

REAL CHANGE

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ISSUES • INSIGHT • IMPACT

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DEC. 28 '05 - JAN. 3 '06

Back Home

Family works to return injured relative to Seattle

By ADAM HYLA
 Editor

The last time Michele Brockmole saw Daniel Leon, the father of her baby girl, as he used to be, Leon was sitting in a public swimming pool in Silver City, New Mexico.

Babysitting five of her little cousins, Brockmole went running after an errant child. Minutes later, she heard a life-guard shout and saw Leon's distinctive long hair, then his body, being pulled from the water.

"I was following around the kids," says Brockmole. "I never thought I needed to ..." she trails off.

Doctors say the brain damage Leon sustained during five minutes underwater means he may never be his old self. Family members are raising money to transport Leon from a long-term care facility in New Mexico back to Seattle — where they'll rely on loving attention and a ton of prayer to work a miracle.

Before the accident Leon, 21, was a dedicated leader among "at-risk" youth working for the public art program ArtWorks, a nonprofit that promotes good works habits and artistic self-expression among kids involved in the juvenile justice system.

Charged with assault when he was 16, Leon began painting murals through

See HOME, Continued on Page 12

[Donate Now!]

Our generous readers have donated \$79,601 to the Holiday Pledge Drive since Nov. 1, but with less than one week to go we still need a little over \$10,000 to meet our goal. Please help. You can donate online at realchangenews.org or use the coupon provided on page 12 to support our work today.



Night Watch

DANIEL O'CONNOR STANDS SILENTLY LAST WEDNESDAY IN WESTLAKE CENTER TO RECOGNIZE THE 55 HOMELESS MEN AND WOMEN WHO DIED OUTSIDE OR BY VIOLENCE IN SEATTLE IN 2005. FIFTY-FIVE IS THE HIGHEST NUMBER OF DEAD COUNTED SINCE PUBLIC HEALTH - SEATTLE & KING COUNTY BEGAN KEEPING TRACK. DEC. 21 WAS NATIONAL HOMELESS PEOPLE'S MEMORIAL DAY; O'CONNOR HIMSELF IS RECENTLY HOMELESS. PHOTO BY SHERRY LOESER.

Subtle Diplomacy

Local residents experience a new way of living on journey to Nigeria

By CYDNEY GILLIS
 Staff Reporter

It's not hard to tell that Nigeria overwhelmed Susan Partnow.

The director of Seattle-based Global Citizen Journey took 19 Americans on a trip to the Niger Delta Nov. 16 to Dec. 2. Though Partnow has been on many "citizen diplomacy" trips over the years, this was her first as a leader — in a West African country where things are very different.

The sweltering heat and lack of clean water were just the start. In Nigeria, Partnow says, time is fluid: people don't make and keep appointments like Westerners do. And corruption is rampant: police routinely seek bribes and builders often leave public-works projects half-finished.

As a result, Partnow says, many Nigerians expressed cynicism about the do-gooder American delegation and its focus on the destruction and poverty caused by oil drilling in the Niger Delta. Despite the odds, however, the group achieved its mission — building a library — and, in their own small way, Partnow says, will continue to make a difference.

After arriving in Lagos, the Americans and a counterpart group of Nigerian delegates traveled to Warri and the coastal village of Oporoza, where the group completed and opened a regional Niger Delta Friendship Library. The delegates stocked the library with 70-pound boxes of books that each brought over on the plane.

The library project got national media coverage there. Members of the delegation are now forming a micro-lending program to help village women start household businesses.

"People were really amazed that we accomplished [building the library] because the norm in Nigeria is for projects to be begun and abandoned," Partnow says. "All over the place you see half-finished buildings that show how you can't count on anyone — which adds to the disillusionment."

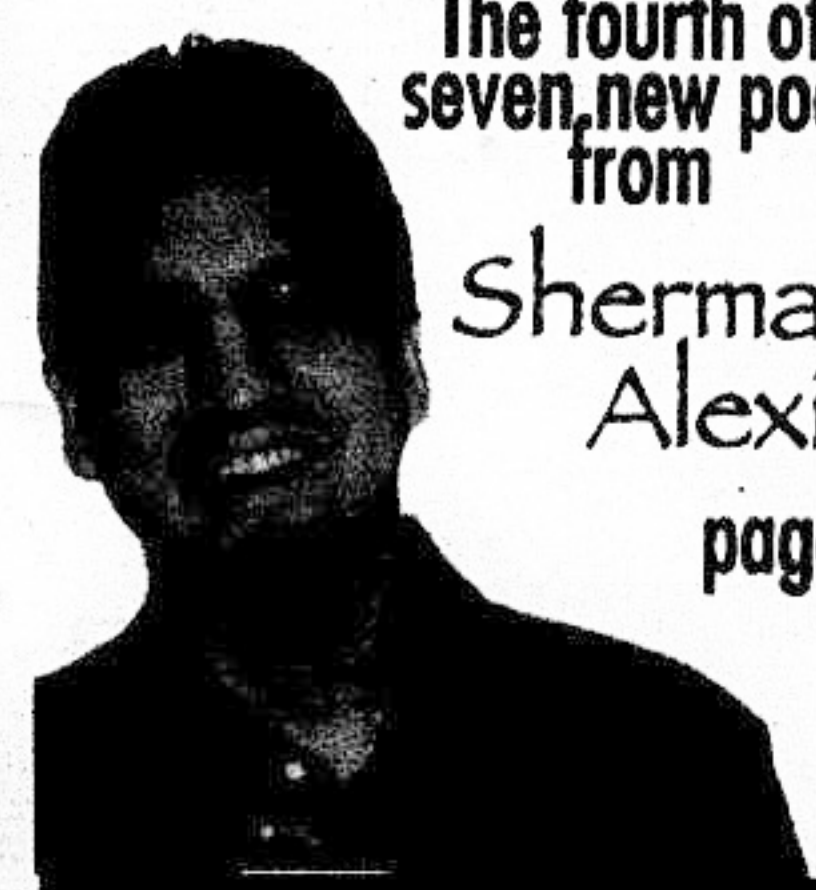
Partnow and Global Citizen co-founder Mary Ella Keblusek chose Oporoza because it sits squarely in the pollution and poverty left behind after 50 years of drilling by Chevron, Shell,

See NIGERA, Continued on Page 12

This Issue

The fourth of seven new poems from

Sherman Alexie
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I RESOLVE TO...

This new year, instead of claiming you'll stop biting your nails, why not help us fight poverty?

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CHRISTMAS PERIL

For the homeless in the UK, the holiday of peace and goodwill is about as Dickensian as it gets.

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THREE STRIKES

Stevan Dozier, a "persistent offender," reflects on how WA intends to jail him for life.

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How's This for a New Year's Resolution:

Offering your support to Real Change helps everyone start the year off right

By TIMOTHY HARRIS
Executive Director

Just this morning, one of our vendors wished me a happy holiday and said, "The readers say the paper just keeps getting better and better. I can't keep 'em from flying out of my hands." She was beaming with pride and success. "This," I thought, "is really what it's all about."

We asked our readers for support, and you've come through. Last October, we took a hard look at the books and set a fundraising goal of \$90,000 in donor support for November and December. Reaching this goal means we'll have the resources to keep *Real Change* thriving over the lean months of spring and summer.

It takes about \$50,000 a month to run *Real Change*. We publish a quality weekly newspaper, offer work and community to more than 270 homeless and very low-income vendors, and effectively mobilize people to take action on the issues that matter, and we do all of this and more with the equivalent of just 7.5 full-time staff and a whole lot of volunteers.

The response so far is extremely encouraging. Over the past two months, we have received \$79,601 in reader support. With your help in this final week, we will meet our year-end goal. We rely upon readers like you for nearly half of our annual budget. Every donation counts as valued community support.

The heart of *Real Change* lies in the vendors who earn a living by selling this paper, and in the readers who offer community, dignity, and support to those working to improve their lives. Last year, we decided that the most direct way to help our vendors and offer quality content to our readers was to publish weekly and increase the relevance and timeliness of our news.

In February, we made the leap: We more than doubled our news staff. We hired additional support for our vendors. We redesigned the paper and rethought our news priorities. We built a large advisory board of community

leaders and activists to help keep us focused and growing.

I'm not going to lie to you. It's been a challenging year.

When we began weekly publication, it wasn't clear we had the resources to make it work. We hoped that we could leapfrog our way to sustainability through increased circulation.

By May, we were nearly out of money. We ran a summer fund drive to raise over \$60,000 and laid off two of our staff to help conserve resources. It soon became clear that our usual way of operating—with no reserves and one or two pay periods away from being broke—was not working anymore.

At the same time, weekly publication was working. The vendors were doing far better, and reader feedback was extremely positive. We were determined not to go backwards.

Many of our supporters stepped forward to help. Two major donors committed to help us hire a dedicated fundraising staff person. A successful 11th anniversary event raised another \$38,000. By reaching our \$90,000 holiday fund drive goal, *Real Change* enters 2006 with the resources we need to succeed.

Our goal for 2006 is to close the year with three months expenses in the bank. After 11 years, our days of operating just above the red must come to an end. We've decided that our work simply matters too much.

Just this morning, one of our vendors wished me a happy holiday and said, "The readers say the paper just keeps getting better and better. I can't keep 'em from flying out of my hands." She was beaming with pride and success. "This," I thought, "is really what it's all about."

Since June, our circulation each month has exceeded the previous

years' by more than 20 percent. Better still, more people than ever look to us as a valued community news source. We also know that more people are responding to our invitations to take action.

Real Change is about opportunity and dignity for the homeless, quality alternative journalism on the issues you care about, and effective advocacy that builds power for the poor. We are building a base for long-term social change while meeting the immediate needs of those most affected by an unjust social order.

Over 2006, we'll continue to strengthen our community in action.

We will offer more support to our vendors and more opportunities for success and community. We will broaden our advisory board and deepen our coverage of diverse issues and communities. With the addition of a new Director of Advocacy and Organizing, we are increasingly focused on building our base of activists to effectively take action on the issues that matter most.

Help us change lives by making a gift to *Real Change* today that is significant for you, whether it be \$10, \$100, \$1,000, or anything in between. Your support makes our work possible.

[Donate Now!]

Our generous readers have donated \$79,601 to the Holiday Pledge Drive since Nov. 1, but with less than one week left, we still need just over \$10,000 to meet our goal. *Real Change* is working to build a long-term social justice movement while helping meet the immediate needs of the very poor today. Please help. Donate online at realchangenews.org or use the coupon on page 12 to support our work today.



Real Change is published weekly and is sold by the poor and homeless of Seattle. Vendors receive 65¢ of the \$1.00 paid for this paper.

Mission Statement:

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

On the Web at

<http://www.realchangenews.org>

Email rchange@speakeasy.org

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Real Change is a member of the North American Street Newspaper Association, the International Network of Street Papers, and the Greater Seattle Business Association.



Who Is Real Change?

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Change Agent

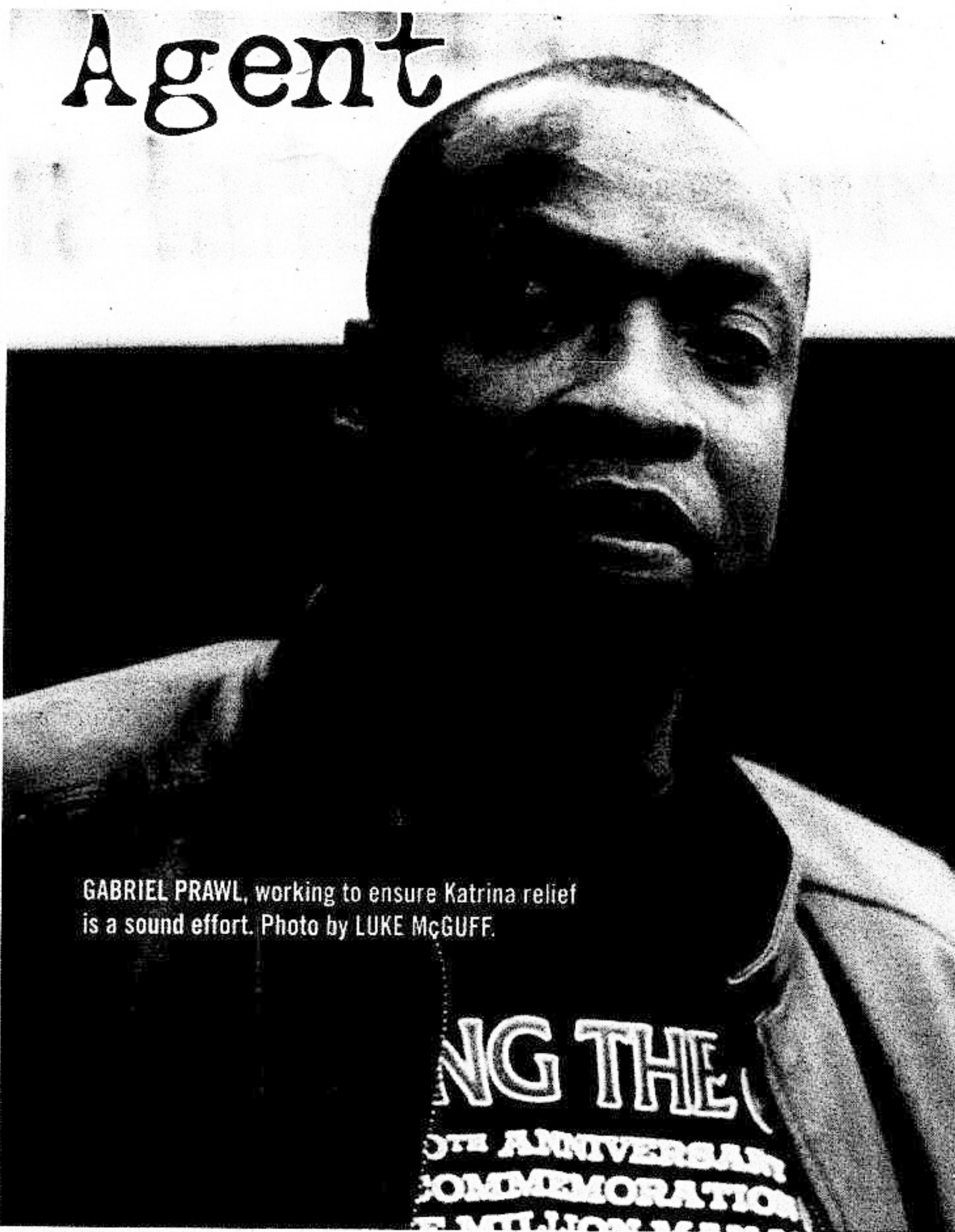
Gabriel Prawl saw his share of poverty and prejudice while growing up in Jamaica and Central America. The plight of the Gulf Coast and the city of New Orleans in the aftermath of Hurricane Katrina resonated with Prawl, who's one of the founders of the Puget Sound Katrina Relief & Reconstruction effort.

"There's always been poverty in that area, but the hurricane exposed it," he says. "And the racism is heavy."

A longshoreman in ILWU Local 52, Prawl hopes to load 10 cargo containers with hand tools, power tools, and various other items including flashlights, first aid kits, and bottled water. The containers are currently stored at the Burt Nelson Memorial Katrina Relief Warehouse at Terminal 106, but will eventually be transported to an open port in Baton Rouge. The local Community Labor United (CLU) will then deliver it to neighborhood-based distribution points.

A complete list of what supplies are needed can be found on the King County Labor Council site, www.kclc.org. Anyone wishing to contribute can call the Warehouse Hotline at (206)701-4986.

—R.V. Murphy



GABRIEL PRAWL, working to ensure Katrina relief is a sound effort. Photo by LUKE MCGUFF.

Lonely for Christmas

UK streetpaper vendors paint a bleaker picture of the holidays

By CARRIE BRIFFETT
The Big Issue Cymru

The majority of UK parents spend between \$170 to \$350 per child on Christmas gifts, while a quarter spends between \$350 and \$850 per child and a lucky four per cent of children receive gifts worth over \$850, according to last year's figures from the Association Of Investment Trust Companies.

For most people, planning for Christmas means thinking about what they are going to buy for whom, how much food and drink they will need, and when they will be able to fit in seeing all their family and friends.

But for homeless people it is vastly different. A new study by UK street newspapers *The Big Issue Cymru* and *The Big Issue South West* shows that over a third of vendors didn't know where they would be sleeping on Christmas Day. And of the 65 percent who did know, a third expected to be sleeping rough on the streets, 13 percent will be staying in a hostel, and only 13 percent will be staying in their own accommodation.

Jim, a vendor in Exeter, says he will be spending the Christmas period on the streets. "I'm not going to be going anywhere in particular," he says. "What usually happens is that a few friends get together a day or two before Christmas, could be in the car park or wherever we are sleeping."

And while the total cost of Christmas gifts in the UK this year is expected to be more than \$25 billion, averaging at \$530 on presents per-head, almost three quarters of the 55 vendors who took part in the study said they did not expect a single Christmas present and two-thirds do not expect any cards. In contrast, \$3.4 billion worth of unwanted presents were received in the UK last year, according to research by online banking Egg.

The Deloitte survey also showed that the UK will be spending \$11.7 billion on socializing and more than \$13 billion on food and drink over the

festive period. But almost half of the vendors are uncertain about or do not expect to have a Christmas dinner, with only 12 percent of those not having one saying it is through personal choice.

The bleak picture of a homeless Christmas is supported by previous research by homelessness charity Crisis. In its 2002 survey it found that one in three homeless people spend it alone and three in five say they have never enjoyed Christmas since becoming homeless.

Dave Ormonde is a vendor service worker for *The Big Issue* in Cardiff and says that the figures are unsurprising. "I think for a lot of homeless people, Christmas is often pretty much the same as any other day."

And there are very few homeless people who are expecting to see their family at all over Christmas. Three out of five vendors say they will not see their family and while over half of vendors have children, 58 per cent of those with children do not expect to see them.

The majority of UK parents spend between \$170 to \$350 per child on Christmas gifts, while a quarter spends between \$350 and \$850 per child and a lucky 4 percent of children receive gifts worth over \$850, according to last year's figures from the Association of Investment Trust Companies. Yet among the vendors surveyed, just over half will be able to give their children any presents. A few of them stressed that the presents given will be limited due to lack of cash.

Alex Hinds, director of *The Big Issue Cymru*, notes that "Christmas is a poignant time of year for anyone who cares at all about homelessness. It's the time of year when the chasm between 'have' and 'have not' is starkly apparent. We don't want people to feel pity or sentimentality, but just to remember that all people deserve respect and dignity. That's why vendors often tell us the best thing about selling the magazine is being treated as human beings by customers." ■

Just Heard...

A Good Year to Be Poor?

The Best & Worst of 2005

The defining event of 2005 was **Hurricane Katrina**, which blew the cover off race and poverty and created a new awareness of inequality in America. Yet more than three months later, the recovery of New Orleans is far from assured and the entrenched Congressional Republican majority continues to pursue an agenda of greed. Dick Cheney—like some perverse anti-Santa Claus—caught an emergency flight from Pakistan to Washington just before Christmas to cast the tie-breaking vote for \$40 billion in cuts to programs for the poor to offset the cost of new tax cuts for the wealthy.

Locally, the picture is more promising. 2005 will be remembered as the launch of the **Ten Year Plan to End Homelessness**, a collaboration between government, service providers, religious and business leaders, and private philanthropy to stop simply managing homelessness and work for long-term solutions. Along with this commitment came real resources. **HB 2163** was passed by the State Legislature to fund efforts to end homelessness with \$20 million in new funding raised through a small increase in real estate filing fees. Additionally, the **State Housing Trust Fund**, an enormously successful program to create affordable housing, saw its funding expand by 25 percent to reach \$100 million. There was additional good news in the form of expanded health care for the poor and new access to treatment for those who struggle with addiction. A good news city budget restored cuts to human services that were made in leaner years.

SHARE grabbed lots of headlines with their refusal to implement the Safe Harbors data collection system and the suburban expansion of their Tent City strategy. A series of unusually ugly community meetings spawned the inspirational **Eastside Cares**, a Tent City solidarity organization dedicated to the idea that not everyone living east of Lake Washington fears and hates the poor.

Yet, in a year when **four homeless people were murdered** and more than 50 others have died, the City of Seattle may actually decrease the number of emergency shelter beds available. While the Mayor's office has promised no net loss of shelter, the defunding of SHARE for their refusal to participate in Safe Harbors could derail those good intentions. The new \$350,000 in funding that Seattle has dedicated toward shelter simply isn't enough to compensate for the loss of SHARE's self-managed beds and the expectation that services will include more than just a mat on the floor. There is still hope that this low-light of 2005 might be resolved over the first months of the new year.

Sizzling Rivalry

Glasgow's Sons and Daughters' music is a malevolent cocktail of coquettish folk, argumentative instrumentation and blistering psychobilly fury. Often compared to the blackened passages that define Nick Cave's music, their lyrics haunt their music like mad, dead lovers.

By GHITA LOEBENSTEIN
Contributing Writer

They might share a name with an old Australian soap opera, but Glasgow's Sons and Daughters prefer their melodrama turned up a lot louder. The band's live shows have been likened to being strapped to the roof of a runaway train, or trapped in a 1950s B-grade movie in which prom queens run amok.

Their music is a malevolent cocktail of coquettish folk, argumentative instrumentation and blistering psychobilly fury. Often compared to the blackened passages that define Nick Cave's music, their lyrics haunt their music like mad, dead lovers. But a frenetic pace and an acid-washed punk attitude carries this dark concoction into infectious pop territory; successfully crossing wailing call-and-response choruses with virtuous show-tune duets and maniacal lovers' spats.

At the helm of this graveyard party is frontwoman Adele Bethel; a pale-skinned vixen who flutters her charcoal lashes as she shrieks and swans across the stage, charming her audience with tales of broken loves and lovers.

"It was so hard to pick a name for this record," Bethel says of the band's wickedly delicious full-length debut, "The Repulsion Box." But the title, in the end, was a fated decision. "When we were mixing the record we'd read that Brian Eno or David Bowie would cut up random words and put them in a bowl," she recalls. "We tried that and the word 'repulsion' kept coming up with 'box'. We thought it was a good reflection of the imagery on the record; the main theme of disgust with the idea of Pandora's box, like opening something up and hell breaking loose."

Sons and Daughters formed two years ago when Bethel enlisted school-friend Ailidh Lennon (bass), fellow

Arab Strap bandmate David Gow (drums) and Scott Paterson (vocals, guitar), the boy who made daily visits to the record shop where she worked. The quartet pried open their own Pandora's box; out of which popped that recklessly speeding train.

"I suppose we gave ourselves as much freedom as possible and didn't try to tie ourselves down to any genre or sound," Bethel says. "We're quite open to how we work together and everyone listens to a lot of different music. Some love dance music but then I like listening to country, folk and post-punk. We just try pull everything into it."

While the lyrics were brooding from the very beginning, the pace of the music picked up as the band grew more confident. With speed came adrenalin and that, explains Bethel, is where the brutality and rawness came from. Resisting the temptation of creating slow, gothic murder ballads, "because Nick Cave does it a whole lot better", the band ventured down a different road entirely. "I think we did want 'pop' sensibilities in the music as long as the lyrics carried the darker element," Bethel says. "We wanted people to enjoy coming to the shows and have a good time. It's good that we can go out and hear our record played in clubs."

Bethel's attraction to music's darker side was influenced by years spent locked in her bedroom listening to the likes of Morrissey and PJ Harvey. "From a young age I started listening to music that I thought meant something and it was bands like The Smiths and The Cure. You can dance to those records, but you can also sit in your bedroom and really read the poetry that they've written."

Yet it's singer/songwriters such as Leonard Cohen, Johnny Cash and Smog's Bill Callahan who have inspired Bethel to turn her songs into vivid stories. "I like people that have

dark humour in their lyrics," she says. Indeed one of the band's first singles was a murderous rock number called 'Johnny Cash'.

That storytelling inclination exhumes itself on *Repulsion Box*, in the spaghetti-western-seance of 'Rama Lama': "On a blue antique night / In early October / His wavy brown hair / Stuck wet to his shoulder / And its click, click, click / Go the heels of his feet / Listen / How long has it been since the boyfriend has visited"; and the tempestuously paced 'Red Receiver': "Cold feet in London / Useless confetti / No groom / No first kiss / No diamonds for the girl / Don't look in the side of the wardrobe / The white dress hangs tall as a tightrope."

Although she believes there's plenty of love in a good murder ballad, Bethel insists that her now long-term romance with Paterson isn't reflected in her lyrics. "No, I think that would be sick," she says, laughing. "It's very strange because we really have quite a healthy relationship. I mean I've had bad relationships in the past so there are definitely elements that subconsciously meld their way in, but there's never anything written about this relationship. Although maybe I'm lying to myself..."

In the glare of stage-lights, it's almost cathartic for the pair to act the part of jilted lovers; Bethel howling like a vindictive banshee and Paterson haunting her with his distinctive burr. "It helps being a couple because you can really let go," she says. "I don't feel like I have any inhibitions. It's also an emotional support to have each other here on tour as well." In fact, the intimate bonds within the band are so completely functional that it's almost un-rock'n'roll. "We're definitely not Fleetwood Mac!" Bethel jokes. For the time being at least, the razor-toothed melodrama of Sons and Daughters ends when the audience cheers and the lights go up. ■

Reprinted from
The Big Issue in
Australia

Short Takes

Civil service looks to Reichert

Government workers' unions have won two court victories this year against a plan to weaken their hand when representing Department of Homeland Security employees. That's good news for federal workers in any department, say union activists who say the Bush Administration is bent on revolutionizing the civil service system.

The judges' rulings — which threw out a Bush plan to change the scope of collective bargaining — have a direct bearing on a mirror-image plan for employees at the Department of Defense, says Jeff Johnson, organizing and research director at the Washington State AFL-CIO.

That's why he and his cohorts among Jobs with Justice and the State Labor Council are getting local fire, police, and emergency workers to sign a petition against the changes, dubbed the National Security Personnel System (NSPS).

NSPS converts the Department of Defense's civilian workers' pay increases from a seniority-basis to

one based on performance, ushering in a "culture of accountability... that will foster a work environment that attracts, rewards, and retains the best talent," states a fact sheet released by the department in October. It also establishes an independent National Security Labor Relations Board, and allows high-level Defense managers to waive labor agreements in the name of an emergency.

"Using national security as an excuse, they want to be able to issue rules and regulations that would void collective bargaining at any time, for any reason," says Jeff Johnson, organizing and research director at the Washington State Labor Council AFL-CIO.

This fight was taken to Rep. Dave Reichert's (R-Bellevue) swing district in December, as labor activists began asking police and firefighter unions to pressure the former sheriff to stand against the new system. So far, the King County Labor Council and the State Firefighters' Council have endorsed the resolution.

Steve Kofahl, president of the American Federation of Government Employees Local 3937, says that even though NSPS is not moving through Congress, it's still important to pin Reichert down on. Other federal workers may be targeted for the same rules, through legislation, later on. Reichert's stand ought to be thus, he says: "If you want to overhaul the civil service, you better make sure it's not too bad before I put my name on it."

For police and fire agencies, Johnson says the plan is a real insult. "You're the ones first on the scene at 9/11; no one asked any questions. Now rights are being stripped away, at least at the federal level."

—Adam Hyla

Blowing in the Wind

An owner of an Ariz. bookstore, who was to be extradited to Wash. on charges of arson, has committed suicide.

William Rodgers, 40, of Prescott, Ariz., was one of six individuals arrested over the past month for alleged involvement in what are being dubbed "eco-terrorist" attacks in this state and Oregon. Arson charges against him stem from what federal investigators say is his involvement in firebombing the Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service lab just outside of Olympia, along with an arson that occurred at the University of Washington's Center for Urban Horticulture in May 2001.

Medical examiners in Coconino County, Ariz., determined Rodgers killed himself by suffocation induced by a plastic bag placed over his head.

Rodgers was co-proprietor of The Catalyst Infoshop and Bookstore, a volunteer-run space with a focus on environmental action and social justice. Speaking from the bookstore in Prescott, a Friend of the Catalyst says that while Rodgers' death is a huge loss, his presence won't be soon forgotten: "His spirit is here all around us, in the trees and in the wind."

—Rosette Royale

Qualia

In philosophical jargon, qualia are those experiences that we cannot possibly describe in words, such as seeing a specific color.

-Christopher J. Moore

Walking to the basketball game,
Diane and I saw a homeless man,
Mad, and very handsome,
Shockingly handsome. "Did you see

His eyes?" D asked. Yes, they were blue,
Epic blue, like the blue glacier
That sank the Titanic; a blue
That's too dangerous to look at;

A blue that lures ships to wreck
On the shoals; a blue that calls boys
to island wars; a spider-blue
That wraps men and moths in its web.

His eyes were schizophrenic blue;
Paranoid blue. Mad people's eyes
illuminate. They've seen too much,
As if their eyes used to be brown,

But were wounded with each vision,
then bled hard and healed over,
until each became a blue scar.
O, his eyes were alien blue;

A blue that will never belong
On the color spectrum; a blue
That was painted on the rock walls
Of Sodom and Gomorrah. Yes,

A blue that turned an old woman
Into salt; a blue that consumed
All of those terrible sinners,
Whose sins were exactly the same

As our sins, so maybe this man,
Fat, dirty, and homeless, has come
To judge us. Maybe he's Jesus;
Maybe his left eye is the blue

Flame of God and his right eye
The blue hem of Mary's rough robe.
Maybe he's come to preach to us,
To remind us that Jesus wept

Most for the poorest among us,
And that the greatest sins of all
Are not of the flesh, but of pride
And rage. Whores and pimps, fags and dykes,

Porn stars and adulterers, all
Of those fleshy sinners will get
Into Heaven long before priests
Who pray on television shows,

And long before politicians
Who know their best camera angles,
And long before righteous Christians,
Jews and Muslims who think they know

The only holy book. So praise
Our poor flesh and curse the rich man
Who won't wash the feet of the lame.
O, Jesus! Trickster! You arrived

Covered with rags, sores, and lice!
But you could not disguise your eyes,
Which were not blue. No, there's no word
That can describe this color; no

Painting, poem, story, or ballad
That can possibly recreate
What it felt like to see those eyes
For the first time. Diane and I

Often speak of that homeless man,
And we always laugh in wonder.
Who knew Jesus was a black man
With blue eyes? Who knew the holy

Son would arrive in third-hand boots?
Who knew that a homeless beggar
Could be beautiful? If you want
To find this man, and wash his feet,

Then you must come to Seattle
And stand on a downtown corner.
If you are patient, he will come
And trade his love for your spare change.

Locked Up for Life

13 years after the passage of the "Persistent Offender Act," what kind of justice is served by keeping men like Stevan Dozier locked up?

By SILJA J.A. TALVI

Contributing Writer/Advisory Board Member

"Earlier this year, I had a chance to speak briefly with the Secretary of Corrections, Harold Clarke. I asked him one question: 'How do you feel about persons with non-armed, non-injury offenses being sentenced to life without parole?' Mr. Clarke responded that he was 'uncomfortable with that practice.'"

I first met Stevan Dozier in 2003, within the bleak confines of the Monroe Correctional Complex visiting room. Prison visits are not uncommon to my line of work, and every prison experience or correspondence leaves its own mark. But this was a meeting that shook me to my core. Every one of the three men I was speaking with had been handed a life sentence — without the possibility of parole — despite the fact that not a one of them had committed anything akin to a heinous crime.

When I left the prison grounds, I tried to imagine what it would be like for each of these men to return to their respective cells, night after night, knowing that the laws on the books would not even allow them the possibility of eventual release — no matter how non-violent their "third strike." It wouldn't matter a bit how exemplary their behavior in prison became or how far their own personal growth would take them; it wouldn't even matter how old or sick they got.

The situation left me with the sickening feeling that the very unconstitutional practice of "cruel and unusual punishment" was actually what was being exacted on these souls. There was nothing akin to a socially or fiscally sensible reason to keep so many of these offenders locked up for the rest of their lives. What was the point of it all, but to fulfill some form of convenient political sloganeering about being "tough on crime"?

I don't question the fact that dangerous predators do, indeed, exist among us. If and when they are caught — as was the case with the Green River

Killer — I have no qualms with the fact that they should be locked away for the rest of their lives.

But when it comes to Stevan Dozier (and the many other men and women like him), I have serious questions as both a reporter and a tax-paying citizen about what kind of justice is being served.

Forty percent of "Three Strikers," including Dozier, are there because of a robbery conviction, although not all of those robberies have been non-violent. Worth noting is the fact that more than 35 percent of Washington state's Three-Strikers are African American, although their statewide population amounts to only just a hair over 3 percent.

With his criminal history of unarmed robberies, Dozier was the sixth person to "strike out" in Washington, just one year after a majority of Washington voters approved Initiative 593, the Persistent Offenders Act.

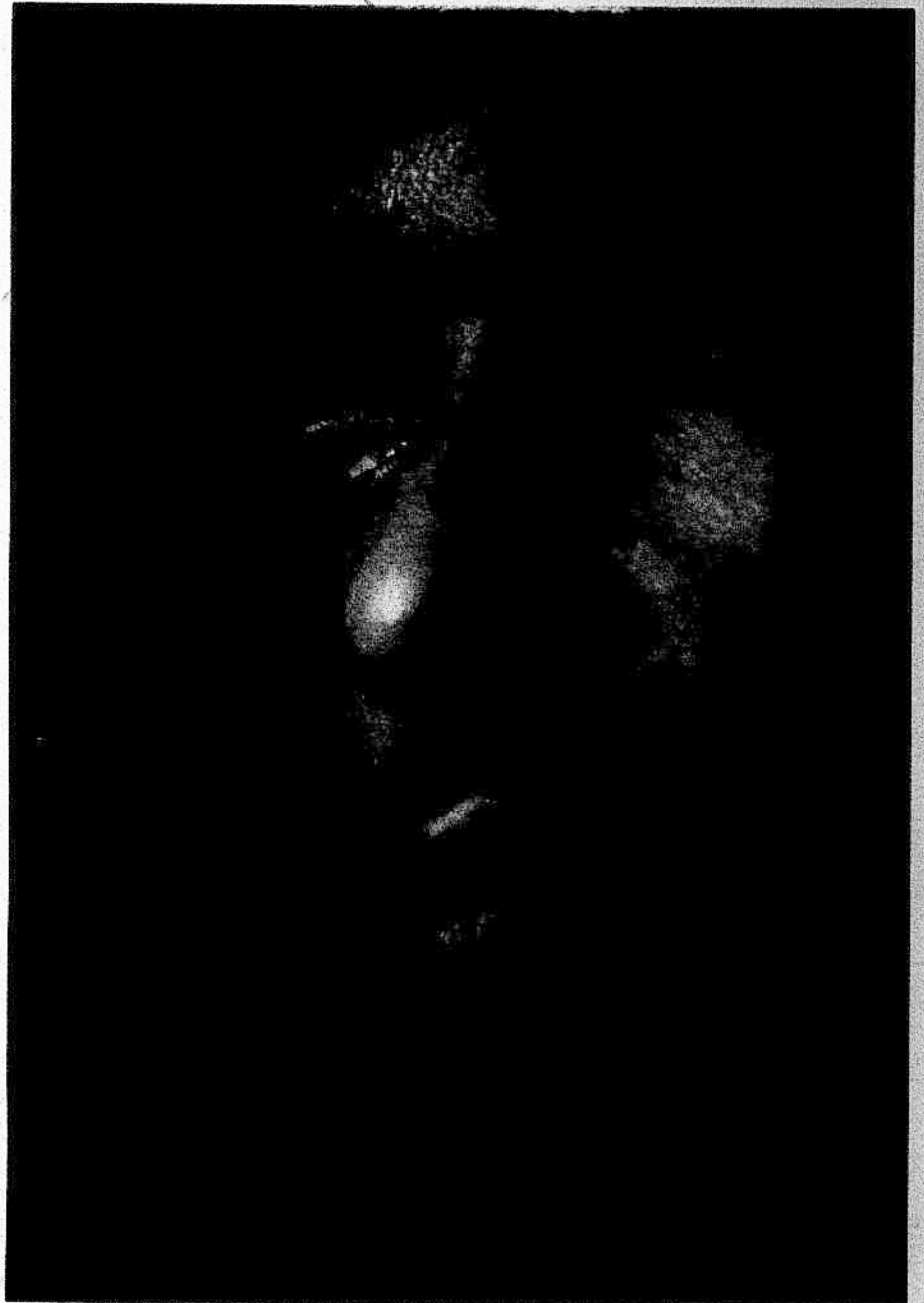
Under this law, all sentencing discretion was removed from judges if a person was convicted of a "Third Strike" on a long list of offenses. If that

qualification was met, the Three Strikers were automatically sentenced to life without parole (LWOP). (Before Three Strikes, LWOPs were handed out only to criminals who had committed aggravated

murders, including torture killings.) Over the years, legislators have tried a number of routes to amend the law, including proposals to remove second-degree robbery and/or assault from the list of strikable offenses. (The bipartisan Washington Sentencing Guidelines Commission recommended in 2001 that second-degree robbery should be removed from the Three Strikes list.)

Yet, in 2006, the law remains unaltered. I wrote Dozier recently to get a sense of how things were going for him.

As a result of Initiative 593, the 1994 Persistent Offenders Act, Stevan Dozier is serving life without hope of parole for committing three unarmed, non-violent robberies. Photo courtesy of ColorsNW Magazine / Inye Wokoma.



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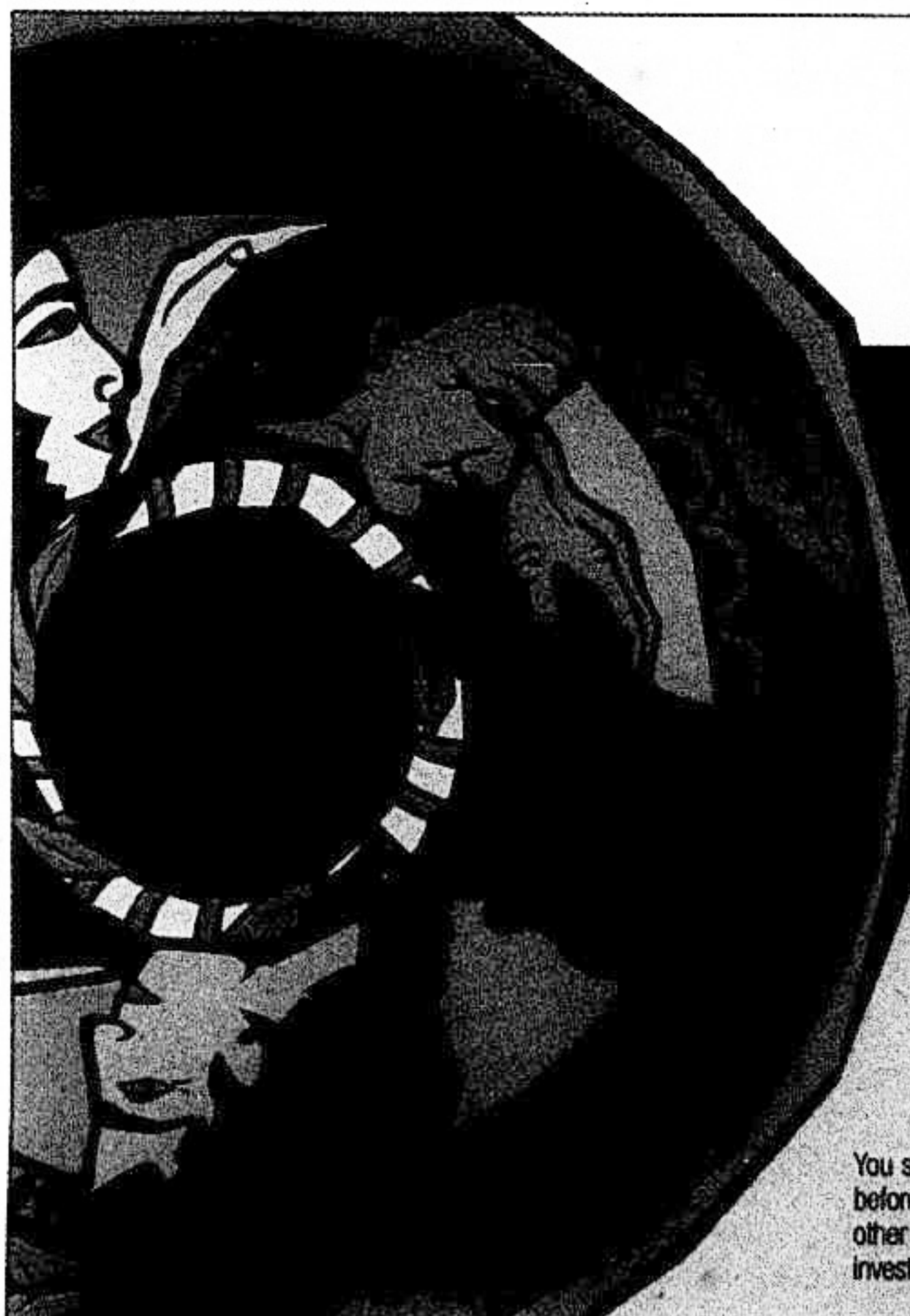
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Continued from Previous Page

Real Change: Stevan, how long have you been in prison so far, and for what offense?

Steven Dozier: I have been in prison for 11 years and nine months. The offense that I committed was second-degree robbery.

RC: If Washington's "Three Strikes" legislation were not in place, how long would you have served in state prison for your crime?

Dozier: If the Three Strikes law were not in place, the sentence I would have received is between 65 and 84 months.

RC: Do you feel that you would have deserved that sentence?

Dozier: I feel that I deserved to be sentenced within that guideline range, because [it] was proportionate to the non-armed, non-injury offense I committed.

RC: How old are you, and where were you raised?

Dozier: I am now 44 years old. I was brought up living on various army posts during my early years.

RC: What kinds of opportunities do you wish you would have had when you were younger that you didn't have, and what kinds of decisions do you wish you had made differently?

Dozier: When I was 11 years old, my family moved to South Seattle. The type of opportunities that I wish I would have had early in life range from a relationship with my father to career training to substance abuse counseling, when I first started smoking weed and drinking. I wish I never would have started running the streets. I wish I would have been a better father to my son, and a better husband to my wife, Lillian.

RC: If you were to be released next month, what would you see yourself doing in the days, weeks, and months to follow? Would you have a place to go "home" to?

Dozier: If I were released in the future, I would see myself working as a welder or laborer and spending plenty of time with my loved ones. I see myself appreciating my freedom and being a productive member of society. I have very strong family support, so [my] living arrangements [would be] the least of my worries.

RC: Several pieces of state legislation have been introduced, over the years, that would have reduced the scope of offenses eligible for a third strike. Nothing has come of the effort, as of yet. What has been the experience like of waiting to see what would happen with this legislation?

Dozier: Over the years, [each time that] Three Strikes legislation is introduced, I find myself on an emotional rollercoaster — right along with my loved ones.

[Our political] leadership seems to be unconcerned over the fiscally irresponsible approach of one-size-fits-all sentencing, and they fail to grasp the fact that "Tough on Crime" and "Smart on Punishment" can go hand in hand.

RC: Tell us about the kinds of efforts you're involved in within prison.

Dozier: My efforts in prison over the years have consisted of [educating] younger inmates about Three Strikes. I feel if me sharing my story can save one [of them] from striking out, [then my story] is worth telling.

I have been writing lawmakers for years, asking them to re-examine the offenses on the Three Strikes list. I have reached out to those in the Black community who I saw as community leaders regarding this issue. [King County Councilmember] Larry Gossett has been a shining star and has been quite vocal in his opposition to unarmed low-level offenders receiving sentences equal to what the Green River Killer received.

For quite a while, I was basically on

my own in my efforts to reach out. So many Three-Strikers have given up or committed acts far more serious than the low-level ones being considered by lawmakers [as offenses not worthy of life sentences].

I have involved myself in the Black Prisoners Caucus and in the Concerned Lifers Organization. I work within the groups, and I encourage the members to pursue these various issues via letters to lawmakers and to the community.

RC: How have the staff employed by the state Department of Corrections (DOC) reacted to your situation and to the law that has put you behind bars for life?

Dozier: Many staff [members] within DOC have told me

how unjust they feel my sentence is. Earlier this year, I had a chance to speak briefly with the Secretary of Corrections, Harold Clarke, while he toured [Monroe]. I asked him one question, "How do you feel about persons with non-armed, non-injury offenses being sentenced to life without parole?" Mr. Clarke responded that he was "uncomfortable with that practice," and that he believes those being put away forever from society should be truly dangerous individuals — and

RC: How do you combat feelings of hopelessness or depression?

Dozier: I do hit times of depression, but I have learned to regroup quickly because my loved ones feed off of my optimism, and I'd hate to bring them down again.

RC: Are there people in prison who really should be incarcerated for life and not be given a second chance?

Dozier: Yes, I believe that there are some in prison who should be incarcerated forever. I believe all criminal behavior should be punished in a manner which is proportionate to the offense committed.

RC: If they feel compelled to act, how would you suggest that people in the "free world" might be able to help to change this law?

Dozier: During my darkest days, I find comfort in knowing that some people do care enough to fight to correct an overreaching law. Please call and e-mail your State Senator, Representatives, members of the Senate Judiciary Committee, and the House Criminal Justice and Corrections Committee. These officials need to hear from the public that they are displeased with the practice of treating low-level offenders in the same fashion as serial killers and terrorists. ■

"I have been in prison for 11 years and nine months. The offense that I committed was second-degree robbery."

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Raunch Dressing

What author Ariel Levy finds troubling is that more women appear to be adorning or augmenting themselves in the image of porn stars because they've been told such acts equal sexual empowerment.

Female Chauvinist Pigs: Women and the Rise of Raunch Culture
by Ariel Levy
Free Press; \$25

By ROSETTE ROYALE
Staff Reporter

I don't know about you, but I've never owned a thong. This fact makes me wonder if I'm a little uptight, given their near-ubiquity in catalogues and shopping malls, but really: butt floss? Not for these cheeks. And while it's true I'm not a woman, I feel relieved by the actions of women in Britain: thong sales there have, ahem, bottomed out, with 20 percent less being sold from April-June 2005 than in the same period last year. As for the women who still buy them (and in the U.S., thongs are the fastest-growing segment of the almost \$700 million knickers, I mean, lingerie industry,) I propose they spend their money instead on *Female Chauvinist Pigs* by Ariel Levy. Chances are, once they close the back cover, they may want to cover up a little more of their backsides.

Not that getting women to burn their thongs is Levy's thesis. Oh, no no no no. Levy believes that women can wear thongs or push-up bras or even get breast enhancements if they so desire. What troubles her is that more women appear to be adorning or augmenting themselves in the image of porn stars because they've been told such acts equal sexual empowerment. But, Levy wonders, aren't these deeds simply old school sexism trussed up in the *Empress'* new clothes?

Who, you may wonder, is telling women certain clothes and acts signal sexual empowerment? Men, to be sure, but, believe it or not, a good number of women too. In one sense, Levy tracks today's raunch back to the women who surfed the turbulent waters of what's referred to as feminism's first wave: Gloria Steinem, Susan Brownmiller, Andrea Dworkin, et al. By laying out their achievements and failures in *Pigs*, Levy identifies an overlooked event: the schism between the women's lib movement and the sexual revolution that arose in the late '70s. "What we are seeing today," writes Levy, an editor at *New York* magazine, "is the residue of that confusion." And Levy finds that residue sticking to women practically everywhere.

It's in the front offices of *Playboy*, where she watches two women primp and preen before rushing off in hopes of securing a photo spread. (FYI: *Playboy* is now run by Christie Hefner, Hugh's daughter. Kinda makes you wonder about all those Daddy's-Little-Girl-inspired spreads, don't it?) Levy spies the residue at a female-run CAKE party, a hypersexual monthly event in New York City, where women wear buttons that invite: "ASK ME: If I know where my G-Spot is." The residue practically suffocates a San Francisco lesbian bar where she overhears one patron with what looks to be a strapped-down chest complain to another: "Some of these chicks, it's like you top them once and then they're all in your face. It's like, Did I

get you off? Yes. Am I your new best friend? No." The list of women selling out women is troubling. But not as troubling as what she finds with young girls.

She talks to teen girls who, in hopes boys will notice them, wear cropped, tight-fitting clothes they don't necessarily like because they know such a look garners looks. She reports on others who fellate boys on school buses, or perform fake fellatio on broom handles for the benefit of a webcam. These orally inclined young girls almost always get caught, almost always get suspended from school, and almost always get their 15 minutes of neighborhood fame.

Levy does a pretty nice job of revealing this lib vs. sex-power schism in all sorts of locales, but at times, the book suffers from a this-is-my-college-dissertation voice. And she shies away from dissecting one crucial component: capitalism. Women believe raunchy sexual behavior is empowering because it's sold to them. And buying into it means you need to buy the tricks of a remarketed trade.

Even still, Levy holds tight to her core conviction: "If we [that is, women] believed that we were sexy and funny and competent and smart, we would not need to be like strippers or men or like anyone other than our own specific, individual selves." Amen, sister. Then there might not be a need to pay such a heavy price for that inexpensive thong. ■

War Games

Munich
Directed by Stephen Spielberg

By LESTER GRAY
Arts Editor

Issuing an evenhanded mainstream movie on the Middle East conflict — given the current political atmosphere driven by demagogues and wingnuts — bespeaks of foolhardiness, masochism, and courage.

The production of *Munich*, a collaborative effort between Steven Spielberg and Tony Award-winning writer Tony Kushner, remained stealth almost until release. Once it appeared on the horizon, the predictable battery of opinion launched — much of it curious vitriol. Demagogues appear reluctant to acknowledge that the film is an eloquent argument for the humanity of the Israeli people.

The story begins at the 1972 Olympics where a group of Palestinians, intent on bringing their plight to the attention of the world, take hostage and eventually kill 12 Israeli athletes. Golda Meir, then Prime Minister of Israel, meeting with advisors, reluctantly decides that her country must respond in kind by tracking down and killing those responsible.

Avner (Eric Bana), chosen to lead the effort, has no official title, no official sanction — the typical secret mission that doesn't even exist. A team comprised of the young intelligence officer and four others, who like himself are inexperienced and morally conflicted with the uncloaked violence of assassination, nonetheless goes dutifully forward.

Rookies in a counterintuitive underworld of spies and pecuniary purveyors of information, they learn even the

best allegiances can shift with deadly swiftness. Their consciences prove not only a luxury, but a liability.

Absent is the glamour and cheap gratification of highly choreographed and stylized recompense. The Israeli operatives demonstrate none of the dime-store novel bravado and "make my day" dialogue. The narrative is driven, not by the animosity of Israeli versus Palestinian, but the inner conflict of those assigned to even a score — the well-known but seldom dramatized messy psychology that comes with any type of killing.

This is not to suggest a ponderous, painfully introspective offering. The requisite cloak and dagger of espionage is present, albeit of a design that provokes less pedestrian emotions.

It takes a great deal of skill to avoid overly aggravating the gadflies who circle the post-9/11 rot and tell a story as engaging as *Munich*. The film is a brave but still cautious effort. Most disturbing is that such tact was even necessary.

The thought of continued collaboration of Spielberg and Kushner is enticing. The efforts of the former, as good as they are, have always been too neat and tidy. Teamed with the playwright, perhaps future works may acknowledge that ET doesn't always make it home. ■

Munich is currently playing in local theaters.

It takes a great deal of skill to avoid overly aggravating the gadflies who circle the post-9/11 rot and tell a story as engaging as *Munich*. The film is a brave but still cautious effort.



Adventures
in Irony

Dr. Wes Browning

For Auld Lang Syne

Here it is, the end of the year, bringing me end-of-the-year memories. Unfortunately, being as old as I am, and as scattered, I can't focus my memories on one year, so don't expect an end-of-the-year roundup like you'll get from a convergent person.

Here it is, the end of the year, bringing me end-of-the-year memories. Unfortunately, being as old as I am, and as scattered, I can't focus my memories on one year, so don't expect an end-of-the-year roundup like you'll get from a convergent person.

Instead, my thoughts race back and forth across the last 56-and-a-half years, and I recall who did what to me, and I calculate how much they need to pay. New Year's Resolution: Round up bastards, chastise, repeat.

There was the campus security officer who forced hour-long conversations on me whenever he caught me sleeping in my car on campus. Such sleeping was legal at the time. But he wanted to let me know that he, personally, did not approve of the law having such a loophole, because it took advantage of working people like him. I told him I had a job. He said, "Oh, well then, get a better one." I said, "How about yours, you're not doing it..."

On nights when he wasn't "working," there was another campus cop who didn't, personally, mind me sleeping on campus. But he took great umbrage when he caught me using a public bathroom after hours.

I said, "It was left unlocked, it's a public restroom. I'm a member of the public. What's the problem?"

He said, "Don't you know that people have to clean these bathrooms? They don't just clean themselves."

I said, "When I finish, I'll clean up after myself, unlike any of the thousands of other people who use it during the day, who don't get to meet you."

He said, "But you're homeless. How do you think those people would feel if they knew someone like you was using their bathroom?"

"Vicariously relieved?"

A certain deli downtown used to be open all night and welcomed the homeless if they at least paid for coffee. I was grateful and repaid them by patronizing them and steering other business their way. Then I moved out of downtown for a few years.

When I moved back downtown, I returned to the old haunt to find it very different. Not only was the store not open all night, it had been remodeled and rearranged. I saw people chased away just for appearing homeless. But what earns them a special place on my little list is what happened after I used one of their two unisex bathrooms while waiting for a sandwich to be made. I had accidentally used the wrong one, because I was used to the old arrangement. So they reported me to the police. I had been in a bathroom labeled "Women" on the door, by myself, for a whole minute. And oh, yes, I was obviously homeless again. So I was clearly a danger to society.

Here's the one who goes at the top of my list. I had gotten on welfare at one time, but wanted to get a job and get off welfare as soon as possible. To help things along I got into a work shelter program through the Division of Vocational Rehabilitation. Having a work shelter job meant being paid less than minimum wage. The state made up for that partially by providing bus passes.

Every day until I got my bus pass I'd take the same bus to the job. The driver would smile and nod. There'd be fewer than five passengers on the trip. No one ever complained.

The day I flashed my newly obtained state authorized bus pass, the same driver who had always smiled at me before said he was going to stop letting me use his bus if I didn't start taking showers. When I told him I just had one, he answered that he was sick of people like me abusing the system.

As soon as I figure out what that system was he was talking about, it goes on my list, too. ■



Mon., Dec. 5, 10:11 a.m., Victor Steinbrueck Park. Officers contacted the suspect during a narcotics shake. Suspect, a transient white male aged 37, was found to have an outstanding felony warrant out of Texas. The warrant was verified — it was 12 years old — and the man was transported to the precinct. Around an hour later, Texas authorities called to say the warrant was no good, and the suspect would not be extradited. Suspect was released.

Mon., Dec. 5, 10:15 a.m., Third Ave. and Bell St. Officers stopped the suspect at Third and Bell after observing him at a bus stop. He was sitting huddled next to a female, and did not appear to be looking at the buses coming to the stop. When suspect, a transient Black male aged 38, saw officers approaching he began walking towards the bus. Officers had arrested the suspect on several previous contacts, and had stopped him on narcotic shakes. They knew he was on active Department of Corrections supervision, and called his officer to enquire about his status. His DOC officer requested that officers take him to the precinct, and he was released into custody. He was questioned and released.

Mon., Dec. 5, 3:28 p.m., First and Pike. Suspect, a transient white female aged 13, was contacted regarding a narcotics complaint. She stated she was just walking down the street with a relative. She then gave officers two false names before admitting that she had run away from the Spruce St. Youth Facility the night before. Staff at Spruce St. confirmed the story and gave officers the girl's real name. They also stated that she had a youth warrant for theft against her from Idaho. The warrant was verified, and the suspect was returned to the Spruce St. Facility.

Thurs., Dec. 15, 10:45 a.m., Second Ave. Officers stopped the suspect, a transient Native American male aged 41, on the 1500 block of Second Ave. They had originally observed him at Second and Pike, and he appeared to be walking northbound to avoid the police. This area is known as a high narcotics area, and the reporting officer has made many arrests there before. They contacted the suspect and asked him what he was doing. He stated, "Just kicking it with friends." The officers were aware that the man was on active supervision with the Department of Corrections, and so contacted his DOC officer. She directed the police to arrest the suspect and take him to the West Precinct. There he was interviewed by his DOC officer and released.

Sun., Dec. 18, 1:40 p.m., Third & Yesler, Prefontaine Park. The suspect, a transient Black male aged 32, was observed walking in Prefontaine Park, in violation of his current one-year ban from all parks in the city. He was taken into custody and booked into King County Jail for Trespass in the Parks.

Compiled from incident reports of the Seattle Police Department by Emma Quinn. Got your own experience to relate? Call us at (206)441-3247 ext. 207 and we'll get the scoop.

Body Murmurs

The laying on of hands made merry muscles tremor

She was amusing herself when the child returned

Face down

Face flushed

She startled to her knees

Eyes darting

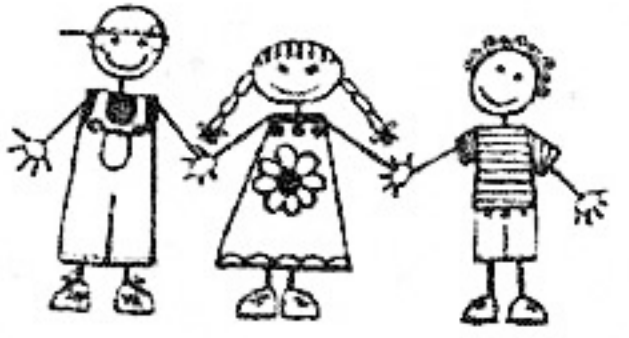
A wry shy smile

Unbuttoned hair in a pile

Diamond pave in a bag
She asked him to give it to her

He hovered over
The stars spilled
The firmament filled
With harp notes trilled

Sleep comes deep and warm



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*How hard it is for those who have wealth
to enter the Kingdom of God! Indeed it is
easier for a camel to go through the eye of
a needle than for someone who is rich to
enter Kingdom of God.*

— Luke 18:24-25

SO WE HAVE TO ASK, FOR THE SAKE OF THEIR SOULS:
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ARE SHARING-IMPAIRED (I.E., THOSE WHO HAVE WEALTH)?



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Letters

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Who's the Boss?

Dear *Real Change*,

The old year is ending and a new year is almost upon us, just hovering over the horizon. We're just waiting to hear the greetings of the horns, bells and the happy hollering of Happy New Year, Happy New Year. I take that as a good omen for more jobs and housing and less homelessness: bringing people in off the sidewalks, out from under viaducts, or wherever they find to sleep. I give thanks to the caregivers and volunteers who reach out to the homeless and everyone else who needs a place to sleep — by putting a roof over their beds so they can live like the human beings they are.

I want to applaud the people down at the *Real Change* office who are making a difference in people's lives. It's degrading for a man or a woman to walk around everyday with empty pockets. *Real Change* puts them to work and by working they gain confidence and hope. *Real Change* is a turning point in many people's lives. It changes their dreams into reality.

As you send your Christmas gifts to friends and family, it would be nice to send along a subscription to the *Real Change* paper as well because it helps people to help themselves.

The people down at the *Real Change* office are nice, friendly, and helpful — even to yours truly, who goes in there a lot without an appointment.

But on a lighter side, who actually runs the store at *Real Change*? Is it the distinguished director, Tim Harris? You would think so, but no, not him. Is it the fair-haired, bright-eyed, alert and hardnosed-for-news editor, Adam Hyla? Wrong again. And it's certainly not the talented and renowned Dr. Wes Browning. It's none

of the above. It's the lovable, scroungy, cantankerous cat, Sid Vicious. He walks around in the morning, looking in all the offices for familiar faces. Then he strolls up the steps to see if all the familiar faces are up there. He comes back down to follow the maintenance man while he does the floors. The maintenance man says that Sid loves to follow him around because he loves the smell of the disinfectant in the water. That is his opinion. Knowing Sid, I think he's following him around to make sure he does his job.

On Sid's good day, you couldn't call him Mr. Congeniality. A mouse wouldn't dare cross his path. In fact they all went elsewhere, to safer places. Sometimes he will let me give him a pet or a scratch behind his ears, but only for a second because he doesn't tolerate you for too long. Then he'll stretch one paw out to you, which is Sid's way of saying, "Back off!" And believe me folks, I back off. Sid will then move to his stand and take a nap. When he wakes up, he heads to the back to make sure his water and food bowls are still there. He sees the people off at night and greets them in the morning. He is loved at *Real Change* in spite of himself.

I want to say a very Merry Christmas and a prosperous New Year to all my friends at the *Real Change* office. And a very merry, merry meow meow year to Sid Vicious, the boss of them all.

**Happy Holidays to everyone,
Estella Wallace**

Real Change welcomes letters to the editor of up to 250 words in length. Please include name, address, phone number, and email for author verification. Letters should be addressed to Editor at *Real Change*, 2129 2nd Ave., Seattle, WA, 98121, or emailed to editor@realchangenews.org.



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Meet someone new... Volunteer Chore Services is looking for volunteers to assist low-income elders and adults with disabilities with household chores and yard work. The program is flexible; volunteers choose the time and location. Make a new friend while helping someone remain independent. For more information call Volunteer Chore Services, a program of Catholic Community Services, at 1-888-649-6580 or email vc@ccsww.org.

Opportunity

Discover a New You! See yourself in a whole new way with a free makeover! Find a look that expresses your style, your personality, your life. Call me to create a fabulous look that's uniquely you. You'll love what you discover. **Joyce Townsend**, Mary Kay Independent Beauty Consultant. www.MaryKay.com/Jtownsend1976. 206-352-7472.

Real Change classifieds are a way to reach 30,000 loyal readers. Call 441-3247, or email classified@realchangenews.org.

Calendar

This Week's Top Ten

Thursday 12/29

Mische Eddins and Bill Horist come together to create an acoustic duet of melancholic pop-rock with a country twist. Horist will perform his set of finger-style acoustic instrumental pieces. 5:30 p.m., Seattle Art Museum, Brotman Hall, 100 University St.

Through Friday 12/30

A fresh twist on Charles Dickens' beloved classic *A Christmas Carol*, the play "The Trial" of Ebenezer Scrooge visits the relapsed Scrooge, who is grouzier than ever and on trial, with the audience acting as the jury. Tickets \$23 and up. Tuesday - Thursday 7:30 p.m., Friday 8 p.m., Taproot Theatre, 204 N 85th St., www.taproottheatre.org



For two years, Subhankar Banerjee traveled 4,000 miles through the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge in Alaska, surviving blizzards and negative-40 degree temperatures. His 49 extraordinary photographs are visual witnesses to the costal tundra, boreal forests, and indigenous peoples of one of the world's last untouched arctic ecosystems. Through Sat., Dec. 31. Tickets \$8 general, \$6.50 seniors, \$5 students. 10 a.m. - 5 p.m., University of Washington, Burke Museum, 17th Ave. NE and NE 45th St.

The Simple Cup showcases variations of the cup form by more than 50 North American and 10 Japanese ceramic artists. The exhibition, curated by Peter Olsen, executive director of Seward Park Clay, highlights the contrasts of how the cup form is interpreted in contemporary Japan. Mon. - Fri. 11 a.m. - 6 p.m., Kobo Gallery, 602 S. Jackson St., www.koboseattle.com

Richard Kirsten presents his exhibit "The Return of the Voyager," a special showing of miniature paintings created in Japan and possessing emanations of love and silent songs. 11 a.m. - 6 p.m., Kirsten Gallery, 5320 Roosevelt Way NE.

Saturday, 12/31

Walking Meditation for Contemplation and Reflection is a peaceful gathering with chants, music, songs, and prayers from a wealth of different spiritual traditions. A candlelight walk will follow. 3:30 p.m., Green Lake Community Center, 7201 E. Green Lake Drive N. Info: www.interfaithcouncil.com

The Bollywood New Year's Eve Party presents the music and rhythms of South Asia, including Indian drums, belly dancers, and more. The festive atmosphere carries the message of

love, peace, and harmony. Tickets \$20. 9 p.m., The Baltic Room, 1207 Pine St.

Thursday 1/5

The Seattle League of Women Voters hosts a presentation and discussion on two hotbutton issues: the death penalty and immigration. Speakers include attorneys and local activists. 7:30 p.m., Seattle First Baptist Church, 1111 Harvard Ave.

Friday 1/6

Set in a small village after the Bosnian war, "Fuse" begins by showing that lawlessness continues even after the armed hostilities have ended. However, when the villagers learn of President Clinton's impending visit, they immediately try to erase all evidence of crime in the hopes of impressing the world and luring foreign capital. 7 p.m., Keystone Church, 5019 Keystone Place. Info wncfp@bridgings.org

The Norwegian cultural treasure, "Draumkvedet," recounts a dream journey through heaven and hell. This performance features theatrical feats, narration in English, digitally projected images, and Scandinavian folk music. Tickets \$15 general, \$10 students and seniors. 8 p.m., Town Hall, 1119 Eighth Ave.

Calendar compiled by Dena Burke. Have a suggestion for an event? Email it to calendar@realchangenews.org.

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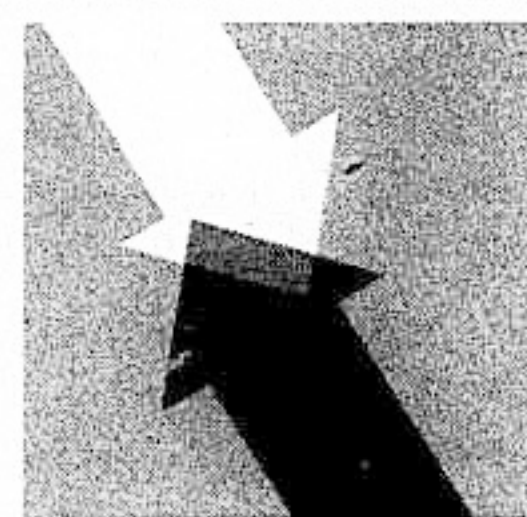
It's been said that a year in politics is an eternity. 2005 has been extraordinary in that respect.

Hurricane Katrina left hundreds of thousands of people homeless and revealed the existence of another America, where the poor and the dark skinned live in impoverished obscurity. In Iraq, mounting casualties and reports of prisoner abuse and torture turned public opinion against the war. On the home front, new revelations regarding internal spying have triggered what could become a full-blown constitutional crisis.

Republicans went into 2005 with a promise to spend their 2004 election "political capital" by privatizing social security. By the end of the year, their party was fractured, their President crippled, their leaders under indictment, and their agenda in tatters. Yet, they rallied in the end — by the slimmest possible margin — to obtain budget cuts for the poor and tax breaks for the rich.

As the Republican Party self-destructs out of sheer arrogance and overreach, Democrats must do more than simply be there to cash in. As we head toward mid-term elections, "not nearly as plutocratic as the other guys" is a less than inspiring campaign slogan.

25 years ago, Ted Kennedy's Democratic Convention concession speech to Jimmy Carter may have been the last great statement of Democratic Party principles. We "cannot have a fair prosperity," he said, "in isolation from a fair society," and whatever sacrifices must be made must be "shared and shared fairly." To paraphrase James Carville, "It's inequality, stupid."



First things First

Get Involved • Take Action

Keep High Cost of Comcast in the Past

Issue: Comcast's contract with the city of Seattle expires later this year, and the company must renegotiate its right to provide local cable and Internet service. We now have a rare and critical opportunity to improve our terms of service — to hold the line on outrageous rate inflation and force them to provide real public benefit in return for their extremely lucrative monopoly access to our homes and businesses.

Background: Recently, the city's Office of Cable Communications released details of its proposed deal with Comcast. The contract sets the terms for providing service to Seattle neighborhoods for the next 10 years. Negotiated behind closed doors over a year-long process, the franchise renewal outlines the public benefits Comcast must provide in return for their lucrative contract. Prominent among these benefits are our local, noncommercial cable channels, including the government-run Seattle Channel and the community-programmed station SCAN.

In the proposed contract, the Mayor's office calls for new content requirements for SCAN aimed at increasing programming "predictability," quality, and more local arts and cultural programming. These new mandates come without any of the funding needed to implement them. The obvious way to improve SCAN's quality would be to increase the station's meager annual budget and allow it to expand onto a second channel. Instead, the city's proposed new cable contract would cut SCAN's budget by \$150,000 a year, then funnel arts funding towards the government-controlled Seattle Channel, where arts and cultural programming will be decided by city managers rather than the broader community.

The proposed franchise ignores community recommendations regarding consumer rights, accountability and a living wage and guaranteed right to organize for Comcast employees. It calls for the city to give away cable channels reserved for local, noncommercial programming to Comcast for commercial use.

In a separate agreement, Comcast will buy \$5 million worth of "sponsorship" on Seattle Channel cultural programs. This deal will place Comcast branding on the air alongside our local government coverage and discourage the channel from airing programs that might be unpalatable to the corporate sponsor.

Action: In the coming months, the City Council is required to hear public comments and decide whether the proposed franchise agreement is good enough for Seattle residents. Comcast is a powerful company with deep pockets, and it will take strong leadership for the City Council to stand up for a better deal for Seattle. Contact City Councilmembers today and ask that they hold at least four hearings around the city so the public has ample opportunity for input on this contract. Tell them you want community access television adequately funded, increased consumer rights, protections for Comcast workers, and no commercialization of the Seattle Channel.

- Jim Compton: Jim.compton@seattle.gov 684-8802
- Jan Drago: Jan.drago@seattle.gov 684-8801
- Nick Licata: Nick.licata@seattle.gov 684-8803
- Peter Steinbrueck: Peter.steinbrueck@seattle.gov 684-8804
- Richard McIver: Richard.mciver@seattle.gov 684-8800
- David Della: David.della@seattle.gov 684-8806
- Jean Godden: Jean.godden@seattle.gov 684-8807
- Richard Conlin: Richard.conlin@seattle.gov 684-8805
- Tom Rasmussen: Tom.rasmussen@seattle.gov 684-8808

Visit www.reclaimthedia.org to take action now.

HOME, Continued from Page 1

ArtWorks on a judge's order. He stayed straight by focusing on keeping his girlfriend and daughter happy, says his father, Alex Leon. He also discovered art as a means of self-expression and a way to carry on the artistic traditions of his Tlingit, Tsimshian, and Lakota Sioux forebears.

His talent was apparent, says his father. Native carvers would ask him to apprentice with them, "but he wanted to do his own thing. They knew he had a lot of potential in all the things he did."

Leon's turn-around put him on the cover of *Real Change* ["Art Emerging: urban art program turns young offenders into public artists," June 13, 2002].

Alex, Brockmole, and Brockmole's mother are raising money for Leon's care through the sale of Native art donated by friends and supporters. They raised about \$1,000 at an August benefit. While Medicaid pays for Leon's care, the government program won't pay to transport him back to Seattle. Brockmole says they're still shy of the \$12,500 needed for that trip, but they hope an online art sale they have set up will cover the cost.

It's an effort in keeping with what Alex says is his son's generous spirit. "Every time he did some art we told

him, 'You should sell that,' but he'd give it away."

Family and friends are hoping that being closer to home will speed Leon's recovery.

"Right now, we're just feeling like he is alone and he needs us. We believe that with his family and friends around

him, he'll probably strive to get better," says Brockmole's mother.

In that sort of setting, doctors say that he can improve "to the point that he can take care of himself and function," says Brockmole. But they also say that his personality and his ability to learn new things may be gone — that "he'll never be Daniel," the outgoing person who loved art, again.

That's something Brockmole doesn't share with her two-year-old daughter.

"I just tell her that daddy's going to get better. She was there for the whole thing, so she's seen enough." ■

[To help]

Artwork for sale to pay for Daniel's care can be viewed online at www.danielleonfund.com



DANIEL LEON IN 2002. THE 21-YEAR-OLD ARTIST SUFFERED BRAIN DAMAGE FROM A JULY SWIMMING ACCIDENT IN NEW MEXICO, WHERE HE LIES IN A COMA. FAMILY MEMBERS ARE RAISING MONEY TO BRING HIM BACK TO SEATTLE. PHOTO BY CASEY KELBAUGH.

NIGERIA, Continued from Page 1

and other oil giants. Though the region now supplies the United States with 10 percent of its oil and generates most of Nigeria's wealth, oil pollution has destroyed the traditional livelihoods of farming and fishing in Oporoza and other Delta villages.

In a meeting at Chevron's Nigerian offices, Partnow says executives insisted the company has changed its practices. But the group later saw a Chevron gas flare — a toxic burn-off of natural gas — that contradicted the sincerity.

In Oporoza, where the delegates lived for a week, residents told Partnow that a filthy mudflat was once a white, sandy beach. Because fish have become so scarce and there are no jobs to be had, village women requested a meeting with Partnow, giving her a list of demands that included bigger boats for ocean fishing.

"It was very painful because, of course, because I don't have money. I don't have any way of providing them with anything," she says.

Later, Partnow says she came up with an idea: If she and some of the delegates could come up with \$500 or \$600 each, they could create a micro-lending fund to back small endeavors.

She and delegates Peter Titcomb, a high school teacher, and Leslye Wood, a freelance writer, each contributed and are now trying to raise a total of \$5,000, which will be loaned in small amounts to individuals or groups. Some of the Nigerian delegates will provide training for the projects, which could include planting cassava, raising chickens, or selling honey.


If the projects go well, Partnow says, Chevron told her it would put up more money. In the meantime, to help them prepare business plans, one of the village women who can read and write stepped forward at a meeting and volunteered to teach the others.

"To me, the key is not so much the economics as the empowerment, because women in the village have very little status and therefore little confidence," Partnow says. "My desire is to get the women to start working together and feeling like they have some control over their life." ■

[On the Air]

Extended coverage of the Niger Delta continues on-KBCS 91.3 FM in January. Listen or check www.kbcs.fm for more details.

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