

REAL CHANGE

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**Fired at
Sound Transit**

5

**Homeless at
Seattle U.**

6

Tsunami

7

RC HERO

10

PHOTO BY SEAN ELLINGSON

By Rosette Royale

Ask Faiza Sultan, an Iraqi American of Kurdish descent, what she thinks of her country of origin's first ever upcoming national election on Jan. 30, and you will hear in her voice the music of hope colored by the dissonance of despair.

"I feel strongly that Iraqis are very determined to start a new era in their lives," says Sultan, 33, who makes her home in Kent. "This is the first time ever, ever, in this country that we held elections. We can vote for different parties, different groups, different people. This is a big thing for us. I wish I could be there, and be there with them, and be a part of the election."

But she can't. It is not simply the fact that Sultan cannot afford to journey back to her homeland by month's end. She also can't afford to make the trip to Washington, D.C., Chicago, Nashville, Detroit, or Los Angeles, the only cities in the United States where Sultan, along with some other 360,000 Iraqi-born citizens now living in this country, will be allowed to cast votes in an election taking place in another hemisphere. "So I'm really disappointed in how the election is handled for the Iraqis [here]," says Sultan.

Also unable to participate will be Muhamed Qatrani, co-founder of the local Iraqi Community Center and lead representative for all immigrant programs at the Southwest Youth and Family Services, in West Seattle. Qatrani says he collected the names of local Iraqis wish-

ing to vote and, collaborating with an Iraqi organization in Los Angeles, he tried to secure the ability for those people to vote here. "I didn't have any luck having a booth opened here," Qatrani says. In discussions with representatives at the Iraqi Embassy in D.C., Qatrani says he was informed that cities with Iraqi immigrant populations exceeding 500 would have polling stations. Of the close to 10,000 Iraqis estimated to be living in Washington State, the majority reside in or around Seattle. Still, no polling places within city or state borders.

Complicating matter further is the registration process. Registration is available in the five host cities, but only from Jan. 17-23. Polling stations, however, are only open from Jan. 28-30. This means those wishing to vote who don't live in or near any of these cities have three options: make two separate trips; stay within one of the cities for the interim period; or don't vote at all.

Qatrani, who left Basra 12 years ago, says such difficulties make it close to impossible for him to head south for voting. He says embassy officials have not been able to give him conclusive reasons as to why Seattle is not a polling station or why the entire process itself is so complicated. "It's just a big mystery," says Qatrani.

The bigger mystery remains whether or not there will even be an election in Iraq when dawn greets the morning of Jan. 30. From these shores, President Bush — whose inauguration tomorrow, estimated to cost more than \$40 million, will mark the sunset of the 2004 United

States presidential election process — has asserted time and time again that the election will not be derailed. Until recently, this was in line with the sentiment expressed within the borders of Iraq as well. But last week, on Jan. 11, Iraq's interim Prime Minister, Iyad Allawi, indicated that in parts of the country, it simply may be too dangerous for people to vote. This announcement came the day after Baghdad's deputy police chief and his son were assassinated. Police officers have been targeted for assassination in Iraq, including Sultan's cousin, Sad, whose death left 13 children and a wife with no dependable source of income.

This question of whether the election — with more than 7,000 candidates running for only 275 seats in a national assembly — is to be or not to be is born out in more than just words. Visual cues, often accompanying both the written and spoken words of mass media, imply that the fate, and perhaps the validity, of the vote will be tenuous at best. Television news programs broadcast pools of blood that widen beneath the bodies of murdered civilians. Newspapers provide captions for photos that display the detritus of exploded vehicles smoldering in the afternoon sun. Websites present pictures of men that cling to each other in

grief while fully armed U.S. soldiers look on. This is war-torn imagery, portraying a nascent electoral process fighting for its life.

But according to Sultan, these images do not depict the reality for all of Iraq, a country of more than 24.5 million people, of which, according to State Department statistics, 15 million are legally registered voters. In speaking to relatives, she says the situation in northern Iraq, where her hometown of Erbil sits, is not as dire. There, she says, reside vast pockets of safety. But as for other, more newsworthy locales? "I'm hoping things get better," Sultan offers, "but everyday, I see something. It's getting worse, instead of getting better, especially that triangle, that Sunni Triangle [which encompasses Baghdad], it is really getting worse."

Even still, she cautions against taking everything at face value. "We cannot just look at things the way media is talking," says Sultan. "We have to think deep and dig behind the scenes to things that are not written, things that are not said. A lot of things, a lot of things."

Sultan developed her penchant for digging beneath the surface to search

"This is the first time ever, ever, in this country that we held elections. We can vote for different parties, different groups, different people. This is a big thing for us."

Continued to Page 9

MAIL BAG

2129 2nd Ave., 98121
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Reframing the review

Dear *Real Change*,

I read Anitra Freeman's review of George Lakoff's *Moral Politics: How Liberals and Conservatives Think* with considerable consternation, because this is a very important book, and I believe that Ms. Freeman has missed the point.

While Lakoff does provide scupulously balanced descriptions of the "strong father" and "nurturing parent" family models and analyses of the moral implications of each, he states at the outset that he prefers one family (and moral) model over the other and, certainly, he is very explicit about this in the final sections of the book.

De Toqueville, in his masterful study of democracy in America, asserted that "aristocratic or democratic passions can easily be found at the bottom of all parties and... though they may slip out of sight there, they are, as it were, the nerve and soul of the matter." As I read Lakoff, he not only recognizes but fears the "aristocratic passions" he sees growing in our country, nurtured by a citizenry attracted to an authoritarian "strong father" model in a time of global uncertainty.

Sincerely,
Peter Kolb
Seattle

Common ground

Dear *Real Change*,

I am afraid of a homeless person who yelled at me and called me a bitch after I simply said "no" to him this morning at my bus stop. Right afterwards I had the belief: Homeless people are demanding and vengeful when you respond with "no."

Crisis Intervention Specialists for YWCA Angeline's Center for Homeless Women. Use your skills to make a difference for homeless women in downtown Seattle. \$11.00-11.50/hr. Full-time and on-call, variety of day/night shifts available. See www.ywcaworks.org for details. Send resume to #5-0102 Attn: K. Pratt, 2024 3rd Ave., Seattle 98121 or HR@ywcaworks.org. EOE

When I got honest with myself about it, I saw he wasn't demanding....he just asked me a question, about helping him get a cup of coffee. He asked a yes or no question. There is no demand in a question. Upon further introspection, I also realized he wasn't being vengeful when I said no, he was being loud, and he called me a bitch. It's good to be honest about what happened. I can even agree with him that sometimes in my life I have been a bitch. So he was also telling the truth to me.

So, I do not like him, but maybe I don't need to have fear in my heart for my safety. He is loud and a namecaller when met with my honest no. I don't want to be afraid of him, or to be afraid to go to my bus stop. It turns out I have no proof for my mind that he is violent, just loud and honest. I'm quiet and honest. I guess we have the honesty in common today. I try to be honest with myself and all people I come into contact with. Thank you for reading.

Julia Kellogg
Seattle

Ink in their veins. Fire in their bellies.

Next issue, as everyone knows by now, *Real Change* becomes a weekly publication, and we've staffed up to make it work. It is with no small amount of excitement that we introduce *Real Change's* first-ever staff reporters, Rosette Royale and Cydney Gillis.

While volunteers remain the heart and soul of *Real Change*, the prospect of publishing twice as often is a bit daunting. We need to be sure to maintain the quality our readers expect. When we advertised for two part-time journalists, the résumés poured in. But Rosette and Cydney offered more than just great credentials. They had a passion for social justice and an appreciation for what makes *Real Change* special.

Rosette Royale moved to Seattle from the "other Washington" — D.C., that is — in July 2003. Before that, he worked as a freelance reporter for a weekly community newspaper in Provincetown, MA, out on the tip of Cape Cod, where his jack-of-all-trades beat included maritime issues, education, the arts, and local government. At *Real Change*, Rosette says he is looking forward to "presenting viewpoints from unheard members of the community — even the ones that challenge our own beliefs."

Cydney Gillis' reporting gigs have ranged from a column in the *Regrade Dispatch*, Belltown's former neighborhood newspaper, to editing the Seattle arts tabloid *ArtsFocus*, to the *King County Journal*, where she brought attention to the sorts of stories *Microsoft* would have preferred to stifle. She was most recently at the Snohomish County bureau of *The Seattle Times*.

This summer, after being laid off, she took a detour from mainstream journalism to volunteer on the Kerry campaign. She realized there, she says, "that whatever I did next, I wanted it to have meaning and to count — and to try to help better the world. Getting underneath some of the stories that the daily papers can only cover briefly. And maybe even breaking some news."

Cydney and Rosette: Welcome. ■



Cydney

Change

Fairness, Opportunity, Community

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

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

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

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

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

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Fixing Elections

Six ways to rebuild voter confidence

By Steven Hill and Rob Richie

The day following Election 2004, retiring NBC News anchor Tom Brokaw indicated the need for strong national standards in how we count the votes. In an unusually serious interview with David Letterman, Brokaw said point blank, "We've got to fix the election system in this country."

Some Democrats in both the House and Senate agree. They decided to mount a challenge to congressional certification of Ohio's 20 electoral votes for President Bush as a tactic to shine a national spotlight on numerous voting irregularities in Ohio and elsewhere.

"We go across the world trying to ensure democracy, but there are some problems with the process in the United States," said Rep. Stephanie Tubbs Jones, D-Ohio.

No question, the 2004 elections once again underscored the urgent demand to modernize our elections and bring them in line with international norms. Without such modernization, we will remain vulnerable to electoral breakdowns.

Consider these six reforms for improving our elections:

Non-partisan election officials. It hardly matters whether the method of voting is with pen and paper or computerized equipment if election administrators are not trustworthy. The secretaries of state overseeing elections in three battleground states — Ohio, Missouri, and Michigan — were co-chairs of their state's George Bush re-election campaigns. The Missouri secretary of state oversaw elections for his own race for governor, and New Mexico's secretary of state was a highly partisan Democrat. Administrators instead should be nonpartisan civil servants with demonstrated proficiency in running elections and commitment to making the process transparent and secure.

National elections commission. The United States leaves election administration to officials in more than 3,000 counties and 9,000 townships scattered across the nation with too few national standards or uniformity. This is a recipe for inconsistency and unfairness. Most democracies instead use national elections commissions to establish minimum standards. The Election Assistance Commission established by the Help America Vote Act should be strengthened and should partner with state and local election officials to ensure pre-election and post-election accountability.

Universal voter registration. We lack a system of universal voter registration in which citizens who turn 18 years of age are automatically registered to vote by election authorities. This practice is used by most established democracies, giving them voter rolls far more complete and clean than ours — in fact, a higher percentage of Iraqi adults already are registered to vote than American adults. Universal voter registration in the United States is now easier as a result of the Help America Vote Act, which mandated that all states must establish statewide voter databases by 2006. It would add 50 million eligible voters to the rolls and end duplicate registrations.

"Public interest" voting equipment. Current voting equipment undermines confidence in our elections. Proprietary software and hardware are created by shadowy companies with partisan ties, which sell equipment to local administrators who often possess limited knowledge of voting technology. Other national governments have developed their own voting equipment with very positive results. Ours should follow them by overseeing the development of publicly owned, open-source software and hardware, contracting with the sharpest minds in the private sector to ensure all public needs are met.

Holiday/weekend elections. We vote on a busy workday instead of a national holiday or weekend (like most other nations do), creating a barrier for nine-to-five workers and also leading to a shortage of poll workers and polling places. Puerto Rico makes Election Day a holiday and typically has the highest voter turnout in the United States.

Commissions to evaluate structural reform. Redistricting and winner-take-all elections are shutting out competition in most legislative races. The Electoral College method used for president causes campaigns to completely ignore most states, and invites partisan shenanigans by allowing a shift of a handful of votes in one or two states to decide the presidency. Congress and states should establish commissions to make recommendations, such as direct election of the President by majority vote.

We can't win all these reforms at once, but we can make advances if we keep our eyes on the prize and pursue opportunities that emerge. Whether you're a Democrat, Republican, Green, Libertarian, or independent, you can be part of one big party: the "Better Democracy" party. ■

Steven Hill is Irvine Senior Fellow for the New America Foundation and author of *Fixing Elections: The Failure of America's Winner Take All Politics* (www.FixingElections.com). Rob Richie is executive director of FairVote — The Center for Voting and Democracy (www.fairvote.org).

Inside:

Opinion

Rebuilding voter confidence
by Steven Hill and Rob Richie 1

News

News You Can Use: Last Supper at the Wall, Drivers Wanted, Park Busts.
by Tom Cogbill, Rosette Royale, Diana Wurn 4

Fired: Wackenhut targets labor activist
by Cydney Gillis 5

North American Newsbriefs
by Patty Lane 5

Features

Dream of Democracy. Iraqi Americans consider the election
by Rosette Royale 1

Hearing the Call: Seattle U hosts Tent City
by Megan Lee 6

Heroes and Heroines: Tsunami reflections
by Bonnie Olson 7

Street Watch
by Emma Quinn 8

Real Change Hero: John Porter, Vendor #3291
by Erin Anderson 8

Adventures in Poetry: Dumb Luck
with ©Dr. Wes Browning 10

Calendar
by Sandra Enger 12

Poetry

Insights and surprises from Roger stukey, Emily Francisca, Anitra Freeman 10

Activism

Citizen's Participation Project: Tax Fairness Now
by Rachael Myers 12

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Last supper

A mid-January deadline for declaring a permanent site for the Seattle's licensed outdoor meals programs has come and gone, and a final site has not been named. Until such a location is announced, those seeking an outdoor meal are being directed to other, indoor locales throughout downtown.

A city official and a local coordinator for meals programs within the city both maintain they are in negotiations with a likely site. But until those negotiations reach their conclusion — which is projected to occur by month's end — all parties involved are keeping mum about the site and its location.

"We're looking for a solution that will get us through," says Patricia McInturff, head of Human Services for the mayor's office. Thus far, that solution involves having outdoor meals providers who served food at the Washington War Memorial on the Public Safety Building (PSB) plaza direct the hungry to city-sanctioned indoor sites.

Su'N Chon, program coordinator for the Meals Partnership Coalition, says she has emailed eight outdoor meals providers a list of city-sanctioned general indoor feeding programs within King County. The list includes six meals providers who offer breakfast at least once a week; 23 that offer lunch at least once weekly; and 12 that serve dinner at least once weekly. "It's been a difficult process," admits Chon, "but we feel that everyone really wants to solve this problem."

The city has been dealing with the problem, in its most current manifestation, since last August. It was then that the mayor's office, citing a rise in violence, curtailed hours meals could be served when the program was at City Hall Park, which it was last summer. The meals program there suffered a four-day shutdown. It was then moved back to Washington War Memorial on the PSB. Since then, the need for a permanent site has become increasingly important, with demolition set to occur of the memorial by the end of this month. In order to prepare for demolition, the program's last meal was served at dinnertime, on January 14th.

Chon says that more organizations offering free meals exist above and beyond those on the list compiled by the Meals Partnership Coalition, but without being sanctioned by city government, the coalition did not feel confident in passing their names on to clients.

"I anticipate that there is going to be plenty of food out there, but we don't know if it's going to be safe," says Chon.

The city requires that meals programs comply with a number of criteria, the most important of which is compliance with health code regulations.

While admitting that while she was skeptical of the process and the city's determination at first, Chon acknowledges that her feelings have changed after being involved in this months-long process. "I feel the city has been working in good faith and really trying hard," she says.

McInturff says she is aware that the city's inability to acquire a more permanent site by its mid-month deadline may cause the perception that this is a low-level priority. "We are hoping that the people we are in negotiations with will prove to be the answer," she says. "This is not something that we're interested in dropping the ball on."

And what if the negotiations for the potential site come to naught? "We'll go back to our original sites on the list and come up with a place as quickly as we can," says McInturff.

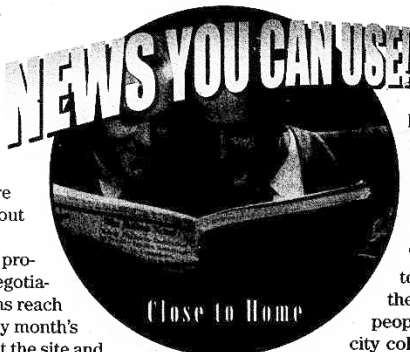


PHOTO BY TERRY DIVYAK

Back in the saddle

People who have had their licenses suspended for various minor offenses may now be eligible to get them reinstated. A court decision last June found that the state Department of Licensing (DOL) had acted illegally by suspending licenses without informing drivers of their right to a court hearing first.

In compliance with the decision, DOL sent out over 200,000 letters advising affected individuals that a DOL office would reissue their license if they stopped in. What is not known, however, is how many of those whose li-

censes were suspended are aware of this.

"We know this constituency," says Lynn Domingo of LELO, an advocacy group whose Relicensing Project has been contesting the state's policy of revoking driving rights over minor offenses. "We know a high percentage of those DOL letters never reached the right people."

LELO has been working to get the news out through posters, leafleting, and intermediaries at court hearings. The group successfully opposed Mayor Nickels' attempt to lop the Relicensing Project out of Seattle's budget in the 2005-06 fiscal year. They lobbied City Council with people who had directly benefited from changes in how the city collects on overdue auto-related fines, convincing members of the need to maintain relicensing outreach.

"The City of Seattle saw the economic and social gain from diverting Class 3 offenders from prosecution, allowing them to repay their fines over time," says Michael Woo, co-director of LELO. Class 3 offenses are the most minor kind, like driving without proof of insurance or registration, as well as parking and uncomplicated traffic tickets (no injuries, property damage, or DUI).

Woo considers Seattle and King County to be leading the way in alternatives to license suspensions, but cautions that in most of the rest of the state, low-income people still remain at a disadvantage in getting suspended licenses reinstated and paying off old fines.

LELO intends to lobby the current legislature not to revoke the license-reinstatement requirement before all the affected drivers have had a chance to arrange for repayment options. Making insurance more affordable, perhaps through no-fault plans, is another of their long-term goals, but for now, the priority is to make sure working people have legal access to the mobility of driving.

Says Janet Fowler, leader of the campaign that lobbied City Council, "My son has a family, and it's hard for him and others to take care of their families without a license and without a job.... Everyone needs a chance."

"People drive to survive," adds Michael Woo, "they do whatever it takes to get by."

—Tom Cogbill

Public safety, or racial profiling?

The city's 2005-06 budget includes more money for Seattle mayor Greg Nickels to expand his "Neighborhood Corrections Initiative," a partnership between the Seattle Police Department and state corrections officials.

The program involves expanded street outreach to areas that are popular haunts for drug dealers. The goal is to find those who may be violating orders of parole for drug violations. With a van, handy laptop to check information about prospective offenders, and an eye for the suspicious, officers can approach individuals, ask for ID, obtain their criminal history, and see if they are following requirements of the court. Anyone out of compliance can be ordered to leave the area or be sent to a work crew.

Katherine Beckett, associate professor in the Department of Sociology at the University of Washington, analyzed over 15,000 Seattle police records detailing possible drug offenses, and found that a criminal focus on low-level drug dealers has done nothing to increase safety in the downtown area.

Yet the purpose of the Neighborhood Corrections program, say its advocates, is not to add to an already overloaded jail system, but to help offenders stay clean and out of jail.

Its goal "is to keep them on the path they should be on with all their conditions of supervision and keep them out of trouble," says Bob Scales, a public safety policy analyst with the City of Seattle.

As the officers and corrections officials look for potential drug offenders standing on sidewalks or just in the wrong parts of town, what factors will influence who they decide to stop?

D'Adre Cunningham, staff attorney of the Defender Association's Racial Disparity Project, has heard of incidents involving situations that don't always appear to be drug-related. Once, corrections officers stopped a man on a bicycle for not wearing a helmet. The African American man became frustrated with the questioning and rode away, and was then charged with a criminal violation of obstruction.

"The mayor announced that to reduce drug crime, the police and the Department of Corrections will be stopping people on the street. The question is: how do you implement that objective?" says Cunningham. "If the program has been put in place to reduce drug crime, you wonder why they are stopping people on the street for not wearing a bicycle helmet." ■

—Diana Wurn

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

Gone, But Not Forgotten

Security contractor under scrutiny for firing whistleblower



By Cydney Gillis

One day Franklin Bullock was talking up the union to a fellow security guard at Sound Transit. Six days later, he says his boss drove up, stuffed him into the back of a car, and suspended him from his job — give or take a few minutes of intense interrogation.

Bullock, who was formally fired Dec. 6, worked for Wackenhut Corp., a national rent-a-cop outfit with 38,000 employees and a long anti-labor history. The Florida-based company has a contract to provide the regional transit agency with 38 security guards, who patrol nine light rail and Sounder commuter train stations from Tacoma to Everett.

So far, 23 of the guards have signed union authorization cards. That's 23 of nearly 300 cards signed in a massive campaign started early last year by the Service Employees International Union, which is trying to organize more than 1,000 guards who work for the local offices of Wackenhut and five other private security firms.

In theory, national labor law protects such organizing activity. But, because Bullock was an employee of Wackenhut, not Sound Transit, members of the public agency's board — which includes Mayor Greg Nickels and King County Executive Ron Sims — say they can do nothing to get Bullock's job back.

On Jan. 6, at an executive committee meeting of Sound Transit, labor supporters with the Church Council of Greater Seattle and a security guard employed by Northwest Protective Services — one of the companies SEIU is trying to organize — spoke against Wackenhut and its firing of Bullock, who says he never got a written notice as to why he was fired.

A company incident report, however, shows it was for visiting a fellow employee at a work site Nov. 30. Bullock was off duty and says the officer he visited was on a break.

At the Jan. 6 meeting, Sound Transit board members made it clear they were unhappy about the firing, with Nickels and Sims both raising the idea of Sound Transit bringing its security

guards in house, as direct employees.

But the mayor and county executive both declined to comment on Bullock's situation. The problem, says Pierce County Executive John Ladenburg, Sound Transit's board chairman, is legalese.

Under its contract, the agency "has an obligation to see that services are performed adequately," Ladenburg says of Wackenhut, "but that doesn't extend to telling them how to run their business."

That doesn't mean the board is doing nothing. Last September, after three years of contracting with Wackenhut, Sound Transit shortened the company's latest one-year contract, which

expires June 30, to nine and a half months. By April, the agency plans to issue a new call for security contractors and is currently drafting new contract language that will include labor standards for the contractor to follow.

The shortened contract was a victory for SEIU, which had made an issue of Wackenhut contract violations uncovered during its organizing drive — most related to safety for both guards and the public.

Among the violations, the union says, Wackenhut routinely makes officers work multiple 12-hour shifts, leaves sites unprotected for hours at a time, and fails to provide safety boots, restroom facilities, and training for officers.

Geoff Patrick, a spokesman for Sound Transit, says the agency is investigating the charges and should have a response in a month. In the meantime, when asked if he thinks he'll get his job back, the 49-year-old Bullock, a resi-

dent of Tacoma, isn't optimistic.

"That would be asking if I believe Wackenhut will respect its employees," Bullock quips.

"Franklin is a whistleblower. That's how Wackenhut saw it," says Kathleen Buckley, a Northwest Protective Services guard who spoke for Bullock Jan. 6.

In addition to Wackenhut and Northwest Protective Services, the union is working to organize security guards at ACSS, Allied-Barton, Guardsmark, and Northwest Security. Together, says SEIU organizer Anastasia Christman, the companies employ an estimated 1,000 to 1,200 officers who cover some 200 commercial properties in Seattle and Bellevue, including the area's biggest building owner, Equity Office Properties.

"We're trying to work with all the officers in those companies simultaneously with a goal of getting enough critical mass to sit down and bargain a master contract," Christman says.

Wackenhut, however, won't be easy. The company, which provides security guards for 30 of the nation's 64 nuclear power plants, is a special SEIU target for a number of firings just like

Bullock's in which employees had raised safety issues. The company is part of a multinational security conglomerate called Group 4 Securicor that made more than \$360 million in profit in 2003.

In theory, when Sound Transit opens its new contract bids this spring, Wackenhut could win again. But that's not likely, according to board member and King County Councilmember Dwight Pelz.

"Wackenhut's actions in firing Bullock are highly suspect," Pelz says. "As a board member, I'm not enthusiastic about doing business with companies that punish union activists."

Getting Wackenhut to rehire him, however, is Bullock's problem.

"It's up to Wackenhut," Pelz says. "But the whole world's watching." ■

"I'm not enthusiastic about doing business with companies that punish union activists."



NORTH AMERICAN NEWSBRIEFS

WWW.FREEINDEPENDENTPRESS.ORG

With more than 100,000 people expected in Jacksonville for this year's **Super Bowl**, homeless advocates are trying to determine where the city's homeless will go. For many homeless the impending masses make them feel a bit uncomfortable. "You don't know what to expect. Its going to be

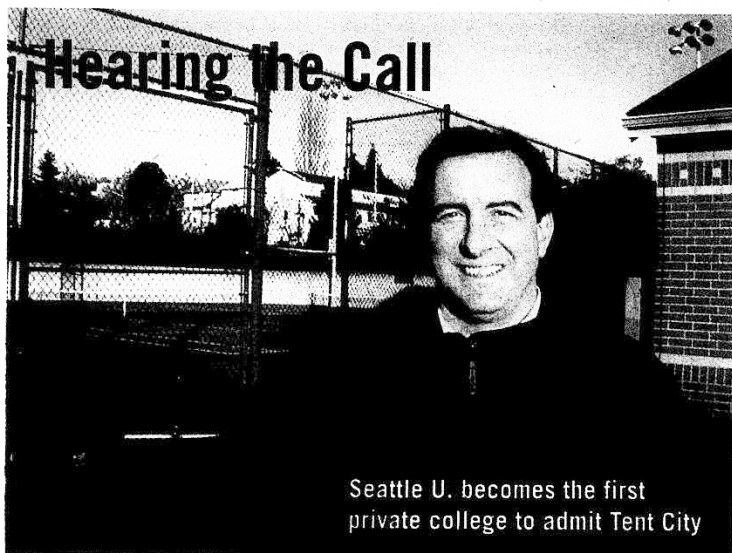
flooded," says Terry Stover, who has lived on Jacksonville's streets for six months. Homeless advocates have taken a proactive approach to the problem. Area shelters have joined the Emergency Services and Homeless Coalition to provide a place for the homeless during Super Bowl week. "For people who live on the street, that is their home. And with all the people in town for the game, they need a place of safe, quiet refuge," Wanda Lanier of the Homeless Coalition tells Jacksonville's CBS TV. Each night, around 600 people are left to live on the streets of Jacksonville because of full shelters. The temporary shelter will be open two weeks before the Super Bowl and close the day after.

"These are the forgotten people," sighed Tom Flynn, owner of a cemetery in Illinois that for 23 years has buried the dead left unclaimed at Cook County's morgue. CBS-2 reports there are around 7,000 homeless and indigent people **buried in common graves** at Homewood Memorial Gardens. Reta Riengruber is the most recent of them. Her body body was kept at the morgue for five months before she was buried along with 22 other people whose bodies were not claimed. Riengruber, who often spent nights sleeping on Chicago buses, was 45 when she died in August of breast cancer at a hospital. Homeless advocates say more could be done to

connect these forgotten with relatives or friends so they don't have to lie unclaimed for months and be given anonymous mass burials at the south suburban Chicago cemetery. "It's amazing that such cases are typical. It's a tragedy," says Ed Shurna of Chicago's Coalition for the Homeless. He says officials are not doing enough to get the word out on the street when homeless people die so relatives or friends can be found. Last year, about 250 people went unclaimed from the Medical Examiner's office. An official with the Chicago Department of Human Services says they do their best to identify the dead and find surviving relatives. Chicago Police often distribute photos of the deceased in neighborhoods where the person spent time.

Homeless advocates and city officials in San Diego County gathered to put together a plan to **end homelessness** in 10 years. Attendees heard success stories from housing officials from Atlanta and Philadelphia as well as ideas from the top official of a federal agency working on homeless issues. "I think it's pretty exciting," Escondido Mayor Lori Holt Pfeiler says of the conference. "I think it reinforces that you can solve the problem as a region." When the local group next meets, its first goal will be to develop strategies to eliminate chronic homelessness. That group of people, which officials said comprise 20 percent of the homeless population, will be the first focus of the effort because it consumes about 50 percent of the financial resources available to address the problem. Attendees said routinely chronically homeless get turned away from programs which leads to the need for emergency health services and law enforcement intervention. "I think we are missing the boat," says Hannah Cohen, a consultant with the United Way. "There has to be something wrong with this picture if existing programs are not working."

—Compiled by Patty Lane



Seattle U. becomes the first private college to admit Tent City

UNIVERSITY PRESIDENT STEVEN SUNDBORG SEES HOSTING TENT CITY AS AN OPPORTUNITY TO FOLLOW SU'S MISSION. PHOTO BY MEGAN LEE.

By Megan Lee

The 100 homeless campers who make up Tent City 3 (TC3) will be inhabiting the Seattle University tennis courts January 29 through February 28. So far there has been little media attention garnered by this mobile community's upcoming move, but as the date approaches, doctoral student Joe Orlando, who helped dream up the idea, hopes there will be more. "I understand we are the first university in the United States to host a tent city encampment, and we are really looking forward to this opportunity," he says.

Not only is the university offering a place for 100 people to pitch their tents, the SU community is stepping up to participate.

Students and faculty from the Law School are planning to run a weekly law clinic, helping people with everything from immigration to criminal issues. The nursing school will be operating a health desk. The Career Development Center will be doing employment workshops. And throngs of volunteers are working to organize everything from tent setup and takedown to meal planning.

While similar services for homeless and poor people are offered around the city, organizers of Tent City's visit hope that it will be a positive learning experience for the campus community at large.

SU President Steven Sundborg, S.J., feels this is a perfect opportunity for the university to follow the university's mission statement (ABOVE) a little further and for the students to get an inside look at poverty and social vulnerability in America.

The plan to host TC3 was born in October 2003, when Sundborg distributed 400 copies of the book *Radical Compassion*, by Gary Smith, a Jesuit

priest from Oregon who has lived among and ministered to the poor since 1969. A group of doctoral students read the book, then suggested hosting the TC3 project for a month. Since SU is a first-time host, campus leaders decided that a month-long hosting period would be a logical beginning.

"We see an opportunity, one related to our core commitment of service," explains Orlando. "This is a chance for us to become further educated about the larger issue of homelessness and challenges we face as society. To be a place for TC3 to be located. And, for us to learn about them. It's a mutual exchange."

Other local universities are less eager to follow SU's lead. Bob Roseth, director of news and information at the University of Washington, says that public institutions have less decision-making leeway — but, if a tent city were invited to stay on the grounds of UW, it would be students spearheading the plan.

Another local private school has taken notice, however. "I am very impressed by the SU's initiative," says Terry McConnell, student and vice-president of campus ministry at Seattle Pacific University. "We at SPU, especially in ministry, have a commitment to help the community. This is definitely something I could see students rallying for."

Since the decision was made to host the project, planning committees formed and the campus community is getting involved. Two planning groups, one covering community education and the other dealing with direct services for the residents, are working in phases to make this project run smoothly, with overlapping responsibilities. Each component has a number of people working on it. The director of SU's Social Work Program is compiling a 100-page reader dealing with local homeless is-

sues.

The planning committees started by asking TC3 residents how they could help and are working from there.

The average monthly operating cost of running TC3 is about \$4,500 for bus tickets, portable restrooms, refuse disposal, and various expenses. Share/Wheel is the joint operating, non-profit organization which helps fund-raise and organize the Tent City projects. El Centro de la Raza, on Beacon Hill, has housed the TC3 project on three separate occasions. El Centro de la Raza Executive Director Roberto Maestas was instrumental in getting Tent City accepted by the City of Seattle.

"It was a pleasure to have them here," says Steve Erickson, El Centro de la Raza facilities manager. "They were very helpful to the community, they have their own security team and divide work up among themselves."

Erickson says the TC3 residents go out of their way to keep things right in the neighborhood. He recalls that if there was a mess a half mile away, someone from TC3 would go and clean it up, because they knew they would be suspected.

Jerry Crow, executive committee member and security officer at the camp, says the group is looking forward to this move. He says TC3 is filled to the capacity of 100 residents, approximately 80 percent males and 20 percent females.

"People [TC3 residents] are asking about the services, everybody is real excited," says Crow. "They are interested in the opportunities to better themselves, such as career and legal advice. A couple people here used to be nursing students and they are looking forward to getting back and finishing their program. We want to talk about what it would take to actually get everybody off of the streets."

Some students are anxious about the impending arrival, while others are eagerly counting down the days. Three forums were held introducing the project, but some students feel they weren't asked or informed early on about this decision, just told in a mass email from the president. Some feel only students with related majors were consulted. Some students worry about security, but according to folks who have housed

TC3, security is not an issue.

The fenced tennis courts between 13th and 14th Avenues on Cherry Street, where the TC3 encampment will be located, are generally vacant this time of year, but one of the four courts will remain open for play. The field house, between the tennis courts will be fixed up and used as the dining facility and workshop area — a place for the campus community and the tent community to mingle. ■

Academic Salons

A series of interactive events, part of the university's yearlong salon on "Consumption and Poverty," are designed to give tent city residents and SU community members a chance to deepen their mutual understanding.

Residents and panels from Tent City 3 will be invited to speak to individual classes. The encampment will be opened for prearranged, chaperoned tours, offering a real-life perspective on life in TC3 and what the state of homelessness encompasses.

SU's academic salon began with a presentation in the fall and continues through the academic year with debates, films, book readings, and discussions on cultural issues related to social justice. All are welcome to attend these salons; the calendar is available on the SU website. The events involving TC3 will be supplementary to this series.

The TC3 events will begin Feb. 7, at 7 p.m., with a panel discussion including SU president Sundborg, King County executive Ron Sims, and selected TC3 residents. Six additional forums events are planned during the month.

The five to 20-person groups will be organized through the Office of Jesuit Identity, and will include a question and answer session. Tours will be offered Mondays, Wednesdays, and Fridays, on the hour. Contact Eddie Salazar, Office of Jesuit Identity (296-6133) for more information, or to organize a visit. Or go to www.seattleu.edu/tentcity.

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Of Heroes and Heroines

In the midst of a tsunami, what's the use of being Western?

By Bonnie Olson

I was on the southwest coast of India when the tsunami hit, in a remote area of traditional fishing villages in Kerala state. I had come to the ashram of Mata Anuritanandamayi (commonly known as Amma) for the month of December. You may have heard of Amma; she comes to Seattle once a year on her world tour. Amma has been dubbed the "hugging saint" because she individually hugs every person who comes to her for a blessing. The ashram itself is built on a narrow spit of a peninsula where Amma was born, a dense, humid jungle of coconut trees and majestic brown eagles, with the ocean on one side and the "backwaters" on the other. The backwaters consist of a usually calm, muddy river and land pockmarked with ponds and pools.

So when the tsunami hit, water poured in from both directions simultaneously. The western narrow passageway to the sea became a rushing river, reaching three feet in minutes and climbing. The eastern pond behind our café exploded over a cement wall, knocking it down and tossing around the heavy metal tables with attached benches. People jumped onto tables, ran up the temple steps, and those in the temple with Amma stood in amazed silence. I cannot personally claim a dramatic adventure: I was in a seventh-floor flat, napping in preparation for an all-night vigil.

The massive wave that flooded the ashram was actually the second surge of water, and no one knew if there would be more. Within two hours of the flooding, the ashram residents and guests were told to evacuate immediately for higher ground. We were ferried across the river and walked the equivalent of about five city blocks to the ashram's new engineering college still under construction. Fortunately one section of the complex was complete, with plumbing and electricity. We camped out in the classrooms, about 3,000 in all, Indians and Westerners from all over the world. Thirty women slept in my 25 by 40 foot room.

Soon, the whole peninsula was ordered evacuated: about 40 percent of the houses were damaged or destroyed, the water all contaminated, and uncounted dead at this point. The ashram, with its impressively efficient system of feeding thousands of people per day, kicked into high gear, mobilizing its food stores, massive cooking tubs, and all its vehicles and people to get food and medical services to the peninsula refugees.

Like many others, I spent hours chopping vegetables, filling huge tubs five feet

across and three feet high, one tub each of the various local produce that make up the common meal of curried vegetables with rice, three times a day.

We did not see the drama everyone here has been watching so intently on CNN. Right in the middle of it, we were only aware of our direct experience. We heard bits of information by word of mouth, but had no access to radio, television, or even newspapers. On the third day, I went to a nearby town via rickshaw to call home and buy toothpaste and soap. I was lucky to encounter an industrious man on a bicycle selling an English newspaper (one), and was swamped by people when I returned, all hungry to find out exactly what was going on.

The fourth day we had a meeting with ashramites and found out a mass funeral had taken place in the neighboring village of Azhikkal. A funeral pyre had been erected to burn more than 40 bodies, most of them children.

We are mesmerized by the sensational, wired for the retelling of our mythic themes. Yet do we have this compassionate response to the pain of others in our midst, or do we use our judgments to create distance?

I was impressed by how calm and patient so many of the Westerners seemed to be. I was not one of them. I must confess that it was quite a struggle to transcend my own personal discomfort. I was miserable: sleeping on a concrete floor, using my bumpy backpack as a pillow, wearing the same dirty clothes day after day, always hot, sweaty, grimy. The incessant itch of mosquito bites, with a fresh batch added each night. Cracked heels, heat rash, the close proximity of so many people, coughing, snoring, kids crying. Amazing how relativity works: the 12 by 12 foot room in the ashram, which I shared with two other people, now seemed luxurious! Fortunately, volunteer work was a great relief from my physical discomforts, and there was always plenty of that. I watched the busload of Indian ashramites going off to the relief camps, the group of men sent to clear concrete debris. Of course, the local Indians were best for the frontlines: they could speak Malayalam, the local language. I wished I could go, to do something more dramatic.

I was disappointed that I didn't get to volunteer at the ashram's hospital. Only taking 15 people per shift, there were more volunteers than they could use. The next sign-up opportunity I missed again (another nap). I seemed destined to continue my reflection on the inflated Western ego as I trudged yet again back to the canteen, to continue the unglamorous yet vital job of chopping mountains of vegetables.

It is interesting, this dynamic that you often must leave your own culture in order to really see how immersed you are in it. I have always criticized

this dominant theme of hero-worship in America: the myth of the rugged individual who stands out above the others. So I noticed my disappointment that I didn't get to go to the refugee sites. It was not that the work wasn't getting done, but that I wasn't getting to do it.

Now that I sit comfortably in my living room, watching the distant drama on CNN, it is easy to think I am feeling the plight of others, but am I really just watching a movie? We are mesmerized by the sensational, wired for the retelling of our mythic themes. Yet do we have this compassionate response to the pain of others in our midst, or do we use our judgments to create distance? We are very generous in this country, no doubt. But it is easy to be generous because we have so much. It is easy to give something you will not really miss. It is easy to think of others' needs when we ourselves are comfortable.

This experience has shattered many illusions I had about myself. I realize just how pampered and spoiled I really am. Me, who thinks I live frugally, who thinks I could easily do without extras. As Les McCann would say, compared to what.

I wonder about the amazing coping mechanisms of homeless men who live in the large shelters, sleeping four inches from the person next to them night after night. I wonder at the level of compassion and understanding required of Tent City 4 people, to endure not only their daily conditions but the saga of protests every time they have to move, defending themselves over and over again.

I hope this caring and compassion we all have for the tsunami victims is not short-lived. The rebuilding effort will take much more and much longer than our current emergency relief. I hope our identification with the plight of others is not reserved solely for these most dramatic of calamities. ■

Bonnie Olson is a Seattle resident with a long history of human services and advocacy work, now consulting with nonprofits and community groups. For more details about the tsunami's effects at the ashram, including pictures, and ashram reconstruction projects, see www.amritapuri.org/tsunami or www.amma.org.



COMPASSION AT WORK. ADEPT AT FEEDING THOUSANDS OF PEOPLE PER DAY, THE ASHRAM MOBILIZED ITS FOOD STORES AND MASSIVE COOKING VESSELS FOR THOSE DISPLACED BY THE FLOOD. PHOTO BY BONNIE OLSON.

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**Friday, Dec. 24, 12:45 a.m., Hing Hay Park.**

A transient Black male aged 51 was observed trespassing in Hing Hay Park. The Department of Corrections was called to the scene, and a crack pipe and a small piece of crack were recovered from the suspect, which the DOC retained as evidence. Suspect admitted to drinking yesterday and to smoking crack today, and was booked into King County Jail for DOC parole violations.

Friday, Dec. 24, 9:00 p.m., S. Jackson St.

Subject, a transient Black male aged 41, was observed trespassing in a Metro bus shelter. Police were unable to ID him due to his intoxication and distressed mental state. He was interviewed and released from the ID unit, and was transported to the cold weather shelter on Yesler Way.

Friday, Dec. 24, 10:37 p.m., Western Ave.

Suspect was seen sitting on a park bench in Victor Steinbrueck Park. Officers recognized the suspect, a transient white male aged 33, from previous contacts, and were aware that he had been trespassed from the park several times. They made a computer check and found he had been trespassed from the park for a year. He was placed under arrest, issued a new park exclusion notice, and transported to King County Jail.

Friday, Dec. 24, 10:40 p.m., Fourth Ave. gas station.

Upon arrival at the above location, officers contacted the victim, a transient white male aged 34, who was being treated by Seattle Fire Department aid workers. He had been assaulted, but was not able to provide any details about what had happened to him. He did not know who had assaulted him or how long he'd been at the gas station. Seattle Fire stated that the three-inch cut over his eye was consistent with having been hit with a hard object, possibly a bottle. On the west side of the gas station, officers located a large puddle of blood and various items strewn around: cigarettes, food. There were also bits of the victim's clothing in the area, indicating a struggle. Victim stated he was not missing any money from his wallet. He was transferred to Harborview with multiple abrasions and severe swelling of the eyes and nose.

Saturday, Dec. 25, 3:47 p.m., Downtown Emergency Service Center.

Complainant called 911 to say she could see an assault occurring on the sidewalk in front of the DESC. She was working inside and could see it through the video monitor covering the front door. She saw two Black males and the victim, a transient Hispanic male aged 36, standing on the sidewalk. She was unsure of the involvement of the second Black male, but saw the first punch and shove the victim. Suspect said to the victim "Give me my money, or give me back my shit." They then left the area, leaving the victim on the sidewalk. An area

**REAL CHANGE HERO****John Porter, Vendor #3291**

If you've ever braved the mammoth lines to pick up that last-minute sociology text before the first day of class, waited in quivering anticipation for an autograph from a local author at a reading, or browsed the bargain section for a good read (and, not coincidentally, a free parking validation) at the University Bookstore, then you've probably met John Porter.

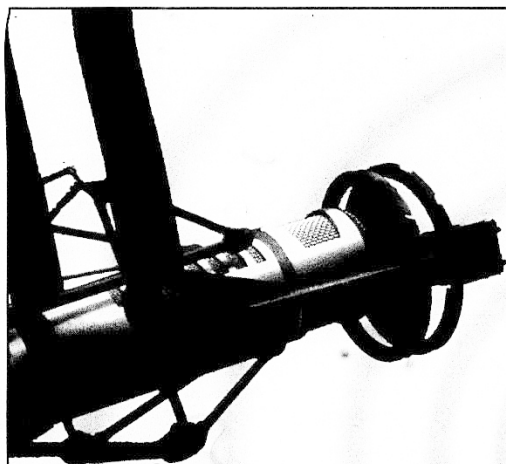
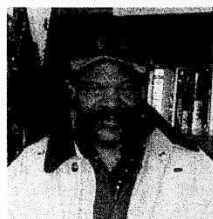
A *Real Change* vendor for more than three years, John sells the paper outside the back entrance to the U Bookstore, where his typical workweek is seven days and often more than 60 hours, bringing into question the whole concept of "workweek."

John has used *Real Change* to help get himself back on his feet after a struggle with homelessness. "Basically, it started with an illness in the family and escalating hospital costs at the rate of up to \$600 a day," says John. "Age has a lot to do with it, also. I'll be 60 years old next year. A lot of good jobs, they're just not going to hire me."

With two years of business school and 16 years of highly regarded active military service under his belt, John insists, "Homelessness is not related to intellect or abilities. I don't care who you are; education isn't enough. Anybody can become homeless."

Real Change is only a tiny part of John's life. He has enough stories to fill a library. "I once returned \$43,000 to Washington Mutual which they accidentally put in my checking account. I had \$4 in that account. They insisted it was my money, and I insisted it wasn't." Living in a homeless shelter at the time, John initially refused any reward, despite generous offers from the CEO of Washington Mutual. Eventually working out a compromise, "We arranged for the Lazarus Day Center [an organization for homeless men over 50] to be provided with over 200 steak dinners," he says.

When he's not making his mark as a public servant, rail travel is one of John's favorite hobbies. "I've traveled by rail throughout the U.S. and Canada," says John. "I've been from one side of Canada to the other, and I've been in every state in the union at least five times with the exception of Hawaii, which I flew over." John looks at travel as an educational experience, satiating his hunger for learning about geography and culture. ■

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ELECTIONS, Cont. from Page 1

out that which is unwritten, and unspoken, during events she witnessed in Iraq.

It was during the mid-'90s, when Sultan worked as an interpreter for a number of humanitarian and non-profit organizations, that she honed her skills for hearing both the said and unsaid, translating this others to comprehend. Through this work, she developed a program that provided health education to mothers and their children via skits she and a troupe of co-workers performed. UNICEF heard of the program and hired Sultan, along with her staff, to present the mini-performances in hospitals. Their work, however, turned out to be an unintentional play within a play — a mini-drama taking place upon a much larger, almost tragically Shakespearean stage.

On that larger stage, the two major Kurdish parties in Erbil were locked in vicious dispute. One party, the Kurdistan Democratic Party (KDP), was overthrown by the Iraqi National Congress (INC). Smarting from their loss, the KDP enlisted Saddam Hussein's help to reclaim the city. "So my city was invaded by the tanks and Saddam's army," remembers Sultan.

It was believed that close to 20,000 people were displaced in Iraq due to the dispute, while another 39,000 were thought to have sought refuge in Iran. Up to 1,500 people were arrested in house-to-house searches. Close to 100 people were known to have been executed. The U.S. government confronted the attempted genocide (Sultan says that her boss, the head of UNICEF, pleaded a case to Congress to save the endangered Kurds) and began discussions with Turkey to evacuate people to safety. In the early fall of 1996, more than 2,000 people in the threatened area were evacuated to Turkey, then flown to Guam. Three months in Guam led to the asylum seekers' arrival in the United States.

Their first stop was San Francisco, where Sultan helped her fellow evacuees fill out necessary immigration data for two weeks. Once they began to be directed to any number of American cities, Sultan headed north, to Seattle,

which she says she chose because it was close to her older brother, who was in Vancouver, British Columbia. This March 3, Sultan will mark her eighth anniversary of living on American soil.

"So, that was my beginning," Sultan says.

That beginning eventually led to her marrying, having children, and starting her own company, Kurdistan Language Services, which specializes in Arabic translation and interpretation, as well as providing education about the fundamentals of Islam.

And through that octet of years, she kept abreast of the situation in Iraq. Relatives have provided her with information and stories during that time, but so too did various media outlets, whether televised, broadcast on radio or provided on-line. While Iraq may have been less than newsworthy from the U.S. mass media's standpoint, that sentiment changed immeasurably once the U.S.-proclaimed War on Terror set its sights on the country. With the second anniversary of the invasion barely two months away, Sultan finds herself standing decisively on middle ground in her opinions on the validity of Operation Iraqi Freedom.

"I don't like war," she asserts. "I'm a very anti-war person, because I've been in war since my childhood. But, she continues, "whatever this administration's agenda was, the result, again, was the liberation of Iraq. Iraqis felt liberation for the first time of their lives. The outcome of what they (the U.S. military) did and the way they did it, the way it was handled," she pauses, "I don't agree with the way it was handled, the invasion and the aftermath."

But could this country's military operation, as poorly handled as Sultan

admits it has been, shift from invasion to lasting occupation, say, for oil? Sultan is doubtful such an outcome will ever see the light of day.

"Iraqis are a free, free-spirited people," she claims. "And if this invasion turns out to be an occupation, as what they are talking about, Iraqis, throughout their history, they don't accept any occupation."

"The only occupied military, in a country, is [in] Palestine, with Israel.... Because we live in 2005 now, and we don't live in these old ages of occupation in countries and things. This is not what the Iraqi people hold, and this is not what's going to happen."

And what of the election? Is this what the Iraqi people hold? Is this what will happen? Qatrani's aspirations lean in that direction. "I hope it will go well," Qatrani says. "I hope the majority of Iraqis will be part of this election. If everyone did their part, the country will go forward."

Sultan concurs. "In Iraq, we never had democracy in the modern political history," she says. "And this is our first time, our first time, that we dream of democracy. We have a chance." ■

[Resources]

Iraqi Community Center
(at Southwest Youth and Family Services)
4555 Delridge Way SW
Seattle, WA 98106
(206)937-7680

Kurdish Human Rights Watch, Inc.
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The woods are not a metaphor for any human thing.
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roots, shelter, aspiration
the nourishment we once plucked from her hand,

and all our building yet embodies
a pale part of what grows on,
out there,
beyond.

Woods hold
cathedrals,
gardens,
sculpture,
music,
dance
all engineering and

more reality than we've grown into yet.

—ANITRA L. FREEMAN

Harvesting Hope

Deepest hope
Springs forth from earth,
Determined to fulfill joy.
Dreams shall come true,
Be assured.

—EMILY FRANCISCA

Shopping

Pity the child wandering in the mall
shopping for identity.

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

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

...b

...

...b

...

...breathe.

—ROGER STUKEY

Propaganda

We've sat there with buttery fingers
loyally entertained
laughing at all the right places
our emotions in perfect sync with the soundtrack.
Some have suspended belief
many more have exiled it.

But now the plot is
beginning to unravel.
The lies have become too complicated
as when a teenager says:
"Molly's house"
(when last night she said:
"Heather's house.")

What happens in a bad movie?
(glancing at your watch again)
You (would be wise to)
remember it is a movie.

—ROGER STUKEY

Adventures in Poetry with ©Dr. Wes Browning



Senses of humor: what are they? How many are there? Where do they come from? Why do some people seem not to have them? Why do Germans like toilet jokes so much? Why is George Bush so snarky? How did "snarky" get to be a word? Why did the expression "elephant that sticks to the roof of your mouth" make me squirt Pepsi out my nose, once?

Those are just some of the questions I have no answer for. I wanted to devote today's column to things I don't know. But that's such a big subject I've had to narrow it down to just the things I don't know that have recently come to my attention.

In particular, as I was telling my life story to a captive audience last week, it dawned on me that although I was talking about dreadful, horrible, catastrophes that had befallen me in my innocent childhood, I was breaking out into giggles. I was talking about disaster after disaster happening to a poor defenseless child, the sort of stories that can make grown men cry. But since it all happened to me over 50 years ago, I was on the verge of giggling like any three teenage girls in the same room.

Another odd sense of humor is the Seinfeld sense. I'm not speaking of the Seinfeld stand-up sense of humor, but the Seinfeld sitcom sense of humor. I watch reruns of Seinfeld, the sitcom, all the time. While I watch, Anitra "Netnama" Freeman, Upon Whose Kitchen Floor I Have Sometimes Slept, is almost always trying to surf the internet while at the same time holding her hands over her ears and making "la-la" noises to block out the Seinfeld dialog. To sweet caring sensitive Anitra, the Seinfeld dialog is mean and Seinfeld characters are the dregs of human society and she finds nothing funny about them.

Whereas, to me, the Seinfeld dialog is mean and Seinfeld characters are the dregs of human society, and I laugh and laugh no matter how often I see them.

Perhaps what got me thinking about this is the latest issue of *Time* magazine, which has a set of short stories that all amuse me.

First, there's the PETA fur coat story. PETA (People for the Ethical Treatment of Animals) has organized boycotts of stores selling fur coats, even stores selling only vintage fur coats. But they also give fur coats away to the homeless. Now they are giving fur coats to homeless people in Iraq and Afghanistan.

Now, speaking of things I do not know, "eccentric former basketball star" Dennis Rodman has something called the Dennis Rodman Foundation, which helps the homeless. I did not know that.

Meanwhile, homeless men in Amsterdam are voluntarily wearing winter jackets that advertise Ben & Jerry's, in return for money from Ben and Jerry going to local nuns who in turn help the needy.

But that's not all! The New Hampshire Fish and Game Department is now giving away confiscated meat from illegally killed moose and deer. Moose jerky, anyone? "Say, what are you going to do with that moose-hide, Mister Fish and Game man? That'd make a fine pair of pants for a homeless guy." "Oh, rats, there's a bullet hole in mine."

Allow me to summarize.

I don't know everything. I know that I have a weird sense of humor, but I don't know why. I know that Dennis Rodman would rather be naked than wear fur, but homeless people would rather wear furs than freeze to death. I know that PETA and Dennis are OK with that. I know that Anitra would wear a jacket with a Ben & Jerry's ad on it, just to promote ice cream. I know that I will never see a squirrel ice-skating on the Potomac in July.

But I might wear him for a hat some winter, if I were homeless again. I'd get a pass from PETA. ■

**I know that I
will never see
a squirrel ice-
skating on the
Potomac in
July.**

Upcoming & Notable

Thursday 1/20

Not In Our Name (NION) Seattle hosts a convergence rally with music and a speak-out on inauguration day calling for resistance to the **Bush agenda of war and repression**. NION is calling for neighborhood gatherings followed by marches, caravans, or group bus rides to Westlake Park. Actions and events will continue throughout the day and night to show the power and unity of our numbers. 2 p.m., at Westlake Park, Fourth Ave. and Pine St., Downtown Seattle. Info 206-322-3813.

Seattle Act Now Stop War End Racism (ANSWER) will hold a **counter-inaugural demonstration**. 5 p.m., at the Federal Building, 2nd and Marion, Downtown Seattle. Info 206-568-1661.

Homebuyer Information Session to learn how to **apply for affordable housing** through Habitat for Humanity, Community Home Ownership Center and Homestead Community Land Trust. 7 p.m., at New Holly Community Center, 7054 32nd Ave. S., Seattle. Also 2 p.m., Sunday, Jan. 23, at High Point Community Center, 6920 34th Ave. SW, Seattle.

Friday 1/21

"A Place At The Table," a **Minority Vendor and Career Fair**, presented by Washington State Convention & Trade Center and Seattle's Convention and Visitors Bureau. Begins with a vendor fair, then lunch with a speaker from The Urban Enterprise Center. 10 a.m., at Washington Trade & Convention Center, 800 Convention Place, Downtown Seattle. Info E.J. Mays 206-694-5186 or ejmays@wsctc.com.

Saturday 1/22

A call to action on the 32nd Anniversary of Roe v. Wade. Radical Women sponsor a **Speak Out for Abortion Rights and Reproductive Justice** with a march after a rally. End the war

on women at home and abroad. Demands include free and accessible abortion, reinstate funding to international organizations providing abortions, universal healthcare and fully funded social services. 1 p.m., at Westlake Park, 4th and Pine, Downtown Seattle. Info 206-722-6057 or 722-2453.

Seattle Thunder presents an **Election Reform Forum** to discuss paper ballots, ballot access, media access and clean money elections. Participants include Ruth Bennett, former candidate for Governor; Linda Knighton on ballot access; and others. 1 p.m., at Trinity United Methodist Church, NW 65th and 23rd Ave. NW in Ballard, Seattle. Info simahoyo@coolindian.com.

Sunday 1/23

Benefit for **Care Asia Quake Disaster Fund** featuring the Garfield High School Jazz Ensemble with "A Tribute to Ella and Louis." \$12 at door, \$10 advance at Bud's Jazz Records. 7 p.m., at Museum of History and Industry, 2700 24th Ave. E., Seattle. Info 206-628-0445.

Wednesday 1/26

Lecture series on global issues and perspectives, "Sharing and Understanding: **Multiethnic and Multireligious people living together** in Europe. Speakers include Dr. Karl Kumpfmüller, director of Peace Centre in Graz, Austria and Sadruddin Boga, Ph.D. Presented by Antioch's Center for Creative Change. Free, 7-9 p.m., at Antioch University, 2326 6th Ave., Seattle. Info 206-268-4906 or <http://www.antiochsea.edu>.

Thursday 1/27

"Perspectives from the Salmon People," a discussion with tribal leaders on the **progress of salmon recovery** in the Pacific Northwest. Representatives from local tribes reflect on decades of struggle over declining salmon runs and how they see the future of salmon in our region. Co-sponsored by People

For Puget Sound and Salmon Homecoming. Admission is free. 7-9 p.m., at REI Flagship Store, 222 Yale Ave., 2nd Floor, Seattle. Info 206-382-7008.

Saturday 1/29

Shanti Volunteer Training, volunteers provide one-to-one, nonjudgmental emotional support to **people living with HIV/AIDS, cancer, MS and other life-threatening illnesses**. The Shanti training and volunteer experience has been described as life-changing for many volunteers. Training session is Jan. 29, 30 and Feb. 5, 6. Info 206-324-1520 x3 or shanti@multifaith.org.

Gabriela Network and Anakbayan Seattle present "Tagumpay: A Legacy of Resistance," a multimedia performance including exhibits on the **continuing struggle for liberation and peace** in the Philippines. Tickets \$8 general, \$5 students. 7-9 p.m., at UW Ethnic Cultural Theatre, 3940 Brooklyn Ave. NE., Seattle. Advance tickets tagumpayrsvp@yahoo.com.

Monday 1/31

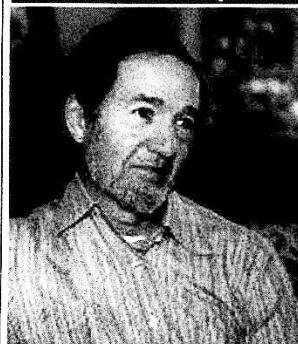
Literacy AmeriCorps presents "The Power of Literacy," a free video screening featuring the stories of **adult learners and volunteers** at Literacy Source,

a non-profit community-learning center in Fremont. Learn more about the importance of literacy and how you can help a neighbor learn to read. 7-8 p.m., at the Central Seattle Public Library, 1000 4th Ave., Downtown Seattle. Info 206-782-2050.

Tuesday 2/1

The Fremont Public Association hosts a discussion, "What does an **Anti-Racism Community** look like?" Come for an evening of reflection and inspiration with local leaders committed to a community free from racial prejudice and injustice. Speakers include Dustin Washington, Dir. of Community Justice Program; Joy Shigaki, Pres. Of Japanese American Citizens' League; Victoria Redstarr, Nez Perce and active with People's Institute Northwest; and others. Light meal provided at 6 p.m., program 6:30-8:30 p.m., at the 2100 Building, Community Rooms A & B, 24th Ave. S., bus routes 4, 7, 8, 9, 39, 42, and 48. Info 206-694-6715 or Gillian@fremontpublic.org.

Social Collapse



Jared Diamond explained how the West rose to power with *Guns, Germs, and Steel*; now, he shows how, from barren Easter Island to strip-mined Montana, civilizations precipitate their own decline in **Collapse: How Societies Choose to Succeed or Fail**. 7:30 p.m., at Town Hall, 8th and Seneca, Seattle. Tickets are \$5 and available at Elliott Bay Books, 206-624-6600.

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

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Tuesday to Friday: 9:30 a.m. - 4:30 p.m.
206-239-1500
www.seattlehousing.org

citizens participation project



Tax reform: make yourself heard

Issue: In spite of never-ending budget crises and multiple reports telling us that Washington's tax system is one of the most regressive in the nation, state lawmakers are reticent to take on tax reform. Even the most progressive among them shy away from meaningful reform, afraid of losing their jobs and then losing any opportunity to help create a fairer system. They need a reminder that their constituents know that taxes are the price we pay for living in a civilized society, for highways and public transit, and to have free education for every child — not a burden that we should revolt against.

Background: Washington State's tax system doesn't work. It's unfair: putting the bulk of the responsibility on families and small businesses that can least afford it, while letting those with higher incomes slide without contributing their fair share. And it's inadequate: there never seems to be enough to meet the needs of our state. Over the past few years, the state budget has been cut back repeatedly, while kids go without healthcare, families survive on the streets, and the cost just to rent a one-bedroom apartment is far beyond the grasp of a full-time minimum wage worker. (The same worker who pays about 17 percent of her income in taxes, compared with the millionaire who pays closer to 3 percent.)

Tax reform advocates have created a tax fairness pledge for you to sign to show your support for change. We need a tax system that is:

Fair—Taxes are based on one's ability to pay. People and businesses with higher incomes are asked to pay their fair share.

Sufficient—Enough revenue is raised to promote a healthy economy and meet the public needs of our citizens, including education, health, and human services.

Stable—There is a stable stream of revenue during times of economic growth and economic recession.

Accountable—Government is accountable to the people. All spending, taxes and tax exemptions should be publicly disclosed, and reviewed and evaluated to ensure they provide public benefits.

To reach these goals, I support a tax reform package that includes:

- Disclosing and evaluating all tax exemptions so the public can determine whether they meet public goals.
- Eliminating some tax exemptions to bring in needed revenue and ensure that everyone is paying their fair share.
- Lowering the sales tax rate to reduce taxes on middle- and low-income families.
- Establishing a personal income tax, so taxes are related to how much people make and wealthier people pay their fair share.
- Reforming business taxes to reduce taxes on small and new businesses.
- Extending the sales tax to some professional and consumer services so our taxes keep up with the changing economy.

Action: Take the Pledge at our Online Action Center at www.realchangenews.org and send the pledge directly to your legislators and the Governor in a personal email.

To learn more about tax fairness and sign up for legislative alerts, contact the Washington Tax Fairness Coalition at www.wataxfairness.org.



Sacred Heart Shelter for homeless families and single women in Seattle is seeking energetic new members for our Fundraising Advisory Board to help plan events and build an endowment. Contact Nancy at (206) 285-7489 or nancya@shshelter.org.

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.

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We want to hear from you!



Bring story ideas, comments, suggestions, and questions to the fourth monthly open meeting of the Real Change Editorial Committee. Wednesday Dec. 22, 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