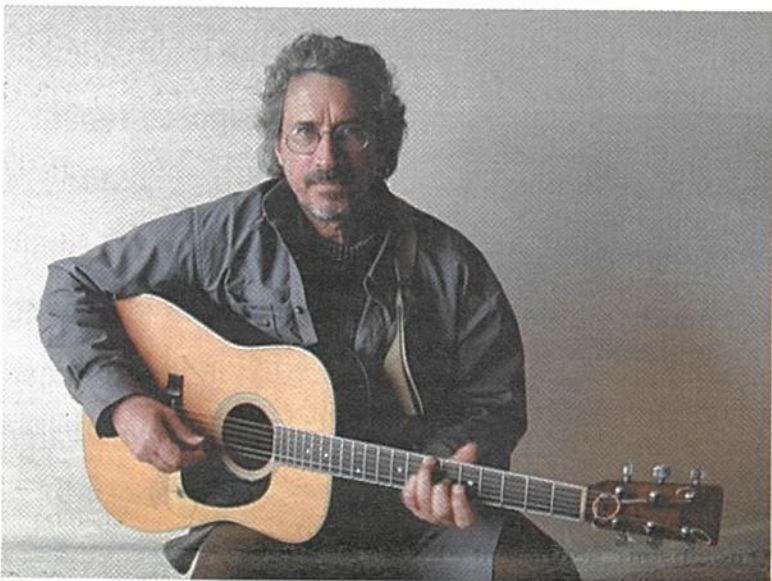
Annex Theatre: "Verbatim"

Developed from interviews with Puget Sound residents, "Verbatim" is a documentary theater piece about jobs and the people who work them. Their stories have been edited and interwoven to create a portrait of storytelling about our region's jobs and the corresponding effect on the people behind

them. 3-4 p.m., Theater Puget Sound Stage in the Center House Theater.

Omar Faruk Tekbilek

Faruk has been mesmerizing audiences for over 30 years through his melodic and emotional Middle Eastern music. Faruk's music transcends political boundaries and maintains traditional sensibilities in a way few artists can manage. Tekbilek's latest album, *Alif*, is a folkloric album combining



POLITICAL FOLKSTER JIM PAGE

three aspects of love: divine love, romantic love and love of life. 6:45-8:15 p.m., Miller Genuine Draft Bumbrella Stage

The Best Of Arab Films

A quartet of award-winning shorts from Egypt, Iran and Lebanon, courtesy of Arab Film Distribution. Featuring: *The Sandwich*; *Red Chewing Gum*; *Dead Time*; and *The Dead Weight of A Quarrel Hangs*. 9-10 p.m.

Sunday, September 5

The 'F' Word

Feminist Punk Writing Workshop with Felicia Luna Lemus. She has taught English Composition in Los Angeles and Orange County. According to *The Advocate*, her novel *Trace Elements of Random Tea Parties* tells the story of a young dyke caught between L.A.'s post-punk scene and the Mexican traditions of her childhood. 1-2 p.m., Starbucks Literary Stage.

Claudia Mauro

Mauro, author of *Reading the River and Stealing Fire* and editor of *In Praise of Fertile Land*, is joined by fellow poets to read selected pieces from the latter, an anthology of poetry, parable and story by celebrated writers like Denise Levertov, Pablo Neruda, Emily Dickinson, and Langston Hughes. Keeping with the themes of farming, food, and preserving the envi-

ronment. All royalties from the book will benefit programs that preserve and protect our farmlands.

DJ Cheb I Sabbah

A world music DJ, producer and guru, Cheb I Sabbah is known around the world and has quite the following in San Francisco, where he lives. His Algerian and Jewish roots influence his music and he incorporates several languages and continents to take the listener on a mystical journey. For some 40 years he has been spinning; layering traditional music with contemporary bass lines to get crowds moving across the world. www.chebisabbah.com. 4-5:30 p.m., Miller Genuine Draft Bumbrella Stage.

Monday, September 6

Fran Varian with Erin McNamee

Varian collaborates with vocalist McNamee to perform a new piece created specifically for

Bumbershoot: a poetic and musical tribute to the victims of the Green River Killer. 12:30-1 p.m., Starbucks Literary Stage

Silksreening 101 with Theresa Molter, Gillian Beck & Shelley Pearson. 1-2:30 p.m., Ink Spot sponsored by Starbucks.

Harvey Pekar

Pekar has made two cameo appearances in films and appeared on "Late Night with David Letterman" eight times between 1986-1988. It was Pekar's interest in politics, and specifically NBC's affiliation with General Electric, that got him banned from the show. Eventually he was asked to return and Pekar made two more appearances in the early 1990s. 1-2 p.m., Bagley Wright Theatre.

Stephanie Kallos, Skye Moody

Covering social and environmental issues, Moody has trav-

eled throughout the world, primarily in Third World and developing nations, including China, Uzbekistan, Armenia, Tajikistan, Georgia, Russia, including northeastern Siberia, and East Africa. Going on location, she has covered such subjects as Chinese and Russian coal mining, reindeer herding in northern Siberia, textile mills and farming in Uzbekistan, river pollution in the Republic of Georgia, and the effects of acid rain in the Arctic Circle. 2-3 p.m., Starbucks Literary Stage.

Rise Against

A Chicago band participating in Punk Voter (which seeks to get more young people politically involved and socially aware) Rise Against draws influences from Minor Threat, Black Flag, and Bad Brains. www.riseagainst.com. 8:30-9:45 p.m., 107.7 The End What's Next Stage at the Exhibition Hall.

Ongoing

W. Scott Trimble

Trimble asks questions about industry, nature, and machine. Put a quarter in Trimble's machines and consider questions about consumer culture, art as commodity, and whether or not technology has given us more freedom. These interactive sculptures explore themes of landscape and architecture and our relationships with both. Trimble strives for an experience that reaches beyond gimmick, the trivial, and the obvious. In the Northwest Courtrooms hallways.

The Pillar Project: an Outsider Artist Collective

A sculptural installation assembled with individually transformed components, contributed by artists from disabled, underprivileged and homeless communities. The exciting transformation of discarded, common and found objects are reflective of the influences and ingenuity of the individual artist. The true spirit of the "outsider art environment" is brought to life through the unified efforts of the contributing artists. At the International Fountain. ■



WRITER SKYE MOODY

Bumbershoot 2004 festivities take place September 3rd to 6th at the Seattle Center. Festival hours are 11 a.m. - 11 p.m. daily. The earlier you get to events, the better the seating. You can buy tickets online, from Ticketmaster, or at the gate. Advanced ticket purchase saves you 40 percent. There is a discount for people with disabilities and one companion. An access guide (and all other information) is at bumbershoot.org.

Unfinished Business

9/11: A Day that will Live in Inquiry

Review by Joe Martin

The New Pearl Harbor
by David Ray Griffin
Olive Branch Press, 2004
Paperback, 214 pages, \$15.00

An age of endless war. A time of endless preparation for bloodletting. This is our time. In war, the first casualty is truth. And in an age of everlasting hostilities pursued by a voracious hegemon, mendacity must assume truly epic proportions.

In the months preceding the release of the official 9/11 Commission Report, a book appeared which outlined a cogent argument for U.S. government complicity in the horrors of September 11, 2001. Written by the respected theologian and philosopher David Ray Griffin, *The New Pearl Harbor* examines unsettling questions about the murderous attacks on the World Trade Center and Pentagon, and the crashed United Airlines flight 93.

Griffin, a professor at the Claremont School of Theology, is no crackpot. This erudite and meticulous scholar has put together a profoundly disturbing analysis. There is no doubt that the stupefied aftermath of the 9/11 atrocity provided a faltering Bush administration an extraordinary opportunity to embark swiftly on the bellicose path they had long desired. Was this coincidental? Was systemic incompetence the only explanation for the sickening disaster?

Griffin's title comes from a document entitled "Rebuilding America's Defenses," prepared by the right-wing Project for a New American Century. Published in September 2000, the document outlines a cold vision of planetary domination. Unless a "new Pearl Harbor" stunned America, the document read, there was little chance that such global dreams could be realized. Conveniently, tragedy struck and the new robber barons got their casus belli. Perhaps it was all *too* convenient. On the second anniversary of the attacks, Donald Rumsfeld stated in an interview that he perceived 9/11 to have been "a blessing in disguise."

In painstaking fashion, Griffin draws together elements of an argument that points to the complicity of our government in these unprecedented attacks. Is such a notion too preposterous, too ridiculous to be given even a second thought? Are there precedents for such a perspective?

Consider the first Pearl Harbor, December 7, 1941. That fiasco has been a point of controversy from almost the

day after the Japanese attack in which 2,400 Americans died. Many have never heard of the accusations of U.S. government complicity looming around this vicious act: that the "surprise" attack on Pearl Harbor probably did not come as any surprise to FDR and his inner circle.

For strategic reasons, the Pacific Fleet had always docked on the West Coast of the United States, in California. But FDR ordered the fleet's commander, Admiral James Richardson, to move the fleet to Pearl Harbor on Oahu. Richardson refused, stating that it would make the fleet a sitting duck and give an enemy a full 360-degree corridor of attack. FDR replaced him, the fleet was relocated, and the Japanese eventually delivered a devastating blow.

The infamous deed gave FDR — whose administration, prior to the attack, had actually intercepted critical messages indicating Japan's belligerent intent — what he desired: a mandate to enter into World War II.

The Roberts Commission, which was the first government

body to investigate the Pearl Harbor debacle, scapegoated the top commanders. The two, an admiral and a general, were forced into retirement. Commenting on the Roberts Commission's conclusions, Admiral Richardson stated: "It is the most unfair, unjust, and deceptively dishonest document ever

printed by the Government Printing Office. I cannot conceive of honorable men serving on a commission without greatest regret and deepest feelings of shame."

Anyone wishing to explore this history must read the impressive work by Robert Stinnett entitled *Day of Deceit* (The Free Press, 2000). Stinnett claims that he does not wish to smear FDR. He has expressed his agreement with Roosevelt's action, given that a sooner confrontation with Hitler and the Axis powers was preferable to a later one. FDR felt compelled to lure Japan into attacking first in order to overcome pervasive American isolationism. Stinnett's exhaustive study demonstrates the capacity for our government's systematic and protracted obfuscation of unpleasant facts behind certain historical events.

In the forward to Griffin's book, Richard Falk, the prestigious professor of international law at Princeton, writes of the various instances of subterfuge in American history, like Pearl Harbor, in which public opinion was manipu-

lated by political sleight of hand. He refers to the blowing up of the *USS Maine*, the Gulf of Tonkin incident, and the recent dissembling by the Bush administration about nonexistent weapons of mass destruction in Iraq. Falk states: "The official explanations of such historic events as [the rationale for] the atomic bombing of Hiroshima and Nagasaki and the assassination of President Kennedy have not stood up to scrutiny by objective scholars." Thus the orchestrated political duplicity limned by Griffin has deep roots in the modern American experience.

Griffin's book anticipates the "incompetence" argument, the bedrock of the official report of the 9/11 Commission. The Commission blames everyone for the tragedy and winds up blaming nobody. For the official investigation of the most shocking event in recent American history, our government spent less time and money than it spent investigating Whitewater and Monica Lewinsky. William Raspberry of the Washington Post has expressed his deep disappointment in the report: "For all its somber-faced seriousness, the report of the 9/11 Commission turns out to be a childlike explanation of what went so tragically wrong nearly three years ago. It acknowledges the obvious, but it manages to avoid any semblance of individual responsibility. 'The lamp broke,' a child might say. Or, as the report would have it, the 'system' failed." Like the Warren Commission, which so horribly mangled its investigation into JFK's assassination, the 9/11 Commission sheds little light on murky events. Leaders can utilize incompetence as a cover story, argues Griffin, "as a way to deny their active involvement in some illegal operation."

He elaborates: "As can be seen, what some critics call the *incompetence* theory can be understood as simply part of a larger *coincidence* theory, because it entails that FAA agents, NMCC and NORAD officials, pilots, immigration agents, U.S. military leaders in Afghanistan, and numerous US intelligence agencies all coincidentally acted with extreme and unusual incompetence when dealing with matters related to 9/11." That every system, every agent, every military officer demonstrated ineptitude while the World Trade Center and the Pentagon itself were under attack strains credulity.

Griffin demonstrates that in fact many individuals at various levels of government and law enforcement were on the job, trying to prevent trouble. The story of John O'Neill is especially

poignant. A top counter-terrorism expert, he resigned in frustration from the FBI after his efforts to capture Osama bin Laden were thwarted by the White House. Ironically, O'Neill became director of security at the North Tower of the World Trade Center, where he died on 9/11.

Griffin relates the controversy surrounding the physical collapse of the towers. Some authorities explain that heat generated by jet fuel could not have accomplished the destruction of these carefully designed 1,300-foot structures of steel and concrete. Something other than burning kerosene, something more like explosives within the building, had to have been present to account for molten steel and massive amounts pulverized dust. Curiously, the 300,000 tons of mutilated steel from the toppled towers were exported immediately as scrap to Korea and China, thereby removing crucial forensic evidence from expert scrutiny.

Another bizarre piece of the saga involves the fate of the 47-story WTC building number seven in the

World Trade Center complex, which collapsed at 5:20 p.m. It had not been struck by a plane. Other buildings in the area that had caught fire did not fall down. According to Griffin, the fall of building number seven makes it "the first steel-framed building in history to collapse solely from fire damage." Its destruction late on that brutal afternoon actually resembled a conventional demolition process.

Despite its astounding thesis, Griffin's book is a carefully drawn portrait of surreptitious governmental betrayal, of right wing elements that yearned for, perhaps allowed, and possibly even participated in the shocking events of 9/11. While expressing the need for a thorough investigation, Griffin notes the doubts surrounding the efficacy of the probe conducted by the 9/11 Commission. Before the Commission finished its work, its most outspoken member, former Senator Max Cleland, resigned, ostensibly to take a seat on the Export-Import Bank. He had vocalized his disgust with the Bush administration's stonewalling, and stated "the Warren Commission blew it ... I'm not going to be a part of that." Given the very limited scope of the official final report of the 9/11 Commission, the concluding words of Griffin's book ring prophetic, that "a new investigation will be needed if there is to be any hope for discovering the truth."

The New Pearl Harbor provides a good place to start. ■

**The Commission
blames everyone for
the tragedy, and
winds up blaming
nobody. For the
official investigation
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event in recent
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government spent
less time and money
than it spent investi-
gating Whitewater
and Monica
Lewinsky.**



Living History

Howard Zinn's zen of scholarly activism



HOWARD ZINN IS ARRESTED AT AN ANTI-VIETNAM DEMONSTRATION AT BU. PHOTO COURTESY FIRST RUN FEATURES.

By Paula Mathieu

In ancient Greek, it's called *kairos*, knowing the right time or measure in which to do something. Others might call it skill, presence of mind, or even luck. Whatever you call it, Howard Zinn has it—throughout his life, this history professor has had the uncanny ability to be present and take part in key moments of U.S. history. Now Zinn's life itself has become history through a compelling documentary that takes him as the subject.

Howard Zinn: You Can't Be Neutral on a Moving Train is currently traveling the country, offering an intimate portrait of an extraordinary man who has both reported on and taken part in historical struggles for peace and justice for much of the past century. During a summer inundated with left-leaning agit-prop documentaries that explore the overwhelming power exercised by moneyed and corporate interests in our country—ranging from *Fahrenheit 9/11*, *Supersize Me*, *Control Room*, and *The Corporation*—*You Can't Be Neutral* offers an uplifting countervision that details the changes an individual can make by working with others, speaking the truth, and refusing to collaborate in acts of war and injustice.

You might know Howard Zinn's name as the author of the bestselling critical American history compendium, *A People's History of the United States*. The book, which has sold more than a million copies worldwide, has shaken the guilt off American icons like Christopher Columbus by telling his story from the point of view of the massacred native people. The book continues to increase in sales each year, and was referenced in the film *Good Will Hunting*, and there is even talk that family friend Matt Damon (who acts as narrator of this documentary) is trying to adapt the book to screen. *A People's History* was written relatively late in Zinn's career, however; it was first published in 1980, and he completed graduate school in the late 1950s. Long before and after its

publication, Zinn has been an agitator and activist, maintaining throughout all his endeavors an ever-present zen-like smile coupled with what Marian Wright Edelman calls an unprecedented "capacity for moral outrage." As a shipyard worker, soldier, history professor, and activist, Zinn has devoted his life to "achieving justice with struggle but without war." This film takes viewers through each different and fascinating chapter of his life, combining archival footage from Zinn's life with interviews with him and his friends, colleagues, and students — like Alice Walker, Noam Chomsky and Daniel Berrigan.

You Can't Be Neutral follows Zinn's life as he intersects time and again many of the key historical turning points in U.S. history in the 20th century: In the 1930s he worked in the shipyards and became involved in union organizing. In the 1940s he met Roz, his wife, and enlisted in the Air Force, where during WWII he dropped "jellied gasoline" (later known as napalm) on German soldiers in a French countryside—an experience that would profoundly shape his later views on war. Moving to Atlanta with his family to teach at Spelman College in the late fifties, Zinn took part in the desegregation movement and lost his job due to his involvement in student demonstrations. In the 1960s he flew to Vietnam on a peace mission, where he helped negotiate return of American servicemen from the North Vietnamese and took part in student demonstrations on the campus where he taught at Boston University.

While the story is compelling, what will stay with audiences most are small glimpses of the sense of community and fulfillment that can be gained through a life lived well and devoted to teaching and to justice. Despite all his accomplishments, what seems most memorable about Zinn is he seems to be a genuinely happy man. In re-

counting his years of struggle with the notorious conservative president of Boston University, John Silber, Zinn laughingly admits why Silber never truly got the upper hand: "He had his office, his money, his trees, and I had these 400 students every semester." By connecting with students, by being engaging inside the classroom and out, Zinn has been able to speak out against abuses of power without being crushed like so many other truth tellers in history. And throughout it all he has maintained a sense of humor and day-to-day humility that is instructive and just plain fun to watch.

With a brisk running time of just over 90 minutes, and a soundtrack with such leftist titans as Billy Bragg and Woody Guthrie, watching *You Can't Be Neutral* doesn't feel at all like homework. It's one of the most hopeful and humanizing films you'll see this year. It's well worth catching during its limited theatrical release. ■

Film Showing:

The Northwest Film Forum screens *You Can't Be Neutral* on a Moving Train from Friday, September 3 until Thursday, September 16 at its new location, 1515 - 12th Avenue in Seattle's Capitol Hill neighborhood. The film shows at 6, 7:45, and 9:30 p.m.; there are no shows on Mondays. Admission is \$7.00 for the general public and \$5.50 for NW Film Forum members.

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HAVA Great Election 2004

New voters may encounter problems on November 2

by Diana Wurn

Just 10 weeks away from the November 2 presidential election, we are bombarded with one consistent political message: Get out and vote!

The Help America Vote Act (HAVA), passed by Congress in 2002, was intended to improve voting systems after the problems encountered in Florida after the 2000 election. Yet as Washington State implements changes for the next federal election, new voters may find it more difficult to register this year.

Voters wishing to register by mail for the first time will need to have a driver's license or a document showing their street address as proof of their identity.

Originally, new voters would be verified by the last four digits of their Social Security number. But now elections officials say additional information will be needed.

Carlos Webb, Assistant Superintendent of Voter Services in Washington State, says that his office will accept the following forms of identification "showing a name and address": driver's license, photo identification, utility bill, government check, bank statement, paycheck, or a government document.

But what about the eligible voters who do not have a driver's license or a document showing an address? Certain segments of the population, such as homeless individuals, are less likely to have these pieces of identification.

Other documents can be used, says Webb, but that person's vote will become a "provisional ballot," and a decision must be made as to whether or not it is valid. Each county will have a "canvassing board" — made up of a county auditor, prosecuting attorney and the council chair — to review these ballots and decide if the vote is valid.

"Any time it is not a black-and-white issue, the board will review the ballot and make a decision," says Bill Huennekens, King County Superintendent of Elections.

According to elections officials in King, Snohomish, Pierce, and Kitsap counties, one way to verify votes of those without correct ID is to check the signatures of the provisional ballot voters.

"There are other things we can do if a person does not have an address," says Delores Gilmore of the Kitsap County Elections Office. "We will do our best to contact the voter and talk to them. We can look in voter records and compare the signature of the original voter registration with the signature on the provisional ballot envelope."

Pierce County Auditor Pat McCarthy says that the office will go

to great lengths to make every vote count. Individuals who don't have an address will be required to list something on the registration, "even if it's under a bridge or wherever they sleep at night." McCarthy noted that Washington is a "very progressive state" and they want to make the process easy for people.

"It's really a small percentage who do not provide a verifiable piece of ID deemed good," says Wendy Mauch, Voter Registration Supervisor with the Snohomish County Elections Department. When proper ID is not submitted, a letter goes out to the voter, who then gets another chance to turn in the information before their ballot becomes provisional.

In King and Snohomish counties, voters can track their provisional ballot by going to the county website and entering a number provided to them to see if their votes were counted.

Voting officials feel that the new changes will reduce fraudulent votes, like the kind that happened in St. Louis. In 2002, Missouri Senator Kit Bond testified in an election reform hearing that the city had become a "national laughingstock" after "dead people and dogs" had registered to vote by mail. Senator Bond did not mention if the dogs had registered as Democrats or Republicans.

Though the new identification requirements will stop canines from registering, they could also dissuade new voters from showing at the polls, especially for certain populations that already have historically low levels of voter participation. Some in the Native American community have voiced concern.

"We just don't know if the Help America Vote Act will be a bar to participation," says Russ Lehman of the First American Education Project (FAEP), an organization founded to increase involvement of Native Americans in the political process. "We'll have to see."

A greater barrier is "lack of interest and whether or not Native Americans feel they can make a difference and if any candidates are speaking about issues they care about," he says.

Though eligible Native American voters are only 2.7 percent of the state's population, they were able to make a tremendous difference in the past. In the year 2000, FEAP organized a dramatic voting campaign against Slade Gorton by helping to register 10,000 new Native voters that year. Gorton, who had a history of opposition with tribal communities, was defeated largely due to the Native vote.

If a similar scenario happened again and 10,000 voters were sufficiently

motivated to register, would it be possible to have such a successful outcome, considering that everyone who does not have the proper identification becomes a "provisional" vote subject to scrutiny by a committee?

Problems with the new ID requirements have been identified as one of the "Top Five Risks to Eligible Voters in 2004" by the League of Women Voters at a news conference in May.

Wade Henderson, Executive Director of the Leadership Conference on Civil Rights, in a speech made in May, pointed out that "while HAVA clearly has a number of flaws, it can go a long way to improving faith in the outcome of this and future elections if it is adequately funded and properly implemented."

Henderson recommended that states and counties accept registration forms as long as they have the "minimal information necessary to determine that a voter is in fact eligible. This means that registrars and secretary of state offices need to understand just how broad their discretion is under HAVA and state laws, and they need to

make a point to exercise it in favor of getting more voters on the rolls."

He pointed to Wyoming as an example of what not to do. Under Wyoming law, voters who register by mail must have applications notarized.

"Our hope is that this legislation will

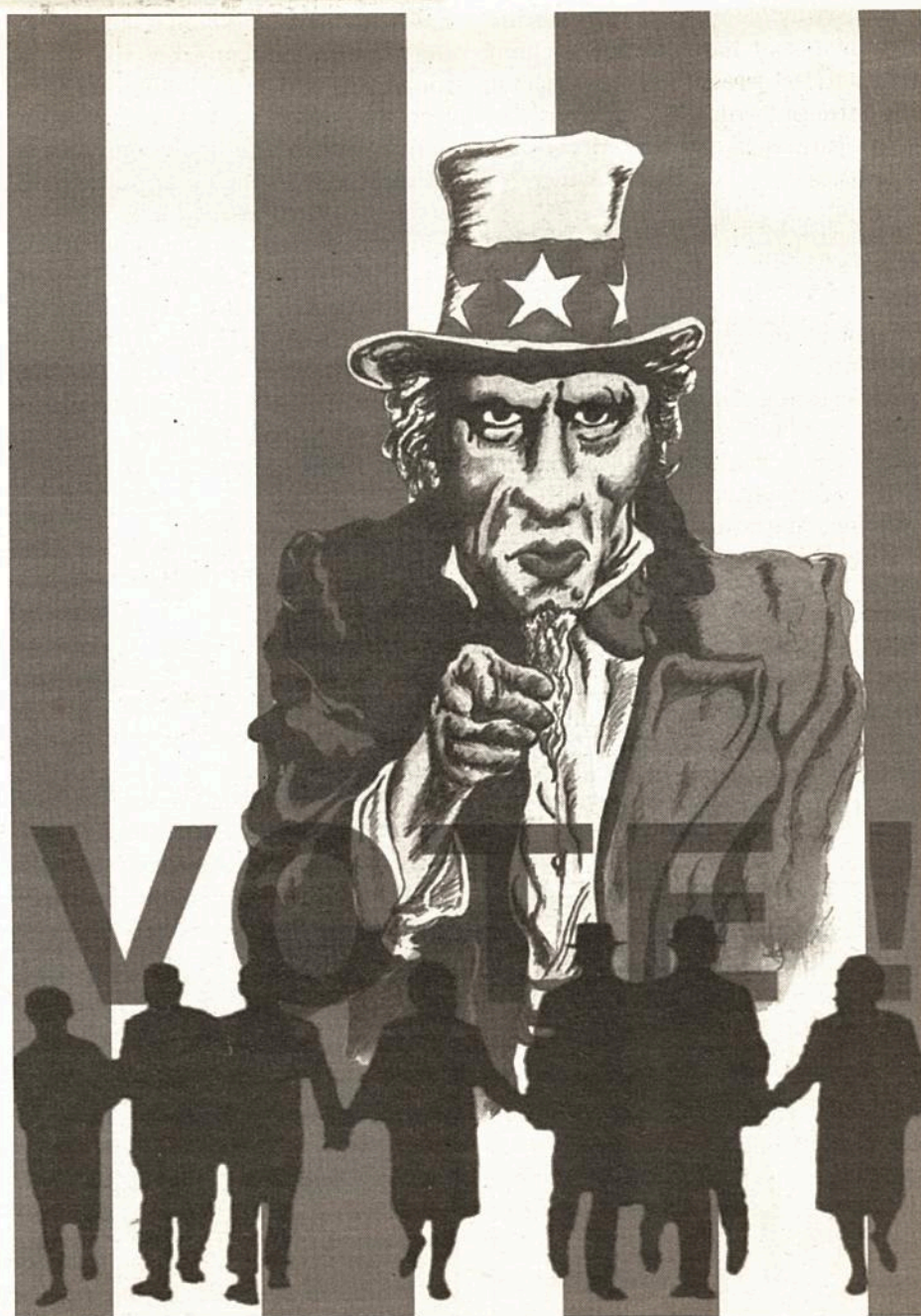
build faith in the system and ultimately increase voter turnout," Dean Logan, the Director of Elections, writes on the Secretary of State website.

The greatest threat to voting integrity in the Northwest may have taken place two decades ago in Oregon, when the Rajneeshees, a religious cult in The Dalles, plotted various ways to disrupt the local elections. Among other egregious acts, in 1984, the group bussed in hundreds of homeless people from

other counties on Election Day to flood the ballots with Rajneesheedian votes. This massive voter registration raised the eyebrows of election officials, who began an investigation.

Though there is no indication of a repeat of this kind in Washington State, the integrity of America's voting system has been in question since Bush took office. ■

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

Friday, August 6th, 4 p.m., Third Avenue and South Washington St. Victim made contact with the police and told them the following: The victim, a transient white male aged 48, was on Third Street and S. Washington when he was approached by the two suspects, a white male and a Black male, both in their fifties, who asked if he had any money. When he replied "No," suspect number 1 punched him in the face and suspect number 2 threw "a few" rocks, striking the victim in the forehead and jaw. One of the suspects went through his pockets, stole his wallet and they both fled. Victim stated he would recognize the suspects again as they were transient men that he saw hanging around downtown. His injuries were photographed for the incident report. He had sustained contusions and scrapes and possibly a broken eye socket. He was treated and released by Harborview and was transported to a downtown shelter as requested.

Friday, August 6th, 11:14 a.m., Hing Hay Park. Officers standing in Hing Hay Park observed the suspect, a transient Asian male aged 39, enter the park. They were aware that the suspect had been trespassed from all city parks for one year. They contacted him and informed him he was under arrest for criminal trespass, and handcuffed him. Officers then searched his pockets and found two metal crack pipes in his pockets. Both field tested positive for cocaine. He was booked into King County Jail for possession and criminal trespass.

Sunday, August 8th, 1:01 p.m., Second Ave. Complainant/victim was sleeping on the sidewalk while leaning against a building. He stated he was "self-medicating" after being discharged from the hospital: his pain medication wasn't working, so he was drinking vodka too. He awoke to find the suspect, a white male in his twenties, rummaging through his pockets. When he awoke the suspect punched him in the head several times and then kicked him in the groin. He used his pepper spray to drive his attacker away. Seattle Fire Department treated him at the scene. He had his pain pills, walkman, and \$40 stolen, and stated that the hospital would not refill his prescription.

Do you have your own story to tell? Call Real Change at (206)441-3247 ext. 207, and we'll get the scoop.

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Street Talk: Primary Concern

Photos and interviews by Shelly Martin

Washington's new primary election ballot requires voters to choose a party and then vote only for candidates in that party. It succeeds the "open primary," where all voters could vote for any candidate, regardless of party affiliation. *Real Change* asked pedestrians in downtown Seattle: What is your opinion of the new primary ballot?



"I wait to see which one has the right words, the best speech, and then I vote.... I think you should be able to vote for more than one party. There's no

telling who's coming up and who's good."

—Rick Ferguson, 43, McCormick and Schmicks

"If you're a Democrat, then you're only going to vote Democratic, and I think it's smart to separate them. I think it's a good idea because you might get confused and I think it's best not to confuse people."

—Dakotah Graham, 18, salesman



"I'm not really that happy about having to declare a party affiliation."

—Tom Guyton, 39, telecommunications sales



"I think I'm not too pleased; I would prefer to have a choice to cross-over."

—Katherine McDermott, 38, former high school teacher

"I think it's good. I just hope the right person gets into office."

—Francine Henderson, 40, Patient Account Representative at Group Health



"I don't necessarily declare myself as a Republican but on occasion I'll like a Republican, and I don't like the changes. I've always voted bi-partisan."

—Marcie

McMurtrie, 56, accountant/cook/homemaker

"Personally, I'm not for it — it takes away our freedom to vote — you have to pick a category and stick with that category."

—David Grenfell, 20,

lighting expert / musician



"It seems like if you're electing candidates for a party, it makes sense to choose them from that party. I mean, ideally you'd like to weigh in on both sides ... and you

kind of have to align with one party. I certainly don't like to align with one system ..."

—Mike Thomas, 27, voter registration organizer

Be a Voter Registration VOLUNTEER

Voter registration deadlines are approaching and we looking for volunteers to register homeless and low-income people at:

Federal Way Food Bank
(Wed/Fri afternoons)
The Women's Referral Center
(evenings)
Boomtown Café
(breakfast or lunch shifts)
Local DSHS offices
(weekdays)

Other locations available. We'll train you and provide materials. You provide your own transportation and outgoing personality. Bi-lingual volunteers (Engl/Span and Eng/Mandarin), people of color, and Muslim volunteers especially encouraged.

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REAL CHANGE HERO

Zapata, Vendor #3312

OK. Zapata (vendor #3312) is not one of *Real Change*'s highest selling vendors. I'm not even sure he's one of our most consistent vendors. But when he's out selling he loves to talk to his customers — he's eager to discuss political issues at length politely with them — and when he gets going his spirit is infectious.

If you are lucky enough to catch Zapata (who also goes by Jose Ornelas) at his favorite site at Fourth and Lenora, you might guess from his appearance that his handle was a reference to Emiliano Zapata, the Mexican revolutionary. Not that he looks like E. Zapata (if he had a moustache he would), but there's a definite revolutionary look there, and we know it isn't accidental. Zapata has some of that in him.

For example, when he had to live at Tent City3 in 2001, he was selected to be their representative to go to Mexico City to travel with the Zapatistas, who were engaged in highly publicized marches then. This led to a big scare for those of us who knew him back here at *Real Change*, when we got word that Zapata had been arrested and thrown into jail in Mexico, with others, apparently for demonstrating in the wrong place at the wrong time. He downplays the danger he was in whenever we talk about it now, but that just reinforces that revolutionary cachet I'm talking about.

But in fact, he tells me he was calling himself Zapata even before he became involved with the Zapatistas, in honor of Mia Zapata, not Emiliano. The name is a show of solidarity for the singer who was brutally murdered here in Seattle in 1993. (Also, Zapata says he likes the name because he's one of the few people in Seattle who might be inclined to use it who can pronounce it properly.) So much for appearances.

So even though I thought I knew, I asked Zapata how he came to be homeless in America and selling *Real Change*. He began by telling me that he was born here in the U.S. in California's Orange County. He points out that it is the most heavily Republican county in the country. He himself was born into the densest Hispanic community within Orange County.

At some point in the '90s, Zapata joined the Army, and the Army brought him to this part of the country in 1997 and then discharged him, leaving him here. Initially he tried to live in Tacoma, but he couldn't find work there, so he came to Seattle. Here he found work in the fast food business on Mercer Island, at one point working two jobs to make ends meet, and to make some more extra money Zapata joined the National Guard.

It was about that time that Zapata wandered into a session of StreetWrites, Anitra Freeman's writing workshop/support group that she runs some evenings at the *Real Change* office. For about three years he was a regular there. In early '99 he lost his jobs, so for a while the National Guard income was all the income he had, and he became a vendor that March.

We especially enjoyed the company of this National Guardsman at the writing workshops during the WTO protests later that year, when we saw so many of his fellow Guardsmen called up to protect the city from us.

Zapata's goals lie in his writing. He says he wants to be Anitra's biographer "when he grows up." In the meantime he is working on the Great American Movie script. We can't wait to see that movie when it comes out.

—Wes Browning



BY PERFESS'R HARRIS

Proud Olympic Moments, Then and Now

We at Classics Corner are not given to displays of athletic prowess, personal or otherwise. This is why, every four years or so, we become dimly aware of something called "The Olympics." But given the choice between that and, say, watching a bad 70s movie on Channel 22, we'll go for the movie every time because, to us, nothing is more amusing than long pointy polyester shirt collars, stupid sideburns, and aviator sunglasses.

Once, after trailer trash diva Tonya Harding's loser boyfriend tried to take out Nancy Kerrigan's world-class knees, we developed a brief but intense interest in Olympic figure skating, and fondly remember a tearful Harding whining to the judges about her untied laces. This, we remember thinking, is a great Olympic moment.

Yes, the Olympics have a proud history, dating back to at least 776 B.C. The games this year have come home to Athens, Greece, which with its Panathenia, was always a close second to the real deal, held up the road a bit in Olympia.

The Olympics were inevitable because the Greeks were an insufferable bunch of egotists who were out to outdo each other pretty much all the time. In Homer we have the Judgment of Paris, for example, where the pretty boy of Troy gets suckered into deciding a beauty contest between Athena, Hera, and Aphrodite. Bad idea. Then there's the funeral games of Patroclus, which prove that whenever a handful of Greeks get together for anything, pretty soon the disci and javelins come out like hacky-sacks at a Phish concert.

To the Greeks, competition was how nobility expressed itself. The ideal was to trace your family lineage to a God and to work as little as possible. Craftsmen, artists, and merchants were looked down on as the occupations of those who actually needed to earn a living. The nobility liked war, athletics, and statesmanship, and excellence in these fields depended upon sufficient leisure to develop stunning pecs, perfect abs, and an amazing ability to perform meaningless tasks. And so, the Olympics were born.

Even then, there were superstars. Theagenes, Plutarch tells us, had more than 1,200 crowns, "although most of them were trivial." And there was a celebrity-obsessed media to match. We know much of what we do because families paid Pindar to scribble immortal lines concerning their favorite sons. There was also a bustling statue industry, where the way to win fame throughout the Greek world was to build a statue to oneself in Olympia. One winner of three footraces had three statues erected. Horse breeders, the über-wealthy of Greece, commissioned statues of whole horse and chariot teams.

A scandal could lead to one's monument being torn down. And scandals there were. Sometimes, anticipating Hermann Goering's great insight, cities would simply lie about who won, hoping that if they repeated an untruth often enough it would become true. Some Olympic champions could be bribed to say they were from whatever city that could pay for the honor.

There was one good thing. War, the favored occupation of the time, was considered less important and suspended for the duration. If we could pull that off, we'd want the Olympics to never end. ■

Whenever a handful of Greeks get together for anything, pretty soon the disci and javelins come out like hacky-sacks at a Phish concert.

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Upcoming & Notable

Thursday 8/19

And subsequent Thursdays, 4-6 p.m. at the LGBT Community Center, 1115 E. Pike, Seattle; meeting of **Queer Youth Rights**, an initiative of The Seattle Young People's project, a Seattle based non-profit social justice organization that is based on the projects/ideas/initiatives of young people (18/19 and under). Queer Youth Rights has been around for the past seven years. Open to all queer youth & straight allies. Info 206-860-9606, or www.sypp.org.

Peace vigil to protest U.S. policy in Afghanistan, Palestine/Israel, and Iraq. Silent / visible presence, leaflets, and info table by Women in Black, Women wear black; men welcome to stand at the sidelines or to leaflet; a peace group in the tradition of the women who vigil weekly in Israel/Palestine. 5-6 p.m. at Westlake Park near Fourth and Pine, Seattle. Info seattlewomeninblack@speakeasy.net or 206-208-9715 or www.scn.org/womeninblack.

Saturday 8/21

New and Used Book Sale to raise funds for **Noel House Programs**. Noel House provides services for women in the Seattle community who are experiencing and overcoming homelessness. 11 a.m.-4 p.m., at Noel House, 2301 2nd Ave., Seattle. Info contact Kirsten at 206-441-3210 or www.noelhouse.org.

The Electrical Worker's Union Hall will be transformed into a theater to show one of the **best labor films** ever made. Admission is free and the general public is invited. 7 p.m., at IBEW Local 46 Union Hall, 2700 First Ave., Seattle. Info Harry Bridges Center for Labor Studies 206-543-7946.

Volunteer to increase voter 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., every Saturday through Oct. 2. Carpool from Fremont Public Association, back parking lot, 1501 N. 45th, Seattle at 10 a.m. Maps available at fremontpublic.org/SPAN/volunteer.html. Info Anne Yen 206-694-6794 ext. 4.

Monday 8/23

The National Coalition Building Institute will offer **"Effective Communication Skills"**. Participants in this interactive workshop will learn active listening and communication skills. This event is ideal for activists, educators, social workers and anyone who values open communication. \$30-\$80, sliding scale. Register at scn.org.ncbisea/. 9 a.m.-4 p.m., at Safeco Jackson St. Center, 23rd Ave. S. and Jackson St., Seattle. Info 206-323-5427.

Tuesday 8/24

Join I-90 Wildlife Bridges Coalition for **Cascades Crossings**: a forum on wildlife passage across Interstate 90. A major freeway expansion in a critical zone for Cascades wildlife: Threat or Opportunity? A forum on the issues surrounding wildlife connectivity and interstate transportation planning, with a specific focus on Washington Department of Transportation's (WSDOT) plans to expand a 15-mile stretch of Interstate 90 just east of Snoqualmie Pass. Join us for this free educational event and great discussion on wildlife and transportation planning. RSVP to Jen Watkins to reserve your space today!

Thursday 8/26

Justice Works! prisoner/ex-prisoner support team. The YARD group meeting for previously incarcerated people. Justice Works! Works at undoing racism in the criminal justice system as experienced by African Americans. 6:30-8 p.m., call 206-309-2087 for location; please confirm at www.justiceworks.info, info justice_works@yahoo.com or 206-303-7559.

Saturday 8/28

Activist and author, Charles Derber, will discuss his new book, **Freeing America From Corporate Rule**. Mr. Derber lays out a practical course of action to create a more free and democratic society. Also, music performed by Jess Grant. This benefit aids Seattle Thunder, Community Alliance for Global Justice and others. Suggested donation \$5. 7-9:30 p.m., at University Unitarian Church, 6556 35th Ave. NE, Seattle. Info actinfo@uucnubg.org

Radical Women host **Women's Rights Day Celebration**, with the theme "For This We Won the Vote? An irreverent look at election lunacy." Festivities include

biting impressions of presidential campaigns by Tamara Turner and live music. Sassy summer buffet, with vegetarian option, at 6:30 p.m. for a \$9 donation. Door donation \$3, sliding scale and work exchanges available. Everyone welcome. 8 p.m., at New Freeway Hall, 5018 Rainier Ave. S., Seattle. Info 206-722-6057 or 722-2453.

Sunday 8/29

Seattle Peace Concert, featuring music by Lucy Lunchmouth, Oxygen Ensemble, AATMA, and many others. Free, please bring a food donation for Northwest Harvest. Noon-6 p.m., at Volunteer Park, Seattle. Info 206-729-5232 or www.seapeace.org/.

Wednesday 9/1

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

A Community Anti-Racism Forum sponsored by The Fremont Public Association (FPA) on the topic **"The Right to Vote: overcoming barriers to voting for immigrants, low-income people, and communities of color."** Many communities are working hard in this election year to ensure that community members are free to exercise their right to vote. Panelists will speak about these barriers and strategic organizing to overcome them. With panelists Abdullahi Jama, Hate Free Zone; Charles Rolland, A. Philip Randolph Institute; Frances Youn, Korean American Voters Alliance; Carlos Martinez, Comité Pro Amnestia; Kim Justice, Statewide Poverty Action Network / FPA. All community members are welcome. Light meal provided at 6 p.m. Childcare: RSVP by 8/25. Info Gillian 206-694-6715 or gillianb@fremontpublic.org. 6:30-8:30 p.m., at the 2100 Building, Community Rooms A & B, 2100 24th Ave S, Seattle, accessible by buses 4, 7, 8, 9, 39, 42 and 48.

Friday 9/3

Wallingford Neighbors for Peace and Justice present Friday Night at the **Meaningful Movies**. Discussion follow, free, donations appreciated. 7 p.m., at Keystone Church, 5019 Keystone Pl. N., north of 50th in Wallingford. Info wnfp@comcast.net.

Ongoing

"Reflecting on Lewis and Clark: **Contemporary Native American Views**" at the State Capitol Museum, Olympia, through November 27. Native American artists share their interpretations on the commemoration of Lewis and Clark. Guest curator Pat Courtney Gold, Wasco artist, Warm Springs, OR. Artists include: Vivian Adams, Yakama; Bernyce Courtney, Wasco; Joe Fedderson, Colville; Tony Johnson, Chinook; Miles Miller, Yakama; Lillian Pitt, Yakama/Wasco; Thelissa Redhawk, Cayuse and Umatilla; Apalonia Santos, Tygh and Warm Springs; Chuck Williams, Cascade; Liz Woody, Yakama/Navajo.

Calendar compiled from Jean Buskin's Peace and Justice Events Calendar, available in full at www.scn.org/activism/calendar. Email calendar submissions to calendar@real-changenews.org.

Bumbershoot Pick

Voices in Wartime with Chris Abani, Sinan Antoon, Jonathan Shay & Emily Warn, moderated by Andrew Himes



Iraqi poet Sinan Antoon has published a collection of poems **Mawshur Muballal bil-Huroob (A Prism; Wet with War)** and a novel, **I'jam**.

Sat., Sept. 4, 2:30 pm - 4:00 pm: Bagley Wright Theatre

Clips from the upcoming documentary "Poetry in Wartime" will be shown at this special preview, hosted by Voices in Wartime members including Nigerian war survivor Chris Abani (Graceland), Iraqi exile poet Sinan Antoon, Emily Warn (The Novice Insomniac) and Jonathan Shay (Achilles In Vietnam). More Info: www.voicesinwartime.org

info www.i90wildlifebridges.org/forum.htm or 206-675-9747 x-208. 6:30-8:30 p.m. at Center for Urban Horticulture, University of Washington, Seattle.

Hopelink's Family and Emergency Services Dept. will host **Introduction to Home Ownership**, participants will learn about loan programs, how to purchase a first home, applying for a mortgage and more. The workshop is presented by US Bank. Free on-site child

citizens participation project



Help Stop Predatory Lending

Issue: Refund Anticipation Loans (RALs) provide those expecting tax refunds with a slightly quicker way to receive their money. But they usually charge outrageously high interest rates, up to 800 percent APR based on the 10-day loan period. Consumer advocates say that the commercial tax preparers who offer these loans often do so without disclosing the high interest rates, or the alternatives available. Seattle City Councilmember Tom Rasmussen has proposed legislation to require disclosure of fees and alternatives, to prevent consumers from being misled.

Background: The largest market for these loans is the working poor: people who live paycheck to paycheck, and are struggling to stay on top of basic bills like rent and utilities. Many who use these loans don't know that by filing electronically instead, their refund would be available to them in about 10 days without any fees. Some don't even realize they are borrowing money that they will have to pay back if the IRS reduces or denies their expected refund.

A report by the National Consumer Law Center and the Consumer Federation of America found that about 40 percent of the refund loans are made to people who received the Earned Income Tax Credit — the largest federal anti-poverty assistance program. Because the paperwork required to receive the EITC is challenging, families filing for the credit are more likely to use commercial tax preparers. A refund loan sounds especially good then, because it covers the fee for their tax preparation.

Refund Anticipation Loans are just one of the many ways people who are poor get bilked out of their money. They fall into the same category as rent-to-own furniture, payday advance loans, check cashing services with high fees, and car title pawn services. Exploiting people in poverty is lucrative business.

Councilmember Rasmussen's legislation is a reasonable response to unscrupulous lending practices. It doesn't ban the loans, just requires disclosure. Under the proposal, commercial tax preparers would have to disclose, verbally and in writing, the interest rate of the loan, the date when a refund could be expected if filed electronically, the amount the consumer will receive after fees are applied, and that the customer will still have to pay the loan back if the IRS reduces or denies the refund. Failure to do all those things would result in a city-imposed fine of up to \$700.

Desperation doesn't always lead to the best decision-making, and refund loan providers count on this. During the August 12th public hearing on this proposal, members of the tax-preparation industry showed up to lobby against it, making up about a quarter of those testifying.

Action: Contact the Seattle City Council members and urge them to pass Councilmember Rasmussen's Refund Anticipation Loan disclosure bill. And take another minute to thank Councilmember Rasmussen for looking out for the rest of us.

Tom.rasmussen@seattle.gov or 684-8808
Jan.drago@seattle.gov or 684-8801
Richard.mciver@seattle.gov or 684-8800
Richard.conlin@seattle.gov or 684-8805
Peter.steinbrueck@seattle.gov or 684-8804
Jean.godden@seattle.gov or 684-8807
Nick.licata@seattle.gov or 684-8803
Jim.compton@seattle.gov or 684-8802
David.della@seattle.gov or 684-8806

For more information: National Consumer Law Center (www.consumerlaw.org), or contact Councilmember Tom Rasmussen at Tom.rasmussen@seattle.gov or 206-684-8808.



Executive Service Corps (www.escwa.org) is a non-profit providing affordable consulting services to schools and nonprofits. ESC includes 90 volunteers of all ages from business, education, and government professions. If you are interested, contact Nancy Long, Executive Director, (206)682-6704 or execdir@escwa.org.

Volunteer at **Community Lunch** on Capitol Hill! Serve hot, wholesome meals to homeless and low-income of Seattle. Volunteers needed Tuesdays and Fridays, 10 a.m. to 2 p.m. Contact Brian Johnson at (206)322-7500.

Shoreline YMCA has "tons" of rewarding volunteer opportunities to care for **area teens and kids**. Make a lasting difference today! Call us or email us directly, (206)364-1700 or jmack@sh.seattleyymca.org.

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Seattle, WA 98121



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We want to hear from you!



Bring story ideas, comments, suggestions, and questions to the fourth monthly open meeting of the **Real Change Editorial Committee**. Wednesday Sept. 29, 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
2129 2nd Ave.
Seattle, WA 98121

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