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REAL CHANGE

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Bon-Macy's Dirty Work

Seattle Janitors try to make work pay

State to Kids' Health: Fuhgeddaboutit 4 Nickels' Tunnel Vision 5 Mad Science 7 Evil is us 14

COVER ART BY TATIANA GILL.

By Adam Hyla

Without looking up, Elaine Johnson can tell which employee has walked into the staff restroom at Southcenter Mall by the sound of their shoes on the floor. Bent over her work, she calls out greetings to them as they enter the room: "Hi, Cindy!" With mild surprise, her coworkers say hi back.

"I've been working there too long," says Johnson.

Long enough to gather up more than her share of nightmare cleaning stories, mostly revolving around the store's public bathrooms.

One time, it was a tampon and a dam of feces that she had to remove from a toilet's maw using her own arm, sheathed in a double layer of garbage bags. This year, there was the overflowing toilet in the crowded ladies' room during the day-after-Thanksgiving sale.

"I'm trying to plunge it — I'm plunging it and plunging it, and then it looks like the water's going down," she said, laughing in exasperation in the Kent apartment that she has painstakingly decorated for Christmas.

"So I flush the toilet, and then all of a sudden — oh God, the water starts pumping out of that toilet, and the poop, and the people keep walking in the bath-

room and stepping in it. I say 'Honey, I told you, don't walk there!' Now I got to spray her shoes with disinfectant."

The eventual culprit: a plastic clothes hanger.

Johnson works as a janitor at the Bon-Macy's store in the Southcenter shopping complex. She readies three floors of retail space for the day's first customers. She and her coworkers at the Southcenter store have one advantage over many other custodians: they have a union, and the union has helped them win full family medical, dental, and short-term disability coverage that doesn't cost the workers a penny.

On the other hand, the last labor contract between the union and their employer resulted in a \$2.76 per hour pay cut, from \$11.86 to \$9.10. Now, Johnson makes \$9.80 an hour — the same amount she made 10 years ago. Her wages are not much more than

some non-union janitors, according to an informal survey of local custodial firms.

"I don't know who to be angry with," says Johnson, "the Bon or the union."

"When we signed the contract three years ago, workers made major concessions," says Rebecca Saldaña of the Service Employees International Union, Local 6, who has been working

"We're cleaning the filth and grime — the poop and grime and blood and urine, and there is no respect for our work."

Elaine Johnson, Bon-Macy Janitor



with 40-some janitors, floor waxers, carpet cleaners, and window washers at the Bon's three stores where the cleaning staff are union — downtown,

Southcenter, and Northgate.

"We're cleaning the filth and grime — the poop and grime and blood and urine," Johnson says. "And there is no respect for our work."

Bon managers and union representatives of BON-Macy's only unionized janitors, who all work at the Downtown Seattle location, at the Northgate Mall, or at Southcenter, are in talks now to renew a labor contract that expired in June. Labor is trying to restore, at least in part, the wage losses that Elaine and her Southcenter coworkers suffered in 2002. Those losses resulted from poor representation at the bargaining table, says Johnson. This time, union officials say they will be stronger. For one thing, Johnson herself is on the negotiating team.

For another, SEIU, locally and nationally, has re-energized its efforts to organize low-wage workers. Fresh from its 2003 victory over the non-union Allied Building Services, a cleaning contractor that was edging into downtown Seattle's largely union marketplace, SEIU officials say they won't make the kind of concessions Johnson experienced in 2002.

Most notably, union officials and

Continued to page 11





Joy to the world

Dear *Real Change*,

I hope you enjoy these "alternative Christmas carols" — whether you actually decide to print them or not. Feel free to pass 'em around — they belong to the world!

Sincerely,
Barbara Tomlinson
Seattle

Away in a manger
No room for a bed
A child of Fallujah
Lays down her weary head
She's shivering, she's crying
Hasn't eaten all day
Under constant bombardment
She's in America's way
Away in a manger
His parents killed in their beds
A child of Fallujah (Najaf, RamadiÖ)
Swears vengeance on their heads.
Al-Qaeda's recruiting
He's easy to sway
Under constant bombardment
He's in George Bush's way
Away in a manger
Having lost their only bed
A family of Fallujah
Huddles in mortal dread.
Their livelihood's gone
All possessions swept away
Kills lying sick and wounded
They're in Empire's way.

Oh — you
Better not fight, better not cry
Better not shout, I'm tellin' you why:
Paraplegic Dad is coming
To town.
He's applied for benefits
Sent in applications twice
They seem to ignore him
Whether he acts naughty or nice
Paraplegic Vet is coming
To town
He's got some trouble sleeping
He's in pain when he's awake
He has his good days and his bad
So humor him for goodness sake
So — you
Better not fight, don't let him see you cry
You better prepare yourself
I'm telling you why
Paraplegic Mom is the next to come
To town

Count those votes

Dear *Real Change*,

In our democracy, we are guaranteed by our system of government that

each and every one of us who is of age and legally competent may vote and that each of our votes will be counted in an election.

Rossi and the Republican Party are trying to disenfranchise the King County voters whose votes were not counted in the governor's race - due to error.

Our democracy and way of life are under attack here. ALL votes MUST be counted - period!

Sincerely,
Valerie J. Nicholls
Seattle

Peace through plants

Dear *Real Change*,

The year-end holidays are upon us: Christmas, Chanukah, Kwanzaa, Winter Solstice. They conjure visions of families gathered by a warm fireplace, opening presents, sharing their love, and... feasting on ham and turkey. It's the happiest time of the year — for some.

But, for the millions of factory-farmed pigs and turkeys our holiday season portends only agony, despair, and death after a lifetime of caging, crowding, deprivation, drugging, and mutilation.

Each of us can refuse to subsidize such wanton violence and cruelty during this holiday season by choosing plant-based foods that abound in every supermarket. There are fresh fruits and greens and soy-based deli slices in the produce section, veggie burgers, soy nuggets, and ready-to-eat dinners in the frozen food section, and a variety of soy-based milks, cheeses, and ice creams.

This year, let's have a Gentle Christmas. Let's send the message of "peace on earth" to all living beings.

Sincerely,
Sheldon Oates
Seattle, WA 98121

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Real Change

Fairness, Opportunity, Community

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Mission Statement:

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

Goals:

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

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

Editorial Policy:

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

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An Act of Faith

Hope, action, and transformation: what's it worth?

If you've been watching this space the past few issues, it won't be news that we need money. This has been a year of gearing up. Midway through the year we added a Vendor Field Coordinator to offer our vendors the support they need to succeed. This month, we brought on two part-time journalists.

In another month, we'll begin weekly publication. Our vendors will always have a fresh issue. Our news and advocacy will be much more current. Will we be able to pull it off? We hope so. It's a risk. Right now, we have about three weeks expenses in the bank. But we're pushing ahead. Call it an act of faith.

In October, we announced a campaign to raise \$105,000 from our readers by the end of 2004. This would bring us into 2005 with a little money to grow on. The response has been gratifying. Nearly 500 people attended our 10th anniversary benefit. Many of our readers have contributed for the first time. Others have increased their usual gift. So far, we've reached \$72,000. But here we are. It's December 20, and we still need to raise another \$33,000 to meet our goal.

Real Change has never been about just selling papers. It's about relationships, hope, transformation, and action. Our vendors start selling the paper, and they find that they are no longer alone. As Vendor Rick Clarke recently said, "Since I started selling this paper, I've dared to hope."

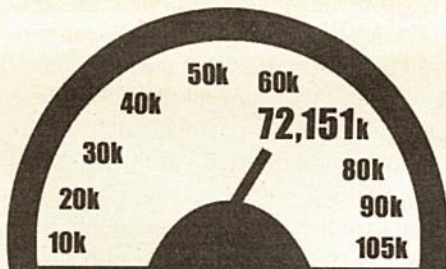
We're doing a bit of hoping of our own. Time and again, it happens that we really don't know how we'll meet payroll next month, and then something happens. Maybe it's a grant we weren't expecting. Maybe it's a big anonymous check. *Real Change*, more often than I'd like to say, has been bailed out by the kindness of strangers.

So here we are, two weeks away from the end of the year, nearly \$33,000 from our fundraising goal, hoping that you will do your part. If you read this paper and have never donated before, this is the time.

We're building *Real Change* to be here for the long haul. Next year, increased circulation and ad sales will make our growth sustainable. But right now, we're relying on you. Be part of the magic of *Real Change*. Please support our work however you are able. ■

We're building *Real Change* to be here for the long haul. But right now, we're counting on you.

No one gets Free parking.



Reader Support Meter



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In Seattle you'd pay \$1 for the paper you're Reading. The vendor pays 30¢, we pay the printer.

You don't get much for nothing these days, and that includes *Real Change*. More than 40% of our 2004 budget comes from donations made by readers like you. That support keeps our doors open.

We need your help to continue to make a difference in the lives of hundreds of homeless and low-income vendors who sell *Real Change* every month.

We need to raise \$105,000 by December 31st to start 2005 on solid ground. Your contribution will help us provide a dignified alternative to panhandling and allow us to continue publishing the stories you've come to expect. As you consider your holiday giving, please consider doing a little more. Use the coupon below to make a tax deductible contribution today. We'll keep you updated on our progress.

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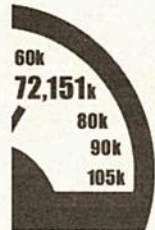
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Act Now! to end poverty.

Turn to the back cover for this week's action.

Online Action center:

<http://www.realchangenews.org/firstthingsfirst/ftfhome.html>

**Unfinished Business:
Ask Governor Locke to
remove barriers to
children's health care
before he leaves office.**



Hearst vs. Times: stuck in the middle

The battle between the owners of Seattle's two daily papers is releasing some bad blood between each paper's staff.

The year-end elections for the executive board of the Pacific Northwest Newspaper Guild are livelier than usual, say union members, because of the platform of five particular candidates who work in the *Seattle Times* newsroom.

Those candidates want the union to seriously reconsider or even end its support for the Committee for a Two Newspaper Town, the community organization started in response to the potential demise of the *Post-Intelligencer*.

These five candidates say that the guild, which has provided about half of the committee's funds as well as staffing assistance in its legal efforts, is aiding a lawsuit that could shutter the *Times* and throw its own members out of work.

They're referring specifically to the committee's participation in *P-I* owner Hearst's lawsuit against the *Times* over the *Times*' attempt to get out of the Joint Operating Agreement that keeps both papers afloat.

Since May 2003, the guild's board has approved \$18,000 in donations to the Committee for a Two-Newspaper Town, according to guild staffer Liz Brown. That comprises "significant contributions" for legal support, says former Supreme Court justice Phil Talmadge, co-chair of the Committee for a Two-Newspaper Town.

The guild's decisions are in the interest of its membership, says guild vice-president and *P-I* reporter Kery Murakami. Having a place in Hearst's suit means that the two companies can't settle without consulting the Committee for a Two-Newspaper Town. And if that happens, the committee will have the guild's interests in mind. That could work regardless of whose jobs are on the line.

"We wanted leverage for whoever would need help," says Murakami.

"I believe that [supporting the committee] was our best course of action at the time the membership decided to get involved in it," says board president Nyssa Rogers, who works at the *Times*, in her re-election candidates' statement.

But Rogers and other guild members say that times have changed. Back then, when the *Times* served notice to Hearst that it would end the JOA, "*P-I* jobs were in imminent danger and the union felt it should step in and save those jobs," says Luke Timmerman, a *Times* newsroom employee who's running for guild leadership for the first time.

The Committee for a Two-Newspaper Town "hasn't done anything besides take Hearst's side in court," says *Times* employee Susan Kelleher. Instead, "it's joined the suit against my employer."

Times owner Frank Blethen has made it clear to his employees that advertising revenue and circulation are shrinking. On November 5, Blethen met with newsroom employees to talk about the financial picture. He said that the *Times* would lose \$12 million in 2004, and warned that layoffs might come in 2005, according to *Times* newsroom employee David Heath, who was at the meeting.

None of the slate of candidates running from the *Times* were there; moreover, Heath says, Blethen made no specific requests that those present get involved with the guild. None of the challenger candidates working for the *Times* have said that Blethen put them up to the task.

Times spokeswoman Kerry Coughlin also says Blethen never invited anyone to run for the guild. "It was their own decision" to run, she says.

"What Frank has done is share some information with them so they can see for themselves the continued impact that the Committee for a Two-Newspaper Town will have. It boils down to the committee's involvement in the lawsuit, which is that they've sided with Hearst in their suit against the *Times*."

Blethen expressed the guild's role in the *Times*' predicament in his own words in a Sept. 7 email to employees: who says that the guild's support for the Committee for a Two Newspaper Town, "by inadvertently helping Hearst drag out the clock and further bleed *The Seattle Times*, has actually hurt the *Times* and guild employees."



"It's a fight between two corporate media conglomerates, and we the workers are stuck in the middle," says the *P-I*'s Murakami, "and one side is very afraid."

Lest Blethen's communiques look too unseemly, management at Hearst has also weighed in on the guild's activities. "Roger [Oglesby, *P-I* publisher] told a few of us at one of his meet-the-troops meetings last month that he thinks the guild should continue to communicate with both sides, and that that kind of communication has an effect," wrote *P-I* reporter Gregory Roberts in a Dec. 1 email to guild boardmembers and staff.

An earlier vote of the guild's membership to withdraw support for the committee failed by about 20 votes.

Times staffer David Heath says ending the guild's support of the committee would not be an anti-worker move. "If most people want to do it this way, that's not anti-guild, that is the guild. It's a democracy. The guild is what the membership wants it to be."

The guild's election is Dec. 31.

—by Adam Hyla

Locke budget hurts health care

Welcome to 2005, a year when more of the disabled and working poor could find themselves making a New Year's resolution not to go to the doctor.

That's the only choice thousands more people will have if Washington state can't find \$800 million to fund the counseling, medical and dental services, and disability assistance that are targeted for cuts.

Gov. Gary Locke recommended the cuts Dec. 16 in a proposed budget of \$26 billion to the state Legislature.

In his first-ever move to increase taxes, the outgoing governor also proposed saving some of the services by raising nearly \$600 million, primarily from "sin taxes" that would add a nickel to the cost of a soda or beer.

If the Legislature doesn't fund the targeted programs, community advocates and health workers say, the full \$800 million in cuts would be drastic.

Without new taxes, Locke's budget would cut 17,200 people from the state's low-income Basic Health insurance plan, end all dental work for adults on Medicaid, require premium payments of \$10-\$15 per month for children on Medicaid, and reduce in-home personal aide visits for old and disabled Medicaid recipients.

Twenty-two community health clinics would also lose half their state funding (\$11.6 million), and all cash grants from the state's General Assistance Unemployable program would be eliminated for some 16,000 people who are disabled and cannot work.

Cheri Keller, a budget assistant to Gov. Locke, says the majority of those people live downtown in Seattle's Belltown district on average monthly checks of \$296.

"They're disabled, they have mental-health problems, they have physical problems. Without cash grants, they are going to be up shit creek," says Tony Lee, a human services lobbyist with Seattle's Fremont Public Association.

"There are lots of other things," Lee says of the cuts. "The list goes on."

The \$600 million in new taxes proposed by Locke would "buy back" most of the cuts, Lee says. It would also provide 7,100 new slots at state colleges and universities, more student grants, better foster-care services, and \$54 million more in alcohol and substance abuse treatment — all of which Lee cited as positive.

But that's only if taxes are raised. The Legislature, which is facing a \$1.8 billion shortfall in revenue, will start work on the budget when it convenes in mid-January.

Regardless of who the governor is by then, Locke's budget is important, Lee says, because the Legislature will use it as a starting point.

Both gubernatorial candidates — Democrat Christine Gregoire and Repub-

Continued to page 14

Room at the Inn?



A COSTUMED JOSEPH AND MARY, OF NEW TESTAMENT FAME, AND A RETINUE OF ABOUT 75 SUPPORTERS MARCHED ON THE SEATTLE HEADQUARTERS OF IMMIGRATION AND CUSTOMS ENFORCEMENT AND THE FEDERAL BUILDING DOWNTOWN ON THURSDAY, DEC. 16. THE MARCHERS CALLED FOR AMNESTY FOR UNDOCUMENTED IMMIGRANTS. PHOTO BY MARK SULLO.

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

Elevating the Debate

Is a tunnel really the ideal replacement for the Alaskan Way Viaduct?

By Tom Cogbill

Seattle Mayor Greg Nickels' recent designation of a new tunnel as the preferred option for resolving the Alaskan Way Viaduct's eventual demise raised a bit of a ruckus around town. While it may have delighted some concerned citizens and the construction and real estate lobbies, various others were none too pleased. They're letting city and state officials know it.

The mayor and his supporters will be taking on a host of groups in Magnolia and Ballard, two of the neighborhoods most affected by the controversy since 15th Avenue directly links them to the Viaduct and points south and east from there.

Eugene Wasserman, head of the North Seattle Industrial Association, is spearheading the simpler rebuild option with a group calling itself Common Sense Elevated Solutions. Their gripe, in a nutshell, is that the tunnel option will obstruct freight traffic between the city's key industrial areas of Ballard and the Duwamish.

[The issue] There are five options for replacing the viaduct, four of which involve either a tunnel or a new viaduct; the fifth would create an at-surface highway along the waterfront. Local officials are pushing for the tunnel option because it would maintain the current viaduct's traffic volume; downtown interests say burying the highway would "reconnect" downtown with the waterfront.

Combustible materials allowable on a viaduct would be banned in the tunnel.

Wasserman, along with Gene Hoglund, spokesperson for a similar, Magnolia-based group, says transportation officials have intentionally dumbed down the tunnel option for political reasons. Little mention is made, for example, of the half-mile, 7 percent grade connecting the new tunnel with the existing Battery Street tunnel.

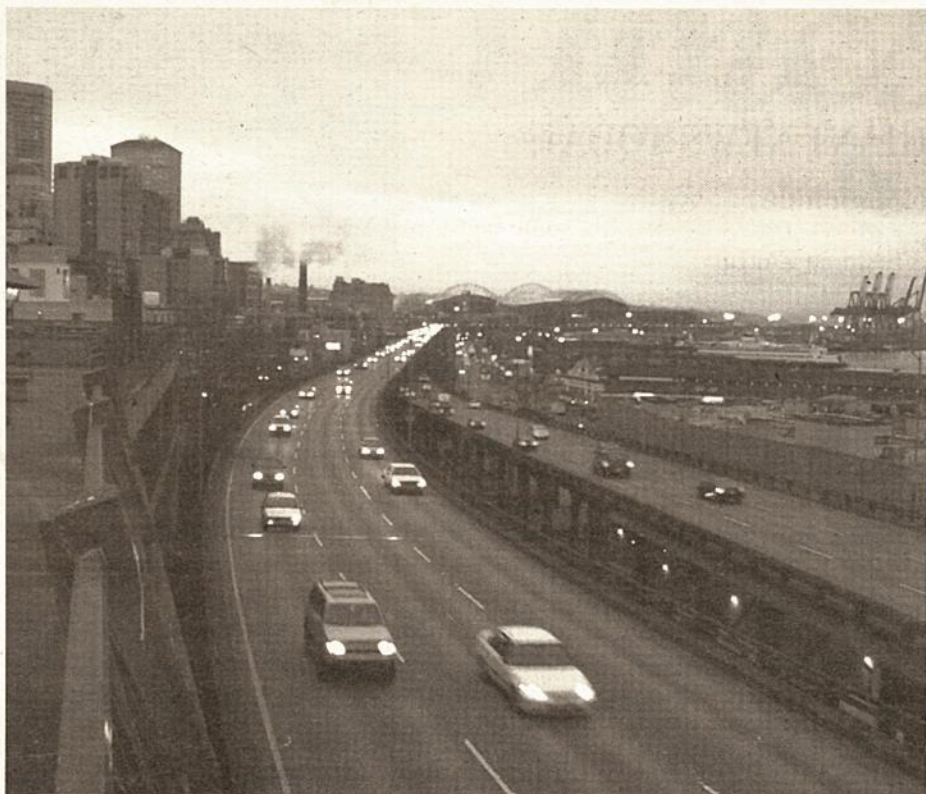
"A 7 percent grade is about what you encounter on the final western approach to Snoqualmie Pass," says Wasserman. "[Loaded] trucks will be lucky to do 25 mph there. It has to cause traffic back-ups," which, he's afraid, will eventually lead the DOT to ban trucks altogether from the tunnel.

"It's dangerous as hell," was Hoglund's characterization of the tunnel design. "Imagine a truck losing its brakes on that stretch."

Both men also cited the exorbitant cost of a tunnel, and pointed to the nightmarish overruns that have plagued Boston's Big Dig. Hoglund was leery about the three-county Regional Transportation Improvement District and the Port of Seattle raising taxes to defray costs.

But in addition to objections relating to safety, cost, and economic impact, another body of citizens favors a rebuild option for aesthetic reasons. Elizabeth Campbell has filed Initiative 85, which would prohibit utilizing any public land for an auto tunnel. Campbell needs to gather more than 17,000 signatures in the next six months for Seattle residents to be able to vote on it.

Apart from its lower cost, Campbell says she's advocating a rebuild because "I like the views. Commuting doesn't always have to be a hardship. This is one of [driving's] pleasant things." By using state-of-the-art construction materials, a new viaduct can be made less noisy and keep open views like the current one. She's also not concerned about the viaduct cutting off the waterfront.



TUNNEL VISION: THE VIADUCT TODAY. PHOTO BY ADAM HYLIA.

"That's a false argument," she says.

Then there is the largely "unspoken" option, which, in terms of vision, is likely the most radical of all: tear down the Viaduct and build no replacement.

Cary Moon, co-founder of the People's Waterfront Coalition, claims the city could save itself a bundle of money and develop the central waterfront into a pleasant, viable park without creating massive gridlock. Relying on the expertise of a dozen or so experienced planners and designers, headed by Ralph Cipriani, the coalition believes existing infrastructure is adequate to handle most of the traffic (although Alaskan Way would be widened) and that drivers will simply find ways to adapt in the absence of a waterfront freeway, as they have in San Francisco when that city lost the Embarcadero to earthquake damage.

"People are going to have to adapt," Moon says, referring to state Department of Transportation (DOT) estimates of the two- to eight-year period the city will be without the waterfront

corridor under either the "preferred" or "contingency" options.

"The DOT has been saying that, without a Viaduct replacement of some sort, I-5 will reach gridlock by 2030. What they don't tell you is that even with a replacement, I-5 is forecast to reach gridlock, it's just that it will happen nine to 13 years later."

To those who may feel I-5 is already reaching gridlock, the coalition's goals may seem quixotic indeed. But Moon and the no-replacement

advocates are unfazed by the overwhelming opposition at City Hall.

"We are a 100 percent grass-roots organization, and we will keep building public support," she vows. "The money for the mayor's idea just isn't there and probably never will be."

The City Council, which voted 8-1 in favor of the tunnel on Dec. 13, is "treading cautiously" when it comes to the no-replacement idea, Moon says.

"They don't want to badmouth us in case ours really is the only affordable solution." ■

[Online] More on the tunnel option at www.wsdot.wa.gov/projects/viaductPreferredAlternative.htm
The no-rebuild coalition: www.peopleswaterfront.org



NORTH AMERICAN NEWSBRIEFS

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An unsettling Vietnam-era trend is returning around the country, as U.S. veterans from Iraq begin to trickle in to homeless shelters. "I have talked to enough [shelters] to know we are getting them. It is happening and this nation is not prepared," says Linda Boone, executive director of the National

Coalition for Homeless Veterans. One veteran, who was injured in Iraq and suffers from depression, tells UPI the military is not getting veterans the care they need. "It is all about numbers," says Seabees Petty Officer Luis Arellano. "Instead of getting quality care, they were trying to get everybody demobilized during a certain time frame. If you had a problem, they said, 'Let the [Department of Veterans Affairs] take care of it.'" Arellano was living out of his truck on and off for three months after returning from Iraq last September, where shrapnel had nearly severed his left thumb. He still has trouble moving it and blames the military for not getting him the care he needs. The Pentagon has acknowledged some early problems and delays in treating soldiers returning from the conflict, but it says the situation has been fixed. Nearly 300,000 veterans are homeless on any given night, and almost half served during the

Vietnam era, according to the Homeless Veterans Coalition. Some advocates fear that similar combat experiences in Vietnam and Iraq mean that these first few homeless Iraq War veterans are the crest of a wave. "This is what happened with the Vietnam vets. It is like watching history being repeated," says John Keaveney, chief operating officer of a shelter and treatment program in Los Angeles. An Army study in the *New England Journal of Medicine* in July showed that 17 percent of service members returning from Iraq met screening criteria for major depression, generalized anxiety disorder, or post-traumatic stress disorder.

Two homeless men in North Carolina who were trying to stay warm unknowingly set a vacant house ablaze, causing around \$45,000 in damage. Fire officials tell the *Greensboro News Record* that the men were using a metal can filled with charcoal to heat up the house, but left the can burning when they went to sleep. The coals burned through the can, setting the wood floor on fire. "When our crews arrived they found the two males, awoke them, and got them out," says Captain Denita Lynch, a spokesman for the High Point Fire Department. The homeless men, both 21 years old, were charged with misdemeanor breaking and entering. Lynch says that as the weather turns cold, people often look for shelter in abandoned homes, sometimes causing a fire. "This is a normal occurrence. We go through this every season."

—Compiled by Patty Lane



GIANT NEWS TODAY:

(to Michele)

A Sequoia FALLS

An SUV is *crushed*

(No you-mans injured...)

REVENGE-OF-THE-REDWOODS

P.S How are YOU doing?

—MARION SUE FISCHER

Shopping

Pity the child wandering in the mall
shopping for identity.

Pity the endless aisles of choices in a
world without
glass slippers or perfect porridge where
all
fashion is made by machines
for approximates.

Pity the impotent indecision, the indulgent
fantasy,
the foreknown impossibility of somehow
squeezing
her mind into their costumes
and still being able to
...b
...
...b
...
...breathe.

—ROGER STUKEY

Christmas on Wall Street

Santa is giving these men coal.
Missing the point
they burn it and buy power
as a Christmas present to themselves,
making Santa obsolete (now working seasonally,
a minimum-wage employee
of a suburban shopping mall).

—ROGER STUKEY

Adventures in Poetry with ©Dr. Wes Browning



For today's column I want to talk about how "Science Marches On!" I am very excited about a new discovery that finally gets at the underlying truth about life being neither a rose garden nor a bowlful of cherries. It also deepens the theory that the Rich Get Richer While the Poor Get Poorer, by sinking it to the level of biology and the reproduction of cells. It's a very factual new discovery that is so scientific and at the same time so scary that it could make the basis for a great new film to bum out kids in high school.

The discovery is a long time coming. I remember reading in history books that way back in the Dark Ages the silly Dark-Ages people all thought that life was "essentially" a waiting room experience with one good magazine that everyone fought over until they remembered that none of them could read, and then you died and went to heaven.

Then, in the Renaissance, science started, and all the beginner scientists started to believe that life blew. It wasn't until the 1800s before science-greats like Darwin and other guys who actually knew things figured out that life really sucks, as we now know today.

But it is one thing to know that life sucks. It is quite another to know HOW life sucks, or to possess the video. This is where 21st century scientists have it all over 19th century scientists: even though they aren't as smart, there's lots more of them, so when you put them all together they end up knowing more. Besides, they have cell phones and digital cameras and laptops.

Anyway, here it is. Scientists just learned last month that if you experience long-term hardship, and if you experience it as chronic stress, then your telomeres will shrivel up. This is bad, the scientists say, because telomeres are the tips-of-the-shoelace thingies at the end of your chromosomes that need to be big and long so that your cells can divide and multiply. So it's like, you know, with shriveled telomeres your cells might as well be neutered, and pretty soon the cells you have die without replacements, and so do you.

There's more: they've actually figured out how much shriveling happens. As much shriveling happens in a typical case that we are talking about losing roughly a year of lifespan for each year of stress experienced. Give or take a month or two.

So let's say someone, we'll call him Herbert, was genetically predisposed to live 70 years if his life went as well as it does for normal people. But suppose instead that the beginning of his life, for the first 35 years, is a genuine living hell, comparatively speaking. According to our old understanding we would have thought that at least Herbert would have had a second 35 years left to him during which things might start looking up. But now we know that

... a very factual new discovery that is so scientific and at the same time so scary that it could make the basis for a great new film to bum out kids in high school.

Herbert's telomeres will be entirely useless as of his 35th birthday and Herbert will die of premature old age within days. Or a couple of years. Or he's already dead. Approximately.

Now, some see a silver lining to this discovery. They point out that the telomeres only shrink if you experience the stress. In other words, if you don't know you're miserable, you won't suffer the ill effects of it. Right, that's it, I could just whack myself

upside my head so hard I don't notice anything at all ever again.

No, there are only two alternatives. Either you're so stupid you not only don't know when you're suffering, you also can't fully know when you're having a good time, i.e., you're a fish, metaphorically speaking. Or else you're a sentient being and every year that you suffer you lose that much opportunity to make up for it.

So we may sum up this new discovery as follows. If you're screwed, you're screwed. Unless you're stupid, in which case you're screwed.

Has there ever been a time when we could so clearly see the need for justice as this? Let's stop putting people through genuine living hells, at least until we can find a way to enlarge telomeres. ■

JANITORS, Cont. from page 1

members alike say they won't let the Bon back away from employer-paid disability benefits and family health care.

Herminio Moran is tired. His eye kept him up last night; he got about two and a half hours of sleep. But he answers questions graciously, in Spanish, as the SEIU's Saldaña translates.

Moran has been working with Elaine Johnson at the Southcenter Bon-Macy's for nearly three years. One morning before his 5 a.m. shift at Southcenter began, Moran realized that one of his eyes would not close. He went to work anyway. By lunchtime, he could not see out of that eye. He left for the day, saw a doctor, and was told that he had suffered a stroke that would eventually affect half of his face.

A 45-year-old floor specialist (he waxes the floors and cleans the carpet), Moran had the benefit of two weeks of disability pay — time off at 70 percent of his usual wage of \$10.45 an hour. Those two weeks weren't enough to fix the problem; his eye still causes him to lose sleep.

The Bon wants to end the janitors' short-term disability payments. And medical and dental care would be

shifted from the SEIU's trust to a company health plan. As a result, workers would pay 50 percent of the costs of health benefits.

At a Dec. 10 negotiating meeting between labor and management, the Bon rolled out their estimated costs for the company plans. Bon officials declined to give *Real Change* specifics, but according to Saldaña, the company's most basic medical plan would cost an individual worker \$85 per month. Insuring a worker and her child would cost \$273 a month. And that's only for medical; dental costs extra.

It's hard to square the company's crafted public image with its negotiating stance.

Of course, the workers can opt out. Union organizers predict that that's precisely what most will do.

"Most of these workers won't go onto it. They can't afford it," says Local 6 organizer Fred Prockiw.

Which is precisely how the company would save money, since health insurance would no longer apply to every worker. Saldaña says that's why the employer can afford to offer up a more expensive alternative to the SEIU's.

The union, for its part, wants the Bon to not only stay with the current health and disability plan, but up its contribution to cover the rising cost, from \$2.01 to \$2.41 per hour per worker. The Bon has remained steadfast at \$2.01 per hour. Take that and keep your

full coverage, they say, or take our plan.

"What this is about is 40 cents," says Saldaña.

Cheryl Davidson is happy that the union is working in her behalf, but she is also a little dispirited. The cost of health care is rising. It's an increasingly fortunate thing to work a low-wage job and have fully paid health insurance. And she worries that public opinion has turned against workers trying to hold onto such fortunes.

"We're passing out these fliers," she says, yet "the people out there usually pay their own medical. They're not going to feel sorry for us."

Local 6 is combining its monthly negotiations with a gallimaufry of street-level actions. They have distributed leaflets and held marches. A couple janitors sat on Santa's lap at the downtown store's holiday playland, asking the jolly man for employer-paid family health care for Christmas. The CEO of Bon-Macy's was awarded the title "Grinch of the Year" by the Jobs With Justice annual party. Such offbeat tactics are a good idea when the holiday season rolls in, says organizer Prockiw. Workers want to be with their families; it's hard to keep the energy going.

The spirit of giving is something that the Bon works hard to cultivate, say labor leaders, and that's why it's hard to square the company's crafted public image with its negotiating stance. This fall's "Charge for a Change" campaign

highlighted breast cancer; the department store held a fashion show for survivors. Meanwhile, the SEIU wondered, why won't the Bon agree to meet the health care needs of its employees?

"The Bon tries to project a compassionate, responsible image to the community," said SEIU Local 6 president Sergio Salinas in a press release, which also pointed out the store's full-page color ads in the Sunday *Seattle Times*. "Yet the reality of their internal practices harshly contradicts their public relations."

The union has not yet fully regained the trust of Elaine Johnson, who — if SEIU gets what it's asking for on the wage front — will still be making 86 cents less than her 2001 hourly wage, doing the same job.

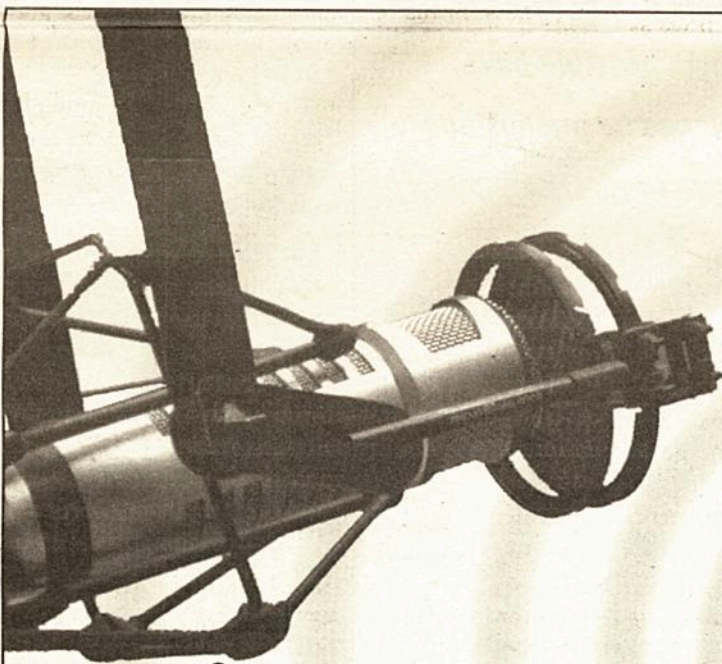
She stayed on during that pay cut out of a sense of loyalty to the company, and in pursuit of a thin promise that one day she'd have a position as housekeeping manager. She works hard, and she knows everyone knows it.

"My work is my signature," she says. "They'll tell you, 'Oh yeah, Elaine does a good job' — Well then, pay me accordingly and stop talking!" she laughs.

She trusts that at the end of the negotiating process, this time, she'll be better off.

"I don't plan on this being a bad turnout. I've worked there too long and I've given them too much. If you lose your faith, then you lose everything."

The union and the Bon management meet again on Jan. 7. ■



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A Reinvention of Hatred

Author David Matlin on the "unimaginable toxicity" of the prison industry

Interview by Lou Rowan

David Matlin was involuntarily demobilized from a war he was winning inside maximum-security prisons — a war to educate and rehabilitate inmates considered the most dangerous and deadly.

Matlin taught masters-level writing courses in maximum-security prisons in upstate New York from 1993 to 1997, when federal funding cuts ended his work.

A novelist and poet, Matlin has also written a powerful, passionate work of non-fiction entitled *Prisons: Inside the New America*. With a lyricism worthy of William Blake, Matlin fills *Prisons* with stories of his powerful learning experience with inmates and demonstrates the force prisons have become in our society and our economy. The stories can be ignored only at the risk of our future as a humane people.

From London, David Matlin completed this interview with writer Lou Rowan. Both will be featured at a Jan. 5 event at the Richard Hugo House.

Real Change: Did your education program really work?

David Matlin: Yes. In the early nineties, for the men in my program who got fully-accredited degrees and were released either through parole or finishing their sentences, there was an 87 percent reduction in recidivism rates.

RC: Why do you think that this country emphasizes prisons more than countries with lower crime rates?

Matlin: The drastic rise in the number of prisoners has nothing to do with the rate of violent crimes. It's the result of longer mandatory sentences and more restrictive parole policies.

We have fully one quarter of all the world's prisoners in our prisons, or 2.1 million people. The majority of these people are behind bars for nonviolent crimes. Our nation spends \$167 billion

a year on law enforcement and criminal justice, as much as we spend on health care. Since 1977, expenditures for corrections have increased twice as fast as spending for health care.

Between 1985 and 2000, the nation's spending on corrections increased by 166 percent compared to a 24 percent increase on education. During the last 20 years, the number of American prisoners of all races and genders has quadrupled, from 582,000 to 2.1 million.

RC: What was it like to teach in maximum security prisons? What kind of relationship did you build with the students?

Matlin: My experience with these men changed my life forever. Their struggle to overcome so great a negation created a sense of shared humanity I have rarely witnessed.

The supposed "hard-core" criminals often underwent the deepest changes through advanced studies in the humanities, social sciences, and music. "Class" does not adequately fix the details, the risks these men took. Every grade they got, every assignment they did, held great meaning for them.

I have come to think many of our most profound historical and social wounds are due to a lack of education. Many of the men I came to know behind those walls would never have gone

to prison had their experience with basic educational institutions at the beginning of their lives not been so destructive.

I came to know Platonic scholars,

Sufi mystics, poets, and great teachers among my students, who taught me. The price we are paying for their abandonment and in our racism has an unimaginable toxicity. We would be an entirely different people if we were able to overcome these mutilations.

RC: Do you think the disparate treatment between poor, non-white drug offenders and middle-class, white drug offenders is a conscious political program?

Matlin: I think the numbers of minority people incarcerated, particularly young Black men, is an unspeakable violation. Twelve percent of young Black males

and prisons as big business has resulted in the largest growth industry in America. The family farm and the great rural skills that made one version of the so-called American myth possible have disappeared — to be replaced by prisons and casinos as the main centers of rural employment.

Prison as industry means we have allowed ourselves to reinvent another set of hatreds by mining not only our communal indifference (witness the shocking fate of the Abu Ghraib story, allowed to sink into disinterest), but also our civil disintegrations.

In the past 30 to 40 years of American history, prisons have become a central image of lethal force — but a force as distant from the common boundaries of our daily lives as death itself.

RC: Particularly after the election, I guess many of us are wondering what we can accomplish. So please tell a success story from your work.

Matlin: One story is very recent. I got a letter from one of the men who was released about a year ago and has been accepted into the New York University graduate program in social work. Many of the men who completed my program, with its focus on rehabilitation, started clinics, counseling centers, and support groups to keep others from going to prison — and to try to stop the community disintegrations that are sending whole generations of our people to prison.

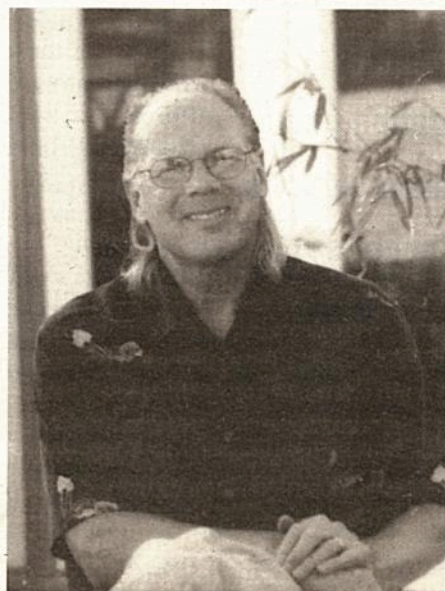
RC: The classes you were teaching are no longer available. I have to ask: what are prisons for — are they meant to rehabilitate or to

punish?

Matlin: Prisons are meant only to expand the industrialization of punishment — which tells us how guideless, fatigued, and fearful we have become. They are the triumph of a barrenness and dread secretly rotting the core of our daily lives.

I think we are in the process of allowing ourselves to hate, to worship hatred and cynicism, and to cherish brutality and waste. Each prison we construct is designed to last at least 100 years, and the industry has no intention of letting itself be reduced. They infect our lives with a commercialized, crafted savagery that places our democracy in jeopardy. ■

"The unique conjunction of racism and prisons as big business has resulted in the largest growth industry in America. The family farm and



the great rural skills that made one version of the so-called American myth possible have disappeared — to be replaced by prisons and casinos as the main centers of rural employment."

—David Matlin

between the ages of 20 and 30 are in prison. The percentage for young white men in the same age group is 1.6.

The newest studies on employment in the African American community represent a central rapacity which demeans us all. One in four Black males in the U.S. is idle all year long. A 25 percent unemployment rate, along with the propaganda on crime and safety — that is the historical wreckage out of which the prison industry has been created.

RC: Explain the importance of prisons to the U.S. economy.

Matlin: The unique conjunction of racism

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Meet the Authors

Lou Rowan and David Matlin read from their work — Matlin's book, Rowan's short stories — at 7:30 p.m. Wednesday, Jan. 5, at the Richard Hugo House, 1634 Eleventh Avenue, Seattle. \$5 contribution suggested.



Compiled from Seattle Police Department incident reports by Emma Quinn.

Saturday, Nov. 27, 11:26 a.m., Third Ave. and Pike Street. Officers saw suspect, a transient white female aged 40, engaged in narcotics activity in the 1400 block of Third Ave. She was stopped, and admitted to looking for drugs. Officers located a DUI warrant out of Bainbridge Island and transported her to the West Precinct. Officers were informed that Bainbridge Island Jail was full, the warrant was put back in the system, and the suspect was released.

Saturday, Nov. 27, 3:32 p.m., City Hall Park. Officers observed suspect, a transient black male aged 39, drinking a beer in Prefontaine Park. After finishing the beer and leaving the can in a flower bed, he crossed the street to City Hall Park. Officers have had numerous contacts with the suspect, and have trespassed him several times from parks. He was contacted in City Hall Park, taken into custody, and advised he was under arrest for trespassing. While searching the suspect the officers located a piece of a suspected crack pipe. A field test for cocaine was inconclusive and the piece was destroyed. Suspect was booked into King County Jail for trespassing.

Thursday, Dec. 9, 9:30 p.m., 300 block James St. Suspect, a transient Black male aged 53, was observed trespassing at the King County Courthouse. A warrant was found and verified, and he was arrested and booked into King County Jail. Another suspect, a transient white male aged 45, was contacted by officers. A name check returned with a warrant. He was transported to Renton, where the warrant was issued. He was released to the Renton Police Dept.

Friday, Dec. 10, 8:46 a.m., Third Ave. and Dilling Way. Suspects, a black female aged 23 and a white male aged 25, both transient, were observed loitering in the area of Third and Yesler with other known drug participants and convicted felons. Both suspects are on active DOC monitoring and had not reported to their parole officer. Officers contacted the DOC and were advised to take both suspects into custody. They were then transported to the 4th and Battery DOC office and released to the DOC.

Friday, Dec. 10, 10:50 a.m., Maynard Ave. S. Bicycle officers working in the International District observed the suspect in Hing Hay Park. The suspect, a Native American female aged 54, has previously been excluded from all parks for one year. She was contacted and arrested for criminal trespass. When officers attempted to put her into handcuffs, she stuck her left hand in her pocket and attempted to get rid of a glass crack pipe. The pipe was recovered and she was handcuffed. The pipe field-tested positive for cocaine, and she was booked into King County Jail for possession and criminal trespass in the parks.

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

Difficult Question

Belltown mural contemplates realities of war

By Regina Liszanckie

The United States continues to be a nation at war, but geographical distance allows most of us to avoid its daily reality. Despite ongoing coverage, mainstream media has failed to provoke much discussion about the long-term, devastating effects of warfare. And so artists like Jessica X are trying to guide citizens away from statistics and sound bites.

The Seattle painter and sculptor has eloquently embraced this responsibility with her new outdoor mural. Commissioned by a local property owner, Jessica's installation on the Rivoli building at 2125 2nd Avenue in Belltown (the same building occupied by *Real Change*) depicts the faces of Iraqi and American citizens who share war's burdens. In shades of gray, with a blood-red caption asking "How Much Longer?," the faces of the mural peer out with striking dark eyes.

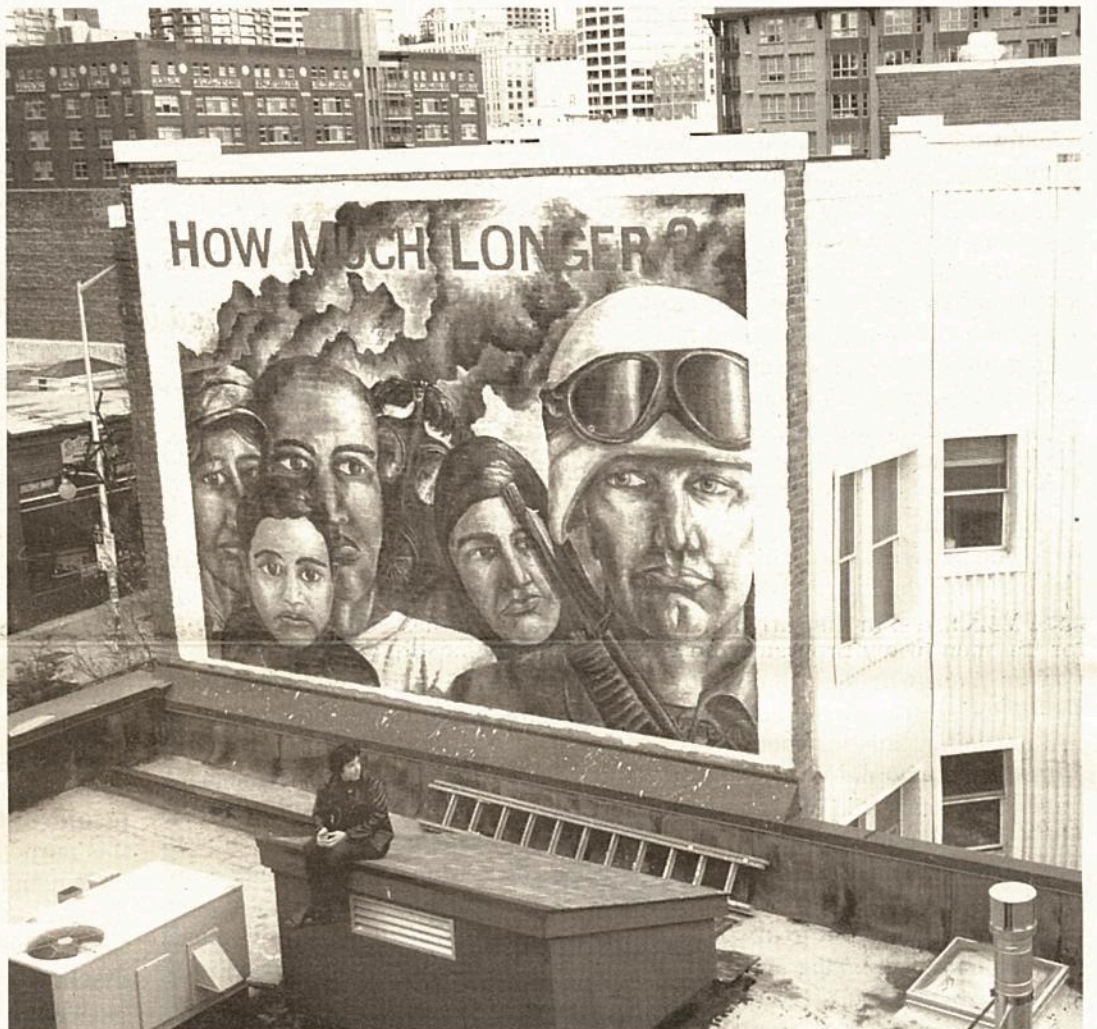
"People will see the caption and ask me what I mean," says Jessica, "and I say, what does it mean to you? The piece has several different symbolic figures that are directly affected by the war and its consequences. We are making political decisions without clear understanding about what is going on. Their lives are completely ruined by war."

Jessica X is no stranger to guerilla arts. Her sculpture of an angel arches over the top of the old Speakeasy Café a few blocks north of the mural, lifting up against the

blackened remains of the building that was destroyed by fire. One of her anti-war pieces was destroyed in Fremont earlier this year; the sculpture, called *Proud to Be an American*, was of a man in a suit patterned with pictures of war's destruction. He is shown pledging his allegiance. Jessica may be best known for her sculpture on Fremont Ave. and N. 35th Street in 2001, inspired by the Pigs on Parade exhibit at the Pike Place Market, of a pig sloppily gorging on a trough laden with the remnants of con-

sumer culture.

Given free reign thematically, Jessica chose to engage the public about the ongoing war. Instead of shock value, the grace of depicting the human faces of war was a conscious choice. Staring at the figures in the mural, huddled close together against the smoke of war, is a reminder that all humans, regardless of background, will feel the effects of this conflict for decades to come. "The real truth for me is that underneath all the layers of conflict and fear is the feeling that deep down we really do care about each other," says Jessica. Maybe one day American foreign policy will recognize this sentiment. ■



"THE REAL TRUTH FOR ME IS THAT UNDERNEATH ALL THE LAYERS OF CONFLICT AND FEAR IS THE FEELING THAT DEEP DOWN WE REALLY DO CARE ABOUT EACH OTHER." PHOTO BY REGINA LISZANCKIE

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Explaining the Unspeakable

Becoming Evil: How Ordinary People Commit Genocide and Mass Killing

by James Waller

Oxford University Press, June 2002

336 pages, \$29.95

Review by Anitra Freeman

How did the girl next door end up leading a naked Iraqi man around on a leash?

When the first headlines came out, Rumsfeld said the abusers in Abu Ghraib were a few bad apples, a handful of psychopaths. Many headlines later - Red Cross reports leaked, a jailed Briton from Guantánamo testifying to abuse, two American soldiers convicted of murder (one of a severely wounded teenaged captive, the other of a fellow guard) - even those who were willing to accept that explanation in the beginning want a better one. One that will make the abuses end.

In *Becoming Evil*, social psychologist James Waller examines extraordinary human evil: genocide and mass killing. Between each of his chapters he includes firsthand accounts from those who have experienced some of the greatest human evils of our history, from the slaughter of Native Americans by Europeans to the tragic cycle of genocide between Hutus and Tutsis in Rwanda. For the history lesson alone, this would be a valuable book.

Waller argues that we must neither disown those who do evil, nor excuse them. Social pressures exist, but they are not deterministic. There were Hutus who did not kill Tutsis and Tutsis who did not kill Hutus. One of the things that we have to do in order to create a society with less killing and cruelty is never to excuse or minimize killing and cruelty. Individuals must be accountable for the evils they themselves do. But we must be accountable for our part in creating a culture that encourages either empathy or cruelty.

Waller examines previous explanations of extraordinary human evil - including "a handful of psychopaths" - and then proposes his own explanatory model. An explanatory model should be useful, and Waller's gives us immediate things to do, in our individual lives as well as in social policy, to increase human kindness. Like the poor, evil will always be with us. That does not mean we should be fatalistic about evil. It means that we should always be ready to address it.

Waller cites psychological experiment, ethnological field studies, and evolutionary theory to support the thesis that humans are genetically predisposed to divide into groups, value our in-group over other groups, and treat those within the group more "ethically" than those outside of the group. In human history, this predisposition has encouraged ethnocentricity and xeno-

phobia - bigotry and hatred. Our biological heritage also influences our response to authority and our desire to exert authority over others.

There are also social forces that help prepare people to commit genocide. One is cultural beliefs, like nationalism, racism, or "manifest destiny." Another is disengaging morality from conduct by such things as:

- displacing responsibility ("I was only following orders")
- deploying euphemisms ("collateral damage")
- seeking moral justification (it is "for a good end," "for the good of the state," "for the protection of democracy")
- looking for advantageous comparisons ("we have done some bad things, but look at what they did")
- minimizing, distorting, or distancing ourselves from the consequences (not broadcasting images of war, concentration camps, or mass killing; calling torture "abuse" or even a "fraternity prank;" calling the destruction of a village "liberation")

When society approves serving one's self interest above all other things, then it becomes easier to justify evil. At the same time, having a self-identity that is distinct from one's group identity is essential to maintaining moral

norms. When one's entire identity is wrapped up in being a prison guard; when the message of your social group is that brutality is not only acceptable but a positive good; when any refusal to obey orders or disclosure of anything to others that may reflect poorly on the group is considered betrayal: that setting is a horror waiting to happen.

To make "crimes against humanity" psychologically supportable, according to Waller, it is critical to deny your victims status among those to whom you are morally obligated, and make them responsible for their own suffering. As in: "These people have attacked our society itself and thereby given up all social rights." "These particular offenses place these prisoners outside of the Geneva Convention." Humiliation, forcing others into ragged and unclean conditions, also helps to disassociate us from them.

We may not be able to overcome our biology, or want to. But there are insights in Waller's scientific analysis that we have heard before, like: Do not justify doing evil in the name of fighting evil, or we will become what we fight. Now that it has a scientific imprimatur, perhaps more people will apply that simple maxim. ■

The more highly regarded one's self-interest becomes, the easier it is to justify evil done to others.

STATE BUDGET, Cont. from Page 4

lican Dino Rossi — have stated they are against raising taxes. By proposing a hike on his way out, Lee says, Locke has provided political cover for Gregoire and the Democrat-controlled Legislature to insist taxes are needed, particularly since the state already slashed a total of \$4 billion from its 2003-05 budget.

A transition team working for governor-elect Rossi has taken no position on what human services Rossi would or would not cut. But, contrary to recent statements in the press, Sharon Gilpin, a spokeswoman for the transition team, does not rule out new taxes altogether.

"Governor-elect Rossi has promised he will not balance the budget on the backs of the vulnerable. We will not do it," Gilpin says.

Sen. Margarita Prentice (D-Seattle), who will chair the Ways and Means Committee when the Legislature opens, says she believes Rossi would be flexible. She says she also looking at a variety of other revenue sources, including taxing card rooms.

But, new taxes or no, Locke's budget still puts nearly \$300 million in human services on the chopping block.

That includes a cut of \$77.6 million in counseling at outpatient clinics such as Community Psychiatric Clinic and Seattle Mental Health. In the past, the clinics got the money from surplus funds in the state's Medicaid budget, a federally funded health program for the poor and disabled, and used it to provide counseling for non-Medicaid patients.

As of Jan. 1, a new federal mandate puts an end to using Medicaid funds for this purpose. If the state can't replace the funding, says Peter Roy-Byrne, chief of psychiatry at Harborview Medical Center, the cut would destroy a critical first line of defense in the community.

Without early treatment at a clinic, Roy-Byrne says, people who are sinking into depression or schizophrenics who have gone off their medications are likely to end up in a locked ward at Harborview or another psychiatric facility — with greater trauma to the in-

dividual and higher cost to the taxpayer.

"It would be as if someone came into the emergency room with chest pain and they were told, 'Don't come back until you need a heart transplant,'" Roy-Byrne says. "It's a terrible, shortsighted thing to do. It's crazy."

Lee agrees but says he believes the Legislature will come up with the \$77 million, as recommended by its Joint Mental Health Task Force.

At a time when layoffs and previous Medicaid cuts are clogging local emergency rooms with uninsured people, Lee says the proposed cuts to neighborhood health clinics such as Country Doctor on Capitol Hill and Wallingford's 45th Street Clinic are very bad.

If taxes are raised, Locke's budget would cut \$5.8 million from the clinics. Without new taxes, the clinics would lose \$11.6 million — more than half the \$20.7 million grant the health clinics got from the state for 2003-05, says Rebecca Kavoussi, director of public policy for the Community Health Network of Washington, a Seattle-based nonprofit association that includes 19 of the 22 private health centers

that would lose funding.

In 2003, the 22 clinics saw 507,000 patients. One third of them, Kavoussi says, had no health coverage — a number that has jumped dramatically in recent years. Between 2000 and 2003, she says, the clinics served 42,000 more uninsured people.

Some of the uninsured had been on the state's Basic Health Plan but got cut in 2001, when the Legislature axed 30,000 slots, Kavoussi says.

With the state looking to cut 17,200 more people from Basic Health and \$77 million in outpatient mental-health services and at least \$5.8 million from the budgets of the clinics, Kavoussi says something will have to give.

Whether it's cutting hours or staff, she says, it will certainly mean a reduction in services.

"This is not a pretty scenario," Kavoussi says. "It's a piling on of problems."

—Cydney Gillis

"This is not a pretty scenario. It's a piling on of problems."

Rebecca Kavoussi, CHNW



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Upcoming and Notable

Tuesday 12/28

Apprentice Opportunities Project Orientation. Learn more about job opportunities and other services. You must be a resident of King County, in excellent physical condition, and be able to pass a drug/alcohol-screening test. Most projects require a valid Washington driver's license and a high school diploma or GED. 1 p.m., at AOP, 6770 E. Marginal Way S., Bldg. D, Room 106, Seattle.

Friday 12/31

New Year's Eve Party, Resist Bush's Jive - Keep Dissent Alive in 2005, hosted by Radical Women and Freedom Socialist Party. Festivities include Latin American feast, farcical theatrics: "Law and Disorder Special Rebels Unit," libations, and dancing for all ages. Door donation \$5, buffet donation \$15, sliding scale and work exchanges available. 8:30 p.m., at New Freeway Hall, 5018 Rainier Ave. S., Seattle. Info 206-722-6057 or 722-2453.

Wednesday 1/5

Public Hearing on King County Districting. The County Council will be reduced from 13 to nine representatives. Come hear about alternative plans and speak out. 6 p.m., at Lake Forest Park Council Chambers, 17425 Ballinger Way NE, Lake Forest Park. Also, Thursday, Jan 6, 6 p.m., at Auburn City Council Chambers, 25 W. Main St., Auburn, and Sat., Jan 8, 10

a.m., at King County Courthouse, Council Chambers, 516 3rd, downtown Seattle. Info www.metrokc.gov/council/districting.

RiotFolk Benefit for Not In Our Name. Come for an awesome night of music and build momentum for Jan. 20: No Business as Usual (Bush will be inaugurated that day). Performances by Jim Page, Robert Blake, Anna Roland, and others. Suggested donation \$5-\$15, every dollar helps, no one turned away. 5 - 11 p.m., at Hugo House Café, 1634 - 11th Ave. (between Olive and Pike) on Capitol Hill, Seattle. Info www.notinourname.net.

Friday 1/7

Wallingford Neighbors for Peace and Justice present Friday Night at the Meaningful Movies; this program is the film *Bulworth*, by Warren Beatty. This movie is political satire about a senator running for re-election who decides to tell the truth. Discussion follows, free, donations appreciated. 7 p.m., at Keystone Church, 5019 Keystone Pl., north of 50th in Wallingford, Seattle. Info wfnfp@bridgings.org.

Ongoing

Jack Straw Productions is proud to present composer and performer Byron Au Yong's collaborative multimedia installation. "Yiju: Songs of Dislocation," a poetic evocation of migration and travel. This installation transforms the gallery into a musical

Celebrate Kwanzaa



Celebrate African American culture by attending a local Kwanzaa festival. In observance of this yearly affirmation of community, family and creativity, Seattle Center House is hosting a festival on the first day of this week-long observance. The event features crafts, live entertainment by local dancer Afua N'Diaye and others, and exhibitions commemorating this decades-old African American tradition. Seattle Center House, Sunday Dec. 26, 2-4 p.m. More information at www.seattlecenter.com.

and visual sanctum. Admission free, Mon - Fri, 9 a.m. - 6 p.m., through Dec. 31, at Jack Straw New Media Gallery, 4261 Roosevelt Way NE, Seattle. Info www.jackstraw.org.

Take the **ACLU Refuse to Surrender Pledge.** Help gather 100,000 signatures on a pledge leading up to inaugural day, Jan. 20. Pledge to preserve the separation of church and state, amend the

Patriot Act, defend the right to dissent, safeguard a woman's right to choose, advocate for the full equality of lesbians and gay men, and protect privacy in all aspects of our lives. Visit the ACLU website to sign, www.aclu.org/refusetosurrender/.

Calendar compiled from Jean Buskin's Peace and Justice events calendar, available in full at www.scn.org/activism/calendar

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citizens participation project



Unfinished Business: Health Care for Children

Issue: On Jan. 10, Gov. Gary Locke leaves office. The legacy he leaves behind for the health of children is still unwritten. Before we turn our attention to whomever is Washington's next governor, we ask you to urge Gov. Locke to take care of unfinished business. Health care for thousands of low-income children in our state hinges on a pending decision from Gov. Locke. Please urge him to remove barriers to children's health coverage before he leaves office on Jan. 10.

Background: More than 47,000 children have dropped off the children's Medicaid program since April 2003, due almost entirely to administrative changes made to the program. This number is more than twice the number of children that were expected to lose coverage.

To address this crisis and stabilize coverage for children, the Children's Alliance and other organizations have asked Gov. Locke to issue an executive order to simplify administration of the children's Medicaid program in order to restore healthcare to children.

A delegation met with Gov. Locke in late September and has not yet heard a response to the request. As the governor prepares to leave office, it is critical that he act to restore children's health coverage.

The following actions should be included in the executive order and implemented as soon as possible:

- Restore the 12-month certification period for children's Medicaid eligibility.
- Simplify income verification procedures by implementing a system that is consistent, maintains program integrity, makes efficient use of state resources, and reduces the burden on families who are applying for and renewing Medicaid.
- Restore continuous eligibility and allow children to maintain coverage within the entire certification period regardless of minor fluctuations in family income.
- Explore other strategies for protecting children's health coverage such as marketing, outreach, and linkages with schools that make enrollment easy and efficient.

Action: Send a message to outgoing Gov. Gary Locke now and ask him to remove barriers to children's health coverage before he leaves office on Jan. 11 by issuing an executive order with the above four points included. He still has time to make a difference for children.

You can contact the Governor at:
Gov. Gary Locke
PO Box 40002
Olympia, WA 98504-0002
Phone: (360)902-4111
Fax: (360)753-4110
Email: www.governor.wa.gov

To make it even simpler, you can send a message from the Children's Alliance online action center at www.childrenshub.org/campaign/kidshealth.

Have A Heart For Kids Day 2005, the annual children's lobby day in Olympia, is coming up Monday, Feb. 21 (President's Day.) Contact the Children's Alliance for more information at childrensalliance.org or 206-324-0340 ext. 19.



The **Central Area Senior Center (CASC)** Hot Lunch Program seeks volunteer lunch-welcomers and kitchen helpers. Volunteers are needed daily, monthly, and during special occasions, between 10:30 am - 2:00 pm. Free meal offered in gratitude. The *suggested* donation for Seniors to eat is \$3 - though no Senior is turned away for lack of funds. For more information call Rhonda at (206) 726-4926, ext. 29.

World Heritage seeks a volunteer to provide **high school exchange students** with program support. Call Diana at 1-800-888-9040 or visit our website at worldheritage.org.

Help people resolve conflict! Learn conflict-resolution skills and contribute to **peace and harmony** in the community. The King County Dispute Resolution Center seeks good listeners to volunteer as Telephone Conciliators in our Seattle office. Weekly daytime shift; conflict resolution training provided. We especially encourage bilingual people, people of color, and sexual minorities to apply. Information: www.kcdrc.org; volunteer @kcdrc.org; or call 206-443-9603 ext. 100.

To post a volunteer opportunity FOR FREE, email 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 monthly open meeting of the **Real Change Editorial Committee**. Wednesday, Jan. 19, 4:30 p.m., at the *Real Change* office. Everyone welcome. For additional information about the meeting, please call Adam Hyla, editor, at 206-441-3247, extension 207.

Real Change Homeless Empowerment Project
2129 2nd Ave.
Seattle, WA 98121



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

Mockingbird Times

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



January 2005

Foster Care and Homeless Youth Speak Out Across the Nation

Volume V, Issue 1

Visit us online at www.mockingbirdsociety.org or call 206-323-5437 (KIDS)

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Check out the Bonus Articles Section Online at mockingbirdsociety.org

This month Jamica Henderson explores Seattle online!

Homeless Youth Educate and Inspire at Common Cents Forum

ANTHONY GUESS



ON THURSDAY DECEMBER 2nd 2004, AT THE BOOMTOWN CAFE, citizens from around the Seattle area came to hear poetry and listen to how homelessness affects youth in the long run of life. The panel consisted of four members, who are or at one point in their lives were homeless. Courtney Konietzko and Darius Reynolds, reporters from the *Mockingbird Times*, read poetry at this event.

Courtney wrote and read a poem called *Mirror*, which left a lot of people impressed. I asked a lady named Emily Green why she came out to the event and what she thought about the poems. Green replied that she came out just to get another perspective of homeless youth. Green also said that the poem that Courtney wrote left a big impact on her because that's how she thought of her self for a long time in her life (the poem is about being a person of color in a white world).

After the poems were read, the panel shared their experience of being homeless and how their life now is affected because of it. For example, Dustin, one of the members on the panel, said that his home situation wasn't that great and so he left home. He said that being homeless let him experience emotions and feelings that he doesn't feel like he would have gone through if he grew up in a nice structured home. Dustin said that he's now part of the YMCA program and attends Bellevue Community College. When Dustin was asked what he thought the audience could do to help minimize homelessness among youth, his response was, "nothing." He believes that some kids choose to be

Throughout the presentation I got the feeling that homeless youth aren't asking for a big miracle; they just want to be noticed and feel needed.

homeless, but one thing he said to do was if you see some one holding up a cup for money you should give them some. And if you don't feel comfortable giving them money because you believe that they are going to use it for drugs, well you should go out and buy them food. Dustin stressed that what made him feel not wanted or not even part of this world was being ignored by the people that walked past when he was standing out in the cold asking for money for food.

I asked panel members how being homeless effected or impacted your personality or life time goals. One panel member, Sarah, responded by saying that being homeless made her more equipped to deal with the world, and allowed her to see the world with a clearer view. Although she advises youth to stay at home if it's an option, she says that living on the streets allowed her to find herself and what she wanted out of life, which is to be simply happy. Rob, another panel member, was asked what can the system do to improve the amount of youth experiencing homelessness. Rob's response was that he thinks that some organizations should link together so they can receive more money for youth, instead of stepping on each others toes for grants. All the panel members were great in answering questions and gave thoughtful experiences to back up their opinions.

Throughout the presentation I got the feeling that homeless youth aren't asking for a big miracle they just want to be noticed and feel needed. The members on the panel had wonderful things to say, for example, Rob said that everyone has problems and issues and that homelessness is his problem. Rob encouraged everyone to just have an open heart.

The presentation was put on by the Fremont Public Association's Common Cents, an organization that raises money for homeless youth. For more information about this event and Common Cents, go to www.fremontpublic.org/commoncentsforkids/ccents.html

Military Actions Provoke Talk of Mandatory Draft

MISTY COOK



JUST THE WORD "DRAFT" SENDS CHILLS down the spine of many Americans alive today. The draft is a system that has lain dormant for years, and now, after decades of inactivity, the draft could be activated. There are pending bills in legislation (legislation: the making of a law or laws) in the House and Senate that could reinstate the draft as early as June 15th, 2005.

Companion Bills S89 and HR 163 are nearly identical in text and are referred to as "The Universal National Service Act of 2003" in their short title. Introduced to the House of Representatives on January 7th, 2003, the actual text of the HR 163 bill reads: "To provide for the common defense by requiring that all young persons in the United States, including women, perform a period of military service or a period of civilian service in furtherance of the national defense and homeland security, and for other purposes." The entire text of the HR 163 bill via THOMAS, a website which provides "Legislative Information on the Internet." THOMAS was initially created "In the Spirit of Thomas Jefferson", and is "a service of the Library of Congress". The full text of the HR 163 bill is at <http://thomas.loc.gov/>.

The 2005 Draft would require ALL young people ages 18 - 26 to perform a 2 year period of military service, including women. Not only would every young American be required to perform military service, according to paragraph "a", section 2 of the HR 163 bill, every single young American would be obligated to perform some sort of military service for a minimum of 2 years. The text of Section 2, paragraph "a" of the HR 163 bill reads:

"(a) OBLIGATION FOR YOUNG PERSONS- It is the obligation of every citizen of the United States, and every other person residing in the United States, who is between the ages of 18 and 26 to perform a period of national service as prescribed in this Act..."

If Rumsfeld's prediction of a "long, hard slog" in Afghanistan and Iraq and a permanent state of "War on Terrorism" proves itself to be true, then it appears that the US will have no choice but to reactivate the draft. According to the Home School Legal Defense Association, the President will decide how many young Americans go to war and under what circumstances. Here's what the HSLDA (Online) had to say about the S. 89 bill (nearly identical to the HR 163 bill): "The language of this bill mandates a national service obligation for every U.S. citizen and permanent resident, aged 18-26. It authorizes the President to establish both the number of people to be selected for military service, and the means of selection. Additionally, the measure requires those not selected specifically for military service to perform their national service obligation in a civilian capacity for at least two years."

Higher education will no longer be a refuge for would-be draft dodgers and Canada will no longer be an option to escape military service, the draft, or fighting in this "War on Terror". On December 12, 2001, the U.S and Canada signed a "Smart Border Declaration". This border agreement could be used to keep U.S draft dodgers in the United States and out of Canada. John Manly, who was the previous Canadian minister of foreign affairs, and former U.S. director of Homeland Security Tom Ridge both signed the "Smart Borders Declaration" in 2001. The "Smart Borders Declaration" includes a "pre-clearance agreement" for people leaving or entering both countries, along with a 30-point plan to "improve border security".

Reforms aiming to make the draft more "equal" as far as class and gender go will eliminate higher education as a shelter and include women in the draft pool. Once drafted because of the HR 163 bill, underclassman

DRAFT CONTINUED ON PAGE 2

Letter from the Editor

JIM THEOFELIS



this same opportunity needs to be available to those youth who have received their high school diploma/GED and want to continue into college or a voc-tech program. The 2005 Washington legislature will be debating this very issue. If you want to assist The Mockingbird Society and other advocates in the development of policy that allows youth to stay in care while in college contact us for Youth Advocacy Day scheduled for February 11th in Olympia. This is always a remarkable day when foster and homeless youth meet directly with legislators to share ideas, hopes and dreams.

College for Washington State Foster Youth: The Governor's Scholarship Fund is a remarkable program that continues to send youth from foster care to college. Applications are now available for high school juniors who are also in foster care. You can check out this amazing opportunity and other's at the **Washington Education Foundation** at: www.waedfoundation.org or toll free at 1-877-655-04787.

Finally, The Mockingbird Society is holding its **annual fund raiser on February 6th**. If you would like to assist us either by volunteering, donating an item for our silent auction or making a cash donation please contact us at 206-323-5437 or www.mockingbirdsociety.org. We need your help in "building a world class foster care system while serving our neighborhood youth". Make it a Happy and Healthy New Year!

Jim Theofelis
jim@mockingbirdsociety.org

HAPPY NEW YEAR! WITH THE NEW YEAR COMES new opportunities to create a world in which ALL children and youth are valued, supported and honored. The Mockingbird Society is a mission-driven organization dedicated to providing public education, advocacy and positive system reform to benefit the thousands of children, adolescents and families involved in the foster/kinship care system. One of the primary strategies employed by The Mockingbird Society is the inclusion and leadership of young people who have experience with foster care and/or homelessness. We believe that to the degree young people are provided a forum to present their experiences, ideas and passions the general public and elected officials will begin to understand the hope and promise that comes with these same youth.

I want to take this opportunity to present two important opportunities for young people aging out of the system (turning age 18). **Extending Services to Youth for Post-High School/Voc-Tec Training:** Currently, young people who are in foster care and turn age 18 can remain in their foster home until they receive their high school diploma or GED. The Mockingbird Society believes that

All incoming Letters to the Editor should be addressed to Mockingbird Editorial Staff and will be opened by Editorial Staff. All incoming correspondence to reporting staff under 18 years of age will be opened first by Mockingbird Editorial Staff.

DRAFT CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

would only be allowed to finish up their current semester before they get shipped off to the Middle East, and senior students would be fighting in this "War on Terrorism" as soon as they finished their academic year. Once Canada and higher education are no longer options for dodging the draft, Americans who currently support the U.S invasion of the Middle East will be confronted with the undeniable possibility that their own children, grandchildren, sons, daughters, brothers and sisters could be chosen by President Bush to fight in this "War on Terrorism."

The facts suggest that if you are a young American and you are drafted in 2005, dodging the 2005 draft will be harder for you than it was for your parent's generation in the Vietnam era.

In Part II of this series on the draft, I will be asking the Seattle community and various experts from around the world about their views on the U.S 2005 draft and the impact they believe a draft will have on the youth of this Nation and the people of the world. Be sure to check out February's issue to read all about what this draft could mean for you, your children, your grandchildren,

your sons, your daughters, your brothers and your sisters, coming from a variety of sources.

Information in this article was obtained from the following sources:

- Webster's Concise Dictionary
- CNN News "Rumsfeld predicts 'long, hard slog' in Iraq", <http://www.cnn.com/2003/WORLD/meast/10/22/sprj.irq.main/>
- www.hslda.org/legislation/national/2003/s89/default.asp
- www.canadianembassy.org/border/index-en.asp
- www.wbai.org/index.php?option=content&task=view&id=1462&Itemid=2

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CREATIVE CORNER

You Never Stopped Lovin' Me

JEREMY M.

Hey Ma,
How ya doin', it's your son now,
And I was thinkin' of you and put the drugs down,
I'm tryin' to do somethin' that will make you proud
Instead of every time I call it's to bail me out,
I never listened to things you used to tell me,
Like they got plans for ya,
Ain't nothin' I can do once The Law gets they hands on ya.
Not a for real talker but you talk to me,
About those girls wearin' hoodys and jeans,
Livin' at Granny's house takin' all of her things,
And I will always be there to give you whatever you want,
You never stopped lovin' me,
You don't have to call the cops no more,
You never stopped lovin' me.
You don't have to hope no more
You never stopped lovin' me,
I ain't touchin' the dope no more.
You never stopped lovin' me.
You don't have to cry no more.

What is Family?

RICO EVANS



WHAT IS FAMILY? To some people family is a group of people who have similar DNA. Some consider friends to be family, but what is the difference between family and friends? I believe that if you pick your friends wisely they can be your family. They respect you, care for you and give you help when you need it. Most of my friends have taught me more than my family has. I have had more emotional support from them too, they have been all around better people than my family has. I think that in a family everyone should have love for each other.

There are so many ideas on how people think that a family should live their lives together and that's because not everyone is raised the same. When they grow up and get married and have their kids, depending on how they were raised that is where they will get their knowledge about family.

FAMILY CONTINUED ON PAGE 4

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. Additionally, youth from across the country submit articles, art work, poetry and are compensated up to \$25 per published piece. The *Mockingbird Times* has a monthly circulation of 60,000 copies being distributed across Washington and the U.S.A, as inserts in community newspapers Real Change, *Seattle Sun* and *South Star* and a private mailing list. 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 2005 The Mockingbird Society.

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- \$50+.....Supporter
- \$25.....Foster Parent

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- My employer will match my gift; enclosed is my matching gift form.
- I am interested in receiving information on the advantages of planned giving.

Please do not include my name on published donor lists.

Please fill out and mail this form with a check or money order payable to: The Mockingbird Society, 2100 24th Ave South Suite 350, Seattle WA 98144

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Positive Power: Culture of Hip Hop



DARIUS REYNOLDS



HIP HOP TO ME IS MORE THAN MUSIC; it's a way to express myself—a way of life and, for some people, a job. I started writing poetry when I was 15 to escape some of the things that were going on in my life; like being in foster care and going in and out of juvenile detention. Two years later I met a kid who wanted to be a rapper. He wrote down all of his songs, and encouraged me to do the same. At first my songs were all about being a gangster, but I grew out of that and started combining my poetry with my rap songs. I stopped listening to a lot of gangster rap (music that glorifies gangs and crime) and started listening to more conscious rap (rap that talks about more positive things); which is usually performed by rappers who nobody has heard of.

I believe that true hip hop culture revolves mostly around the conscious and underground rap scene; most of these rappers aren't rapping about how much money and jewelry they have, they are rapping about living life and improving your rap skills and yourself. They also talk about what they see going in the world. A good example of this is the Black Eyed Peas song, *Where is the Love*.

Rap has changed a lot over the years. When rap started in the early seventies there was just the DJ and the Emcee. It was all about expression and having fun. Rappers rapped about parties and how good they were at rapping. There were also break dancers, taggers (people who spray paint pictures on walls) and people who freestyle rapped (rapping off the top of your head) and there were the clothes. When hip hop first started, rappers were wearing anything for leather to feathers; (now its all about the baggy style and my personal favorite hats).

It's great to be a part of the hip hop culture. Hip hop came from a very negative environment and became something great. Hip hop has broken free from race barriers and nowadays there are rappers from all sort of different backgrounds. Music collaboration has come a long way since Fab 5 Freddy and Deborah Harry from Blondie in 1980. Recently Rapper Nelly and Country music star Tim McGraw teamed up to do a song together. Collaborating with different kinds of music is a big part of hip hop because most hip hop artists want to create a sound that no one has heard before.



Hip Hop Icons Run-D.M.C
Photo from www.pophotties.com

Rapping has done a lot for me; it's helped me improve my poetry, it helps me get my feelings out and get things off my mind. Now when my friends and I have nothing to do, instead of going out and getting into trouble, we get into a circle and start rapping. So I have to give thanks to the pioneers of hip hop for creating something so beautiful. I would like to encourage people to other forms of hip hop, not just what you hear on MTV. To find out about the best new underground hip hop visit www.undergroundhiphop.com.

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Program Highlight: The House of Sarah Family Homes

DARIUS REYNOLDS

THE HOUSE OF SARAH FAMILY HOMES is a program that offers interim care (a temporary home during a transition) and therapy for boys ages 6-18. Most of the boys who live at the House of Sarah have been sexually, mentally and/or physically abused, or their parents simply gave them up.

The House of Sarah opened in 2000 and has been in operation for 4 years. There are currently five youth living in the home, though they have room for 12. The program offers several different kinds of therapy; milieu therapy (a form of group living therapy), family therapy and group therapy. The House of Sarah also offers educational planning and skill building and the youth are very involved in making decisions with their on-site caseworker.

Most of the youth who live at the House of Sarah are wards of the state, but parents can have supervised visits. Parents who have a possibility of getting their child back have to attend court ordered training before the child can return.

The youth living at the House of Sarah have a chance to earn privileges. Some of the privileges included are educational outings and trips to sports events. Freddie Hamlet, Executive Director of the House of Sarah says she just wants to help the children make themselves better people and let them know they are loved.

The House of Sarah always welcomes donations. The youth who currently live in the house are ages 11-16. If you would like to make a donation you can contact David Stewart at (206)799-5509. You can donate money or gifts--the youth there would like a video game system, so if you are looking for some way to help contact David.

ASK-Y Sponsors Youth Advocacy Day

PRINCESS HOLLINS



YOUTH ADVOCACY DAY IS APPROACHING, ON FEBRUARY 11, 2004. It's a great day for youth of all ages, races, stature, and cultures to gather in Olympia to support youth, community members and representatives, and to testify to legislatures about the continuous struggles they and others are facing in the foster care, kinship and homelessness system. Youth Advocacy Day is an annual event held in Olympia, Washington state's capitol. Every year Seattle's local community groups, foster care, kinship care and homeless youth

gather to give their testimonies and support proposed bills. This event is being sponsored for a second year by the Advocates for System Kids and Youth (ASK-Y) Coalition. ASK-Y is a coalition of motivated people who come together to discuss the advantages and disadvantages in the system. Members include service providers and youth from Seattle and around Washington State. ASK-Y focuses on issues young people face when involved in the juvenile justice system, mental health system, chemical dependency, employment and school system.

Last year the coalition proposed House Bill 3078, amending the sealing of juvenile records to shorten the time involved for young people to get their records sealed, which was passed. This bill has made an impact on young people everywhere, and there is now a clinic in Seattle where lawyers sit down with young people to help them through the process of sealing their records

so they can move on and apply for scholarships, grants, jobs and sign rental agreements.

This year ASK-Y and supporters are going back to Olympia to support the extended services portion of Kids Come First (KFC II), DSHS Children's Administration's proposal to improve services for kids. Kids Come First was launched in 2000 as a part of the DSHS long term program to reform the child welfare system. The ASK-Y Coalition encourages the extended service portion of the KFC II, and believe that this is an essential part of the system that could provide adolescents with support to help them excel in education and careers.

To find out more about how to get involved with the ASK-Y Coalition, find out more about the Kids Come First Plan and/or join ASK-Y for Advocacy Day in February, check out www.mockingbirdsociety.org or call 206-323-5437.

Healthy Outlook Fosters Independence

ASHLEY GRANT



THERE ARE MANY DIFFERENT CHANGES AND CHALLENGES ONE MUST GO THROUGH in the transition from adolescence to adulthood, between the ages of 17 and 20. Several things determine how well a person can do in what some refer to as the "real world." The mind set of the person and how they were brought up has a lot to do with how they handle this transition.

Your mindset is important because if you are going to make the transition to adulthood successfully your philosophy about life has to make sense. It's hard to be successful in the "real world" if you have a selfish mindset. It is a known fact that the "real world" has no sympathy for anyone.

Everyone grows up for a reason. It was always told to me that you grow up to do one thing ... and that is to take care of yourself. Senior year in high school has a lot to do with becoming independent. It is the gateway of life. For some young people who grew up in foster care this is what they strive for, being independent. Always remember having the right frame of mind will put you ahead of the rest because you know what you want. The hard part is pursuing what you want and not letting anything or anyone prevent you from doing so.

The way an individual was brought up has a lot to do with their relationship with the outside world. Some youth have a more sheltered life than others. For some youth

it is not possible to go back home once they leave, while for others there can be a revolving door. The more time a young person has away from their comfort zone the more understanding they will get. Being in a comfort zone limits your activity with the outside world. When it is time for you to experience it for yourself and you don't agree with it at first, you will run back to what you know instead of coping with an uncomfortable situation. Others are stuck with the situation--comfortable or not. Knowing what curve balls life brings you is important to cope with the uncomfortable situations.

What I would suggest to the people going through these changes is just be aware of everything that is going on around them. Always remember to have an open mind. Reflecting on these changes puts a person in deep thought about their future. You will come to find out that life is all about choices. Remember "the choices you make today can affect the one for tomorrow."

Reflections about the Effects of Gentrification

J.EBOH



ONCE A WEEK I MAKE MY WAY TO THE MOCKINGBIRD TIMES OFFICE to complete my weekly eight hour shift. I really enjoy riding the bus. It gives me time to just think and stare out the window. One day not too long ago I found myself staring out the window like I would any other day. I noticed that the shapes, colors and images were not the same. On closer inspection, I realized that there was a new construction site forming on the street corner. I also noticed that there was another construction site about two blocks up the street. As the weeks went by I noticed more and more buildings popping up and being torn down.

What years ago would have seemed insignificant now had me worried. In my less than two years living in Seattle I was witnessing the transformation of a neighborhood. For those of you who don't know the Central District in Seattle, it is an area that is rumored to be troubled with crime and poverty. When this happens to a neighborhood, property values and land prices go down. While this may have a negative effect on economic vitality of a neighborhood, it gives real estate developers an advantage.

Cheap land equals lower construction cost, which equals a higher profit to real estate developers and investors once a property and/or land is sold. Once other businesses and developers hear about what's going on they too move quickly into a neighborhood while there is an opportunity at a reduced cost.

Initially this might seem all well and good. Residents of neighborhoods who were once marginalized suddenly find themselves surrounded by luxurious housing and fashionable new businesses. But often in life what seems to be a blessing is actually a curse. The new grocery store is too expensive. The posh new houses have a higher mortgage cost and the new

apparel store could eat up a week's paycheck with one outfit. The new cafe sells that beloved cup of morning coffee at three dollars more than the one three blocks North. All of the small businesses who thought all these new changes would bring in new customers and help their bottom line well... it turns out that because the big corporate businesses have bigger budgets and can afford to offer patrons newer, flashier products as soon as they hit the market. Mom and Pop can't compete and thus for the sake of survival, they close up shop or significantly curb their entrepreneurial ambitions. In a nutshell, gentrification has come to town.

Merriam Webster online dictionary (www.m-w.com) defines gentrification as: "the process of renewal and rebuilding accompanying the influx of middle-class or affluent people into deteriorating areas that often displace earlier usually poorer residents." In laymen's terms, the wealthy move in and the poor move out. When the fiscal profile of a neighborhood changes drastically, the less affluent original residents have no opportunity to prepare for the change and thus make the transition.

By addressing gentrification, we as a society would be forced to admit that we are neither the land of the free nor the home of the brave.

I'll keep this simple. Gentrification has nothing to do with money, who's poor and who isn't. It has everything to do with people and how they treat each other. Until people stop hating each other and trying to justify why they're better than the guy across town, we'll just keep running in circles until something so bad happens that it forces people to get their acts together.

Perhaps I was mistaken in saying that my solution was simple. It takes a lot of work to let go of ones selfishness and biases. It will also take a lot of work for the business community to transform their relationship to the money and the "profits above all else" mentality that it entails. Despite the hurdles, I know that if we as a community can collectively stretch our hearts, minds and spiritual muscles; we'll soar over any obstacle yet to come.

Filmmaker Moore's Speech Provokes Thought

ANTHONY GUESS

THE KEY ARENA WAS PACKED on October 19th to hear the great patriot Michael Moore speak. Moore spoke about Bush and his administration and wow...didn't he have a lot of things to say! For example, when Bush first became President, there was information left for him about the attack on the Twin Towers and that the terrorists were going to be using planes. After that statement a lot of people seemed to show some discomfort, maybe because they were shocked that someone like that was in office, or maybe they felt like they had been lied to for so long. Another point that Michael Moore brought up was that during the Presidential debate, President Bush stated that there wasn't going to be a draft. Moore's response was, "Who do you think is going to volunteer after the mess you created?" According to Moore, the amount of people volunteering for the army has gone down since 9-11. As an 18-year-old African-American male I don't feel comfortable joining the Army with the statements that our country is making.

Moore also discussed his movie, *Fahrenheit 9-11* and how he feels like it shows the truth--the truth that the media deprived its people. Moore's goal within his 61 city tour was to demonstrate that we as people have the right to know everything in order to make an informed decision. For instance, he brought up how we voted to send our troops to the Middle East because there were supposedly hidden weapons of mass destruction.

Moore states that we were not given all the facts, many Americans thought this was the right thing to in order to keep our citizens safe, but who is going to keep the soldiers safe? Before ending his speech, Moore said something that not only raised commotion in the arena, but it made me think. Moore asked, "During the debates, how many soldiers popped up on our TV screen and gave their thoughts about the war or even about the candidates themselves?" Moore believes the reason why not is because it might send the wrong message to a lot of Americans about the war and cause a lot of finger pointing among the people in power. I find it odd that we don't hear more soldiers on TV sharing their emotions or their thoughts of being in war, considering that every day they have to wonder if they're going to spend time with their family, or even perform their every day activities. Instead we see and hear brave men and women all the time explaining how joining the army can benefit you in so many ways, and take your life to the highest peak

Moore's speech was enthusiastic and very informative, although several people walked out of the arena. For example, people walked when Moore said that Ralph Nader had no chance in winning the Presidential election and he doesn't understand why he even ran. I hope that in the up coming years the media will try to do a better job by informing citizens of all the facts.

The deadline to apply for Washington State's Governor's Scholarship for Foster Care Youth is March 2nd, 2005 To find out more information and how to apply, go to www.waedfoundation.org or call 1-877-655-4097

Movie Review: The Incredibles

COURTNEY KONIETZKO

THE INCREDIBLES WAS ACTUALLY INCREDIBLY FUNNY! Pixar is amazing! The animation was very good with some of the characters sporting hair worthy of a Pantene commercial. The plot was no disappointment because it kept giving you more when you thought it was coming to an end-- without drawing it out to far.

I thought that *The Incredibles* was going to be just some dumb Disney flick with some 'incredibly fat man' in a red suit advertised on the sides of Metro busses. However, the Internet Movie Data Base (IMDB), the god of movie databases, rated it a 8.3, which convinced me to go see it. I was looking for something light that would make me laugh and I am trying to see new movies. For the most part, IMDB is an excellent resource for finding films to see and an entertaining cite to boot!

The Incredibles is a feel good film, an action-packed silly film that will make you laugh and a film that is appropriate for people of all ages. It tells the story of different super heroes and their tendency to save people who get them in trouble so they have to go into hiding and become 'normal.'

We meet the main characters Mr. Incredible and his wife, super hero Elastigirl, while they are heroes, while they are a family with three kids trying to live the simple civilian life, and later on when fate throws them a twist and they are forced to take up their super hero identities again for life or death because the future of the world rests in their hands.

This duo must save the world from Syndrome, a freakish fire-haired geek who always wanted to be a super hero as a small child but was snubbed by Mr. Incredible who always said, "I work alone" whenever Syndrome appeared.

With his technological advances like rocket boosters on his feet that enable him to fly he plots the demise of other super heroes out of greed and despair and mimics being a human-made super hero himself. Mr. Incredible says, "I work alone" a lot and one of the lessons he has to learn in this film is to let other people help him and the concept of team work.

The special effects in *The Incredibles* are good and the pace of the film is fast. It feels like an original piece, not some washed up Marvel wannabee. Yeah Pixar! Four out of five birds!

FAMILY CONTINUED FROM PAGE 2

What about adopted family, are they any different from blood relatives? They are different because foster care has more child abuse records than a regular family but I think that what happens in a foster family can also happen in a biological family's home

My definition of family is being with people who care for you and love you. Right now I live with my mentor in Auburn. I have been living with her and her boyfriend for a month, It has been a good experience and I have done a lot that I never did with my biological family and it's just so fun, to sit down with them and have dinner and a movie. They have also both sat down with me to help me with my homework.

Another type of family is a TV family. What is a TV family? Their whole family all works together and gets along peacefully. At first when you see this family on TV you may feel jealous that you don't have the nice house and all the toys, but you have to remember that these families are not real they are fake They are what someone wanted their family to be like so the they made it real on TV. That is what I feel that a TV family is, over all they're not real they are what other people wanted the family to be like.

My mentor looks out for me and wants me to do the best I can in school and thinks about my safety. For someone to do all these things then I know this is why she has to love me. I think that friends can be considered family too. Me and Anthony and Emile are all friends but we all consider each other family. We all watch one another's back and all care about our goals for the future. If one of us have a problem we know that we could talk to each other and if one of us were to get in a trouble then we can count on each other.