

# Change

Reaching Out to End Poverty • Volume 11, No. 21

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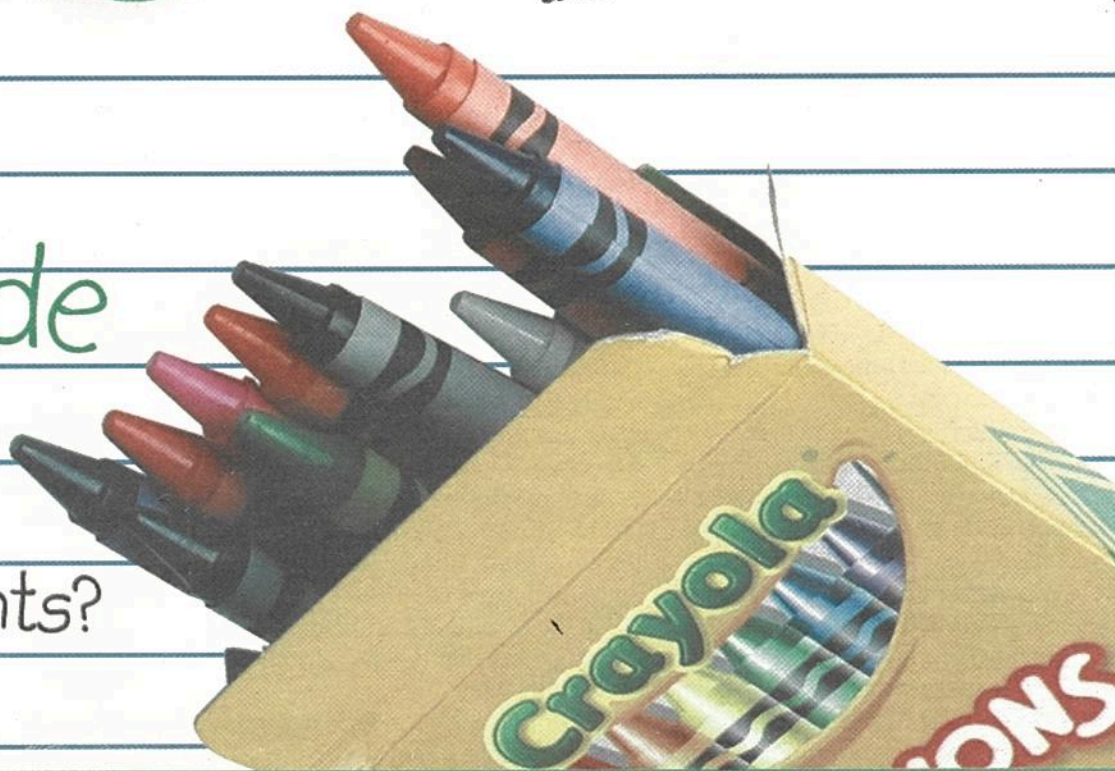
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## Making the Grade

are charter schools the answer for minority students?



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By Adam Hyla

**R**oberto Maestas wants to drop out. A venerable leader within the Latino community, director and founding member of El Centro De La Raza, is supporting Referendum 55 in an effort to give families of color an alternative to the conventional public school system. If a majority of Washington voters join Maestas in voting 'yes' on Referendum 55 this November 2nd, he may get his wish.

Then, at public expense, El Centro De La Raza could expand its afterschool and summer learning programs into a full-fledged charter school for the benefit of underserved Latinos.

Referendum 55 marks the third occasion that charter schools have come to a public vote since 1996. In March, the State Legislature passed legislation authorizing the creation of the schools "for the primary purpose of providing more high-quality learning environments to assist educationally disadvantaged students and other students in meeting the state's academic standards." The legislature was speeded in its efforts by reform advocates, among them business leaders like Jim Spady of Dick's Drive-In — advocates who had already made their case by public initiative twice, and had already been rebuked, twice.

Teachers' unions and public school advocates lobbied against the legislation. The Seattle School Board passed a resolution holding that the "minimal" benefits of charter schools' 10-year history in almost 40 other states "offers no clear rationale" for starting them here. And when Engrossed Second Substitute House Bill 2295 was signed by the governor, teachers' unions and their allies mustered the resources necessary to bring the new law before a public vote. Referendum 55 was born.

On November 2nd, a majority of 'no' votes will strike down the legislature's law; a majority of 'yes' votes will uphold it and clear the way for their authorization.

Already active in at least 30 other states, charter schools operate in a zone that is neither private nor fully public. Generally, they start out by making an agreement (a charter) with a public entity, such as a school board or a state superintendent. They accept public school students, and, because of the charter, take a portion of the school district's funding for those students' education.

While laws vary from state to state, one thing is clear: charter schools have fewer fetters on how they spend this money. They may couple it with funds from non-governmental sources. They

may find a way to educate children more cheaply than public schools, and therefore — if they're operated by a for-profit entity — arrogate a portion of the school's funding to a black bottom-line, pleasing shareholders or enriching executives. Generally, they are not bound to labor-management rules that govern the hiring, firing, and wages of other public schoolteachers.

The law ratified by Washington legislators states that only non-profit entities may start and operate charter schools; religious and sectarian organizations as well as for-profit operators would not be allowed. Additionally, non-profit operators would not be able to contract the operation of the school out to a for-profit. While they could accept money or in-kind donations from many sources, its directors could not accept donations from faith groups. The law's authors and its supporters argue that these and other measures will ensure an open-to-all atmosphere and responsible financial management.

Still, the law raises the hackles of those who have fought to improve the state's public education.

"They won't work any better than the public school system," says Deanna Chew-Freidenberg, a mother of three children who are or have graduated from Seattle's public schools. "Charter schools are advertising like they're some miracle concept, and they're not. They are part of a neoconservative agenda to privatize public education."

The issue does split along ideological lines. A September 27 poll on the subject of Referendum 55 found that three-quarters of all respondents who identified themselves as Republicans said they would vote yes, upholding the legislation and authorizing the schools. Just over one-third of Democrats sided with them.

Roberto Maestas represents those on the left who are embracing the chartering process. They see it as a way to escape a school system that has been

**Roberto Maestas represents those on the left who see Charter Schools as a way to escape a system that has been minimally responsive to their priorities.**

*Continued on Page 11*



Look for the Mockingbird Times Inside!





## Up in arms about sitting down

Dear *Real Change*,

There is no good reason to keep Seattle's sidewalk sitting ordinance on the books.

The law is officially known as, "SMC 15.48.040: sitting or lying down on public sidewalks in downtown and neighborhood commercial zones." It is redundant and causes me personal frustration because I am harassed for occasionally sitting down downtown.

This law is redundant because it is already illegal to obstruct pedestrian traffic in the city of Seattle. I can see no other justification for the law than that people sitting are interfering with others' free movement. If a person is sitting on private property, the building owner or manager can ask them to move, as security guards sometimes do.

Another City of Seattle law "SMC

12A.12.015: pedestrian interference" states, "A person is guilty of pedestrian interference if, in a public place, he or she intentionally obstructs pedestrian or vehicular traffic."

The law also states, "Obstruct pedestrian or vehicular traffic means to walk, stand, sit, lie, or place an object in such a manner as to block passage by another person or a vehicle, or to require another person or a driver of a vehicle to take evasive action to avoid physical contact."

This is a reasonable law as long as the penalties are not too harsh, and can usually be enforced as needed by a police officer simply asking the interfering person to move. A scenario I've seen play itself out many times without further incident.

The law causes me personal frustration because employees of Seattle's Metropolitan Improvement District (MID) bother me sometimes when I am sitting in the downtown area. None of these instances involved the obstruction of pedestrian or vehicular traffic.

MID employees have ordered me to not sit at the Convention Center near the temporary library location, at the bus stop in front of Nordstrom, in front of Pacific Place and at a Second Avenue bus stop between Pike and Union.

Usually when I am harassed by the MID I am sitting on my trumpet case for less than five minutes because I stop and realize that I need to write something down in my organizer.

The third time I was approached by an MID employee I told him to call a cop. He did, the cop said that he agreed with me that the law was unnecessary,

but that instead of arguing with the MID I should call my city council representatives.

I have called all my city council representatives and the mayor to ask them to repeal the law. Nick Licata's office emailed me the two laws regarding pedestrian interference and sidewalk sitting.

Three other council member office staff members told me that if I wanted to change the law, I should start a grass roots campaign to do so.

This letter is the next step in that campaign. Please write your representatives and ask them to repeal this law.

**Greg Spence Wolf**  
Seattle

## Real Change is hiring: Office Manager

Responsible for keeping a small fast-paced office working smoothly by ordering supplies, coordinating volunteers, and supporting office systems.

Qualified candidates can motivate people, have experience working with volunteers, and are highly organized. Because this position provides some support keeping our computer network functioning, a high level of comfort with computers is required.

Salary DOE. People of color and people who have experienced homelessness or poverty especially encouraged to apply.

Position closes 10/12/04 at 5PM. For a full job description, please see [www.realchangenews.org](http://www.realchangenews.org)

## The Company We Keep

Real Change welcomes our revised Advisory Board

Over the past 10 years, *Real Change* has developed into an important community resource, offering broadly progressive coverage of breaking news and current trends that is grounded in issues of poverty and class. We offer a bridge between the haves and the have-nots, where common ground can be found in building a good society. With an average circulation of 17,500 copies per issue, we have made an enormous impact in Seattle and beyond.

Lately, we have thought a great deal about our community. While we have always considered ourselves a resource for Seattle progressives, when we're sniffing around for news, whom do we call first?

Our new Advisory Board, recruited over the summer and approved by our board this September, represents community activists, cultural leaders, academics, and elected officials who have agreed to take action on behalf of *Real Change*. They will offer community perspectives, political leadership, and other resources to help ground our paper in the communities we serve.

The *Real Change* Advisory Board is a work in progress, and we welcome nominations that expand our community of allies. Meanwhile, we would like to take this opportunity to say welcome and thank you to these friends of *Real Change*. Organizational affiliations are listed for identification purposes only.

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# Change

Reaching Out to End Poverty

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Submissions should be mailed to "Real Change," 2129 2nd Ave., Seattle, WA 98121. Tel. (206) 441-3247; fax. (206) 374-2455.

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Mission Statement:

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

Goals:

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

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

Editorial Policy:

Articles appearing in *Real Change* reflect the opinions and perspectives of the authors. We encourage the submission of journalism, opinion, fiction, poetry, and artwork, and hope to create a forum where the many perspectives on poverty and homelessness can find expression. *Real Change* reserves the right to edit any material for length and style. Articles considered libelous or which encourage violence, sexism, homophobia, or racism will not be considered for publication.

# Another World is Possible

The Northwest Social Forum is coming. Here's what it's about

by Dan Merkle

**O**n February 16, 2003, the lead story on the front page of the *New York Times* covered the hundreds of anti-war protests around the world. The opening sentence announced: "The fracturing of the Western alliance over Iraq and the huge anti-war demonstrations around the world this weekend are reminders that there may still be two superpowers on the planet: the United States and world public opinion."

It's time for a change.

Social movements around the world have been coming together at the last four World Social Forums to figure out how to work together. The World Social Forum was created shortly after the WTO protests in Seattle as a model to encourage movements like what took place in Seattle in 1999, and around the world in February 2003 to talk about where we want to go, not just what we are against.

The fourth World Social Forum was held in India this past January, following three annual meetings in Brazil. Hundreds of thousands of activists from around the world have attended these gatherings. The World Social Forum has spawned a kind of model — a way of working together that creates a space to build relationships and plans of action within and between communities, networks, and movements. The social forum model allows each group to maintain their own autonomy and to pick and choose how they want to do their work. The World Social Forum is not about building a big coalition or movement. It's about strengthening our many communities.

To do that, the regional social forums are being convened around the world to build these relationships on a local and national level. The Northwest is having its first social forum from October 14th to 17th at Seattle Center and other venues. The Northwest Social Forum will bring together activists working on issues of social justice, economic justice and environmental sustainability throughout the region, from *Washington, Oregon, Idaho, Montana, Alaska, British Columbia, and the Yukon.*

The NWSF has received over 200 proposals for workshops, panels, roundtables and cultural events (the proposals are listed on the website). Participants there may choose from workshops and events covering over 20 different themes, arranged by track. These include including economic alternatives; global justice; democracy; homelessness, affordable housing, and poverty; media democracy; women's rights; and peace and militarism.

The opening event is on October 14 at Town Hall with a large panel of speakers from the International Forum on Globalization ([www.ifg.org](http://www.ifg.org)). IFG held the famous teach-in during the WTO protests at Benaroya Hall; they are returning for the five-year reunion of the WTO.

The programming at Seattle Center will begin on Friday, October 15th at 2 p.m. with participatory roundtables involving some of the IFG speakers. A cultural celebration will be held on Friday at 6 p.m. with a wide range of performances. Farm workers from around the Northwest (and from Florida and Brazil) will highlight programming on Saturday, along with events on immigrant rights, education, and women's issues.

Sunday's programming includes events on the Middle East, including a national tour of three women from Jerusalem called Partners for Peace. A NW Social Forum Film Festival will run through the entire weekend, with a long list of great films covering local and international issues.

Portland's homeless tent city, Dignity Village, is setting up a model tent city at Seattle Center. Members of the tent city, called the Village Players of Dignity Village, will perform an original theater piece entitled "The Fillmore Hotel." In it, residents of a low-income seaside hotel are evicted to make way for a gentrified "haven for those with plenty of havens". A performance by the Immigrant Freedom Riders is another highlight of the weekend.

We understand that the weekend's events are but a small step forward. We understand that many communities may not be fully represented at this meeting. But we are hopeful this will be the first of many and will inspire other social forums around the U.S.

It's time for a change. Join us in building civil society and a new social agenda. ■

*Ticket and programming information for the Northwest Social Forum is available on the website ([www.nwsocialforum.org](http://www.nwsocialforum.org)). Registration scholarships are available ([info@nwsocialforum.org](mailto:info@nwsocialforum.org) or 866-NW-SOCIAL). Dan Merkle is a member of the NWSF Planning Committee and is the Executive Director of the Center for Social Justice ([www.centerforsocialjustice.org](http://www.centerforsocialjustice.org)). He can be reached at [danm@msfseattle.com](mailto:danm@msfseattle.com).*

**The World Social Forum has spawned a kind of model — a way of working together that creates a space to build relationships and plans of action within and between communities, networks, and movements.**

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**Take action to end poverty in less than TWO minutes.**

[www.realchangenews.org/firstthingsfirst/ftfhome.html](http://www.realchangenews.org/firstthingsfirst/ftfhome.html)

**(click the RED TAKE ACTION button)**

**This week's online action... Fax Mayor Greg Nickels to tell him that two years of cuts to people in need is enough—we can't take anymore!**

## Moving along

With winter looming, the clock is ticking on finding a new site for serving meals to the homeless downtown. The current outdoor feed, located at the Public Safety Building Plaza, will be gone when the building next door is demolished.

"It may be necessary to use a temporary site until a suitable permanent one can be found," says Beverly Graham, founder and Executive Director of Operation Sack Lunch. "It's not easy finding a place that meets all the criteria."

Patricia McInturff, Director of Human Services for the city of Seattle, agrees. Knowing the Plaza site was going to disappear, officials began looking for an alternative feeding venue some two years ago. "It must be accessible, have a flat serving area, toilets, garbage, and hopefully be within the free bus-ride zone. Security is also a concern," she says.

Indeed. The city's first alternative site, City Hall Park, was closed to dinnertime feeding by mayoral fiat after a series of ugly incidents in August. City-sanctioned providers were directed back to the Plaza site a few days later.

"The Plaza is the perfect place to serve, really," Graham comments. She should know; she has been spearheading the distribution of free food to the needy for the last 15 years. But times have changed. Because of reduced donations, she has had to cut back Operation Sack Lunch at the Plaza to once a week. Though she is optimistic about ramping up again as soon as possible, the Plaza will clearly not be the venue much longer. The search for a new, permanent site for the public feeding program has intensified.

In the meantime, food distribution goes on at the periphery of City Hall Park. There are groups that have been serving there for years, since well before the city began monitoring food distribution in downtown parks in the mid-1990s. Most are "unsanctioned," meaning, they prefer to work without city oversight. Some belong to the Meals Partnership Coalition, an umbrella organization which seeks to educate and inform people who would like to contribute to feeding the needy, facilitating and coordinating their efforts. The Coalition tries to see to it that members' charity flows smoothly, is evenly distributed, and that health and safety standards are met. However, membership is not free, and as nothing obligates a provider to join it, not everyone does. Regardless, the same standards must still

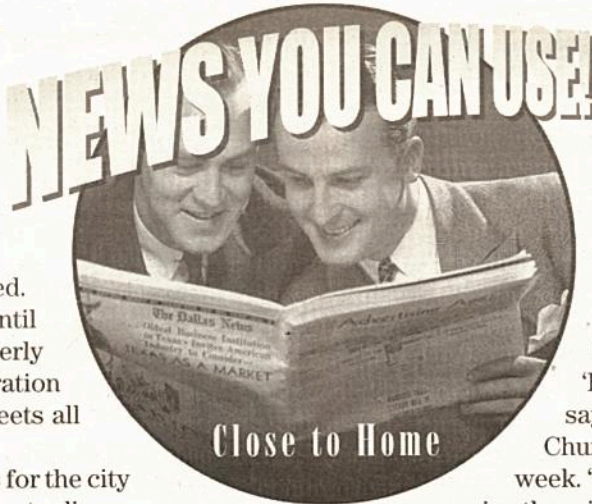


PHOTO BY BRUCE SAVADOW.

Like others, she is concerned about losing the Plaza site, especially if the city does not provide things like security at the new site. An October 6th meeting with the Mayor's Office may bring more to light about the meal program's next move.

—Tom Cogbill

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



### NORTH AMERICAN NEWSBRIEFS WWW.STREETNEWSERVICE.ORG

City officials in Springfield, Massachusetts are looking for alternatives to a homeless tent city. The city is discussing ways to expand shelter space and crafting an ordinance to prevent tent encampments in dense areas such as the downtown and business areas. **A camp began after homeless people and their advocates criticized current shelters as inadequate and unsanitary.** "The city of Springfield has moved responsibly and cautiously to mediate this very difficult situation, keeping in mind the concerns of the residents in the neighborhood and the residents of tent city," Mayor Charles V. Ryan told *The Republic*. He says there have been many meetings to discuss improvements to lodging for the homeless in time for the colder months ahead. **It's an effort hampered by the city's budget crisis.**

The seventh annual homeless Stand Down brought veterans across the region together under one roof in Pocatello, Idaho. Homeless veterans received everything from clothing and haircuts to helpful advice on services available to them. Some services included medical and dental check ups. "We're just here to give a hand up and offer a little assistance and get the resources that are available in this community under one roof for one day, so that somebody doesn't have to trek all around town to find out about job information or health information," Carey Austin, veterans' affairs, tells KIFI. **"It was really uplifting. I didn't know there was so many homeless people here,"** says Sandra Waddoups.

St. Louis officials now say a **municipal judge was wrong** in assigning homeless people accused but not convicted of nuisance crimes to perform community service. The mayor's office tells the *St. Louis Post-Dispatch* that the tactic will not be repeated, but insist that overall, the homeless downtown are treated fairly. The judge's order allowed the jail to release people who were arrested for certain offenses during the July Fourth weekend if they performed eight hours of community service work. About two dozen suspects picked

up litter around a downtown park without ever seeing a judge. **Comparing what happened to slavery, lawyers said they will continue with the suits.** They allege the order was part of a strategy to keep the homeless away from Fair St. Louis, the popular riverfront festival. In the face of another lawsuit from the ACLU, the city will stop accepting an annual gift of \$187,000 from a downtown organization to pay for the nuisance-crimes court. Critics have suggested the money might unfairly influence rulings. "The money is a bull's-eye on a great court program," said Jeff Rainford, the mayor's chief of staff. "We can work the same program within the existing muni-court budget, so we're going to remove the bull's-eye."

New York City will offer **free HIV antibody tests to homeless men**, with results available within an hour. Mayor Michael Bloomberg announced this week that city health workers are now offering the tests to single adult men at the city's homeless shelters, according to *The New York Times*. These tests eliminate the long wait for results, which leads many homeless people to avoid the testing or to never return for the results. Men who test positive for HIV infection will be offered medical referrals. The new program was launched to help identify the approximately 25 percent of the city's HIV-positive residents who are unaware they are infected. City officials say they are considering expanding the program to also include at-risk women.

Three Pennsylvania teenagers have been charged with **beating a 48-year-old homeless man to death over payment for beer.** Police say Thomas Hardy's body was found in a field after he was kicked, punched and beaten in the head with a log. Two 17-year-olds and an 18-year-old were arraigned on charges of criminal homicide, robbery, and conspiracy without bail, according to the Associated Press. One of them told police they had been drinking beer at a party campsite when the victim, who had provided the beer, asked them to pay. They paid the man, but returned to get their money back to buy cigarettes and then attacked Hardy. **"Probably the most disgusting thing was that it all happened over five dollars,"** says state police Lt. Patrick Gebhart.

—Compiled by Patty Lane

# Prejudice Undercover

## Activists want to cut biased drug stings from next year's city budget. Mayor Nickels wants to continue them

By Shelly Martin

On September 27, 2004, Seattle Mayor Greg Nickels presented his proposed 2005-2006 biennial budget to the City Council. Due to the economic slowdown and a court ruling against Seattle City Light, Nickels and the City Council face an estimated \$25 million shortfall over the next two years.

One way the Mayor proposes to balance the books is to eliminate 191 city government positions. Estimated savings from these employee cuts are \$10.9 million. Among the positions lost will be \$400,000 worth from Human Services.

Nickels also proposed a \$318,000 cut to the city's human services programs. Among the funding lost would be money for advocacy groups, a homeless youth shelter in the University District, and a crisis hotline for suicide counseling.

At the same time as he recommended cuts in needed human services programs, Nickels' budget proposal included \$2.3 million for a south downtown hygiene and homeless service center.

When asked about the \$2.3 million proposal, Julia Sterkovsky of the Seattle Human Services Coalition praised Nickels. "All the investments that he's making in human services are very good and very wise. But we're also disappointed that he's making these cuts in services when they are the most needed."

K.L. Shannon and Lisa Daugaard of the Racial Disparity Project and the Defenders Association have an idea how the City Council can redirect more money to human services. By scrapping the Seattle Police Department's "Buy-Bust" program, the council could save \$3 million to \$5 million.

The police use buy-busts to crack down on open-air drug markets. Members of an undercover Anti-Crime Team

approach small-time drug dealers on the streets and attempt to buy drugs from them.

The Defenders Association is representing 19 African American plaintiffs in a case challenging the legality of the buy-bust program. Currently waiting in Washington's Superior courts, the case contends that buy-busts are illegal on the grounds of selective enforcement. Attorneys at the Defenders Association argue that the buy-bust program is questionably concentrated in the police department's West Precinct.

"Drug exchanges on Capitol Hill are done almost exclusively by white people," says Daugaard, "and there are very few buy-busts done up there. Although Second and Pike [downtown] has about four times as many transactions as Broadway and Denny, the number of buy-busts done is about 12 times more, so it's not like the concentration of resources they're putting down there is a function of the number of transactions."

According to data collected by the Defenders Association and the Racial Disparity Project, the police department's Anti-Crime Team undertakes most buy-bust operations in the racially heterogeneous area of downtown Seattle. However, the overwhelming majority of people being arrested there are African American, a percentage that is not justified by the racial composition of that market.

When talking about his proposed budget on Monday, Nickels emphasized a four-point plan to eliminate Seattle's open-air drug markets. The plan would reinstate the "Stay Out of Drug Area" (SODA) program, which uses a court order to keep convicted dealers away from places that could be considered drug markets, and working with service providers to connect addicts with shelters, counseling, and rehab.

However, contrary to activists' desires, this plan would expand the buy-bust program throughout the city.

Daugaard argues that buy-busts don't show effective results. "Open-air drug markets are either exactly or almost exactly where they were a decade ago, so even if you don't have a political or racial justice objection to these kinds of operations, one can question what are they accomplishing, if anything."

K.L. Shannon agrees. "This money should be diverted to something else, because it's clear that buy-busts are ineffective. We have a budget crisis, and this money could be put into drug rehab centers or human services."

Shannon, Daugaard, and other activists in the Racial Disparity Project are starting a new coalition of organizations and con-

cerned citizens called Budget for Justice. They will work to raise community awareness of the racial disparity in buy-bust arrests and ask the City Council and the mayor to de-fund the program and find a fairer, more effective way to spend the money.

The first City Council public hearing on the proposed budget has been scheduled for October 7th. Budget for Justice is organizing a community forum on Oct. 5th to talk about the new budget in relation to the buy-bust program. The forum will be held at Bailey Gatzert Elementary School from 6 to 8 p.m. Dinner will be provided, and Budget for Justice will also have interpreters and child care on site. ■

*For more information on the budget process and its effect on the poor, see the Citizen Participation Project on the back page.*

**"This money should be diverted to something else, because it's clear that buy-busts are ineffective. We have a budget crisis, and this money could be put into drug rehab centers or human services."**

**K.L. Shannon  
Racial Disparity  
Project**



HERION USE IS A SERIOUS PROBLEM IN SEATTLE, BUT COMMUNITY ACTIVISTS QUESTION WHETHER BUY-BUST IS AN EFFECTIVE MEANS TO CONTROL THE PROBLEM. PHOTO BY GEORGE HICKEY.

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## A Dream

No check at Graduation  
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Haven't learned much  
This time around  
(Thought I knew everything)

I Didn't Listen!

(put a cigarette-in-my-mouth  
and I am "Lady-Talks-A lot")

—MARION SUE FISCHER

## I Am A Person Without A Home

I am a person without a home,  
Living under a bridge, just like a gnome.  
Mostly I am just ignored,  
Unless the police become too bored.  
Then it's as if I have no rights,  
Being kicked awake in the middle of the night.  
Made to move my harmless camp,  
Walking the streets in the cold and damp.  
Always trying to keep out of sight,  
Hugging the shadows, avoiding the light.  
As I walk the streets alone,  
I am a person without a home.

—JEFFERS JEFFERSON

## Waking Too Soon

A winter gray cloud rolls  
back and forth through my head.  
My eyes open to November light  
and I wake as a character  
in a Beckett play.

I lie in bed  
while minutes arise and fade  
and wonder how I got  
to this place in my life  
where nothing happens  
and some mornings I lack will.

Out on Greenwood Avenue,  
cars sweep cold blasts  
up and down the asphalt—  
a soundtrack repeating  
itself over and over.  
I hear every cough  
and rasp of woman laughter  
in the alleyway.

My thoughts gather  
into a low overcast  
as I stare at  
the scarred, wooden wall  
on the sleeping alcove  
in my tiny apartment  
in this building, circa 1962 —  
formerly a motel.

I should get up but would rather  
return to the velvet  
ether of sleep.

—JOHN GORSKI

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



**H**ooray! We're finally getting presidential debates! We are all suitably excited to see our great democracy in action, which we look forward to being imitated by all the nations of the world, especially backward nations where all people believe in false religions and use props!

That's right, we don't live in Gallagherstan. Our political parties have agreed that there will be no use of props by the candidates during the debates (which begin the evening of the day this issue appears, if the canary doesn't die). So we won't have to see Bush draw Osama's face on a watermelon and then smash it. Kerry will not use ketchup in any way to "brand" his campaign. No one will stick his head in a rubber

glove and blow. Both candidates will have to blow on their own.

And they will, if these debates go on. Thanks to the now infamous 32-page Memorandum of Understanding, the candidates are not allowed to do much else. As a result there is now general agreement throughout the country that these will not actually be debates. Critics have suggested various other characterizations, such as "scripted joint speeches" and "bi-partisan press conferences." I like the terms "un-debates" or "unbates" for short. "Planned verbal events" would be accurate.

Even the so-called Town Hall debate planned for October 8 doesn't allow for any spontaneous questioning. While the president's own rare press conferences have allowed follow-up questions from reporters, don't expect any of that at the Town Hall debate.

The questions asked in all the debates will be screened by the moderator, so might as well just be his or her questions. Neither candidate will be allowed to address the other. At the Town Hall event they've even gone so far as to ensure that the areas that Bush and Kerry move about in will not overlap. No horseplay! No extended shots of Bush standing next to Kerry showing Kerry's five-inch height advantage!

There will be no imitations of Ed Sullivan introducing celebrities in the audience. You will not hear Bush say, "I want you all to give a warm round of

applause to Donald Rumsfeld. That's him right there in the third row, Secretary of Defense Rumsfeld take a bow" because the Memorandum of Understanding explicitly makes that sort of thing *Verboten*.

The Memo of Understanding gets especially surreal where it grinds on about how the questions in the Town Hall debate will not be limited as to topic in any way, and then immediately adds that the number of questions on foreign policy and homeland security must equal the number on economics and domestic policy. So in the reality of our two major political parties "not limited" officially means "limited." Why am I not surprised?

I saved the worst rule of the Memorandum for last. That one states that the candidates who participate in the presidential debates may not only not debate each other in any other forums besides the three agreed upon, but they are also specifically forbidden to debate candidates of any other parties before the election. We all knew that neither Bush nor Kerry wanted to debate Nader, say, but now they have tried to make it look like they can't do it because their hands are tied: "Our campaigns had to agree to this Memorandum." Right, and their campaigns wrote the Memorandum.

Here's something to look for in the debates, especially the first one. Watch for the candidates to stretch the rules (the rules that they themselves insisted upon) in order to show what mavericks they are. When Bush shows how macho he is by breaking the rule against directly questioning Kerry, and Jim Lehrer tells him he can't do that, look for the smirk. When Kerry proves he has what it takes to be a leader by taking bold and decisive action to step briefly away from the podium, watch how he then shows his sunshiney, personable side when he steps back.

After all, the first debate is all about who's going to defeat the terrorists. Everybody knows we're not going to defeat the terrorists by playing by the rules, right? ■

**When Bush shows how macho he is by breaking the rule against directly questioning Kerry, and Jim Lehrer tells him he can't do that, look for the smirk.**

**SCHOOLS, Continued from page 1**

minimally responsive to their priorities.

Maestas remembers a recent funding crunch that nearly closed *Proyecto Saber* (Project Knowledge), a Latino special-ed program at two area public schools. People from the Latino community, Maestas among them, fought hard to persuade the School Board to keep it running. He remembers well that no teachers ever came before the board to defend *Proyecto Saber*.

"The American Federation of Teachers and the National Education Association have not had to fight tooth and toenail for every little gain in these mainstream institutions. The interests of the teachers and principals are not those of the students. Our interests, when we start a charter school, will not be the teachers or the administration; it will be the children.

"The school districts are incapable of addressing the specific needs of our children; of providing the loving, embracing, empowering education that our children need."

Rogelio Riojas is director of SeaMar Community Health Center, a health clinic and day care center serving low-income people. Most of the staff are bilingual in Spanish and English; they specialize in medical care for the Latino community. Riojas offered to provide mentors for students at a South Park elementary school near the clinic. No thanks, said the principal.

"These guys are not flexible," says Riojas. "There are hundreds of non-profit organizations in the Seattle that can help. But the public schools are like, 'No, this is our thing and we're going to keep doing it our way.' I just thought, what a waste of resources."

The evidence suggests that Riojas' is the kind of help the public school system in Seattle, and around the state, is in need of.

As in every other state in the union, a free education through the 12th grade is open to all Washington children. Yet the reality of race still poses a formidable barrier to equal education.

A 2002 report to the state's Academic Achievement and Accountability Commission tracked the graduation rate for students across racial lines in 1999, 2000, and 2001. It found that an average of 94 percent of the state's Asian and Pacific Islander seventh-graders had finished high school within the usual five-year timeframe. In turn, about 70 percent of white seventh-graders graduated in five years. This number dips to 58 percent for African Americans and Latinos, and drops further, to 49 percent, for Native Americans.

A greater proportion of students of color, especially Blacks, Latinos, and Native Americans, lag behind whites and Asian/Pacific Islander students in math and reading. This gap is reflected in the results of the Washington Assessment of Student Learning (WASL), the

*Continued to page 13*

## Following the money

Support from wealthy dwarfs labor led opposition

Campaign reports provided to the state's Public Disclosure Commission shows that the pro-charter schools campaign is bankrolled in substantial part by three wealthy men: Donald Walton, a relative of the founder of Wal-Mart; John Fisher, co-founder of The Gap; and Microsoft chairman Bill Gates. Each has given \$300,000 to an organization called Approve Referendum 55, which has purchased nearly half a million dollars in television and print advertising. Of the three, only Gates lives in Washington. Other notable contributors are Reed Hastings, the CEO and founder of NetFlix, and Eli Broad, the chairman of AIG Retirement Services. They have given \$90,254 and \$100,000, respectively. Broad lives in Los Angeles.

Though it has also gotten money from out of state, the No on 55 side has received far more modest sums.

The national headquarters of the American Federation of Teachers has sent \$55,000 to the campaign organization Protect our Public Schools. The Washington Education Association has provided \$400,000 in money and in-kind donations. Protect our Public Schools' big checks come substantially from organized labor: the

Washington State Labor Council, the Service Employees International Union, the United Food and Commercial Workers. Numerous individuals have given amounts as small as \$5. The opposition has them enormously out-

nations from organized labor as of September 14 were only one-tenth of the amount that five wealthy men had contributed to the pro-charter team.

Unlike candidates' races, state initiatives and referenda are unfettered by campaign finance limits. ■



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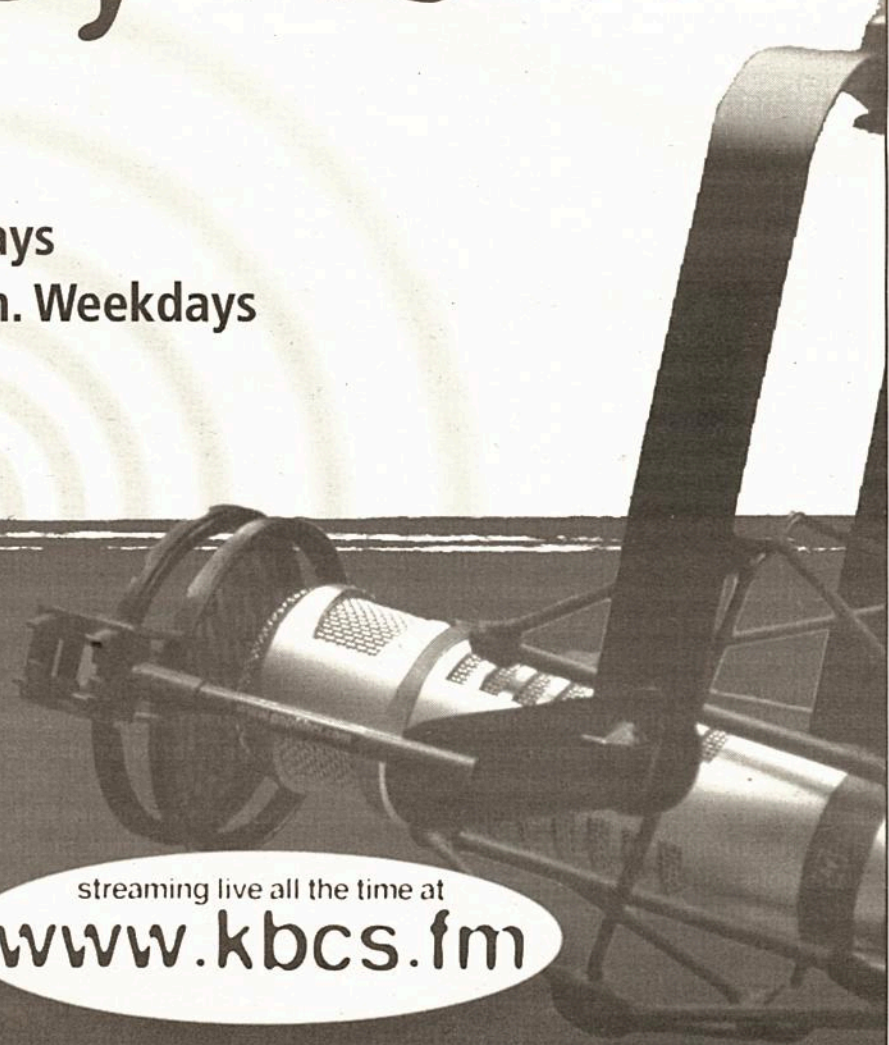
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# A Bill of Goods

Gubernatorial candidate Ron Sims, soundly defeated in the September primary, talks about taxes, race, and Dino Rossi

Interview by Adam Hyla

**Real Change:** You made tax reform the foremost topic in the governor's race before the primary. It's an issue of economic justice, since Washington's is the most regressive tax system of any state in the nation. How did tax reform play on the campaign trail?

**Ron Sims:** I don't believe what happened to me was a referendum on tax reform. As a matter of fact, there were a lot of people who were supportive. Their reluctance to vote for me was based upon their perception that tax reform — or, they would say, an income tax — coupled with my support for same-sex marriage would pose a difficult challenge in winning statewide. I disagree with that, but nonetheless that's the way voters went.

Nobody would create the current tax system today, and we know that the tax burden in the state of Washington is disproportionately put on the shoulders of people who are poor. I kept saying throughout the campaign that we needed to provide middle-class tax relief and tax relief for the poor and most vulnerable, and shift that burden onto people who are wealthier.

We're going to have tax justice; we have to have it. We just cannot be a state known to tell people who are poor: we're going to hit you harder than we're going to hit anybody else. I mean, there's just something really fundamentally wrong with that, right? To have a system of government that not only devalues your services, which our government does, but also denies you services and still ensures that you're going to have higher taxes. Anywhere else, people would be outraged.

**RC:** And you suggested eliminating the Business and Occupation tax, the annual tax on all businesses?

**Sims:** Yeah, eliminate the B&O tax. That would allow companies to invest far more in the health care of their employees, invest in job expansion and economic growth. I still think that is an issue whose time has come. I hope that we see that as well. The dollars would multiply faster in our economy if we let the private sector make its reinvest-

ments, rather than have the government handle the money.

**RC:** And what were you proposing to do with property taxes?

**Sims:** We have a number of people who are literally the working poor, or they've been retired for 10 or 15 years, and their retirement income has not grown as rapidly per year as the value of their home in terms of its tax rate. They need relief too. I was proposing that if you owned a house above \$600,000, you'd probably pay more, 2 to 3 percent more than an individual who is under \$600,000.

Right now it is the poor in our communities that are worried about an income tax, because they think it's one more tax, but I keep telling people it isn't one more tax. In fact, we are folding all of these taxes into the Constitution. So that it would be more difficult for a tax to be re-imposed. Poor people were sold a bill of goods in regards to

**Sims:** No, we didn't.

**RC:** And I think you said that to the press immediately afterwards.

**Sims:** Sure did.

**RC:** How did the sorority snafu appear to you?

**Sims:** What do you mean, how did it appear to me? I don't know quite how to answer your question. We saw it like everybody else did, there wasn't much to it. And it wasn't our issue. What was more interesting was how we got hit with it, how we got blamed for it. That's what really rankled me.

**RC:** You know, talk about racist. To blame a Black man—

**Sims:** Well I don't think it's racist, she's not a racist. I've known racists, I know racists, I've seen racists, and she's not a racist by any standard at all. By any standard.

**RC:** You spent a lot of time with Dino Rossi on the campaign trail. What do you think of Dino? It's said that he's very slick, a very good salesman.

**Sims:** Well, I don't know if I'd call him slick. I think he's earnest, I really do. I'm not going to support him. But I



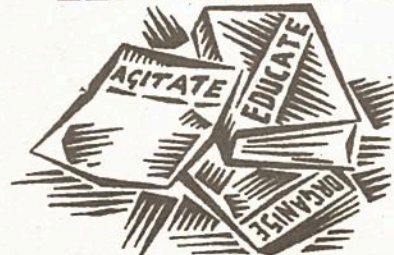
RON SIMS SPEAKS TO A CONSTITUENT AT A 43RD DISTRICT DEMOCRATS MEETING. PHOTO BY KEN DEAN.

why we shouldn't impose a tax that I believe ultimately was to their benefit.

**RC:** Just after the primary, The Seattle Times wrote that "tempers flared recently when Gregoire accused Sims of helping whip up a controversy over her role in a whites-only sorority at the University of Washington in the late 1960s." Did you or your campaign do anything to bring her background to light?

wouldn't demonize him, and I think he gave us a better budget [in his role as Senate leader] than Gary Locke, quite frankly. But I believe that Gregoire will be a much better governor. ■

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## Street Watch

### Wednesday September 22nd, 10 a.m., Federal Army Navy Store, First Avenue.

Complainant watched as the suspect, a transient white male aged 48, took off his dirty jeans and replaced them with a fresh pair from the store's stock. He then added insult to crime by folding his dirty jeans and placing them in the "for sale" stack. He also took a camping stove and hid it beneath a pile of clothes. Suspect had put on the store's pants without the civility of underwear. The store naturally did not want the pants back. Suspect was arrested, and wore the store's pants to jail.

### Thursday September 23rd, 5 p.m., 2300 block of Western Avenue.

Officers observed the suspect, a white male aged 29, sleeping in a fenced-off prohibited entry area under the viaduct on the 2300 block of Western. The area was fully fenced off with many visible signs stating "No Trespassing." Suspect was booked into jail for criminal trespass.

### Thursday September 23rd, 5:45 p.m., Third Avenue Convenience Store.

A transient Black male aged 48 attempted to buy a cigarette with an obviously counterfeit \$5 bill. The complainant did not serve the man, and called SPD. The officer that responded to the scene stated that the subject is a transient emotionally disturbed man whom he has dealt with on many occasions. He received the bills while panhandling, and does not have the capacity to distinguish between valid and counterfeit bills. Subject gave officers the second counterfeit bill, and was released. The bills were entered into evidence.

### Thursday September 23rd, 10 p.m., Fifth Avenue and Seneca Street.

Officers were contacted by a hospital in regard to a rape victim. Officers contacted the victim, a transient female aged 57, and she stated that earlier that day she had taken a bus to downtown Seattle to panhandle. She met up with two other females who she knew slightly, but only by their street names. The two women introduced her to the three male suspects, and she got into a van with them, leaving the other women behind. She stated that two of the men forced her to have sex with them after they had given her narcotics. She was having a hard time talking and was rambling a bit, so the officer gave her a case number and said he would talk to her again when she had rested.

### Friday September 24th, 9:16 p.m., 400 block of Sixth Avenue South.

A transient white male aged 39 called 911 to say he had just cut his wrists. There was a police car in the area as the call came in, and officer arrived at the scene and managed to stop the bleeding by applying direct pressure and a bandage. Seattle Fire treated the man further, and then he was transferred to Harborview Medical Center with paperwork requesting a 72-hour involuntary hold.

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## SCHOOLS, Continued from page 11

annual exam conducted on all fourth-, seventh-, and 10th-graders. According to a 2002 paper prepared for the state achievement commission and the UW Center on Reinventing Public Education, WASL scores among students of these ethnic backgrounds are slowly rising. But an improbably dramatic improvement of 80 to 100 percent would be needed in the next five years for all students to be on par, regardless of race.

Schools with a greater proportion of children living in poverty are much more likely to exhibit poor WASL scores. Race still trumps class, however: factor out economic differences, and those gaps in test scores are still apparent.

There are other indicators of trouble. Latino and Native American students tend to be held back more often than other ethnic groups, according to a 2002 report to the state's Academic Achievement & Accountability Commission. By ninth grade, at least 15 percent of the Latino and Native American students in Washington public schools are two years old or older than the rest of their classmates. An over-age student is highly likely to drop out rather than endure the shame of being in high school at the age of 20.

Two years ago, the *Seattle Post Intelligencer* released a special investigation finding that while African American students made up just 23 percent of the city's high schools, they were subject to 44 percent of the district's suspensions and expulsions.

Barbara Morey is a foster parent of five, four of whom are in Seattle Public Schools' publicly run alternative programs. A member of the Task Force on Multiracial Education and former secretary of Citizens for the Effective Administration of Seattle Education

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Past policies "have been at the root of why South End schools are worse than North End schools. I'm in full solidarity with the Latino community and the South Pacific Islander community, as well as the Native American and African American community. They have waited long enough; their communities have a right to be at the top of the list."

CEASE played a supportive role in electing reform-minded candidates Sally Soriano and Brita Butler-Wall to the School Board last fall. Under their influence and with the leadership of board president Mary Bass, Morey sees the board taking an ever stronger stand against the unequal status quo.

Still, "the public has to be really involved, really on the board's butt. As long as they're not divided and conquered, there's real potential there." Charter schools would be a wrinkle in those works. "I hope we don't drain off our energy and impetus" with an effort to start parallel schools.

Soriano, on the School Board, agrees. Even though the law at hand will prevent for-profits from entering the charter school business here, nothing prevents a non-profit from doing things the School Board doesn't like. "You could have a CEO of a non-profit who defines his own salary: \$500,000. There's nothing in this legislation that could [prevent that]."

Communities of color that want to address their children's educational needs should give the School Board one more try. Or, "go have your own school.

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Soriano is especially concerned about the power of the state to intervene in local school districts, handing over entire schools with persistently low test scores to charter operators. So-called "conversion schools" would usurp local control over the education of poorer students and children of color. Moreover, she says that while a charter company now owns the school, the school district would continue to pay for its maintenance—a financial drain. Local districts "could be in jeopardy of losing our public assets through this legislation," she says.

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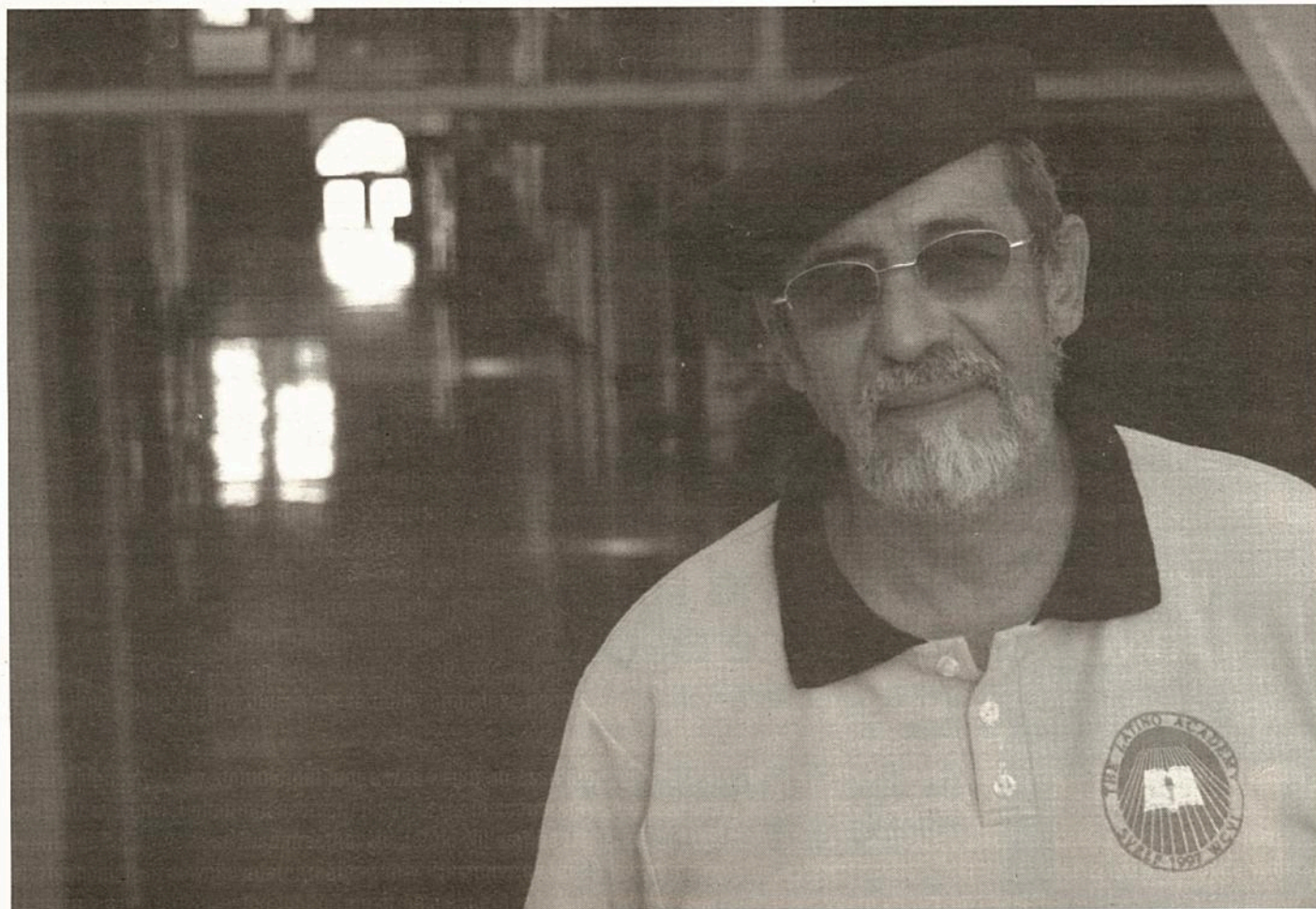
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That was 1986. Since then, Kelly has joined the call for charter schools. ■

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EL CENTRO DE LA RAZA DIRECTOR ROBERTO MAESTAS SAYS THAT HE TRUSTS THE LATINO COMMUNITY WILL RUN SCHOOLS RESPONSIBLY. PHOTO BY BROOKE KEMPNER.



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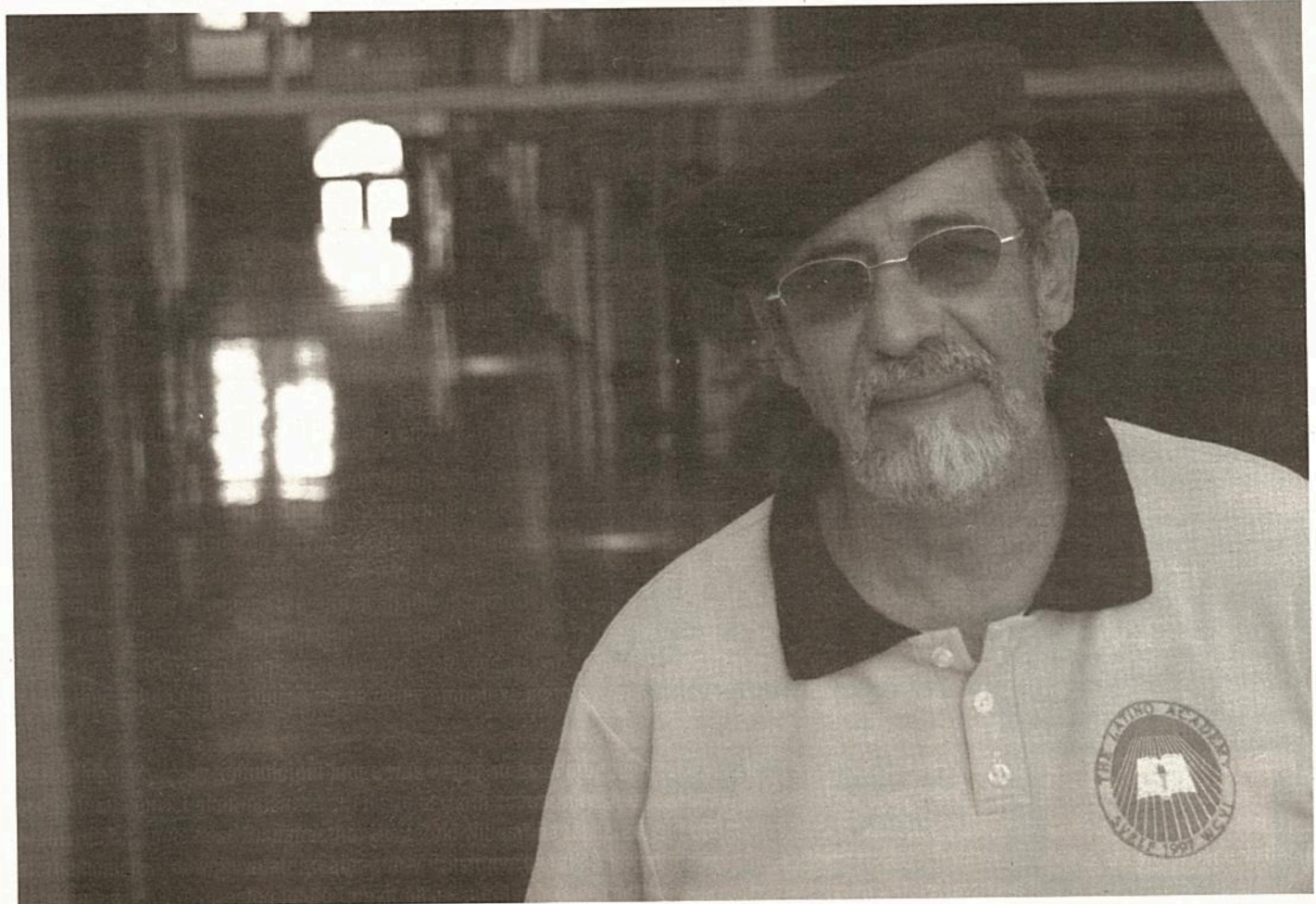
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# Reason

## Why Liberals Will Win the Battle for America

by Robert B. Reich

Knopf; 2004; 272 pages; \$24.00

ISBN: 1400042216

Review by Anitra Freeman

These days, it's hard to find many who proudly call themselves "liberal." Between those who demeaned the word by beating their chests in guilt-trips to avoid angry confrontations, and those who disparaged the word as a political strategy to disparage liberal ideas, the word "liberal" is more popular these days among opponents of liberalism than among its defenders.

Robert Reich is proud to be a liberal, and he makes a stand worth being proud of. In a polarized country in which few people on the "left" can define liberalism and few people on the "right" can define conservatism, in an anti-intellectual culture in which hardly anyone can tell the difference between issues and the ideological theory that provides the framework for those issues, Reich provides the clearest description of liberalism in print today, and its strongest intellectual defense.

The "culture wars" are not a clash between those who support morality and those who oppose morality. They are a clash between two systems of morality, which sometimes agree and sometimes conflict, but which are based on fundamentally opposing assumptions. Reich cuts past the conflicts on surface issues to raise those basic ideological assumptions into view. The majority of Americans have a liberal set of beliefs; they need only an articulate, relevant way to express them.

Another bit of clarity Reich offers is pointing out that there is no "vast right-wing conspiracy." When a lot of people share basic assumptions and motiva-

tions, they will expend their resources in ways that further those, which creates a self-reinforcing system that shapes public opinion and policies. This should be happening among those who share opposing assumptions and motivations, too — except that we have been internally conflicted too much and too long.

One of the things that liberals need in order to work together is an understanding of our basic principles so that we can work with allies that we don't agree with 102 percent on individual issues. I do not agree with all of Robert Reich's positions on individual issues; in particular, his defense of exporting manufacturing jobs overseas and paying foreign workers less to do them than we pay American workers, and his expectation that American workers can be prosperous specializing in intellectual work and service work. I do agree with him on basic principles and core values.

As Reich says, "when you know who you are and what you believe, you've got a much better chance of winning." America has been through this crisis before, with liberalism in disarray and the convenient doctrines of Social Darwinism providing moral justification for the Robber Barons. The fundamental ideals of the American people rose up to turn that around, at the beginnings of the 20th Century. We can do it again, in the 21st Century. Real Change is here because we agree with Robert Reich: "And when you and I join with others, and commit ourselves to the long-term struggle to revive our democracy and rededicate this nation to the liberal ideals on which it is founded, we will win."

Let's do it. ■

**"When you know who you are and what you believe, you've got a much better chance of winning."**

CLASSICS CORNER



BY PERFESS'R HARRIS

### Blood Thirst: a literary perspective on salty snacks

It's surprising how often a background in classics comes in handy, offering a rich tapestry against which modern experience may be evaluated and understood. Last month, for example, as George Bush assured us that things were going well in Iraq, a leader of the Sunni rebels was quoted on NPR saying that they would one day "drink the blood of Allawi."

To modern sensibilities, this feels rather over the top. One just doesn't go about promising to drink the blood of their enemies, especially on NPR. But to classicists such as ourselves, the quaffing of blood is dense with literary allusion.

The Scythians, described at length in the *Histories* of Herodotus, are, of course, the blood drinkers *par excellence*. This was a nomadic warrior tribe located about a thousand miles northwest of Iraq in the southern plains of Russia. They would drink the blood of the first enemy they killed, and after that deliver the head to their king. Then they would usually remove the scalp, work the leather until soft, and maybe sew a few dozen of these into a nice warm coat. Human skin was also employed for arrow quivers (hands, apparently, are especially good for this), and even as canvas for yurts. Don't mess with the Scythians.

In *Ezekiel 39*, in one of those broken promises God makes to Israel to try and make up for his generally abusive relationship, he says they will destroy someplace called Gog so completely it will take seven months to bury all the bodies. Then God gets really carried away, rambling on about eating "the flesh of the mighty" and drinking "the blood of the princes of the earth... until you are drunk." Drunk on blood. Nice. Go God!

Blood drinking also arises in Sophocles. In *Oedipus at Colonus*, the exiled king pleads with Theseus for burial on Athenian soil. Oedipus tells the King of Athens that while his country and Thebes may now be at peace, his "slumbering and buried corpse" would one day drink Theban blood. In this instance, blood drinking wimps out, descending to the merely metaphorical.

Along similarly poetic lines, we find a great deal of flesh eating in Homer. This, as an expression of rage, is very much akin to the blood-drinking thing. Zeus, in book 4 of the *Iliad*, tells Hera she has lost all sense of proportion about Troy. "Insatiable Hera. If only you could devour Priam and Priam's sons and the Trojan armies raw — Then you just might cure your rage at last."

In the same heroic vein, Achilles discusses his lunch plans in book 22. Hector is done for, and Achilles, being Achilles, dismisses his plea to be allowed some dignity in death. "Would to God my rage, my fury would drive me now to hack away your flesh and eat you raw—such agonies you have caused me."

So, let's review. We have blood drinking as warrior ritual, as declaration of total victory, as metaphor for war, and as poetic expression of all consuming rage.

Maybe we shouldn't mess with the Sunnis either. ■

**One just doesn't go about promising to drink the blood of their enemies, especially on NPR.**



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## Support Human Need in the City Budget

**Issue:** On Monday, September 27th, Seattle Mayor Greg Nickels presented his proposed 2005–2006 budget which protects and even expands some important community health and human services. At the same time, however, it reduces services that are just as critical, by almost \$318,000. The City Council now has until the end of November to pass a final, balanced budget.

**Background:** At the budget announcement, the mayor's speech focused on protecting public safety, prioritizing long-neglected southeast Seattle neighborhoods, and adding funds for homeless day and hygiene services. He also highlighted eliminating 191 city staff positions. Mayor Nickels deserves credit for addressing longstanding needs and making internal cuts first. But this is just one side of the story, and the other side is more disappointing.

His budget cuts legal advocacy programs that help low-income people fight for the state and federal benefits they are entitled to, a domestic violence prevention program, and the only shelter for young adults in the city. These are part of a funding category called "systems support," which directly meets the needs of Seattle residents. Others systems support programs bring together groups of human service providers to leverage funding from other branches of government and the private sector. One program the Mayor recommends cutting preserved \$16 million in King County human services funding last year. Another organized a group of service providers to receive \$150,000 from a local foundation for homeless youth services. Another saved healthcare for 25,000 Washington children, including 4,000 in the city of Seattle. By investing in these programs, Seattle maintains access to state, county, and private resources for direct services that are far greater than City resources.

The total amount the Mayor wants to cut is just under \$318,000. That's a lot for the programs who count on these funds, but not much for the City Council to restore. Advocates even have suggestions about where to find the money, such as eliminating the \$3 million a year spent on unfair and ineffective drug tactics (see "Prejudice Undercover," page 5), cutting the PR positions in the Office of Housing and the Human Services Department, or saying no to public dollars for a streetcar.

Cutting systems support funds weakens our community's efforts to keep people safe and healthy. Cutting funds to coordinate advocacy means that in the future, fewer state, county, and private resources will be available to meet Seattle residents' most basic needs. When that happens, will the City of Seattle be able to fill the gaps? Not likely.

**Action:** Fortunately, the Seattle City Council is easy to reach, and has a history of being responsive to constituent input. You can call, write, or email Councilmembers (in that order of effectiveness.)

### Got five minutes?

Go to [www.realchangenews.org](http://www.realchangenews.org), click First things First, and then click Take Action to send a pre-written letter to all nine councilmembers. If you have six minutes, personalize it.

### Got 10 minutes?

Write a short letter or postcard (in your own handwriting) to key Councilmembers Drago, McIver, Rasmussen, Godden, and Conlin. Tell them you expect them to stand up for our city's most important resource — its people — and to demonstrate that by making no further cuts to human services. City contact info may be found at [www.seattle.gov](http://www.seattle.gov)

### Got 15 minutes?

Phone councilmembers with this simple message: "I'm concerned about the Mayor's proposed cuts to human services. Please vote for a budget that restores all funding for systems support and other services that keep people safe and healthy in their communities. There are better places to find savings."



The Attorney General's Office is recruiting consumer analyst volunteers to work with the general public and businesses to **resolve consumer complaints**. Requirements include working a minimum of 10 hours a week over at least a six-month period. Many benefits offered, including college credit and transportation reimbursement. For information call Sean Beary, 206-464-6984.

Just a little bit of help will go a long way and help keep us from shutting the doors at the U-District Young Adult Shelter — an amazing program ensuring that **homeless youth** have services, meals, and a place to sleep each night and more. We are really hit hard by a shortage of volunteers. Call Carla Bueno at 206-920-2006 or e-mail her at [uyshelter@yahoo.com](mailto:uyshelter@yahoo.com).

Become an advocate for **abused and neglected children**. Learn how the legal system works and how it can work for children. Must be 21, have excellent references and participate in training prior to case assignment. Training dates are October 29, 30, and November 6 and 8 in Seattle. Contact us four weeks prior to training dates at 206-296-1120 or at [gal.group@metrokc.gov](mailto:gal.group@metrokc.gov).

To post a volunteer opportunity for FREE, email [adsales@realchangenews.org](mailto:adsales@realchangenews.org) or call Candi at 206-441-3247 ext. 205.

**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, October 27, 4:30 p.m., at the *Real Change* office. Everyone welcome. For additional information about the meeting, please call Adam at 206-441-3247, ext. 207, or email [editor@realchangenews.org](mailto:editor@realchangenews.org).

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# Mockingbird Times

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



October 2004

Foster Care and Homeless Youth Speak out Across the Nation

Volume IV, Issue 10

Visit us online at [www.mockingbirdsociety.org](http://www.mockingbirdsociety.org)

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Check out our Bonus Articles Section Online at [mockingbirdsociety.org](http://mockingbirdsociety.org)

## Judicial Conference Highlights Foster Care Experience

DARIUS REYNOLDS



THE 47<sup>TH</sup> ANNUAL JUDICIAL CONFERENCE WAS HELD IN SPOKANE, WASHINGTON THIS YEAR. Echo Speed and I were invited to be part of a workshop called Foster Care: The Good, The Bad and the Ugly, facilitated by Judge Patricia Clark and Judge LeRoy McCullough. This workshop was put together to educate judges about foster care and give them an opportunity to hear from people who have been involved in the system, as well as share their ideas on what judges can do to make more positive decisions for youth in foster care.

I enjoyed being on the panel because it gave me a chance to tell the judges a little about what I went through in foster care and gave me a chance to make some recommendations about what I think works. Each panel member shared their personal story and thoughts about how to make the court experience more effective for foster kids. Panelist Estakio Beltran reported that a stable education is important for foster children, stating that it is important to "stabilize children through a stable education." Other panelist recommendations included foster parents being encouraged to treat foster kids like their own kids, giving foster

kids a chance to voice what they want to happen with their lives and judges taking the time to talk to foster kids one-on-one. After everyone on the panel spoke, the judges in the audience were given a chance to ask the panel questions, like how race is important when deciding where to place a child. The workshop also included a discussion about the juvenile dependency case process, racial disproportionality, as well as a panel who discussed the Braam lawsuit.

At this conference I learned that a lot of the things the state was supposed to do when I went into foster care never happened. Hopefully by telling the judges my story they will make sure the same thing doesn't happen to another youth. I really enjoyed the question and answer part of the workshop because for the first time in my life, a judge was asking me for advice and listening to what I had to say.

They should have conferences like this all across the country because it is important that the judges hear from the people who are involved in foster care, especially the youth.

The youth can honestly tell what is working, and if we invite youth to speak at more of these forums and conventions they will know that there are people out here who will listen.

Make sure to check out our photo gallery from this event online at [www.mockingbirdsociety.org](http://www.mockingbirdsociety.org). For more information about the Braam lawsuit check out the Attorney General's website at [www.atg.wa.gov/braam/releases.shtml](http://www.atg.wa.gov/braam/releases.shtml)



Panel Participants Darius Reynolds, Adam Cornell, Estakio Beltran, Freddie Hamlet, David Stewart and Echo Speed. Photos by MBT Staff.



Panelists and foster parents Freddie Hamlet and David Stewart.



Panelist member Echo Speed. (MBT)



Panelist members Darius Reynolds (MBT), and Adam Cornell (former foster youth).

## Alumni Corner: Where Do I Go Now? The Challenges of Life After Foster Care

CASEY BATSON



IF PEOPLE ASK YOU WHO YOUR PARENTS ARE AND YOU DON'T KNOW WHAT TO SAY, if you feel awkward talking about your childhood, or if you want to cry when people mention memories of their childhood, then you might be a foster child. If you are a former foster youth, someone who has left your state's care system, then you may be experiencing a world many people could never understand.

For young adults who left their natural families as children, the challenges of real life can seem even more overwhelming than they are already. Foster children are considered adults at the age of 18. Thankfully in most states they are currently allowed to finish their senior year with the foster home they are in before being expected to fend for themselves. This has not always been the case; many had to move out before graduation. Adulthood for these youth is an entirely different experience and offers many more opportunities for failure and hopelessness.

When children from middle-income or wealthier families graduate from high school, they usually have a network of support encouraging them and offering financial help. If the child goes to college, many often only pay half of their own tuition or none at all. During Fall, Winter, Spring and Summer breaks these students usually return home while out of school thus postponing the need to find their own apartment until graduated from college. Parents and grandparents of children not removed from their homes send care packages, notes, and little checks to help them through. They often help them move into a dorm or campus housing. Even if a child does not go to college, often parents allow them to stay up to five more years at home with no rent, all bills paid, food and laundry free. None of this happens for foster youth—without some intervention.

ALUMNI CORNER CONTINUED ON PAGE 2

# Letter from the Editor

JIM THEOFELIS



I RECENTLY HAD THE OPPORTUNITY to provide some clinical consultation to a team of professionals and foster parents regarding a 12-year-old girl who is having extreme difficulty during the bedtime routine. This is not unusual—I frequently provide consultation and training to this age group who know the nightmare of sexual abuse and frequently have difficulty with bedtime and sleep.

If you think of it for a moment, we typically become less and less able to defend ourselves the deeper into the bedtime routine we go. In fact one of the issues these particular foster parents were having is that the little girl did not want to wear pajamas and nightgowns but instead wanted to wear her regular clothing to bed. For this child, her jeans, sweatshirt and day clothing served as comfortable armor in her daily quest to experience a sense of safety and control. Not only were the night clothes less protective, but also the process of changing clothes presented a clear signal that bedtime was near, which activated an anxiety response in itself.

Transitions are often very difficult for any child but for the survivor of abuse a transition typically reflects "change" which so many have experienced as negative. Their change from an innocent child to carrying a deeply confusing secret, change from living at home with this secret to being "placed" into a "new" home, and the change of schools, teachers and friends. Regarding the bedtime routine, the change is dramatic and for many

children and adolescents traumatic—every night. During the day we are active, often protected and even distracted from our fears and anxieties and yet bedtime means being alone in bed with those same thoughts, hopes, fears and anxieties.

Frequently for the survivor of sexual abuse, bedtime is a process that reactivates the memories and fears of being hurt usually by someone in a trusted and loving position. **For many sexual abuse survivors being asleep is the same as being undefendable in an unpredictable world.** Who wants to sign up for that? As a result of the consult a number of strategies were decided upon, including having some discussions with the child about what she needs to feel safe, protected and some sense of control during bedtime (incidentally, she had some very good ideas).

However the most important change in the approach of the adults was the their fundamental way of viewing this situation. To their credit, and a testimony of their concern and skill, the foster parents shifted from viewing this child's behavior during the bedtime routine as one of pathology needing to be fixed. Instead, they adopted the perspective that this child experienced a severe and repetitive trauma that has resulted in her having extra difficulty allowing herself to transition to a place of increased dependency and vulnerability: sleep.

This new perspective has brought change to their role during the bedtime routine allowing them to participate with the child rather than the child withdrawing and power struggles escalating. **To the frightened child at bedtime the most important and reassuring assistance is the presence of an adult the child trusts.** To their credit and the child's benefit these caring foster parents are now able to be that adult for this child.

Jim Theofelis

[jim@mockingbirdsociety.org](mailto:jim@mockingbirdsociety.org)

## ALUMNI CORNER CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

When a foster youth graduates high school they must have a place to go immediately. They must be going to a college dorm or to their own apartment. If they were allowed to remain in their foster home until school started, they can go straight to the dorm. Otherwise, the student has to save during their senior year for their first place. If they are the fortunate one who does go to school and has scholarships and financial aid, then they still have the two big breaks to think about: Winter and Summer. For a former foster youth there are not too many choices of where to go during these times and this can be very depressing for the young adult. Since the young person left home many years earlier, staying with natural family is not comfortable or would get them in trouble. Even the best foster parents often can't take in their former youth because someone new is already sleeping in their old bed. That's one more thing...no place to call home. But just wait—there are more challenges.

For example, if the youth did not save up for an apartment or go to college, they may end up in a group home or a city shelter. Sadly, many individuals reside in these situations inevitably due to personal limitations or lack of support. A successful young person may make it through school with the proper support. Along the way though they need people to help them get their first apartment (co-signer needed since they have no credit history), turn on utilities (plan for all the deposits), and open and manage a checking account (understanding the financial responsibilities). Parents or guardians and other relatives usually do these things for young adults, but the youth out of care is often out of luck.

If you know a foster youth or work with foster children, help them network all they can; offer practical advice for independent living; get them a mentor—a person who will talk them through solutions when problems arise. If you are a foster youth, there are people out there who care, and a church group or foster care advocacy group can be located to help you. You are not alone and you can make a wonderful life for yourself. Let people know who you are, what you need and what they can do to help. May God bless your path.

If you would like your story heard, we are looking for submissions for our Alumni Corner right now! Send your story to: [newspaper@mockingbirdsociety.org](mailto:newspaper@mockingbirdsociety.org).

## Letter to the Editor

Dear Anthony,

As a subscriber to the *Mockingbird Times*, I am writing to affirm your article in the August issue (*Guatemalans Provide New Definition of Wealth*)! Your insight, awareness, and wisdom is powerful. Your words encourage me to keep on being polite, expressing hospitality, and caring. Continue shining your light, treating others with respect and living out your values. This world needs you!

In Admiration,

Biji



**Quote of the Month: It may be long before the law of love will be recognized in international affairs. The machineries of government stand between and hide the hearts of one people from those of another.**

-Gandhi

## THANK YOU'S...

Wild Geese Productions, Joyce Showalter, 47th Annual Judicial Conference Participants, in particular Erica Chung, Judge Patricia Clark and Judge Leroy McCullough, *Seattle Post-Intelligencer*, Senator Thibaudeau, Microsoft, Margaret Ann and Mark LeRoy.

**ABOUT US:** The Mockingbird Society is a private non-profit organization dedicated to building a world class foster care system and improving the other systems that serve children and adolescents involved in homelessness and foster care. The *Mockingbird Times* is a monthly newspaper written and produced by youth who have experience in foster care and/or homelessness. All youth employees of Mockingbird Society are paid between \$7.50 and \$8.50 an hour. Youth from across the country submit articles, art work, and poetry. Youth are compensated up to \$25 per published piece. The *Mockingbird Times* has a monthly circulation of 60,000 copies being distributed across Washington and the U.S.A. We are distributed through several venues, including as an insert inside *Real Change*, *The Seattle Star* and *The Seattle Sun*, our own mailing list and being available online. Youth involvement is the key to the philosophy, values, and success of The Mockingbird Society and, as such, youth are involved in all aspects of organizational development and decision-making. Donations to The Mockingbird Society may be tax-deductible and are greatly appreciated. No part of the *Mockingbird Times* may be reproduced without the written permission of The Mockingbird Society. All contents copyright 2004 The Mockingbird Society.

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# MOCKINGBIRD RECOMMENDED READING:

## ON THEIR OWN; WHAT HAPPENS TO KIDS WHEN THEY AGE OUT OF THE FOSTER CARE SYSTEM

COURTNEY KONIETZKO



"Although Hollywood commonly portrays children in foster care as toddlers clutching teddy bears, nearly one-half are eleven or older." -Shirk and Stangler

**ON THEIR OWN, WHAT HAPPENS TO KIDS WHEN THEY AGE OUT OF THE FOSTER CARE SYSTEM** BY MARTHA SHIRK AND GARY STANGLER IS AN EMOTIONALLY MOVING NON-FICTION ACCOUNT of the lives of eight youth who went through the foster care system and the struggles they face as they try to 'make it' in the adult world. There is a foreword by former President Jimmy Carter and an introduction by authors Shirk and Stangler. President Carter remarks, "The reality is that young people who leave foster care at age eighteen are no more ready to become independent than our own children. In fact, most are probably less ready."

*On Their Own* evoked various emotions, sometimes not very happy emotions, like in the case of Holly Moffett's story when she describes what child-abuse investigators saw when they visited her home. Moffett recalls that "There was no working shower, and the bathtub was clogged up with puke. The refrigerator wasn't working, and all the food in it was bad. There were maggots in the sink, and dirty clothes everywhere..."

A great feature about *On Their Own* is that there is a conclusion section that includes things you can do

to help foster youth. Stangler and Shirk propose specific strategies in the areas of: education, employment, housing, health care, and personal and community engagement. Here are some highlights:

**Education:** provide educational liaisons or advocates, help them engage in school life (extracurricular activities), broaden their horizons (helping them connect learning with career), help them get into college, and help them stay there.

**"WITHIN A FEW YEARS OF LEAVING FOSTER CARE..."**

- »Only slightly more than half of these young people have graduated from high school, compared with 85 percent of all youth eighteen to twenty-four years old.
- »One-fourth have endured some period of homelessness.
- »Almost two-thirds have not maintained employment for a year.
- »Four out of ten have become parents.
- »Not even one in five is completely self-supporting
- »One in four males and one in ten females have spent time in jail."

**Employment:** expose youth in care to the world of work, help youth in care to get jobs, expose youth to career options, connect youth with proven programs, and educate youth about money.

**Housing:** helping young people meet start-up needs (furniture and the like for their first place) and helping them maintain their housing.

**Healthcare:** advocating for Medicaid coverage and linking young people to free or low-cost care.

Stangler and Shirk define youth engagement as "involving young people in the creation of their own destinies." According to Stangler and Shirk, kids who are not in foster care struggle with these same five areas but not to the same extent because they have the support of their parents in more ways than one.

*On Their Own* gives a face to each name by placing photos with each chapter, and each chapter is devoted to one youth. You get the sense that these are lives that are just beginning and the overall feeling is not one of optimism. I agree that much needs to be done in order for the system to better prepare foster youth to transition better into adulthood.

Stirk and Stangler suggest that more money be allocated for independent living services because right now youth have to fight over slim existing funds that are not adequate. Carter agrees, saying that "In 1999, Congress passed and President Clinton signed the Foster Care Independence Act, also called the Chafee Act, which expanded transition services for older youth leaving foster care. Although the new government mandates and funding are welcome, they are far from sufficient. Ensuring the safe passage of these young people into adulthood will take more creativity and cooperation than has been mustered so far."

Carter goes on to say that, "The question we should ask ourselves is this: If we willingly give our own children the benefit of our support as they struggle to become independent, productive adults, why do we tolerate the abrupt withdrawal of support for youth who are aging out of care?"



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## Fall Fashion Corner is Back

HOLLIS RIGGINS



**THE NEED FOR TWEED IS IN THIS FALL.** Yes, you heard right, I said tweed! The difference between the classic look of tweed and its new modern appearance is that now it's being mixed and matched to achieve a chic, sexy, funky, or glamorous look instead of the very outdated head-to-tie nightmare.

This season's tweed is very versatile. It can be worn with denim, leather, silk or satin, metallic, even plaids or contrasting tweed if done correctly. The color to wear this season is purple, so if you can take a pair of boot-cut jeans, a purple camisole and throw in a cropped tweed jacket, you will definitely add a little spice to casual Friday.

This fall, tweed is so affordable you can create a celebrity wardrobe on a tight budget. Right now Nordstrom's junior department carries tweed jackets starting at only \$50; designer jackets can run you about \$4,000. Club Monaco's selection includes a tweed blazer timed in velvet (\$199) and cropped jacket (\$179). Next month

GAP is expecting to have a fitted tweed blazer for about \$90; Sears has a black-and-cream jacket and matching skirt for \$64 and \$38 respectively. You can also catch a very hip and functional \$140 version at Express.

Many moderately-priced stores, including Banana Republic and Club Monaco, offer custom tailoring to make sure you get a proper fit--take full advantage of that. Trust me, nothing will make you look better than something that is custom-fit to suit your body type, but that's another article.



MBT's Echo Speed illustrates Fall's latest look.

One thing you might be wondering is how, once you and your friends have acquired these jackets, to keep from showing up at a party without looking like the girl across the room. The way you avoid that is to decorate your jacket to show who you are. It's simple to do--all you need is a few vintage buttons, a new lining or trim, or you can even dress it up a bit by using a synthetic flower blossom.

Just remember that no matter where you buy your tweed or how much you spend, the most important thing when shopping for a jacket is to choose one that suits your personality or adds your own flavor. Then you too can be this year's fall fashion rave!

## Mockingbird On the Fly

Do you ever wonder what Mockingbird Reporters and staff are doing when they are not reporting the news? We thought we would let you in on a few of the events and projects that Mockingbird is involved with this fall...

- Working with Wild Geese Productions to create a documentary about the Mockingbird Society, the foster care/kinship care system, and youth homelessness, which will be created in part by our reporting staff!
- On September 20th, 2004, Reporters Echo Speed and Darius Reynolds participated in the 47<sup>th</sup> Washington Judicial Conference in Spokane, WA to discuss their experience in the foster care system.
- On September 30th, 2004, Executive Director Jim Theofelis and Reporter Darius Reynolds will be participating in a homelessness forum entitled A Denial of Human Rights, put on by the Seattle Human Rights Commission.
- On October 14th, 2004, Reporters Ashley Grant, Jamica Henderson, Darius Reynolds and Rico Evans will be giving foster parents advice, feedback and telling about their own experience in the system at the annual conference of foster parents in Washington State, put on by Foster Parents Association of Washington State (FPAWS)

# Mockingbird Halloween Special: Supernatural Events—Will We Ever Know the Truth?

DARIUS REYNOLDS

Here is an amazing story for you. On June 30<sup>th</sup>, 1908, there was an explosion in a swamp area near the Tunguska River in Siberia. The Evenki, a local tribe, claims to have seen an object in the sky with a tail that was 800 kilometers long (497 miles). The Evenki claimed that it made no noise as it passed over them but when it hit the ground there were five explosions. These explosions sent a seismic wave that was felt around the world. They also claim that a huge fire ball went several thousand feet in the air and could be seen for hundreds of miles. This explosion produced so much heat that everything within 375 miles of the explosion was destroyed. Scientists were not able to explore the swamp area until thirteen years later, and there was no sign of a meteor hitting earth. What could have caused this explosion?



Image from [www.cognitivedistortion.com](http://www.cognitivedistortion.com)

Are there aliens stealing planes and boats in the Bermuda Triangle? Do ghosts really exist? Are the rocks in Death Valley, California really moving on their own? Many people believe the answers to these questions are yes. There are also many people who are skeptical when it comes to believing in supernatural phenomena. Scientists can clone a sheep and break down DNA, but if a man claims that a ball of lightning comes into his house and moves around like it has a mind of its own and science can't explain it, then the man must have been crazy, right? Just because science can't explain something doesn't mean it's not real or it didn't happen, it just means we didn't understand it.

I recently watched a documentary called "What the #\*\$! Do We Know," about Quantum Physics. One of the scientists in the movie said that sometimes when we see something we've never seen before, our mind does not register it. This means that we don't know what we're seeing even if it's right in front of us. This might explain why we can't see ghosts. For centuries people have claimed to see ghosts and UFO's all over the world.

Nova interviewed the Astronomer Carl Sagan, a skeptic of the existence of extraterrestrials. However, Sagan is very involved in trying to find life on other planets and find proof that aliens exist. Sagan states, "There is a claim that a Brontosaurus is tramping through the jungles today in the Republic of Congo. Should a massive expedition be mounted with government funds to find it, or is it so implausible as not to be

worth serious sustained systematic attention?" Sagan means that no matter how extreme the reports are, we need to investigate before we can claim them as true or not. I believe that most of the videos of UFO's and ghosts on television are probably fake. However, I also believe that ghosts are real and that we are not alone in the universe. I say that we should stop looking for proof and accept the fact that there are things in this world that we won't ever understand.

## Movie Review: Hero Enthralls the Eye

COURTNEY KONIETZKO

THE FILM *YING XIONG* ALSO KNOWN AS *HERO* WAS NOT WHAT I EXPECTED. I went to see *Hero* expecting an action-packed martial arts movie and what I got instead was an exquisitely beautiful 'art film' that enthralls the eye but leaves little to the mind. I think that to understand *Hero* better it would have helped to know the history of China better. *Hero* is based on a true story that takes place when China was divided into seven kingdoms ruled by the Emperor Qin who was trying to unite the seven kingdoms into one. The director, Zhang Yimou takes a spin on this, using it as the baseline for his story adding in three assassins: Broken Sword, Flying Snow, and Sky who are out to have Emperor Qin dead. *Hero* is a story within a story as Nameless, the main character played by Jet Li, comes closer and closer to the Emperor's throne to recount how he killed the assassins, the camera flashes back into colorful pictures of Nameless' journeys. It returns to the tension building between Nameless and the Emperor as Nameless gets closer to the throne because the Emperor suspects Nameless wants to kill him. There are hundreds of candles set up between Nameless and the throne and they flicker according to what is said and felt. Nameless is within ten paces of the throne when things began to get strange...



Image from [www.heromovie.org](http://www.heromovie.org)

turn from one color to another until the whole forest and sky turns blood red matching the red outfits of the two women fighting in the forest. The director bathes each landscape in subtle hues and intense colors that are extremely striking, complimenting the shades of the many brightly colored outfits the characters wear. This is the reason to go see *Hero* - the visual appeal. Do not go for action, an easy to understand story line, or with many expectations because it won't be what you expect. I am a big fan of martial arts movies and have never seen anything quite like this. At first I felt sort of cheated, "What? I paid money for this!" In retrospect, it was a good film, a beautiful film; even though it didn't live up to my high expectations. Anything that has Quentin Tarantino's name attached to it has to be good is my logic even though Quentin was only involved in buying the rights to *Hero* and making sure it was shown in the United States.

There's a stellar cast and crew in *Hero* of big Asian names: Jet Li stars as Nameless, a soldier with no name, Donnie Yen of Iron Monkey and Shanghai Knights fame plays one of the assassins Sky, Tony Leung Chiu Wai plays one of the three assassins Broken Sword, Maggie Cheung plays another of the assassins Flying Snow; Broken Sword and Flying Snow are lovers. Zhang Ziyi, known for her role in *Crouching Tiger Hidden Dragon* plays Moon, a servant to Broken Sword and Flying Snow, and Daoming Chen plays the King of Qin.

*Hero* is the biggest grossing film ever in Chinese history and was released there in 2002 as *Ying xiong*. *Hero* is rated PG-13 and runs an hour and 36 minutes. I would wait until *Hero* comes out on home video if you have a decent sized TV. If not, go see it in theatre if you want to see a visual masterpiece.

## POETRY CORNER



### Mama, Mommy, Mom, Mother, Monster

JESSIE SHOEMAKER

It's been years, but I'm still codependent as ever. How could your negative influence be my one foundation? How could you, the inconsistent, be my one consistency? I see your face in mine, and in past years that drew from me, self-hatred, disgust, humility, but now? I don't know. I guess now it reminds me of where I came from. It reminds me of who you were, who you are, who you will be, who I was, who I am, who I will be- seeing similarities—and being comforted. The way my eyes look when I hate, the way your eyes look when you look at me. Similarities.

You let men love me in ways only a willing woman should be loved. You left me to die. Hogtied. Always hogtied and always whispering, Mommy, I love you, help me. When I grew old enough to fight, to stand my ground, to make decisions, you left me. It didn't matter that the decisions I made were bad, it didn't matter that I was still a baby. You left, and thought nothing of it.

You were fluid, intangible; you slipped through my fingers. I need you. You were always moving, always changing. You lost me, you forgot me, you left me. My last statement to you, mama, mommy, mom, mother, monster. I let you go. I let you go.

### Euterology, 1994

By JAKE PALADINI

Note: This poem was inspired by Kurt Cobain lyrics...I know it's cliché but fug it.

My Misery Secretly eats at me  
Beat me out of me down with me  
Die with me Buy this Heat...I'm a Senseless Apprentice  
The Stress is relentless my 357  
ends this endless depressive message  
that presses my deepest recesses  
repetitive Sentences questions my Worth as a Person  
But First What's Worse is my Further Excursion  
From Birth to Hurst I burn an Yearn For an Earlier  
extermination  
This eternal internal disillusioned disintegration  
My Obnoxious Subconscious pops thoughts an talks this  
Non Stop  
Propostrous Nonsense

### The Mask

KYLE P.

March 1, 2004

To you he seems like a happy guy. He has a date. He has some friends. Sure he has some problems but, doesn't everybody? If only you could see beneath the mask to the pain and hurt he feels. If you knew who he really is you would know a weak fragile little boy caught in the pains of love and loss. He's too scared to love again, but too alone not to. He faces memories nobody should ever have. Lately he cries himself to sleep. His losses are more than his gains. He loses his family and gains a pack of cigarettes. His world is black, yet still he laughs and smiles. When you ask him how he's doing he forces himself not to cry. Every day he dies a little more. Next time you look at him see past the mask and into the eyes of a scared boy, don't see the happy freshman you think you know. He doesn't want your pity; he only wants your understanding. I know his feelings because I am him, so please, next time you see me, look beyond the mask.