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JANUARY 18 - 24, 2006

REAL CHANGE

ISSUES • INSIGHT • IMPACT



Freedom Fighters

SECOND GRADERS ALICEON YASUTAKE, HANNAH BILLEN, AND ALEXANDRIA GORT SING OUT FOR THE LEGACY OF THE CIVIL RIGHTS MOVEMENT DURING THE ANNUAL UNITY MARCH OF ORCA @ COLUMBIA ELEMENTARY SCHOOL ON FRIDAY, JAN. 13. HONORING DR. MARTIN LUTHER KING JR.'S LIFE AND WORK, STUDENTS MADE ART ENVISIONING A WORLD OF HARMONY AND JUSTICE AND DONATED ITEMS TO A LOCAL FOOD BANK. PHOTO BY LUKE MCGUFF.

Freefall

Cuts in services leave mentally ill with no safety net

By **CYDNEY GILLIS**
Staff Reporter

After years of budget cuts, a state surplus of \$1.4 billion has raised hopes that the legislature will restore services for the homeless, disabled, and working poor in 2006.

For "Mrs. W," a mentally ill immigrant who lives in Seattle's Chinatown district, the help can't come soon enough.

On Jan. 1, in the wake of some behind-the-scenes rebudgeting last year at the state, King County pulled the plug on outpatient services for Mrs. W and about 600 other mentally ill people who don't receive or aren't eligible for Medicaid.

The county says it was forced to cut the services because it didn't get \$7.4 million it expected in state funding last year. The money would have paid the bills for non-Medicaid patients who receive services at 18 county-funded mental health clinics, including Seattle Mental Health, Com-

munity Psychiatric Clinic, and Asian Counseling and Referral Services, the agency that looks after Mrs. W.

Yoon Joo Han, director of behavioral health at Asian Counseling, says Mrs. W is a paranoid schizophrenic who came from China in 1979. She suffers from cataracts and a belief that her blurred vision is due to poisoned water that she washed her face with. She can't get Medicaid because two years ago she lost her Social Security card and passport.

Mrs. W isn't alone. Even if they have identification, Han says many mentally ill patients — particularly among the homeless — are so delusional or incapacitated that they can't fill out the Medicaid paperwork. Young people experiencing their first psychotic episode have no medical history to qualify for Medicaid. Others haven't been in the United States long enough to become citizens.

See CUTS, Continued on Page 12

Stand Together

To be effective in Olympia, enviros imitate forest — not trees

By **AMY ROE**
Contributing Writer

For the fourth year in a row, environmentalists from around the state have got together to set Priorities for a Healthy Washington. The coalition approach paid off last year with "green" car and sustainable-building bills. This year's priorities are to promote renewable fuels, clean up Puget Sound, launch electronics-waste recycling, eliminate toxic flame retardants and defend land-use protections.

"It is a short session. It's only 60 days, so you have to be pretty focused," says Naki Stevens, director of programs with People for Puget Sound.

Some of the priorities represent unfinished business. It's deja vu in the effort to ban PBDEs, a group of chemicals added to everything from computers to carpeting and automotive upholstery. The chemicals have been shown to slow development and thyroid processes in laboratory rats, suggesting they may pose particular dangers for children. In a study by Northwest Environment Watch, PBDEs showed up in the breast milk of Northwest mothers. The chemical has also been found in dirt, plants, and throughout the food chain.

California, Oregon, Hawaii, Maine, New York, Michigan, and the European Union have passed legislation phasing out use of most PBDEs. Washington lawmakers delayed action on the issue last year as the Department of Ecology studied it. This year, with a new, more narrowly tailored bill, environmentalists believe they have a good shot at victory. Legislators will also revisit a bill that would protect the state's waters by requiring failing septic systems to be fixed. The bill was just two votes short of passing last year, Stevens says.

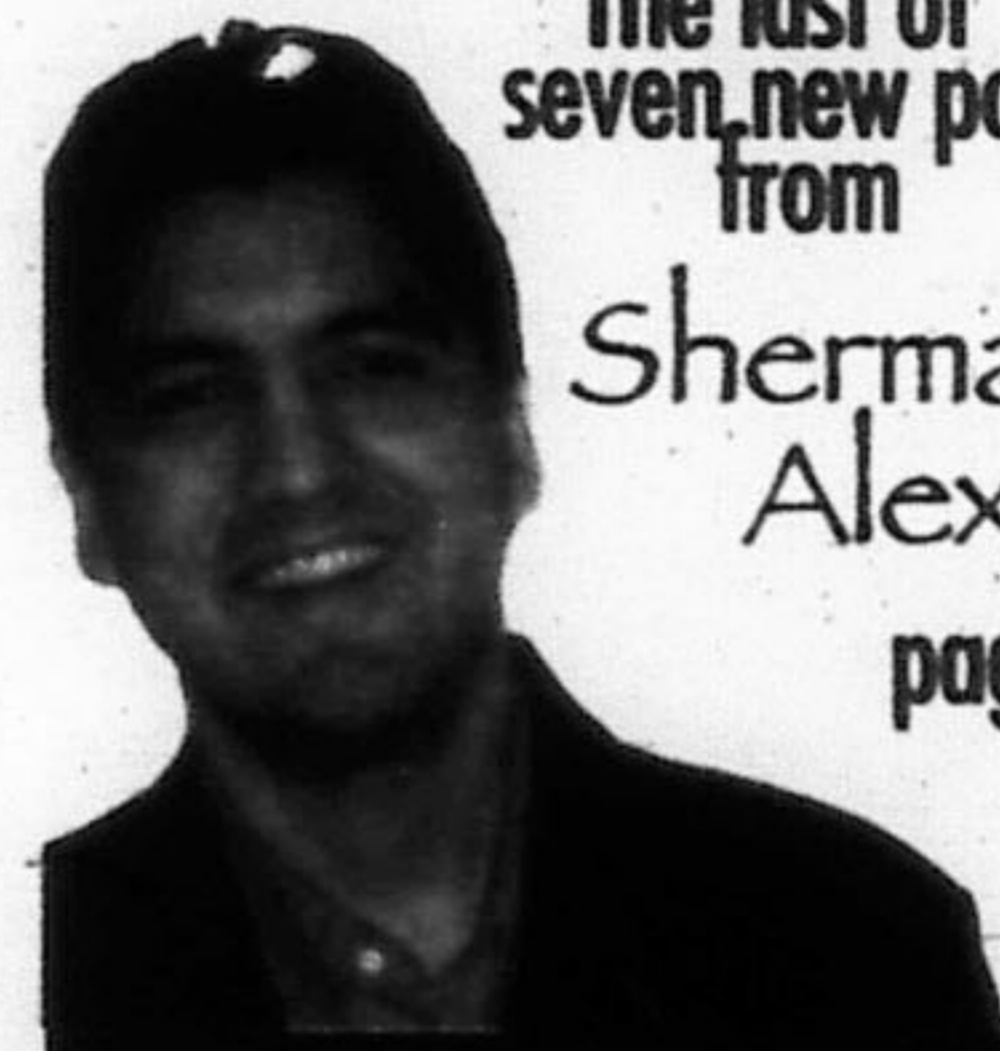
Other water quality priorities include backing Governor Gregoire's \$42.5 million Puget Sound cleanup ini-

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This Issue

The last of seven new poems from

Sherman
Alexie
page 5



HIGH AND LOW

Now the mayor wants to give both high-rise and residential developers an easy break

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ROLLBACK-LASH

Wal-Mart may guarantee low prices — always — but what health care for its employees?

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ID, PLEASE

UW prof David Domke sees right through conservatives' claims that intelligent design is a science.

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With Friends Like These ...

Backroom developer deal threatens expansion of housing funds

By ADAM HYL
Real Change Editor

Mayor Nickels has sold his developer-friendly agenda by promoting a vision of another Vancouver: inviting parks, sidewalk cafés, ecologically friendly gated communities soaring into the sky. There's an ugly side to this future: increased density will accelerate the loss of affordable housing.

Last week, some of Seattle's most prominent developers told the City Council to put away their thinking caps and take out their rubber stamps.

High-end real estate companies Samis Land Co. and Clise Properties, the Downtown Seattle Association, and the non-profit Housing Development Consortium (HDC) issued a letter to the council asking that they forego consideration of City Councilmember Peter Steinbrueck's proposal to make downtown building codes more socially responsible.

Mayor Nickels has sold his developer-friendly agenda by promoting a vision of another Vancouver: inviting parks, sidewalk cafés, ecologically friendly gated communities soaring into the sky. There's an ugly side to this future: increased density will accelerate the loss of affordable housing — which already disappears at a greater rate than can be replaced by the housing levy or the region's strong non-profit sector.

Currently, Seattle collects a \$10-per-square-foot fee from high-rise office developers to subsidize new rentals for low-income people. With a projected 40,000 new residents moving into Seattle's downtown over the next 10 years, the mayor has suggested that the fee be extended to residential builders as well. Councilmember Steinbrueck is asking his colleagues to double the fee to \$20 per square foot.

There is ample evidence that a \$20 fee is both the right thing to do and worth the while of the builders who'll pay it. One study last year noted that for every 100 new condo buyers

moving downtown — people who will have to earn \$90,000 to afford a one-bedroom — 17 new low- and moderate-wage workers will be needed to make their takeout and walk their dogs. To help offset those housing needs, the study suggested setting the fee at \$22.25.

Last week's City Council-commissioned economic feasibility study concluded that there was plenty of profit to go around, even with the higher fee. Under current zoning, developers would reap a 40 percent annual profit on a typical condo development.

Sharon Lee of the Low Income Housing Institute — which has developed more than 2,600 units of affordable housing and owns or manages 44 different properties — says that Steinbrueck's \$20 fee is the very minimum that should be considered.

Profit-driven developers and the boosters of the Downtown Seattle Association naturally want to keep the fee as low as they can. But it's dismaying to see the Housing Development Consortium, the countywide industry association of low-income housing interests, stand with them.

HDC could have furthered its members' pursuit of scarce public funding — and stood for its tenants' intense demand for housing — by speaking up for the higher fees last week. Or, since the interests of its profit-driven developer friends and the interests of the city's poor and ill-housed are evidently in conflict, the consortium could have simply stayed quiet. Instead, by issuing this letter, they have dressed up the self-interest of the city's wealthiest developers in civic-minded beneficence.

HDC argues that the \$10 fee was arrived at over six years of nego-

tiations, and that a deal's a deal. This ignores the fact that those talks were mostly between developers and other downtown interests and the Mayor. The process did not become truly public until the release of the Mayor's proposal last May.

They also fear that by asking for too much, non-profit developers could lose any benefit at all. Developers have threatened to challenge any fee they deem too high in court as a violation of property rights and therefore unconstitutional.

That's an irrelevant bogey brought to life by the real estate interests. These fees don't depend on the principled assent of benevolent developers. They are established for a reason, and don't apply universally — only to the builders of inordinately tall buildings.

Beyond these stated reasons, what's at play is Team Nickels' *über alles* hardball strategy. His staff called the developers together to help conduct concerted opposition to Steinbrueck's proposals. When HDC delivered their letter on the day the City Council released their economic feasibility study, the move was calculated to inflict maximum political damage.

Councilmember Steinbrueck is not working to enrich his campaign contributors. He is working to preserve a Seattle that has room for rich and poor alike. The City Council should pass the zoning Seattle needs, and not just what some people are willing to settle for. And HDC should let the city's for-profit real estate interests do their own lobbying.

If you can't help people — the tenants and would-be tenants of your own buildings — at least don't hurt them. ■



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.

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BETTY JEAN WILLIAMSON (third from left, with glasses,) helping students to share their wisdom. Photo by MARK SULLO.

When Betty Jean Williamson's son began classes at Asa Mercer Middle School, the heavily trafficked Beacon Hill campus had seen better days.

"It looked like an urban battleground," says Williamson. "The premises were run down, the buildings appeared bleak, and it simply wasn't a place where people would want to gather."

Williamson set out to change that. She took an active role on the Parent/Teacher/Student Association and became the Beautification Committee chair.

"This was not just about making things pretty," Williamson explains. "There are over 29 languages spoken in the

homes of our students. There are many diverse cultures. We wanted the campus to reflect that."

Williamson initiated the Walk of Wisdom, a student project in which panels were inscribed with inspirational sayings from around the world and student art. These panels were installed on the exterior beams of the schools walkways. Additionally, nine students authored family histories. These accounts were published in a multilingual anthology entitled "Words of Wisdom." The completed project celebrates diversity, inspires pride, and unites the community as a whole.

—Amy Besunder

Danger Afoot

Local pedestrian dangers highlighted at Jan. 19 summit

"People need to realize that when they are sitting in a metal box, they are armed to kill."

Amy Freedheim,
King County
Felony Traffic
Prosecutor

Cross with care:
drivers kill
pedestrians of
King County
nearly twice as
often as the national average.

Photo by Katia Roberts.

By MARIA ANTONOVA
Contributing Writer

With the limelight Seattle usually gets for its transportation gridlocks and monorail collisions, you thought you'd be safer walking. Wrong again! As statistics show, King County has almost twice the national average for pedestrian crash fatalities. Every month, two pedestrians are killed by automobiles.

According to Amy Freedheim, King County Felony Traffic Prosecutor, Seattle was not always a hotbed of pedestrian deaths. "One difference is that we had very few jaywalkers before," she says, adding that jaywalkers were routinely fined and therefore discouraged from crossing the street illegally. "Right now I see two types of cases: people who get hit while illegally crossing, and drivers who don't pay attention to crosswalks and lights." She points out that the rain and darkness during winter commute hours are what makes Seattle especially unsafe.

David Townsend, founder of TIA (Traffic Intersection Awareness) Foundation, disagrees: "It's the driving culture. Northwest drivers have terrible driving behaviors," he says. Changing lanes without a signal, not paying attention, and speeding in residential areas all can lead to fatal consequences.

The other issue is the lack

of laws covering inattentive driving. Killing a pedestrian while driving negligently can result in a fine of \$520 — since the driver is accountable only for running that red light, not for manslaughter, says Freedheim.

"When someone fires a gun in a crowd of people, the question is 'Who fired the gun?' — not whether the firing was legal or not," she says. "With traffic felonies it is different, because you can be civilly responsible for killing a pedestrian, but not criminally responsible, since you didn't mean to kill that person, even if you are at fault."

For Townsend, that explanation only goes so far. He advocates for higher fines, suspension of drivers' licenses, and up to a year in jail. He calls these collisions crashes, not accidents, and says that 70 percent of drivers at fault are repeat offenders.

On Thursday, experts will convene a Pedestrian Safety Summit, organized by the county's Traffic Safety Coalition, to discuss ways of increasing pedestrian safety. There, a panel will cover three components of pedestrian safety: engineering, enforcement, and education. Freedheim and Townsend seem to agree on one thing: there is not enough money allocated for any of these purposes. Out of Congress' \$285 billion transportation bill, only one percent will go to pedestrian safety.

Engineering is severely underbuilt, says Townsend: "In Seattle on average, we have the density of Queen Anne and the infrastructure of Carnation." He notes that crosswalks and sidewalks are hardly meant for a rush of traffic, especially in the commute hours.

And when it comes to enforcement, "I am the only Traffic felony prosecutor in King County," Freedheim says. "That pretty much illustrates the scarcity of resources."

Arguably, the most important factor is education, she adds: "People need to realize that when they are sitting in a metal box, they are armed to kill." ■



Just Heard...

Gentrification? Never.

The Seattle Housing Authority's track record of replacing older public housing developments like Holly Park with local, state, and federal assistance is getting new scrutiny in Olympia. John Fox of Seattle Displacement Coalition is leading a broad group of advocates to tighten restrictions on SHA's future developments. The bill they're promoting would prevent gentrification at the First Hill housing project Yesler Terrace. The legislation — sponsored by Representatives Mark Miloscia (D-Federal Way) and Eric Pettigrew, among others — gets a hearing before the House of Representatives' Housing Committee on Thursday morning.

Duck, duck, goose

City councilmembers winnowed the list of nearly 100 would-be colleagues down to 14 semifinalists this week as they prepared to appoint a ninth member by month's end.

Among the lucky birds who made the cut: community activists Stella Chao, Juan Jose Bocanegra, and Verlene Jones; media consultants Venus Velasquez and Ross C. Baker; former City Councilmember Dolores Sibonga; and former candidate Darryl Smith. Those with no such luck included former mayoral opponent Al Runte.

—Adam Hyla

Son of a King

The King County Council has postponed the vote to change the county's crown-and-circle logo to an image of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. Councilmember Larry Gossett says the logo change was taken off the agenda of the Jan. 17 meeting because he is awaiting permission from the King family.

Martin Luther King III, King's oldest son and former president of the King Center in Atlanta, will speak at the Lynnwood Convention Center later this month. Gossett says he will have a personal meeting with King while he is in the Northwest and ask for the family's permission to use MLK's image — which is protected by copyright from commercial use.

—J. Jacob Edel

Uncanned heat

In a major move to aid people unable to keep up with the high price of energy, Governor Christine Gregoire signed House Bill 2370 into law on Jan. 12. The first bill passed in the 2006 legislature, H.B. 2370 provides \$7.6 million in home heating assistance to an estimated 14,000 households this winter. "The primary purpose is to give immediate assistance to families that need help with their heating and lighting bills," says Gregoire spokesman Lars Erickson.

The funding, which comes from a \$7.6 million enforcement fine against QWest, will be distributed via the Washington Utilities and Transportation Commission. An average of \$350 will be provided for each home.

—Austin Haskell

Health Matters

Wal-Mart's poor health insurance plan under the spotlight

By **CYDNEY GILLIS**
Staff Reporter

Wal-Mart needs to step up to the plate.

Instead of letting the state or a spouse's health coverage pay its workers' doctor bills, it's time the giant discounter — the world's largest retailer — got off the dole.

That's what some business owners are saying about Arkansas-based Wal-Mart, which, at last count in 2003, had about 13,000 employees in Washington state — more than 700 of whom were on the state's Basic Health Program or Medicaid, according to the Center for a Changing Workforce, a Seattle nonprofit research group.

Legislation introduced Jan. 9 in the state House and Senate would force Wal-Mart and other companies with more than 5,000 workers in Washington to spend 9 percent of their payroll cost on health coverage or pay the state up to 9 percent for its programs, minus the cost of whatever health benefits a company currently provides.

The Fair Share Health Care bills — House Bill 2517 and Senate Bill 6356 — were just two pieces of legislation pushed Monday at an anti-poverty forum and march at the state Capitol on Martin Luther King Jr. Day. More than 200 people from around the state marched in the rain to demand more

health care, housing, education and protection from payday loans that prey on the poor.

The AFL-CIO is backing the Wal-Mart bills as part of a national campaign that's working to introduce similar legislation in 30 states this

"They're passing the buck and dumping their responsibility onto Medicaid and other employers."

—David West, director of the Center for a Changing Workforce, on Wal-Mart

year. The Maryland General Assembly recently overrode a veto by the governor to become the first state to enact the legislation.

In Washington, a bill that would have forced companies with 50 or more workers to provide health coverage failed last year. Though the new bills — sponsored by Rep. Eileen Cody (D-Seattle) and Sen. Jeanne Kohl-Welles (D-Seattle) — would affect less than 25 companies statewide, the Association of Washington Businesses is working to defeat them. "Targeting large employers is the wrong answer," the AWB's Mellani McAleenan says. "The way to solve the problem is to address the underlying cost of health care."

David West, director of the Center for a Changing Workforce, disagrees. He says less than half of Wal-Mart's workers buy into the retailer's health plan because, with a \$5,000 deductible, they see paying monthly premiums as a waste of money. Instead, the family gets coverage through the state or the company their spouse works for.

"They're passing the buck and dumping their responsibility onto Medicaid and other employers," West says.

Craig Brown, president of Bellingham-based Brown & Cole, a chain of 29 grocery stores that covers 95 percent of its workers, says the company had to close three stores last year because of Wal-Mart and its unfair competition — something he plans to tell legislators Jan. 19 in hearings scheduled for the Fair Share bills.

"This is a crisis in American business ethics," Brown says. "If we want to abandon the employer-supported health-care model, that one's OK. But as long as we look to that, we must have major employers participating in the system." ■

[Resource]

To look up any bill or find your legislator, go to www.leg.wa.gov. Or call the free legislative hotline at 800-562-6000 and leave your legislators a message telling them whether you are for or against a bill.

Short Takes

Workers' family leave bill in Olympia

Activists are campaigning this month for state legislators to pass a Family and Medical Leave Act (FMLA). The proposed bill had hearings last Thursday before the Senate Labor, Commerce, and Research & Development Committee, and on Monday before the House Commerce and Labor Committee.

The Washington bill, if approved, would act in the same way as the federal FMLA act, which currently protects workers from losing their jobs for up to 12 weeks in the event they need to take time off to care for a sick relative, be treated or recover from a serious illness, or attend to a new baby.

The Washington bill, however, suggests two significant revisions: one is to change the minimum number of employees from 50 to 25 so that an additional 330,000 Washington workers would benefit from FMLA coverage if needed, and the other is to place domestic partnerships under the category of "family members."

Marilyn Watkins, the policy director at The Economic Opportunity Institute — the organization leading the statewide FMLA coalition — says that while these changes would mark "only a small step forward, it is an extremely important one."

Important, of course, because more workers would be eligible for coverage, but proponents of the bill are also experiencing a sense of urgency. The U.S. Chamber of Commerce has on its agenda to place new regulations on the federal FMLA,

including redefining what constitutes a "serious health condition," and making it more difficult for workers to benefit from intermittent leave.

"The Chamber sees a friendly administration in the White House right now that they may not have in the future, so they are taking advantage of that," Watkins explains. "They want to make changes to roll back the opportunities workers already have now in the event things change come mid-term elections" in 2006.

Regardless of what restrictions might pass at the federal level, if the Washington FMLA passed, the state would at least have the reassurance that certain additional rights are being extended to its workers.

—Emma Dumain

Government ungagged

Rob McKenna and Toby Nixon don't want lawyers to become potted plants. When public officials bring a city attorney into a meeting or send him or her a copy of a memo, the attorney general and state representative say, they're often using the lawyer as a prop to foil public disclosure laws.

The foil is attorney-client privilege, a cloak of secrecy that many officials are using illegally. McKenna and Nixon (R-Kirkland) are working to stop the practice in a series of measures they talked about Jan. 14 at a meeting of the Seattle Neighborhood Coalition.


McKenna is about to finish a set of public disclosure guidelines that local agencies can consult for clarification — but won't be bound by. Nixon introduced a whopping 32 bills last week aimed at beefing up public disclosure laws.

One, House Bill 2515, would keep agencies from using attorney-client privilege unless the requested records actually pertain to a pending lawsuit. Otherwise, Nixon says, a city attorney is an employee of taxpayers, not the mayor or city council.

Two other bills, H.B. 2547 and H.B. 2548, would hold a public official personally accountable for intentionally violating the Open Public Meetings or Public Records acts. The bills would increase penalties to a maximum of \$5,000 and a year in jail, up from today's maximum of \$100 per incident or day of delay.

Today's penalties "are kind of a joke," Nixon says. "Agencies consider the [fines] part of the cost of doing business. That's not right."


—Cydney Gillis



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Naked and Damp,
with a Towel around my Head,
I Noticed Movement
on the Basement Carpet

Ants invaded our home, our walls, ceilings, and floors.
I killed the little red bastards by the dozens,
But they would not retreat or surrender. They warred

Like Phil Sheridan and his illiterate corps
Of cavalry grunts, And though it's been a dozen
Years since I left the rez, its walls, ceilings, and floors

Thick as a prison's, I recall how to be poor,
How you must punch your siblings and kick your cousins,
And then share the wormy government food. My war

With the ants was blasphemous. What kind of profane boar
Wants to genocide his sacred little cousins?
Shouldn't I share my home's walls, ceilings, and floors

With any hungry souls? Fuck the ants! I felt poor
Again, like a rez urchin, as if a dozen
Years of peace and joy had been destroyed by the war

With these terrorists. Tell me, what's worth fighting for?
I killed and killed and killed and killed my ant cousins.
I protected my home, my walls, ceilings, and floors,
Because the rich must always make war on the poor.

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ID, Carded

UW professor David Domke pinpoints why mass media can't get enough of intelligent design

By ROSETTE ROYALE
Staff Reporter

"A sophisticated, smart thing people who are in favor of intelligent design have done is not build their own argument: they've critiqued another argument — evolution. It's much easier to tear down somebody else's position than to necessarily build your own position and defend it."

Seattle is often called a liberal bubble. But there's a well-funded conservative organization downtown that's looking to give that illusory bubble a little *pop!* Familiarize yourself, oh ye denizens of the Emerald City, with the Discovery Institute.

Described on their website as a "non-profit educational foundation," DI brings to its work a point of view that includes a "belief in God-given reason and the permanency of human nature." As such, when DI identifies an educational cause that folds nicely into its mission, it swaddles the issue like a babe born of virgin birth. This practice is best exemplified in their unflagging nurturance of intelligent design. Hailed as a "theory," ID has generated more ink over the past few years than seems possible. But why? David Domke, Associate Professor of Communications at the University of Washington, has a few ideas.

Domke is practiced at examining how messages are disseminated and their impact on the public. In his 2004 release, *God Willing? Political Fundamentalism in the White House, the "War on Terror," and the Echoing Press* (Pluto Press, \$22.95), Domke offers a critical analysis on how Bush used his religious beliefs to create a public policy that capitalized on Americans' fears after Sept. 11. Thus, turning an observant eye on ID seems right up his alley.

And so, on one of those all-too-brief winter moments when the clouds dissolved and the sun shone down in effulgence, Domke shed light on why mass media is a perfect landscape for a religious notion to disguise itself as scientific theory.

Real Change: How would you define "Intelligent Design?"

David Domke: The idea that some being or object created the Earth and humans, and it is responsible for our development into the kind of thinking humans that we are today.

RC: How has this idea been communicated to you, as an average reader of the media?

Domke: Well, I think primarily the way that people who are proponents of intelligent design talk about it is that it's a counter to evolution, and that evolution is incomplete in its theory and explanation of human development. They simplify evolution as this idea that humans just descended from single-cell objects or apes. But they don't spend a lot of time talking about the concept itself of intelligent design. Mostly, they're talking about a critique of evolution, because that resonates with the American public. The American public poll numbers show 50-60 percent consistently don't really buy the whole evolution argument. Now, a sophisticated, smart thing people who are in favor of intelligent design have done is not build their own argument: they've critiqued another argument.

— evolution. It's much easier to tear down somebody else's position than to necessarily build your own position and defend it.

RC: So when people are tearing down a position, is that *making* a position, or is that *creating the perception* of making a position?

Domke: It is certainly perceived as suggesting a position, but in this case, there is no real position being articulated other than, "There must have been something else than evolution." They're not really defining how the intelligent creator could have come into

being; they're not articulating what scientists say you have to explain: the empirical evidence for that argument. But there is no evidence to offer, and I say that as a person of religious belief. Intelligent design claims it's scientific. It's not. As a religious claim,

UW Professor David Domke offers some illumination on how progressives can counter conservatives' fight for a "moral" America. Photo by Sherry Loeser.



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Continued from Previous Page

it's fine. This is what religion is about: the belief in something you can't see.

RC: What are your own religious views?

Domke: Well, I would claim myself as a Christian, but I would be ecumenical in my general outlook.

RC: When you hear ID proposed in the media, do you feel a connection to what ID proponents are saying?

Domke: I do. I see why it resonates, but I see this as a religious claim, not a scientific claim. I'm perfectly comfortable with those coexisting. But the problem — and courts have said this now — is when intelligent design begins to present itself as a scientific position. It is not. [Ed. note: Domke is referring to a recent Penn. court decision where a judge, finding ID was based on religion, ruled it could not be taught alongside evolutionary theory in the Dover, Penn., school system.]

RC: How does the media play into helping to get the notion of ID across to the public?

Domke: The media, actually, are perfect for intelligent design folks, because mainstream journalists aren't scientific experts. So when somebody at Discovery Institute makes a claim about [ID] being scientific, journalists — no offense — aren't in any position to really say true or not true — unless they get other scientists who will criticize it, and the scientists themselves are not very good at publicly speaking.

RC: How can media turn the tables on that? Is there a way?

Domke: So you ask a question about what is the role of mass media in American life. Currently, and for some decades now, media have been primarily supported by advertising: they are set up to function as media that are not really independent voices, but are set up to quote others. In that approach, they're set up to be manipulated by other people who can use sophisticated rhetoric and know how to use the media to their advantage.

RC: Is ID an example of the press echoing what's being fed to them?

Domke: Exactly. This is a case in which conservatives, yet again, have created a moral and simple — and I don't mean "simple" in a negative way — argument that builds upon a viewpoint that Americans generally hold, which is skepticism about evolution. It takes that position and builds it into an argument that progressives are not effectively countering or responding to, with the media all the while sitting in the middle saying, "Hey, we're just covering this."

So who's to blame? Is it the media, or is it progressives? Generally, I'm going to put the blame on progressives, because any thinking person understands how the mainstream media work in this country. If you want the mainstream media to work to your advantage, you have to give a message. You have to do it in simple form, you have to be moral about it, you have to be confrontational about it, and you have to speak in positive ways about the nation. Today in America, conservatives use the press much more effectively.

RC: Can you cite a time when conservatives began to use the media effectively to get their message across?

Domke: I would say it was particularly in the 1980s, with the Reagan administration. There are a couple things that happened. One is that you have a sophisticated communication apparatus in the White House, with a guy from Hollywood who knew how to use the media effectively. Second, you had developments in the media environment which conservatives both created and then capitalized upon: the deregulation of the cable industry, which allowed an explosion of cable television outlets, including cable news, from which Fox was created. Third, you've got the rise of the Internet, another form in which messages can be echoed widely. Then you've got media conglomerations in which fewer and fewer wealthy rich folks — wealthy conservatives — own more and more media outlets. So you have these structural developments in the mass media that have been occurring through a set of conservative actions, but also just through market forces. In instance after instance, the conservative movement has been light-years ahead of progressives in understanding how to use these media developments to their advantage. Then there's talk radio. Talk radio developed in the 1980s, and who's head and shoulders above the rest? Conservatives. Twenty-seven of the top 30 talk show hosts in terms of audience in this country are conservatives.

Progressives, meanwhile, still think that we're back in the days of the early enlightenment, where we're really talking about issues and having a rational debate. We're not. It's who can talk the loudest, and who can get the message to be amplified the most in the media. That's what leads in American politics today.

RC: Okaaaay....

Domke: I know. I tend to depress progressives. [laughter]

RC: Can you change a mindset that says, "Rational debate, issues, issues, issues," to one that says, "Emotional debate"?

Domke: I'm not necessarily wanting progressives to give up their knowledge. That knowledge is valuable. But the re-

ality is that the American public doesn't have the time or the inclination to pay attention to all the details of politics. Progressives want to get into whether ID is science, or "Science is about this." Well, the person is already checked out. Intelligent design folks say, "Do you believe in evolution? Do you really think we're from monkeys? We're not." So what I say to the progressives is, "You have all this knowledge, but unless you simplify down to a couple of sentences, and repeat those, you're not going to get the American public's attention."

RC: Is there anything we can do to make the debate less emotional and less irrational?

Domke: What can the individual citizen do? Engage in the debate over what are moral values. Right now, that's really where the debate is in this country: what does it mean to be a moral American citizen? The loudest voices out there claim that to be a moral American citizen means to be anti-abortion, anti-same-sex relationships, pro-school prayer, pro-intelligent design. These voices are very loud, and these voices are claiming the moral high ground on everything. The progressives are over here reacting, "Oh shit, I didn't see this coming." I think the only way that changes is if individuals, citizen by citizen, in their neighborhood, among the people who they hang out with and also who may disagree with them, enter into this debate, because I can tell you that conservatives have no problem entering into this debate.

RC: How does this go back to intelligent design?

Domke: Well, the whole intelligent design issue is just the tip of the iceberg for about 10, 12 different issues that conservatives are dominating the discourse

on. But not necessarily right on, as the judge said.

RC: Will there ever be a time, you think, when the media can fully address a large-scale, almost infinite topic such as religion?

Domke: Not in terms of that topic getting its appropriate due, no. Something as complex as evolution or religion or figuring out healthcare — I think a smart, good communicator, politically savvy, can figure out the way to present these issues to the American public in simple ways that resonates with the media. So can it be done? Absolutely.

RC: So, we have Democrats, Republicans, progressives, conservatives. We seem to have a binary thinking going on all the time. I'm interested in how to break apart the binary thinking to deal with the complex issues.

Domke: That's part of the Western psyche, I think, the binary approach. I think a progressive, who's frustrated by the current political media structure, can nonetheless work within those structures to introduce new models of thinking about issues of race, or sexuality, or

healthcare. Yes, the binaries are frustrating, they ultimately constrain the discourse, our thinking. That's the hand we're dealt right now, and I tend to be more of a pragmatist than an idealist. But I think what we can do is still very, very powerful. The moment we begin to throw up our hands and say, "Forget it, these structures work against us and forever doom us," then the conservatives have won. ■

[Resource]
For a more complete interview with David Domke, log on to realchangenews.org.

"The reality is that the American public doesn't have the time or the inclination to pay attention to all the details of politics. Progressives want to get into whether ID is science, or 'Science is about this.' Well, the person is already checked out."

"What can the individual citizen do? Engage in the debate over what are moral values. Right now, that's really where the debate is in this country: what does it mean to be a moral American citizen?"

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Jesus Streak

Christ the Lord: Out of Egypt
by Anne Rice
Alfred A. Knopf, 2005
Hardcover, 322 pages, \$25.95

By LLOYD J. AVERILL
Contributing Writer

Meet the new Anne Rice! Fans of the dark imagination that produced tales of vampires and witches may be startled by the light that permeates this strikingly different supernatural novel. As the result of a conversion experience at age 57 — perhaps better, a reversion experience — Rice renounced the faithlessness of her adult life and actively sought reconciliation with the Catholic faith of her childhood. As a result, she told a reviewer, “My mission now is to write... as a lay witness to the story of Christ.” The first fruit of this new consecration is *Christ the Lord: Out of Egypt*.

Fans of that earlier Rice should be warned that the book's real pleasures are to be had by those acquainted with the Gospels, which tell us virtually nothing of the childhood of Jesus: What kind of a child was he? How did he see his world? What were the intimate details of his family life? How did

he experience the larger intersections of politics and religion as they played out around him? After immersing herself in the extensive literature on the current controversial quest for the historical Jesus, as well as on the history and sociology of the first-century world, the monumental task Rice set for herself was to fill one of the major gaps in the biblical record. Joining the results of received scholarship with her own well-practiced imagination, she produced this first-person narrative in which a seven-year-old Jesus tells his own story.

It was a risky venture, and one measure of her success is found on *The New York Times* bestseller list, where the book has been listed since its November release. Are all those Rice fans disappointed to find a baldly religious tract? Perhaps for a week or two — but the word quickly gets around and soon readers are added who know what they are in for.

Anne Rice is a skilled storyteller, and for this remarkable tale, she needed all of the skill at her command. How to present a seven-year-old narrator without dumbing down or gratuitous condescension?

She chose a simple and direct style — gentle is the word that comes to

mind — but leaves no doubt that this is a remarkable child indeed. Yet not so remarkable that he is still a child, subject to fears and uncertainties, who needs a strong father figure like Joseph and a nurturing mother like Mary.

How to deal with the fact that many readers will already know more features of the larger story than the narrator himself? His curiosity, teased by occasional hints of his origin and destiny, drives the story. As they're gradually revealed, the family tries to ensure he's neither frightened nor overwhelmed.

Though having returned to the church of her childhood, Anne Rice is nevertheless critical of some of the Church's social teaching: on homosexuality, abortion, and women's ordination. But by the evidence of this novel, she accepts its teaching on the miraculous birth of Jesus, on the astonishing events that surrounded the birth, on the perpetual virginity of Mary, and on the “brothers and sisters” of Jesus as the children of Joseph from a previous marriage.

And when it comes to the mystery and liturgy of the church, Rice says she has been fully confirmed in her “immense desire to return to the banquet table.” So, what's next? ■

Though having returned to the church of her childhood, Anne Rice is nevertheless critical of some of the Church's social teaching: on homosexuality, abortion, and women's ordination

Lloyd J. Averill is retired from the University of Washington faculty.

A Tough Act to Follow

Following Sean
Written and Directed by Ralph Arlyck
Opens Fri., Jan. 20, at the Varsity Theater

By LESTER GRAY
Arts Editor

Now nearly 60, Ralph Arlyck produces what is most likely his best piece in *Following Sean*, cathartic and honest, in which his life, rather than Sean's, serves as a commentary on the philosophies of the Love Generation.

Director and writer Ralph Arlyck isn't so much *Following Sean*, as he has entitled his documentary; he is looking to find himself.

If that sounds oh-so-'60s, that's because it is: a self-indulgent, occasionally embarrassing, but captivating examination by a filmmaker confronting his own worth. The thread holding this introspective together is the revisiting of a subject that informed his noteworthy documentary film 30 years earlier.

In the heyday of flower children, Vietnam War protests, and folks who did inhale, Arlyck lived in San Francisco's legendary Haight-Ashbury district, a mecca for Hippies from all over the world. Fulfilling a film class assignment, he interviewed a precocious four-year old named Sean. The young boy, who lived upstairs in a crash-pad with his parents, had free rein to roam the apartment building and the streets on which it was located, mixing with political progressives, good-hearted idealists, and riffraff.

The finished product, in which Sean eloquently holds forth on using pot, speed freaks, and what he viewed as a brutal San Francisco police force, attracted national attention from a wide spectrum of viewers, including Congress. The film also launched the documentary career of Arlyck, the success of which comes under scrutiny as this, his latest offering, unwinds.

The ostensible core of this sequel is a sociological follow-up: what happened to the offspring of the love generation, to children who grew up under liberal let-them-do-their-own-thing philosophies?

Sean, now in his 30s, displays few if any obvious signs that reflect what some would call a dysfunctional upbringing. He has neither rebelled into a conservative lifestyle nor ensnared himself in substance abuse. A responsible

member of society, he displays considerable purpose and equanimity. Although Arlyck repeatedly solicits soundbites from his subject, looking to unearth some connection to an unstructured childhood, nothing of significance emerges.

As the filmmaker interviews other members of Sean's colorful family and continues to find little support for the anticipated narrative, he interlaces bits of how his own life has developed since he produced the original film. While in *The Haight* he had considered himself an observer, as opposed to a true subscriber, to the culture's liberated philosophies. But during the course of this film he comes to suspect himself of the improvidence he saw in others.

Figuring prominently in the film are Arlyck's relationships with his parents and his wife, as they were part of this saga from the beginning. Significantly they appear to be the sources of underwriting for a career that has proved mediocre. His wife, a partner since the early years and apparently the chief breadwinner, does not offer judgment. You can't help but feel she's been disappointed, although supportive, for some time.

Now nearly 60, Arlyck produces what is most likely his best piece: cathartic and honest, in which his life, rather than Sean's, serves as a commentary on the philosophies of the Love Generation — credos that advised against the nine-to-five grind and promoted the rewards of creative freedom.

In *Following Sean*, the filmmaker nakedly offers his story up for examination, winnowing his illusions. There's a sense of regret but no melancholy.

Arlyck wisely demurs on a tidy denouement, which would fly in the face of his artistic precepts. The film is patient, and so must the audience be. It unfolds nicely; the revelations of what Sean isn't and Arlyck is makes for a compelling film. ■





Adventures
in Irony

Dr. Wes Browning

Oops, There it Is

Here we are on the verge of another foreign policy "oops, our bad, but that's all right" moment. The Iraq War: "Oops, no WMDs, our bad. But that's all right, Saddam had to go anyway,

The Iraq War: "Oops, no WMDs, our bad. But that's all right, Saddam had to go anyway, right?"

The CIA's attack on a village in Pakistan: "Oops, our bad. Al-Zawahri wasn't there. But that's all right; the people killed included several non-Pakistanis so they must have been terrorists, right?"

The CIA's attack on a village in Pakistan: "Oops, our bad. Al-Zawahri wasn't there. But that's all right; the people killed included several non-Pakistanis so they must have been terrorists, right?"

Really, what the hell? All sorts of folks are condemning Harry Belafonte for calling Bush the world's greatest terrorist. But all Belafonte was doing was giving credit where credit is due. Bush surely authorized the CIA attack. If any attack of that nature were conducted by a foreign power in this country, it would be called a terrorist attack, at the least. But Bush has convinced the majority of Americans that he is not a terrorist. It's precisely that which makes him so great!

The newest "oops" moment in the making concerns Iran. Thanks to a CNN translator's error, most Americans today probably believe that last Saturday Iranian President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad said that his nation has the right to build nuclear weapons, when actually what he said was that no civilized nation needs nuclear weapons.

Let's put that in perspective. First of all, it means it must be really hard to find good translators of Farsi. That one wasn't even close. On the other hand, since CNN was banned from Iran because of this screwup, what Farsi-English translators there are, good or not, will become more available. Snap one up now, prices will never be lower!

But what I think really needs to be appreciated is that the biggest nutcase in the Middle East, and in fact the biggest nutcase with major political

influence anywhere east of Darfur and west of North Korea, said something saner than George Bush has ever said or is likely to ever say, and he won't be believed.

And why won't Iranian President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad be believed, you ask? Well, even though he has always been totally straight-up with his stupid "death to America" rhetoric and his extreme nutcase ideas that Israel should be moved to Auschwitz and/or downtown Berlin under permanent Polish or German management, Iranian President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad won't be believed because he is a president of a country, and George Bush knows that presidents of countries can't be believed. Why heck, that just goes without saying! Presidents are all liars!

Meanwhile, just as in 2003 the UN wanted nothing to do with an invasion of Iraq without proof of WMDs, so now, the UN will never authorize sanctions without proof of a nuclear weapons program, so...

So we are all set up for: "Oops, we bombed nuclear energy-making facilities, instead of bombing bomb-making plants. Our bad. But it's all right, because we've decided for them they don't need nuclear energy anyway, and besides, they're Islamic extremists who attack people in other countries without justification. Besides, nobody else would do it but us, so we had to act for the good of Iranians and all Mankind. Sorry 'bout the mess and the thousands of innocent lives lost, but we did what was right."

Questions for Further Discussion:

1. Senator McCain says the only thing worse than attacking Iran would be an Iran armed with nuclear weapons. Which would be worse: a) the United States having nuclear weapons, or b) the United States being attacked?

2. Iran is hosting a "Holocaust Conference" to study the evidence that the Holocaust never happened. Are they asking for an Israeli missile strike, or what? If the answer is "what," try being more specific, for a minute or so. Then, give up, have a cold one, or take a couple of aspirin, or whatever you're used to doing to re-enter reality. ■

Ellen's Good Day

I guess I'll call my mother, even if we never did get along, and my sister and brother too. Though they'll want me to be normal just like they are, and I can't be more than I already am. My brain chemistry's different from theirs. Even if they have problems, I'm the one with the schizophrenia — the one who hears the CIA, the FBI, the trees talking outside my window.

Here I am in Seattle wandering the streets like a poor sucker who never had a home. As if I were just dropped here in these scruffy clothes, this disoriented mind. When in reality I was brought up like most Americans in a regular house, a row house even, in Flatbush, with neighbors all around who Mother would call for a cup of sugar when she'd run out and want to finish a cake before Dad got home. Dad. He's the one I got it from. My cousin, Jamey, has it too. Runs in families. I don't know. Or care.

I need to find a place to eat, a shelter for tonight. I'll be damned if I'll hold up another sign at the edge of the freeway. Not today anyway. Seems to be a good one so far. Probably because I took my meds. I guess the doctor's right, damn him. Wish he weren't such a pain in the ass. Wonder what kind of life he goes home to, if he ever needed food to eat, a place to sleep. Wonder What time is it? The shelter should be open soon. Maybe I'll go to the library, wait there, find some paper and a pen. Write a story. Read. Draw a picture.

—ESTHER ALTSCHUL HELFGOTT



Fri., Jan. 6, 4:11 p.m., Mary's Place Women's Shelter, Columbia St.

After entering the daytime women's shelter the subject, a transient white female aged 36, proceeded to create a loud disturbance. She was despondent over her continued homelessness, and this fed her volatile emotions — from depressed to angry and threatening. According to witnesses, subject has threatened suicide several times recently and is also off her medications. Officers contacted the woman outside the shelter; she continued to be very emotional and again threatened to commit suicide. She was sent to Harborview Medical center for an involuntary mental health assessment.

Sat., Jan. 7, 5:51 p.m., Fornaio Cucina Italia Restaurant, Pine St.

Suspect entered the Fornaio Restaurant located inside Pacific Place Mall to have a meal. The meal included a calzone, wine, and ice cream, and the bill came to \$56.19. Suspect, a transient Black male aged 40, told the manager that he didn't have the money to pay for the meal and would pay it later. The manager called mall security, and the suspect was taken to the security office and the police were called. When officers arrived they found the suspect inside the security office, asleep in a chair. He awoke and told officers his name, and said that when he got the Social Security money owed to him he would pay for the meal. He also stated that the federal government owed him \$300,000. Suspect explained that he was on probation for a burglary he committed in Oregon. He said he'd also broken into a house there as people from California were following him, and also claimed to have thrown a woman through a plate-glass window. The judge in Oregon had sent him for a mental health evaluation, the suspect claimed, and he was fine. He had just come in on the Greyhound bus and had been looking for shelter for the last three days. His clothing was damp, and he appeared to be tired. Suspect was arrested, and at the precinct a "Continuing Probation" order was found, for two instances of "Theft of Services" in Oregon. The conditions of the probation were that the suspect was to receive mental health treatment and was not to eat at restaurants without being able to pay for it. The manager of the Italian restaurant asked that charges be pressed, so the suspect was booked into King County Jail.

Sun., Jan. 8, 2:52 p.m., Westlake Mall, Pine St.

Officers responded to a disturbance call at Westlake Mall between the suspect, a transient white male aged 59, and mall security. The security guard explained that she had found the suspect sleeping on a bench in the mall, reeking of intoxicants. She asked him to leave, and he said he did not have to. Police advised the guard to ask the suspect to leave the premises again. She did, and he refused, causing more of a disturbance. He was arrested for criminal trespass and booked into King County Jail.

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.



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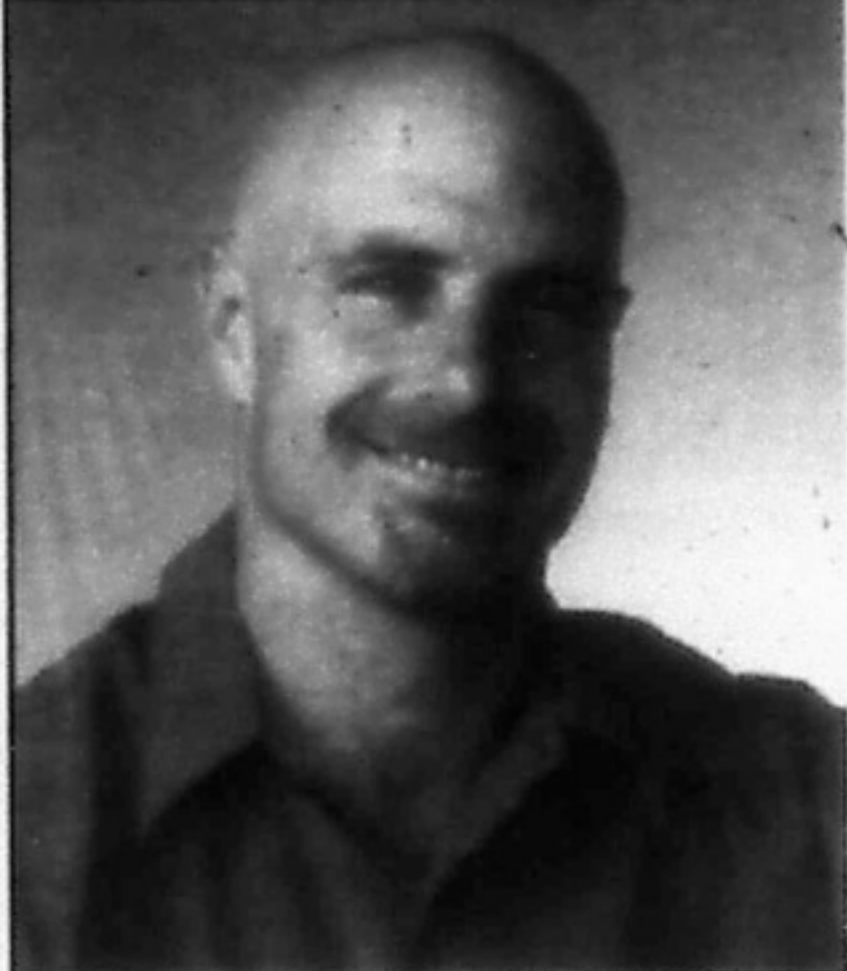
We bomb and invade Iraq, kill thousands of civilians, arrest thousands more and torture some of those arrested, and leave the country in chaos. All of this, so that we can arrest a dictator who arrested and tortured and killed thousands of civilians?

"Beware of false prophets, who come to you in sheep's clothing but inwardly are ravenous wolves. You will know them by their fruits. Are grapes gathered from thorns, or figs from thistles? In the same way, every good tree bears good fruit, but the bad tree bears bad fruit."
Matthew 7:15-19

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Letters

editor@realchangenews.org

Alito's Intentions

Dear *Real Change*,

How important are personal freedoms and protection of ordinary Americans to Samuel Alito? Not at all. It holds no significance, and Mr. Alito firmly does not believe in justice for everyone, especially in the case of women and minorities. In fact, he has stated in at least two major and influential documents, that he will do everything in his power to overturn *Roe v. Wade*.

It doesn't end there. Mr. Alito has fought hard for his 'ultraconservative war' against women and people's rights. Alito directly was involved in race and disability discrimination, striking down the Family & Medical Leave Act, unauthorized strip searches, hostility towards immigrants, and

more. His own personal views and judicial records speak to us very loudly. His one vote will shift the Supreme Court dramatically to the right for decades to come, with this lifetime appointment that is crucial and critical. Alito is only 45-years-old and will do incredible damage to basic protections that we have worked so hard for.

Let's keep this man with his extreme conservative views that cater to the religious right and clear intentions out of our Supreme Court. Let's keep him at his current job as a court judge. Knowing this, do we truly want to appoint him to hold one of the highest offices - the U.S. Supreme Court?

Log onto Moveon.org for more information. Your state Senators need to hear from you right away, so we can keep this potentially destructive radical out of our justice system.

**Sheri A. Hilton
Everett**

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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gotta get outhe auto, pump in the petrol
get outhe kids &hit the mat
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Calendar

This Week's Top Ten

Wednesday 1/18

Allen Braden, Holly Hughes, and Susan Rich read from their contributions to the anthology *Family Matters: Poems of Our Families*. Their writings cover the ups and downs of family life — from the joys of parenting to the sorrows of caring for the aging. 7:30 p.m., The Elliott Bay Book Company, 101 S. Main St.

Thursday 1/19

When new notions of race, beauty, and happiness arose in the 18th and 19th centuries, "the Jewish nose" became an obsession for Jews and non-Jews. Sander Gilman, an author who combines Judaism and the culture of beauty, delivers his talk "Extreme Makeover: Jews and the Invention of Cosmetic Surgery." 7 p.m., Henry Art Gallery, 15th Ave. NE and NE 41st St. Info: www.nextbook.org.

Friday 1/20

An energetic healer and artist, Serena Smith shows her iridescent acrylic paint and chalk representations of light in *Healing Art-Light Embraces You*, Art-Walk. 5 p.m., East West Bookshop, 6500 Roosevelt Way NE

The horrifically violent and graphic film *Fallujah: Hidden Massacre* documents the use of chemical weapons and indiscriminate violence against civilians and children by U.S. forces in Iraq. The controversial film is a critical look at human rights abuses and is not for the weak of stomach. 7 p.m., Keystone Church, 5019 Keystone Pl.

Saturday 1/21

On July 16, 2004, Majid al-Massari, a Saudi citizen legally residing in the United States, disappeared on his way home from his job at the University of Washington. He was arrested by U.S. immigration authorities and held for 11 days incommunicado. To this day, he is still in custody. Support Due Process! Benefit for Majid al-Massari features Jim Page, live Middle Eastern music, and an update on the legal battle. Suggested donation \$10. 7 p.m., 3400 Phinney Ave. Info: (206)369-7087.

Lesley Thomas spent part of her childhood in the Alaskan Arctic in an Inupiat village. Her novel, *Flight of the Goose*, puts a human face on oil drilling in Alaska by following the vivid and complex lives of the people of the Far North. 7:30 p.m., The Elliott Bay Book Company, 101 S Main St.

Saturday 1/21 & Sunday 1/22

With only a tattered suitcase, a few mementos, and persistence, a young boy runs away from his abusive foster home in search of the father he has never met. The play *Bud, not Buddy* is a quest for answers through libraries, ramshackle Hoovervilles, and swanky nightclubs. Tickets \$18 adults, \$10 children. Saturday 2 and 7 p.m., Sunday 2 p.m., Langston Hughes Performing Arts Center, 104 17th Ave. S. Info: www.book-it.org

Monday 1/23

Rally to oppose the confirmation of radically conservative Samuel Alito. Speakers include nationally known abortion clinic bombing survivor Emily Lyons, King County Executive Ron Sims, Deputy Director of NARAL Pro-Choice Washington Blythe Chandler, and more. Noon, Federal Building, 915 Second Ave. Info: www.wanaral.org

Wednesday 1/25

Drawing from his current research in King County, Dr. Lawrence Frank speaks on the effects of traffic, noise, and the lack of open space on our well-being. His lecture, "Urban Lifestyles and the Built Environment: Healthier by Design," focuses on urban sprawl and public health. Tickets \$15. 7 p.m., Town Hall, 1119 Eighth Ave.

Director's Corner



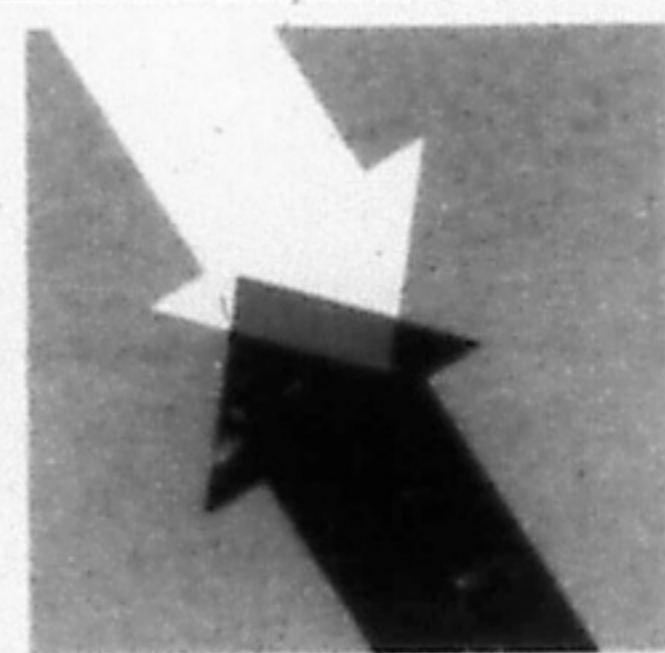
On Monday, Seattle once again held one of the nation's largest annual marches to commemorate the legacy of Martin Luther King Jr. Organizers drew the links between racism, poverty, and militarism, and called for an end to war so that the nation can address poverty here at home.

My twin two-year old daughters and I joined several hundred others in Olympia for a rain-soaked rally and march to the statehouse. Statewide Poverty Action Network (SPAN), *Real Change*, and others united for a day of lobbying and protest in the streets. Most of those who came were those living in poverty.

Our message was that so much poverty amidst so much affluence can not be tolerated. The SPAN legislative agenda this year includes regulation of exploitative lenders, expansion of health care for low-income children and adults, increased support for housing, a living wage for Washington workers, greater investment in Washington families, and expanded voting rights for felons.

Real Change's Anita Freeman reminded us all that "power protects itself by being boring," and that we'll always outnumber the interests that are mobilized in support of an unjust status quo.

For more information on how to support SPAN's 2006 anti-poverty agenda, see their website at www.povertyaction.org, or call (206) 694-6794.



First things First

Get Involved • Take Action

Fix our State's Health Care System. Now!

Issue: America's health care system is in crisis thanks to some big, profitable companies who refuse to pay their fair share of health care costs by covering their workers. Their employees often join the ranks of the uninsured. The cost of health care rises for everyone. And the responsible companies who cover their workers must compete with the companies who don't pay their fair share. Millions of Americans are going without insurance, and health care costs are skyrocketing.

Background: The irresponsibility of some big businesses who don't pay their fair share for health care coverage affects us all.

It raises health care costs for people with and without insurance. It places a burden on taxpayers who are forced to pay to cover the uninsured. And it makes it harder for responsible companies to do the right thing and cover their employees while their competitors cut costs by dropping health care coverage.

The Washington State Legislature in Washington has introduced a version of the Fair Share Health Care Act. House Bill 2517 (sponsored by Rep. Eileen Cody, D-Seattle) and Senate Bill 6356 (sponsored by Sen. Jeanne Kohl-Wells, D-Seattle) would require large employers to pay their fair share of the cost of providing health care for their employees.

These bills would set a minimum standard for employers of 5,000 or more to invest at least 9% of their labor costs into employee health benefits, 7% for public employers and non-profits who can't deduct health costs from their taxes. The handful of businesses that don't meet this standard would have to pay the state a fee — the difference between that 9% and what they do spend on benefits — which would be used to cover some of the uninsured working adults in our state.

By making large employers pay their fair share of health care costs, the Fair Share Health Care Act will:

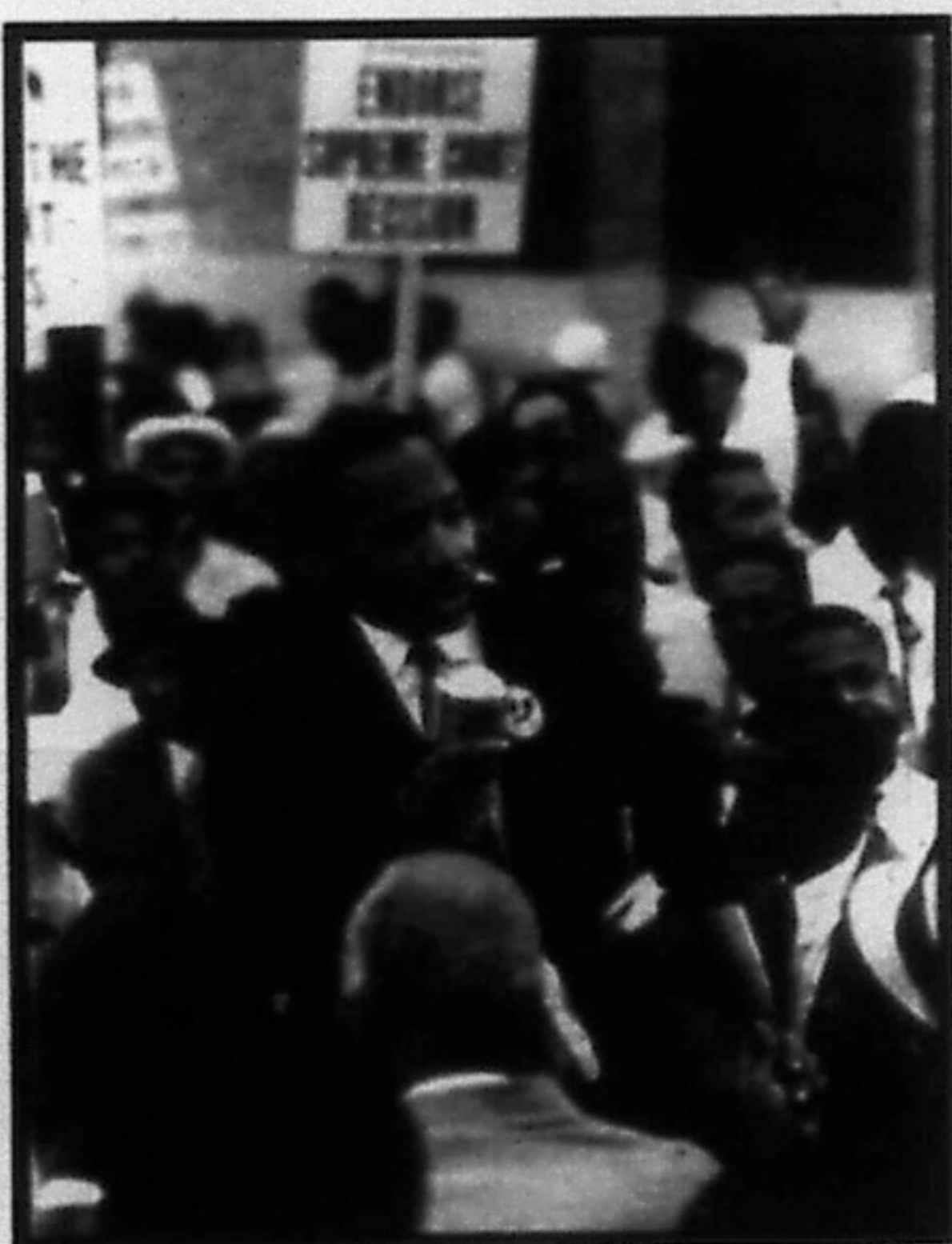
- * Alleviate the burden on taxpayers who are stuck with the bill when big business doesn't pay its fair share of health care costs.
- * Level the playing field between companies that provide good jobs and benefits and those that don't.
- * Help Washington contain rising Medicaid costs.

The Fair Share Health Care Act is vital legislation that will make a real difference for Washington's working families and responsible companies that do the right thing and pay their fair share.

Action: Urge your legislators and the Governor to support the Fair Share Health Care Act, HB 2517 and SB 6356. It is time for us to take action to end the crisis of America's uninsured working families.

To contact Governor Gregoire, visit www.governor.wa.gov, or call her office at (360) 902-4111. To find your legislator's contact information, visit www.leg.wa.gov. You can leave a message for all three of your legislators and the Governor by calling the Legislature's Olympia hotline toll-free at 800.562.6000.

For more information, or to receive alerts about this and other issues that affect working families, contact the Washington State Labor Council at www.wslc.org.



Honoring Martin Luther King Jr., The Other Side of the Tracks: Race & Class in America

is a week of thought-provoking discussions, presentations, and workshops. Some topics include race and poverty in the Katrina aftermath, the gender gap in the workplace, and more. Through Fri., Jan. 20. Highline Community College, 2400 S 240th St. Info: Natasha Burrows, (206)878-3710 ext. 3256, nburrowe@highline.edu

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

CUTS, Continued from Page 1

Han points out that doesn't make the effects of their symptoms or psychosis any less severe for them — or the community.

"These people don't have any resources — no insurance, no money, no Medicaid. They will end up in the hospital, the jail, or the morgue," she says. "Eventually, it will cost the system and the community more. It's really shortsighted to cut off outpatient services."

It's also "institutionalized racism," Han says. "The fact is that a higher percentage of people of color are being shut [out] of the only option they have for mental health."

Han says Asian Counseling currently serves about 100 non-Medicaid clients. They will be cut off one by one as their state-paid benefit — one year of mental health services — expires. That day is coming soon for Mrs. W.

After that, says Amnon Shoenfeld, director of King County's mental health program, "If you're not on

Medicaid, you can't get served in our public-funded system" — unless it's a breakdown that requires hospitalization. Even then, he says, there will be no follow-up care.

Shoenfeld hopes the legislature will make up the \$7.4 million shortfall, which he says follows six years of budget reductions for the county's mental health system.

Last year, the legislature voted an extra \$80 million for state mental health services to make up for a loss of federal Medicaid dollars, which the government told states they could no longer use for people such as Mrs. W.

The legislature directed that \$35 million of the money go to mental health services based on population, with King County originally slated to get about \$31 million. Instead, Shoenfeld says, the state Mental Health Division carved out \$25 million and divided it among the state's 11 smallest mental health provider networks.

As a result, he says, the three counties with the largest populations and mental health systems — King, Pierce,

and Spokane — were shorted millions of dollars.

In September, faced with a \$7.5 million shortfall, Spokane County cut off funding for its non-Medicaid patients. In the wake of the cuts, *The Spokesman Review* reported a layoff of 65 workers at Spokane Mental Health.

While the big counties make cuts, Shoenfeld says the state's rural regions ended up with more money than they can spend. That's because most of their patients qualify for Medicaid, he says.

"They can serve anyone in Chelan County or Douglas County or Richland or Aberdeen who's not on Medicaid. In King County, we can't anymore," Shoenfeld says. "It's extremely unjust. It doesn't make sense."

Dave Daniels, operations chief for the Mental Health Division, said the redistribution was done after an actuarial study showed that the legislature's allocation formula would have wiped out the budgets of the state's rural mental health systems.

He adds that the division consulted the governor and key legislators before making the adjustment and says it's a "cheap shot" for King County officials to blame the division.

"We care as much as they do," Daniels says, but "we have to look at the whole state." ■

ENVIRO, Continued from Page 1

tiative and restoring full funding to the Centennial Water Fund, the state's main water quality account. The account is funded by proceeds from Washington's cigarette tax, but when the tax generates less than \$90 million, the money is supposed to come from the general fund. Instead, Stevens says, it has come from money earmarked for hazardous waste cleanup. "They're basically robbing Peter to pay Paul," he says.

Environmentalists are also hoping to prevent future waste by supporting bills in both the House and Senate that would set up a comprehensive, statewide electronics recycling program. Mo McBroom of the Washington Environmental Council says the new priority is off to a strong start with broad, bipartisan support for the bill as well as backing from manufacturers and the powerful Washington State Retail Association.

"We've reached beyond the environmental community for all these priorities," Stevens says, "and every year we're more successful." ■

[Resource]


To take action on the Priorities for a Healthy Washington, check out the Washington Environmental Council online: www.wecprotects.org.

September 11th

September 11th, 2001. That was the day I arrived. 911. I heard sirens a lot. At least I think that's what they were. Those days were a blur. I do remember laying under the ballard bridge. Me and my brother cuddled up as when we were kids seeking protection from the weather. It was raining that night. No food and no shelter. It rained for days, months, and years. What was that place we'd sleep? Bread of life? No that was 2002. Union Gospel Mission? No, that was earlier. City Team, yeah that's the clique. I was the Babyboy. Why can't I remember? It was the 11th. 911 September. Or was it 211? The Steel Reserve? No, it was Mickey 24. That's what it was. That's what blocked all the pain. Well, that and cocaine. That I knew not of shame in the city of rain. But what was that clique called? I was the Babyboy. The Brotherhood. Yeah, that's what it was. No colors. No rags. No blood and no cuz. Just alcoholics and dopeheads not wanting or needing. From shelter to shelter. Brotherhood! Who feedin? In the city of rain. A single so big. Yet everywhere I go I see the same strangers and people I know. September 11th I think that's when it were. I really can't tell you. It was all a blur.

-TIMOTHY FLEMING

eyes ON FREMONT



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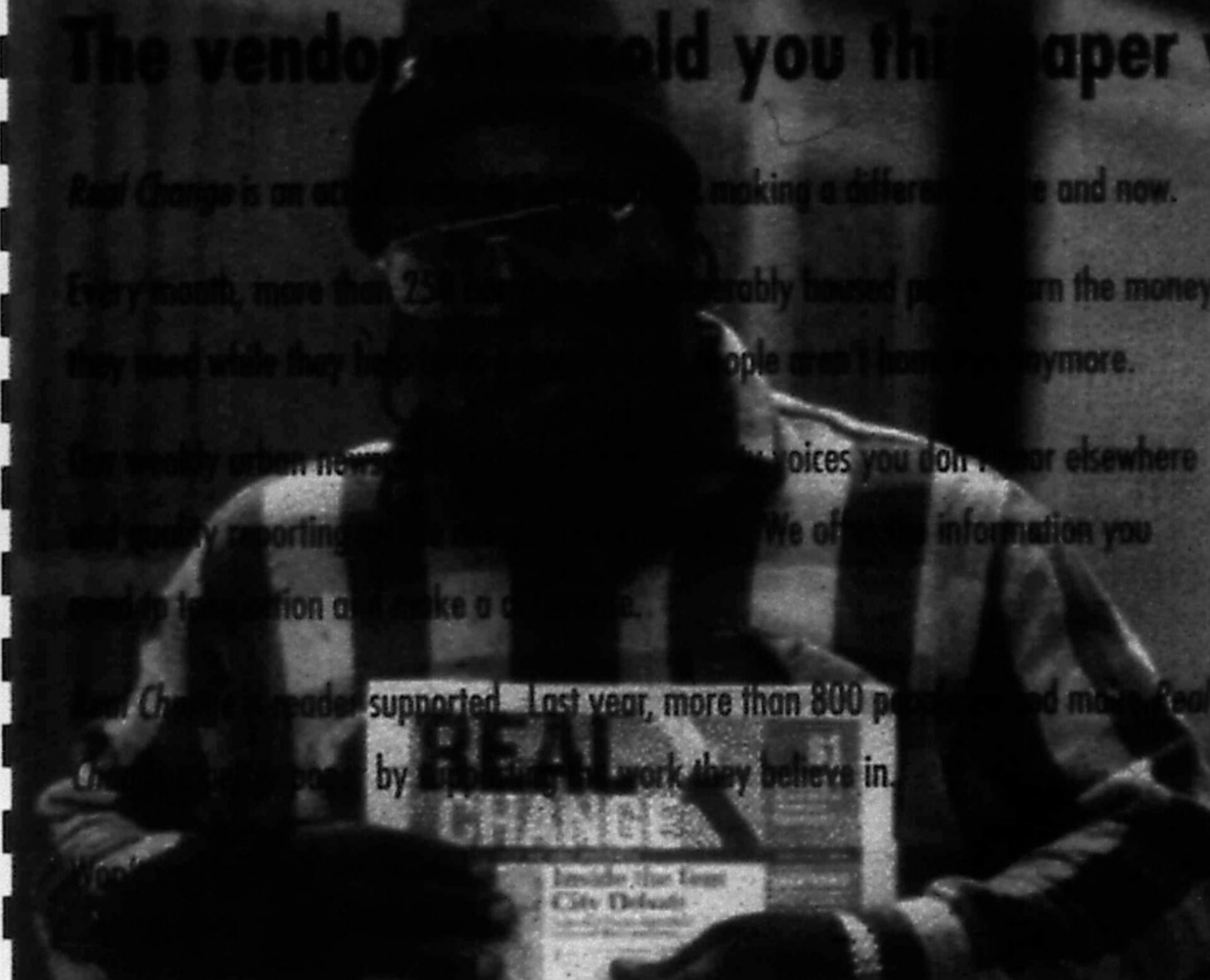
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