

Housing Thirst

New PAC builds support for bricks and mortar in Olympia

By **LYDIA DePILLIS**
Contributing Writer

It's been argued that every successful cause needs three elements: insiders, advocates, and political action committees, the issue-based organizations that raise and distribute money to candidates they want in office. The affordable housing lobby has been lacking the third leg of that stool for two years, but now its PAC is back — this time with goals as big as Washington state.

Voters for Affordable Housing (VAH), which started in 1995 as Housing and Human Services NOW, has reformed in the last few months to focus exclusively on statewide races. The new PAC hopes to move the housing issue out of the shadow of the heavyweights in Olympia: transportation, education, and healthcare.

"Voters for Affordable Housing is the infrastructure for a movement that will help make all the 10-year plans to end homelessness actually possible," says Housing Resources Group Advocacy Director Ben Gitenstein, who moonlights as the new VAH chair. The PAC will play a role in statewide ballot initiatives, educate the public on housing issues, and serve as a megaphone for an advocacy community that doesn't always speak with one voice.

Checks are already rolling in after more than 400 requests were sent to lists from the old PAC and from Democratic Party fundraisers.

But choosing the recipients is not as simple, as many housing advocates don't fit the traditional progressive mold. According to VAH Treasurer Kathy Roseth (also chief operating officer at Plymouth Housing Group), the old PAC would screen out candidates with poor records on gay rights, civil rights, and reproductive choice.

"People are going to be imperfect," says Roseth, noting that VAH has not yet decided on a policy. "If you don't focus, people aren't going to get the message. If you do, you lose things you care about."

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AT A JUNE 15 RALLY DOWNTOWN, JERRY BALL, BEN FREITAS, DON STRICKLING, AND DINO VOS STAND BEFORE THE "FAT CAT," A SYMBOL OF THOSE WHO BENEFIT FROM THE LOW WAGES AND POOR WORKING CONDITIONS OF HOTEL EMPLOYEES. PHOTO BY JUSTIN MILLS.

Raising the Bar

Hotel workers fight for living wage

By **LIZ MILLER**
Staff Reporter

UNITE HERE Local 8 has brought their national organizing campaign to Seattle just as Westin Hotel workers begin bargaining for a new contract. Hotel workers there were joined by community organizers and public officials as they rallied for better healthcare, wages, and working conditions on Thursday, June 15.

Melody Swett has worked at the Westin for 31 years. "We just want to improve the hotel working conditions and the safety standards of the workers," she said.

The difference between high profile workers like Swett, who works in the lobby lounge, and workers like Angela Caribo, who works in the "back of the house," highlights the need for a contract that offers all workers a livable wage.

Caribo has worked at the Westin for more than 11 years. In her address to the audience at the rally, she said that workers in the back of the house — among them, housekeepers and laundry workers — are overworked and sometimes push carts that weigh more than 800 pounds.

"We are the backbone of the hotel and deserve to be treated as valuable individuals," said Caribo.

Swett said that as a tipped employee in the front of the house, she has a different experience than those in the back of the house. "They treat me better than the housekeepers get treated," she said, adding that workers like her do not get wages that keep up with inflation.

"Seattle is a very expensive place to live," Swett said. "Some of these people have to work two jobs."

The struggle described by the two women and many of the rest of the workers in attendance was symbolized by an inflatable suit-wearing cat. Jessica Lawson, an organizer of Thursday's rally, urged the workers to greet the Fat Cat with "boos" and to blow their UNITE HERE whistles in the fat cat's face. Once the workers had joined together, the fat cat was deflated.

Caribo and Swett were joined by two to three hundred people, including UNITE HERE International President John Wilhelm and Mayor Greg Nickels.

"Seattle is a city of human beings," said Nickels, "but it needs to be a city

CLASS, BY ITSELF

A workshop intends to explore how the oft ignored reality that shapes the lives of everyone in other words class.

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Balancing the Scales

Democracy, by way of civil disobedience, may help bring more equality to the judicial system

By DEAN RITZ
Guest Writer

The strongest path to democracy is to separate the powerful from their means of control. This is at the heart of civil disobedience.

The headlines read, "Interest groups targeting state Supreme Court races" (*Seattle Times*, May 23), "New PAC to back judges on the left" (*P-I*, April 29), "Business group rates judges in anticipation of lively judicial campaigns" (*Puget Sound Business Journal*, May 31). Implicit in these headlines is the claim that while justice may be blind, justices are not.

These headlines, and the public efforts to fund the elections of judges by organizations such as the Building Industry Association of Washington, the Washington Association of Realtors, the Washington Farm Bureau, and the Washington Restaurant Association speak to this single truth: The judiciary — particularly the judicial branches with jurisdiction over constitutional issues — is a political body. Judges get political scrutiny because judges make political decisions.

Politics is the art of governance. It is the art of codifying the means of social cooperation and the means of distributing the benefits of this cooperation. Political decisions are those which alter these terms.

To illustrate, let's focus on just one aspect of this nation's laws: the legal equality of all human beings. Logically, every law should apply to all equally. Political equality means that democratic governments should not enable one group of persons to use the mechanisms of government to lord over another group of persons.

Since we as a nation accept as self-evident the legal equality of all human beings (which is the purpose of the 14th Amendment to the Constitution), we could say that when judges make

decisions that violate this equality, the judge is making a political decision.

The various interest groups endorsing or opposing judicial appointments — or, in Washington, judges' election campaigns — acknowledge the political nature of these positions. They seek the placement of judges who will advance their visions of the law: that private property interests trump rights to a clean and healthful environment or free speech rights for workers.

What's the problem with this? For those who seek legal advantages over others (i.e., legalized inequality), the problem of political courts is one of legitimacy. If people cease to believe in the impartiality of courts, then they might just decide to ignore or violate unjust laws — a path chosen by many civil rights activists, union organizers, suffragists and, more currently, some of those advancing immigrant rights and rights for the environment. To get people to submit to unjust laws, the laws must be promoted as constitutionally valid. It's good PR. It uses the mythological objectivity of judges and courts to wrap constitutional protection around inequality and injustice.

The general history of the federal courts is that they always have been political. It was the Warren Court that provided some respite for us, particularly with regard to civil rights and gender equality. Those advancements were an aberration in our history. To those who desire court approval for injustice, that period of our "national nightmare" of equal rights advancement is behind us. Whew!

But for those of us who wish to advance democratic ideals and equality of the law, we're left with free speech zones, warrantless searches and wiretaps, indefinite detention without

charges, and coercive interrogations. We are left with legalized injustice. What is our option? The short answer is more democracy.

By democracy, I mean a government with the following traits: decentralization of political power, transparency, accountability, and remedies for when government acts beyond its authority.

And the strongest path to it is to separate the powerful from their means of control. This is at the heart of civil disobedience. It's not about breaking laws, but rather breaking laws that serve as a means of illegitimate control over others. The Underground Railroad, whose practice violated federal laws that demanded the return of fugitive slaves, did this to separate the powerful slaveholders from one of their means of control. When suffragists attempted to cast votes in public elections, they attempted to separate the powerful patriarchy from one of their means of control.

But the most effective means of control is in our own minds. It is when we accept the myth of judicial infallibility. A belief that they know better. That they are objective. That judges are above politics. The Federalist Society, the Chamber of Commerce, and the Building Industry Association of Washington know better. We should, too.

Judicial decisions and their written opinions (from majority or dissenting judges) may inform us, inspire us, or awaken us to action. One of those actions is to secure judges who would advance the ideals of legal equality for all human beings. We can do this only when we forgo the illusion of judicial infallibility and instead treat constitutional courts and the justices on those benches as the political animals they are. ■

Dean Ritz is an ethicist and educator for Democracy School (www.democracyschool.info), teaching citizens about rights-based activism.

REAL CHANGE

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

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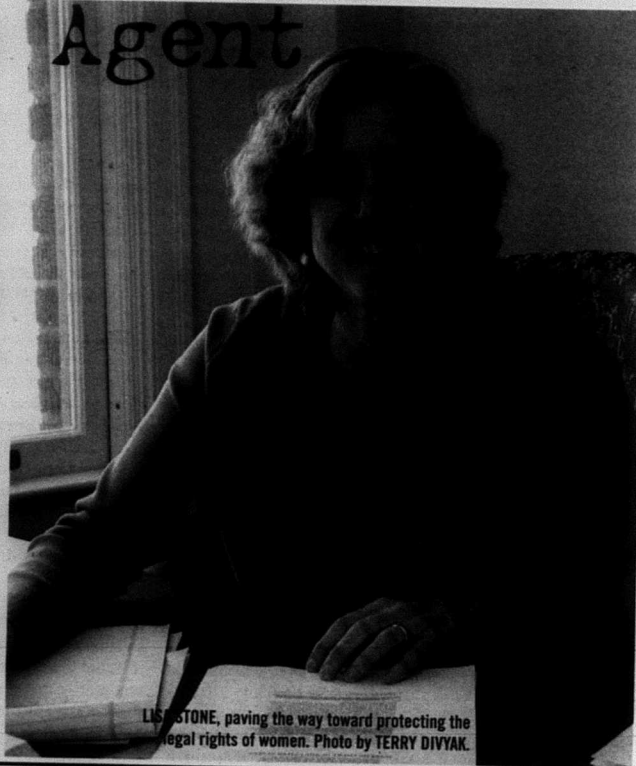
Change Agent

In 1988, Lisa Stone was a practicing attorney with some free time on her hands. She contacted the Northwest Women's Law Center to volunteer her services and was assigned to work on a suit against Operation Rescue, a pro-life organization that was blocking access to abortion clinics. The case developed into a three-year journey during which Stone discovered her true passion. "It just felt right to be using the law to protect and advance women's legal rights," Stone recalls. In 1995, the chance to become the center's executive director presented itself, and Stone leapt at the opportunity.

NWLC tackles difficult issues such as the rights of same-sex partnerships, defending reproductive choice, and urging the courts to recognize non-traditional families. The center pursues precedent-setting lawsuits, drafts and analyzes legislation, offers a legal hot line, and publishes several self-help guides.

"Law is an extremely powerful tool," says Stone. "We can use it to make a real difference."

—Amy Besunder



LISA STONE, paving the way toward protecting the legal rights of women. Photo by TERRY DIVYAK.

Class Work

Workshop explores the experience of worlds apart

By LAURA PEACH
Contributing Writer

[More Info]

Exploring Class, Sat., June 23, 9 a.m. - 5 p.m., University Friends Meeting, 4001 9th Ave. NE. Sliding scale fee. Pre-registration required. Register on line at www.classism.org; go to Programs tab. Space is limited.

Participants in a workshop confronting class divisions. Photo provided by Felice Yeskel.



How does class affect daily life? A workshop entitled "Exploring Class," which deals with issues surrounding class constructs and economic barriers, will be held in Seattle this Sat., June 23.

"Most people don't talk about class, but it deeply impacts who we are," says Felice Yeskel, co-author of *Economic Apartheid in America*, who will be directing part of the workshop. "People grow up in a class-segregated way and are uncomfortable with the unfamiliar. We want them to become aware of class and create cultures that are accepting of people from across class boundaries."

Jennifer Ladd, an educator and philanthropic advisor, will also be directing the workshop. "It's important to understand the strengths and limitations of class backgrounds and realize that we can't do it all ourselves."

The workshop will address class issues through discussion groups and interactive models and illustrations of economic divisions. "Class is such a relative and complex thing that it's better to come at it through personal experience," says Ladd. There will be a focus on discussing each individual's experience of class both within and across boundaries. "We hope to have a safe space where people can explore their class background and create cross-class dialogue," she says.

"We want people from all ends of the spectrum of wealth to come to the workshop," says Yeskel. "Women experience class differently from men, whites experience

class differently from people of color. We want people to bring all of themselves into the workshop and look at how class and identity intersect."

"People can leave with an action plan: looking at where they have influence and raising class consciousness in those areas." She said that action plans can range from teachers deciding to integrate class issues into their curriculum to organizations analyzing and restructuring hiring practices.

Ladd, who is from an upper-class background, has been researching class for several years. "I was always aware of class differences, and growing up in the 1960s provided a context in which to question it in relation to values of equality and social justice." She says that her work is fueled by the possibilities of living in a world without inequality.

Yeskel is from a working-class background and first became aware of class issues when she crossed class lines by attending a school for "gifted" children in New York. She has extensively studied and taught issues of social justice.

The cost of the workshop will be determined on a sliding scale according to each individual's income and ability. The workshops are set up by an organization called ClassAction, a non-profit connected to United for a Fair Economy, which seeks to highlight issues of economic disparity and promote equality.

"Seattle has much broader class divisions than are visible. People need to be aware of the divide that is making life pretty hard for some people," says Lois Canright, the organizer of the workshop. Canright had previously attended a similar workshop and was moved by the content and impressed by Yeskel's facilitation style, so she decided to bring the workshops to Seattle. The Washington Association of Churches has donated the use of their space for the Saturday workshop.

"We need a group of people who have built their knowledge of class issues and divisions so that they can create ways to close the class divide," says Canright, "people who understand how it works and why we need to speak out on it." ■

Just Heard...

City sues I-87

It's so refreshing for a politician to say what he means, and what Greg Nickels said Monday couldn't be any clearer: Spending more money on teachers and new school programs, the mayor said in a statement, would be "throwing money at the wrong problems."

That was the mayor's response to a lawsuit filed by City Attorney Tom Carr against Initiatives 87 and 88, which seek to raise the property tax lid in Seattle in order to raise taxes 39 cents per \$1,000 of a home's assessed value.

That would raise \$40 million for Seattle schools but, instead of going to fill the \$20 million hole the district is in, the money would go directly to classrooms — something the city's lawsuit says isn't legal.

"It goes against state law," says Ruth Bowman, the city attorney's assistant. "The law doesn't allow citizens to budget through the initiative process."

Campaign co-chair and parent Beth Sanders says I-87 attorneys disagree and that supporters still plan to submit the 17,000 signatures needed by June 23.

Open to all?

Opening the south entrance of the King County Courthouse has come a long way from being a "dead" idea.

On Monday, in a unanimous vote, the County Council took \$104,000 it had already budgeted for building repair and put it toward a study of reopening the original grand entrance of the courthouse, which opened in 1916.

Until 1967, the entrance opened onto the tiny City Hall Park, so named because Seattle's city offices once occupied part of the court building, which stands between Third and Fourth avenues and originally faced Yesler Way. After a year of planning, the city Parks Department has come up with a new park design of \$3 million to \$4 million that, among other things, calls for cutting down 10 of the 15 oaks that stand in the park.

Councilmember Bob Ferguson, chair of the Capital Budget Committee, says he sponsored the bill in an effort to coordinate with the city's plans. The city is looking to get more programming and people into the park, which acts as a yard for the homeless and poor residents of the nearby Frye Apartments and Morrison Hotel.

—Cydney Gillis

Backfill man

The city's Community Development Block Grant program was given a little love injection by Mayor Greg Nickels on June 20, when he announced he would backfill \$680,000 of the program's lost funding.

In his announcement, Nickels proposed the city withdraw \$519,000 from general fund revenues, along with \$162,000 in interest earnings. The funds will help to close a federal funding gap that has taken a bite out of human service programs over the past five years. The Block Grant program is the city's primary source of funds for tackling the community development needs of low- and moderate-income people and neighborhoods.

Says Nickels: "Any reduction in funding for these critical programs is devastating."

—Rosette Royale

After the Deluge

Affordable housing in New Orleans going, going, gone

By BILL QUIGLEY
Contributing Writer

The U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development has announced they plan to demolish over five thousand public housing apartments in New Orleans. In August

2005, HUD reported they had 7,381 public apartments in New Orleans. Now HUD says they now have 1000 apartments open and promise to repair and open another 1000 in a couple of months. After months of rumors, HUD confirmed their intention to demolish all the remaining apartments.

HUD's demolition plans leave thousands of families with no hope of returning to New Orleans, where rental housing is scarce and costly. In New Orleans, public housing was occupied by women, mostly working, their children, and the elderly and disabled.

To these mothers and children, HUD Secretary Alphonso Jackson said: "Any New Orleans voucher recipient or public housing resident will be welcomed home."

Jackson urged patience for the thousands who have been displaced since August of 2005, but with more than 200,000 people still displaced, patience in New Orleans is in short supply. "I just need somewhere to stay," Patricia Thomas told the *Times-Picayune*. Ms. Thomas has lived in public housing for years. "We're losing

"We're losing our older people. They're dropping like flies when they hear they can't come home."

— Patricia Thomas, New Orleans public housing resident

our older people. They're dropping like flies when they hear they can't come home."

This demolition plan continues HUD's efforts to get out of the housing business. In 1996, New Orleans had 13,694 units of conventional public housing. Before Katrina, New Orleans was down to half that, 7,379 units of conventional public housing. If they are allowed to accelerate the demolition, public housing in New Orleans will have been reduced by 85% in the past decade.

New Orleans already has many, many people, including families, living in abandoned houses — houses without electricity or running water. New Orleans has recently been plagued with an increase in the number of fires. HUD's actions will put more families into these abandoned houses.

Despite HUD's promise to demolish homes, the right of people to return to New Orleans is slowly being recognized as a human rights issue. According to international law, the victims of Katrina are "internally displaced persons" because they were displaced within their own country as a result of natural disaster.

Principle 28 of the Guiding Principles on Internal Displacement requires that the U.S. government recognize the human right of displaced people to return home. The US must "allow internally displaced persons to return voluntarily, in safety and with dignity, to their homes or places of habitual resi-

See NEW ORLEANS, Continued on Page 10

Short Takes

Won't you be my neighbor?

For the first time in its 13-year history, the Downtown Emergency Service Center has agreed to enter into a Good Neighbor Agreement to move forward with a controversial facility for the chronically homeless and mentally ill. Rainier Valley residents met with the shelter provider last week to provide input for the non-binding contract. Skeptics of the project posed tough questions to DESC staff, while proponents applauded the agency's action.

DESC Director Bill Hobson says that he has been historically opposed to GNAs because they place more responsibility on the service agency than on the community. With other projects — none of which have generated as much difference of opinion — DESC has entered into "Good Neighbor Commitments," a less formal understanding between the two parties.

"[A GNA] assumes that these are unhuman things coming to your neighborhood," Hobson said to community members gathered in an unfinished unit at the new Rainier Vista private housing development. "Without reciprocity, these things have made little sense."

Critics of the project expressed concerns over crime prevention, the number and qualifications of the staff, the size of the facility (60 beds, down from the originally proposed 80), and the progress of residents, many of whom will have substance abuse problems. Despite a comprehensive website and DESC's presence at numerous community meetings, opponents allege that the agency has not communicated adequately with neighborhood residents.

"We feel like we haven't been engaged, and it's sort of been shoved down our throats," said Christine Acker, who said she has not received responses to letters and e-mails. "The opposition simply wants to be part of the dialogue. When we aren't being

engaged in the dialogue, yeah, we are operating from a place of fear."

Opponents also challenge the composition of a Neighborhood Advisory Committee, which will continue to work with DESC after the facility has been built. Hobson said that the community will be represented on the committee by three community organizations selected for their proximity to the project, two of which have already voiced their opposition. Members of the Southeast Crime Prevention Council and Rainier Valley Neighbors, also skeptical, want to be included, and Hobson indicated that he was receptive. The committee so far does not include Rainier Housing Opportunities Made Equal, a group formed to support the project.

King County's 10-year plan to end homelessness demands that 2,900 new units be built for the mentally ill by 2015. The plan's director, Bill Block, spoke on behalf of the project, likening community opposition to the uproar over the construction of the Bailey-Boushway House for people with HIV/AIDS on Capitol Hill in the late 1980s.

Tent City 4 dodges bullet. Again

After an emergency ruling by a Washington State Court of Appeals judge, the Eastside Tent City has a few more days to breathe while attorneys on both sides work through an appeals process. That's a sigh of relief for the 65 homeless men and women who were previously facing a court order to leave Woodinville's Northshore United Church of Christ, by 11:59 p.m. last Saturday.

It's uncertain whether the full Court of Appeals will order the camp to move again after the temporary stay granted by Judge Mary Neel on June 17 runs

out. If Tent City 4 is successful, the camp will be able to live out the full 90-day term at NUCC, where it has been for more than five weeks. If not, organizers will have to scramble to find an alternate location.

TC4's long-term prospects, however, are more hopeful. First Evangelical Lutheran Church has acquired necessary permits from the city of Bothell to house the homeless encampment starting August 2, and St. John Vianney Catholic Church near Kirkland, which hosted the camp two years ago, has indicated willingness to welcome TC4 for the next three-month term starting in November.

The court battle over TC4's residence at NUCC has raged over the last month, with Woodinville attorneys complaining that the camp did not secure proper permits, failed to report sex offenders and burglars in residence, and allowed controlled substance abuse within the encampment's executive tents, according to the *Seattle Times*. Pastor Paul Forman of NUCC welcomed TC4 onto the church's grounds in defiance of a municipal development moratorium and has since fought to protect the camp's continued residence.

— Lydia DePillis

"Gone but not forgotten"

A third of the trees are gone, but Occidental Park isn't forgotten.

Though the city has already cut down 17 of the park's 60 sycamores as part of a renovation, a group of Pioneer Square business owners and residents continues to fight the city over the park's remaining 43 sycamores, which they say the project will kill.

On Monday, after months of city delays, the group got a preliminary appeals hearing with King

County Superior Court Judge John Erlich, who has just taken over the case. The group is asking him to stop the project and order the city to conduct a full environmental impact study, which the group's attorney, Jim Klausner, says is required by the State Environmental Policy Act (SEPA).

The Parks Department conducted its own internal analysis. But Klausner argued Monday that the city failed to provide the report to the Pioneer Square Preservation Board before it took a final vote on the project in May. As a result, Klausner said, the board and the public were deprived of vital information and a chance to comment.

Assistant City Attorney Judith Barbour told the judge it didn't matter because the Pioneer Square Preservation Board has no real authority and no jurisdiction over trees.

"It strikes me that the board has an aesthetic consideration," Judge Erlich responded. "I'm not sure we can dichotomize the aesthetic issue from the earth, air, and water issue."

It was a point in favor of Klausner, who has long argued that ripping out the park's cobblestones and putting in impervious paving will cut off water to the roots and kill the rest of the trees — something the Parks Department never considered, he said.

"If I tried to do what the city did, they would lock me up [and] shut down my project," Klausner said of SEPA. But the city, he said, feels "empowered to ignore their own rules and state law."

"What they've done will kill the rest of these trees," he said.

Judge Erlich has scheduled a full hearing for Thursday, June 22, at 9 a.m., in Room W-1060 of the King County Courthouse. The hearing is open to the public.

— Cydney Gillis

On Frida Kahlo's Painting: The Love Embrace of the Universe

In this embrace
of an ambivalent
maternal universe,
a woman presents
her famous lover-husband
who resembles a sage
wounded, freshly bandaged

Whoever embraces against the torment
embraces in this universe as wounded survivor,
embraces where propaganda's
boast of renewed exclusions
for "lesser people"
and the boot-steel salute
for the next general's war
seems like a flashback
to Anne Frank's social nemesis

In this interlude of multicultural intensity
painted understandings
are revealed for the few
who are many
who will struggle and embrace
the popular Mexican call,
for interpersonal significance
fairer national elections
exuberant social abundance

Who among us
the wrongfully silenced
of history will whisper
then sing to familiar strangers
who will bloom into a knowing people
understanding how Zapatista ideals
are not simply to beg
for richer, pocket changes

- LARRY EBERSOLE

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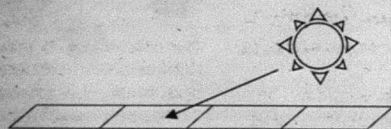
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Story Problem 8



Assume sunlight travels to Earth at a rate of 186,000 miles per second and concrete possesses a thermal mass of .15 degrees Fahrenheit per hour (in direct sunlight). If the temperature drops to 27 degrees Fahrenheit, how much perseverance do you need to fend off hypothermia?



SEA helps young adults who survived life on the street and now want to earn a college degree. Once accepted, students must maintain a 3.0 GPA. Please visit seattleeducationaccess.org to support our scholarship program.



A Necessary Sacrifice

1st Lt. Ehren Watada told the U.S. Army he wasn't going to fight in Iraq. Now he could face a court-martial

"I felt a certain sense of shame of committing these acts and wearing the uniform. Inside, I was really in turmoil. I mean, what does someone do? I had a moral responsibility to do something about it."

Interview by ROSETTE ROYALE
Staff Reporter

Back in March of 2003, when Ehren Watada attempted to join the Army, he was told that, due to a medical condition, he was unfit for military service. After paying out of pocket for a breathing test, military physicians, upon reviewing the results, cleared him of any disqualifying condition. Given the green light, he applied for, and was accepted into, the Officers' Candidate's School. The soon-to-be 1st Lt. Watada had achieved a lifelong dream.

But the glow of achievement went dim two years later, when Watada, 27, was informed he was being deployed to Iraq. The announcement sent him scrambling to learn whatever he could about U.S. military involvement there. After devouring information put out by international law experts, independent journalists, non-governmental organizations, Iraqi civilians, and returning U.S. soldiers alike, he formed a conclusion: the Iraq War was illegal and immoral. Prodded by his conscience, Watada, member of the 3rd Stryker Brigade, then made his own announcement to his higher ups: he would not, no matter the circumstances, fight what he believed to be a war based upon lies.

His decision, to voluntarily remove himself from military service instead of being deployed to Iraq, garnered worldwide headlines when it was leaked to the press June 6. Assigned to Ft. Lewis, 1st Lt. Watada now awaits word on whether the Army will set him free or take him to court — with the possibility of serving time in a military prison — for taking a stand. Speaking from his home off base, Lt. Watada talked to *Real Change* about how he transformed from a willing military officer to an unrepentant anti-war activist.

Real Change: How are you holding up?

Lt. Ehren Watada: Well, last week [June 6-12] was pretty dramatic. People who didn't know the facts were upset, people I worked with. I received a whole bunch of nasty emails on my Army

account. Compared to that, this week has kind of petered out.

RC: Nasty emails? Those came from whom? People in the military?

Lt. Watada: Yes. Everyone in the Army can find your email pretty easy. So these guys from everywhere — Iraq, Afghanistan, the U.S. — were sending me emails. Most were pretty nasty. But there were also some, from all ranks, giving me their support, saying, "You're doing the right thing," and "We agree with you." It surprised me.

RC: How about we run through the timeline leading up to your decision.

Lt. Watada: Well, I signed the papers to join the Army in March in 2003, during the initial invasion of Iraq. I think that for millions of people out there — many Americans and a lot of people in the world — when the President and members of his administration came on national TV, we all believed in them when they said Iraq had stockpiled weapons of mass destruction; that they had the will and intent to use them against their neighbors and us; and that they also had very strong ties to al-Qaeda and 9/11. I think the majority of the people in this nation, despite the mass protests around the world and within our own country, believed the pro-war rhetoric, though, as we can see now, to our own detriment.

So, I believed — [He pauses.] Well, maybe I didn't believe that going to invade a sovereign country was fully justified, but I felt that there was no reason to believe our leaders would betray our trust. Maybe it's a little naïve, but at that time, I think it was hard to conceive that someone



a foreign country, you aren't exposed to as many things as in America. At the time, I wasn't too motivated to look into all the things that were going wrong in Iraq. Our primary mission in Korea was against a [potential] incursion from North Korea and in the peninsula. So that was what we focused on. I redeployed back to the States in June of 2005.

Then I came here to Ft. Lewis and that's when I learned I was going to be deployed to Iraq. I had my doubts about what was going on over there but, for the most part, I was ready to go. But I remembered something that my former commander in Korea told me: Whenever you undertake something as an officer, it's your responsibility to find out everything about that mission, down to the most minute detail. So I read up on war in general, its effects on people and the soldiers, and, more specifically, what was going on in Iraq.

What I found really shocked me: that we have been misled into this war under false pretenses and were manipulating intelligence through a policy established long before 9/11 and the 2003 invasion, in order to have the public back this war and have Congress authorize force. I realized that what we were doing in Iraq at the present time, and the whole war itself, was illegal under international law. And not only that, but national law. At that time, I felt like I finally saw the truth. I felt a certain sense of shame of committing these acts and wearing the uniform. Inside, I was really in turmoil. I mean, what does someone do? I had a moral responsibility to do something about it, but yet, I couldn't.

RC: What do you mean?

Lt. Watada: There was really nothing I could do to correct the wrongs taking place because I was part of the machine: I was a tool of the government and I did what they told me. That really tore me up. I could not stand to watch all these soldiers coming back suffering

1st Lt. Ehren Watada on June 6, the day his decision to refuse deployment to Iraq was announced in the press. Photo by Jeff Paterson.

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would lead us into something as horrible as war and deceive us for the reasons for going into that war. So, I was commissioned [as an officer] in December of 2003, finished all my officer's training in the summer of 2004, and then I served a year in Korea.

RC: What were you doing in Korea?

Lt. Watada: I was in a rocket and missile unit. Being in

Continued from Previous Page

from wounds, suffering from post-traumatic stress disorder, being away from their families, and also the families of these dead and wounded soldiers. And also the innocent Iraqis who were being slaughtered over there, through collateral damage, or intentionally. And I felt all of this was the result of our own government deceiving us. I felt that millions of Americans out there were so helpless, and that there was nothing we could do to stop this war, nothing we could do to hold our government accountable. And because we couldn't, our government thought it was okay to continue to commit wrongful acts that violated our most basic principles outlined in the Constitution.

RC: So was there a moment when you said, "This is it. I have to do something"?

Lt. Watada: I think the point came when I was listening to a radio show, and this guy called in and his brother was being deployed back to Iraq for a second time. And this guy, whoever he was, he was almost to the point of breaking down. He was mad, he was frustrated. He said, "Why aren't people out there protesting this injustice from our government, this war that's without an end?" I felt that same frustration and disappointment. The people we expect to speak for us, the politicians, they weren't doing anything. And if they weren't doing anything, it was time for people who wouldn't ordinarily act to step up. That includes all Americans, even those of us in uniform who normally don't have a voice.

RC: So you submitted your resignation in January 2006. Here we are, in June. What took so long?

Lt. Watada: When I submitted my resignation, they told me, "Well, that's fine that you believe that, but that's not relevant here. We're going to Iraq, we're going there to make a better life for the Iraqi people, we're going to kill terrorists, and you're coming with us. Whether you want to or not." That still wouldn't change my mind. So they said, "Okay, why don't you submit a formal resignation?" This was around February. But I had to find out what comprised the official resignation packet, so it wasn't submitted until April.

Then [the Army has] Block Leave, where they have 14 days set aside, to give the guys who are going to Iraq some time with their families, go on vacation. They took that leave away from me and said, "Why don't you take these two weeks to think? If you still feel the same, we're going to initiate legal proceedings." At that time, I got a lawyer who started talking with JAG (Judge Advocate General's Corps) and the chain of command. The chain of command said if I didn't get on the plane, they were going to charge me.

RC: When are you scheduled for deployment?

Lt. Watada: I can't give you that exact day because of the operation of security. But I can tell you it's going to be within the next couple weeks.

RC: And now you're in this limbo. How does it feel?

Lt. Watada: It feels fine. I honestly believe that what I'm doing is the right thing. Lots of people say, "You took an oath." But my oath was to the Constitution of the United States. It doesn't say in the oath for an officer that you follow the orders of the President and those appointed over you. It's an officer's duty and obligation to obey only lawful orders, not every order that's given to you. I think we've seen the dangers of following every order, through Abu Grahayb and Haditha, which I think are only tips of the iceberg when it comes to the atrocities that are being committed over there. I've talked to numerous guys who've admitted, yes, they've laid waste to most of Iraq when they were over there. They committed war crimes, even in their own eyes.

RC: Being an officer, does it make easier to do what you're doing?

"I think what I'm saying, a lot of people in the military are thinking. But there's just been so much suppression against dissent in this country, that people are afraid to say how they feel, especially those within the military."

Lt. Watada: Maybe. But I think what I'm saying, a lot of people in the military are thinking. But there's just been so much suppression against dissent in this country, that people

are afraid to say how they feel, especially those within the military. I certainly am not comfortable being in the public eye, being the target of so much hatred and hostility. But it came to the point where I felt like it was a necessary sacrifice.

RC: I don't know if you've heard, but First United Methodist Church in Tacoma has decided to offer sanctuary to members of the military who no longer want to serve due to objections of the Iraq War. What do you think about that?

Lt. Watada: You know, I wouldn't feel comfortable commenting directly on that. I just think it's good that all members of the American society get involved in why we're in this war.

RC: What happens now?

Lt. Watada: I'm just waiting for that day when they call me to get on that plane. I'm going to refuse. Then they're going to court-martial me. But the more public scrutiny there is on this case, the more the government will be forced to give me a fair trial and debate the lawfulness of the war. It's highly doubtful they'll allow that though, because they're not going to be put on trial or have anything happens that makes the administration's policies look wrong, legally or morally. But that's my hope. Otherwise, I'll face the consequences. If that's prison time or a dishonorable discharge, then that's the sacrifice that I make. ■

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Sure, there is a plot to *Challenger Park*. People get hurt and have affairs and fall in love. A space shuttle goes up into space and comes down with one fewer member of the crew.

Challenger Park
Stephen Harrigan
Knopf, 2006
Hardcover, 397 pp
US\$24.95

Review by SALLY JAMES
Contributing Writer

We are transported by this novel about astronauts into a tuna-can of an International Space Station. The smell of unwashed bodies and the bad food curdle together into dark comedy. Like a long tradition of submarine- and Arctic-trapped adventure stories, much of this one plays out inside the hero's (heroine's) troubled mind.

Lucy Kincheloe has a doctorate in oceanography, a husband-astronaut, and two adorable children. Davis, her son, is seven years old and lives a slightly withered life because of chronic asthma. Bethie, her daughter, is three. Her husband, Brian, is bitter about a career he sees as stalled.

Harrigan layers the glamour, science and tedium of astronaut culture between the most mundane parts of a parent's day. Lucy takes her son out to lunch, and decides to buy him a toy, which leads to a detailed tour through the action figures of a Toys R Us.

Each action figure has its own special power, and society's myths about

these heroes seem glossy and artificial next to the real-life struggles of the woman we are getting to know.

Both Lucy and her husband worry about their status within the NASA hierarchy and are given boring administrative tasks that they deplore. As such pressures grow, she discovers that some of the same personality traits that make for a good fighter pilot make for a controlling and slightly paranoid husband.

"She had been truly dazzled by him in the beginning, and it had taken her years to fully comprehend his limitations. ... He was a man of honor, but an honor that was always in danger of being betrayed by unworthy forces. Jealous colleagues, backstabbing bureaucrats, incompetent personnel: Lucy had encountered such people from time to time, but Brian's world was crowded with them."

As her husband's personality wounds his career, Lucy gets the final go-ahead to join a mission. She struggles to pull herself free of his turmoil while watching him sink, and her internal ethical war makes up much of the intrigue of this story.

Sure, there is a plot. People get hurt and have affairs and fall in love. A space shuttle goes up into space and comes down with one fewer member of the crew. But the heart of the novel

is Lucy wondering what it means to be a mother and what it means to be a wife.

When she is chosen to join a mission, at what should be the crowning glory of a long struggle for her own opportunity at space, she is paralyzed by guilt at the mere thought of telling her children. She delays and begs her husband not to give it away. Then, when she's completely off guard, her son weasels it out of her and gets upset.

"She had blown it. She had broken the news to him in exactly the wrong way. But what troubled her more was the fear that there was no right way to tell a little boy that his mother was going - not just to an achingly distant place, but to another dimension... Why would his mother, why would any mother, voluntarily leave her child to travel to such a place, a place that was as blank as death, and in whose perfect soundlessness his cries to her were sure to go unheard?"

Harrigan raises this question but never answers. He never asks why a father would go, either. Reading the book is a bit like spending a long time with a brilliant friend in a philosophical discussion. At the end, someone has to pay for lunch and you aren't any surer of right and wrong than when you started. ■

A Fallen Grace

Fall to Grace
Written and Directed by Mari Marchbanks
Opens June 23

By Lester Gray
Arts Editor

The community portrayed in *Fall to Grace* epitomizes dysfunctional, as the word is applied as a pop psychology term. We certainly view neighborhoods more violent, with heavier drug use, with a rot more redolent; but few enclaves distinguish themselves through such a hardy brand of indolence, cynicism, and indifference. In writer and director Mari Marchbanks' debut, this self-imposed dissipation is most manifest in curious marriages that limp along, like diseased organisms, neither able to die nor revive themselves.

The offspring, now teenagers, of these crippled unions, with little in their past or anticipated in their future to root them, are central to this tale of an isolated suburbia. Bereft of motivation, nihilists by default, even getting high proves somewhat of a chore.

An only child, teenage Sara (Kira Pozehl) bears witness to and shares in her mother's berating of a dad whose main

shortcoming is an unrequited love for his wife. The middle-age woman's perverse sense of deprivation as it regards a life of luxury that her husband cannot provide, supports rationalizations of theft, rage, and most likely infidelity.

Kristopher (Gabriel Luna), newly arrived from a republic of the old Soviet Union, is a good student, who loves to play basketball. An indefatigable Pollyanna, he lives with his family, for whom, even in the middle of their financial struggles, the platitudes about the United States as the country of opportunity remain gospel. This faith however undergoes a severe test, as Kristopher's father, Alexei (Bhagirat Crow), weighs the vocational paths of day laboring and drug dealing against each other.

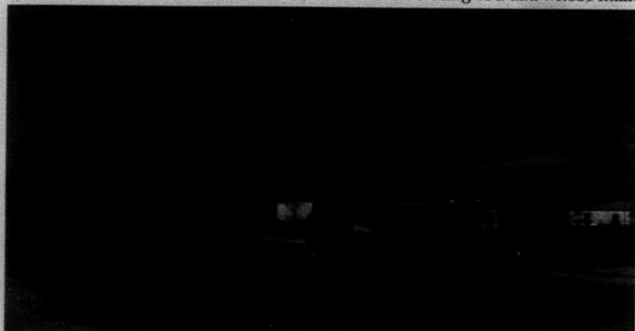
Sara, her only role model in relationships being her mom, delights in taunting Kristopher as he walks to school. Riding shotgun in the car with her get-high posse, she issues insults through the window, reaching out in the only manner she has ever known. His equanimity in the face of these attacks and his sense of purpose, a rare quality among the local denizens, prove attractive to this girl, who has seldom experienced such men in her life.

This love affair, incubating in Marchbanks' dystopia, a place where nothing grows, proves to be a challenge. Can Kristopher maintain his "Have a nice day" countenance? Can Sara escape the gravity of self-destructive behavior to which she is accustomed? Can the film survive this soap opera?

Fall to Grace is a laudable, if a sometimes shaky, first effort. The characters we meet depict a certain type of impoverishment — bodies and minds devoid of spirit; blank personalities in search of blustery affectations. Unfortunately, too many of these folks in one film can make for a bit of tedium, especially when played by less than a superb cast.

Embedded in this uneven offering are compelling moments that seem to arise just when needed — enough to justify a viewing of *Fall to Grace*, and whatever Ms. Marchbanks comes up with in her follow-up effort. ■

Fall to Grace is a laudable, if a sometimes shaky, first effort.





Adventures
in Irony

©Dr. Wes Browning

Step Up to the Hate

"Hey, Rocky! Watch me pull a humor column about hate crimes out of my hat!" "That's not a humor column, Bullwinkle!"

OK, hate crimes aren't remotely funny. I think that's a given. But hate can be amusing. For example, I have come

Here's a purely rhetorical question: If hate crimes are bad because they involve hate, does that mean that stalking, a "love crime," is good?

to realize over the years that my hatred for Steven G., who was my next-door neighbor when I was 11, has assumed comic proportions. That's because, in the 45 years since he got two buddies to hold me down so he could punch me in the face without getting punched back, Steven G. has become my personal metaphor for all that is evil in the world. While others denounce Satan, I denounce Steven G.

Some days I spend hours thinking up delicious revenges upon Steven G. I imagine Steven G. coming to my building to see me, to ask if I could come out to play, just like he always used to do. And I would say no just like I always did, because even before the punching incident I hated him, because all he wanted me to do was come outside and worship him, and be dazzled by the cool way he dressed, and be awed by how many girls he promised he would have in the coming years, once he had managed to have any; that was his idea of "playing," and I despise being that bored.

So in my fantasies I would say no, but Steven G. wouldn't take "no" for an answer, just like every day 45 years ago. But, unlike 45 years ago, this time I would get all Quentin Tarantino on his ass. Oh, yes, I'd come out to play all right. "Bring it on, Stevie G., I'm coming out to play! Look, Stevie G., I have a pound of peeled garlic, a vice, a couple of crowbars, and a tube of Super Glue! Guess what game we're going to play!"

My point is that hate can be amusing because it's just an emotion. It's not whether you hate; it's

whether and how you act on it. Since I haven't yet really stuffed a pound of peeled garlic up Steven G.'s nostrils, or done the other things with the vice, etc., thinking about it can still be entertaining.

Here's a purely rhetorical question: If hate crimes are bad because they involve hate, does that mean that stalking, a "love crime," is good?

Seriously, no, it doesn't. But the question might help explain why the general public is confused about the issue. People are constantly writing to tell editors of newspapers, "We don't need hate crime legislation; all violent crimes are hate crimes, therefore all violent crimes should be treated the same."

Here's the difference: If I Super Glue Steven G.'s face to the front of his tight, purple, package-revealing hip-huggers, I will have committed an act of violence against one Steven G., but I will not have terrorized all Steven G.'s everywhere in the process.

If I had my way, advocates for hate crime legislation would stop using the term "hate crime" and start talking about terrorism. The reason the crimes call for more severe penalties is that they are acts of terrorism against groups. The immediate victim is intended to represent the rest of the group and the crime meant to terrorize the whole group.

Until I get my way, it would really help the debate if opponents of hate crime legislation would stop attacking the misnomer and deal with the real purpose of the proposed laws. "Why make hate a crime?" makes as much sense as "Why do we have anti-trust laws? Isn't trusting good?"

Here's an unfunny factoid: Right now, in this country, homeless people are being murdered, for being homeless, at a rate (per their total numbers, per year) comparable to the rate at which Blacks were lynched between 1882 and 1968. America commits its pogroms on a personal scale, one at a time, up close. ■

Is This Seat Taken?

Maybe it's the high concentration of irresistibly sexy people riding buses. Maybe it's the feeling of community that results from the shared ride. Maybe it's the opportunity afforded by the uninterrupted time in the same space. Heck,

maybe it's boredom. Whatever the reason, buses seem to encourage people to hook up — or, at least to make their best effort at it. We bus riders have a name for this bus-based attempted hook-up: the bus mack.

A bus mack (not to be confused with bus luh, which involves an established, mutual attraction) occurs when one bus rider approaches another in a way that indicates romantic and/or sexual interest. In a typical bus mack scenario: An attractive person gets on. A head turns. Some nervous (or scheming) fidgeting ensues. Before you know it, the head turner is changing seats. And we're off.

The majority of bus macks are unsuccessful, partly because the majority of pick ups, bus-based or otherwise, are unsuccessful, and partly because of the stigma associated with the bus. Even the people on the bus judge other riders, assuming they're weird, or crazy, or (gasp!) too poor to afford a car. (This is probably why many men begin bus macks something like this: "Yeah, you know my Caddy is in the shop....")

Unfortunately (or perhaps fortunately, depending on your need for entertainment and

your threshold for painfully embarrassing situations), bus macks are unsuccessful in a very public forum. I have witnessed more than one would-be macker crash and burn — most often due to wildly optimistic selection of mackee — in front of an audience. The worst was a couple of years ago, on a southbound, late-afternoon 7. A beautiful young woman sitting directly in front of me suddenly stood up and let out an indignant yelp. She waited until she had the entire bus's attention and then leaned toward the not-so-young man seated across the aisle. "You want my phone number?!" she shouted. "You. Want. My. Phone number. For what?"

Most mackees are not interested in embarrassing themselves or others with such dramatic scenes. In fact, some people invest a fair amount of effort in bus-mack prevention. My friend Monique, with whom I rode many a bus back in college, and who is a frequent target of unwelcome bus macks, advises: "Wear sunglasses and earphones and have a book. No hand, eye, or ear contact."

Though Monique's advice is generally sound, be warned: A book can sometimes serve as encouragement. (Reading a Neal Stephenson novel on any route to Redmond, for example, might even be viewed as an explicit invitation.) Monique's advice also has another drawback: It precludes any possibility of meeting someone you might actually want to talk to. It also prevents you from eavesdropping, even (and especially) on the bus macks that are taking place all around you. ■



Fri., May 26, 4:50 p.m., 200 block Ninth Ave. — City Alley. Word spread that suspect, a transient Black male aged 24, had a warrant out for his arrest. Officers went to his hooch and arrested him. The warrant was verified, and suspect was booked into King County Jail.

Thurs., June 1, 12:40 a.m., First Ave.

— **Contour Club.** Officers were flagged down regarding a disturbance at the club. The complainant, a transient Black male aged 38, stated that the suspect — an employee of the club — had grabbed him by his upper arms and pushed him away from the sidewalk area in front of the club. The officer asked what had caused this reaction from the suspect, and complainant said, "I was doing my usual song and dance routine while begging for money, and (suspect) just came up to me, grabbed me, and pushed me away." He declined medical attention and stated he was not injured. When the officer approached the suspect and asked him what had happened, he said, "My boss told me to move all the bums out of here." Suspect showed officer where the complainant had been standing and told him that the complainant had been "bugging our customers... walking back and forth and asking for money." Officer asked him if complainant had been interfering with pedestrian traffic, or if he was impeding entrance to the club — suspect replied "No." He again said his boss had asked him to move the "bums" from the front of the club. The officer explained to suspect that the complainant was not in violation of any city laws, and that furthermore physically restraining him from an area that he was legally allowed to be in constituted a violation of the complainant's rights. The suspect was advised of the laws regarding aggressive pan-handling and pedestrian interference, and the officer said that the suspect now needed to go and advise his boss of the situation, and to educate the rest of his security staff regarding this issue.

Thurs., June 1, 7:09 a.m., James St.

— **City Sidewalk.** An officer called to remove a transient from the sidewalk arrived to find a figure covered in a blanket. The officer announced himself, but there was no response. He then tried to rouse the subject, a transient male aged 48, by shaking him by the shoulder. He found the man was cold and stiff to the touch, and noticed that the subject was pale, with purple around his mouth and neck. He found no sign of a pulse, and saw no sign of trauma. He requested Seattle Fire Department respond to the scene, and SFD noted the discoloration and lack of pulse. A Washington ID card was located on the man, as was a card from the Union Gospel Mission. The Medical Examiner was called and took control of the scene.

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.

Bus Chick,
Transit
Authority



Carla Saulter

We bus riders have a name for a bus-based attempted hook-up: the bus mack.

Got something to say about public transportation in Seattle? Email Bus Chick at buschick@gmail.com or visit blog.seattlepi.nwsourc.com/buschick.

NEW ORLEANS, Continued from Page 4

dence... Such authorities shall facilitate the reintegration of returned or resettled internally displaced persons. Special efforts should be made to ensure the full participation of internally displaced persons in the planning and management of their return or resettlement and reintegration."

NAACP civil rights attorney Tracie Washington has promised a legal challenge to the demolition and told HUD, "You cannot go forward and we will not allow you to go forward." Displaced residents of public housing and their allies have set up a tent city survivors' village outside the fenced off 1,300 empty apartments on St. Bernard Avenue in New Orleans.

If the authorities do not open up the apartments by July 4, they pledge to go through the fences and liberate their homes directly. The group, the United Front for Affordable Housing, is committed to resisting HUD's efforts to bulldoze their apartments "by any means necessary." ■

Bill Quigley is a human rights lawyer and professor at Loyola University New Orleans School of Law. You can reach him at Quigley@loyno.edu

[Resource]

For more information about the July 4 protest by the United Front for Affordable Housing, call Endesha Juakali at 504.239.2907, Elizabeth Cook 504.319.3564, or Ishmael Muhammad at 504.872.9521. If you know someone who is a displaced New Orleans public housing resident and they want to join in a challenge to HUD's actions, they can get more information at www.justiceforneworleans.org.



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Letters
editor@realchangenews.org

Don't blame James

Dear Real Change,

A regular reader of your fine publication, I rarely see any incorrect information in it. Unfortunately, Paul Lehto incorrectly cited Jesse James as the author of the "because that's where the money is" quote about bank robbery. [RC May 31, "The Jesse James Principle"] The quote is attributed to the 20th century bank robber, Willie Sutton, although he later said a newspaper reporter made it up. Here's the full scoop:


http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Willie_Sutton

As an IT guy who has done a lot of work for banks, I completely agree with the substance of Mr. Lehto's article. My favorite bank quote is from Bertolt Brecht:

Was ist ein Einbruch in eine Bank gegen die Gründung einer Bank?

Loosely translated as, "What is the crime of robbing a bank, compared to the crime of owning (lit. "founding") a bank?"

Ian Elliott



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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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CLASSIFIED

Opportunity

UNIFEM and Amnesty International Stop Violence Against Women Walk or Run. \$20. Sat., June 24, 10 a.m., Green Lake Boathouse, 5900 W. Green Lake Way N.

David Helvarg reads from *50 Ways to Save the Ocean*. 8 p.m., Wed., June 21. Elliott Bay Book Company, 101 S. Main St. Info: www.pugetsound.org

Employment

The Church Council of Greater Seattle is immediately seeking a FT Staff Accountant. Duties include all GL maintenance and F/S prep. Job description and application available at www.thechurchcouncil.org/subpages/employment.html EOE Salary DOE and Qualifications.

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

Wednesday 6/21

Yale writing professor and master gardener Patricia Klindienst weaves together engaging stories of American gardeners, the history of agriculture, and her conversations with farmers in her book, *The Earth Knows My Name*.

She focuses on immigrants who refused to assimilate themselves into American culture, presenting gardening as tantamount to cultural endurance. 6 p.m., Elliott Bay Book Company, 101 S Main St.

Jeff Goodell presents an analysis of America's dependence on coal in his book, *Big Coal: The Dirty Secrecy Behind America's Energy Future*. He describes the lobbyists, CEOs, and politicians who protect the coal industry, tells the stories of workers who risk their lives mining, and examines the dire health and environmental consequences of coal emissions. 7 p.m., University Book Store, 4326 University Way NE

Thursday 6/22

British peace activist and author of *Regime Unchanged* and *7/7: The London Bombings, Islam and the Iraq War*, Milan Rai speaks on the state of Iraq and the struggle for peace. Rai went on four sanctions-breaking delegations to Iraq with Voices in the Wilderness and co-founded Justice Not Vengeance, an anti-war group focusing on the "war on terror." 7 p.m., Keystone Congregational Church, 5019 Keystone Pl.

Victor Navasky, publisher and editor emeritus of *The Nation* and author of *A Matter of Opinion*, leads a discussion on encouraging public discourse and defining a progressive agenda. Tickets \$10. 7:30 p.m., Town Hall, 1119 Eighth Ave. Info: www.foolproof.org

Friday 6/23

Living With Pride celebrates the life of Ruth Ellis, who is recognized as the oldest "out" lesbian. The film traces her life, beginning with the Springfield race riots in 1908 through her involvement in the lesbian community of the 1990s. The film shows that anything is possible and marvels in her accomplishments. 7 p.m., Keystone Church, Keystone Pl.



Anne Feeney, Dave Lippman, and George Shrub present a benefit show for Jobs With Justice. Pittsburgh-based Anne Feeney is an agitator whose music is designed "to comfort the afflicted and afflict the comfortable." Suggested donation \$15. Saturday, June 24, 6 p.m., Szwajca's Big Backyard, 2021 NE 75th St. Info (206)441-4696

Saturday 6/24

Celebrate Pride on Broadway with the Raise Your Voice March. Led by the beloved Dykes on Bikes, it is a chance to celebrate community and make a political statement. Festivities include music, belly dancing, songs, speakers, and film. 6 p.m., Seattle Central Community College and north on Broadway. Info: www.seattlelgbt.org

Sunday 6/25

In 1964, the Negro Life and History Collection began with 352 books. Today it has created the finest African-American history collection in the state of Washington. Celebrate the library and learn about the Black experience in the Northwest at the Douglass-Truth Library Tea: *A Community Celebration of Talent and the African-American Library Collection*. 2 p.m., Langston Hughes Performing Arts Center, 104 17th Ave. S

Tuesday 6/27

Science fiction and fantasy writer Maureen McHugh turns speculative fiction enthusiasts on their heads with her feminist views on gender and the family, which she uses to create startlingly new futures and deeply revelatory alternate histories. She discusses her feminist ideas and her debut novel, *China Mountain Zhang*. 7:30 p.m., Science Fiction Museum, 325 5th Ave. N. Info: www.sfhomeworld.org

Wednesday 6/28

In celebration of Gay Pride Week, U.S. Women and Cuba screen *Strawberry and Chocolate*. A homosexual and skeptical young man falls in love with a heterosexual communist full of prejudices. While at first there is rejection and suspicion, the two men build a love and friendship that overcomes intolerance. Tickets \$5. 6:30 p.m., Central Cinema 1411 21st Ave. Info: www.womenandcuba.org

Director's Corner

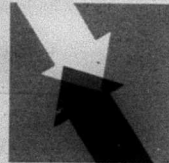


I don't rant very often, so I'm feeling overdue. I'm just 50 pages into Kevin Phillips' *American Theocracy*, which deals with the centrality of oil to American infrastructure and foreign policy, the rise of the first major theocratic political party in American history, and the impossibly irresponsible plunge into debt that has been the Bush administration, and I'm wondering how any of us sleep at night.

Yesterday, like most days in the spring and summer, there was a Little League game across the street from where I live. Of the dozen cars parked alongside the field, nine of them were SUVs or oversized trucks, leading me to wonder, What the hell is wrong with people? A generation of American soldiers has been maimed and 2,500 are dead. I don't even want to think about we've done to the people of the Middle East, who have the singular misfortune of owning a natural resource for which we're apparently happy to kill.

Sometimes, the unreality of life in America becomes so dissonant to any sense of basic human decency, that one needs to just stop, turn off the TV or whatever your distraction of choice might be, and take stock. And then you need to ask, "What am I going to do?"

Change of subject: we're three weeks into our summer fund drive and we need your support. 'Nuff said.



First things First

Get Involved • Take Action

I-91 Will Slamdunk Sonics' Arena

Issue: Initiative 91 prevents the city of Seattle from spending money to subsidize a professional sports team, by requiring a positive return on its financial investment. The initiative is a response to the Seattle Sonics demand for a \$200 million dollar remodel of Key Arena. I-91 needs 25,000 signatures by July 6 and is more than halfway there—but needs your help to make it to the ballot.

Background: Built in 1994 at a cost of about \$92 million, with some \$74 million of bonded indebtedness, Key Arena has had a shelf life hardly longer than canned beans. Now, the team's management is telling us Key Arena was supposedly obsolete the day it opened for business.

The financial structure for payment of the bonds through luxury box seats sales has failed. Now the Sonics, who were responsible for those sales, say they cannot sell the high-priced luxury seating that is responsible for paying back the debt. So they want the city of Seattle to pick up the tab.

The demand for tax subsidies for professional basketball at Key Arena has many other factors driving it. The team payroll has ballooned in the last few years from \$34 million to \$50 million. The average player salary is \$3.2 million per year. The Arena has to compete with Safeco Field and Qwest Field for other events. Despite lavish salaries that are competitive in the league, the team languishes.

The Sonics not only want the taxpayers to pay that bill outstanding from 1994, they want an entirely new facility. That facility will have about 900 more seats (475 standing room only), even fancier luxury suites, a practice arena, and a bigger concourse for restaurants and other facilities that get people to spend more money. Those new businesses will compete with other private businesses ringing Seattle Center. And the Sonics want to control the new Key Arena, keeping nearly all the money from all the events—not just basketball.

We've seen this from Seattle sports teams before. The formula: claim losses, make threats to leave, hype the economic impact of the team. Shed crocodile tears about not being loved. Bring out a citizen's report and economic analysis that shows how much money they contribute to the community.

This time we should know better. National research has repeatedly shown that the positive economic impact of pro-sports and new stadiums is greatly exaggerated by teams. I-91 isn't anti-basketball—if the Sonics owners choose to take the team somewhere else, that will be their decision, and it will be unfortunate for fans. The initiative simply aims to make sure that we prioritize spending public resources on what's really important—housing, schools, transportation, healthcare, etc.—instead of on subsidies for professional sports.

Action: Contact Citizens for More Important Things to learn more and sign the petition. Once you've signed, consider helping gather signatures. You can help collect signatures at festivals, farmers markets, and grocery stores, or even just from your own friends and family. Every signature counts. Contact www.citizensformoreimportantthings.com or call 206-854-6127.

HOUSING, Continued from Page 1

While the old PAC focused their support on candidates in tight races, VAH has a different philosophy: donating to the Washington Low Income Housing Alliance's honor roll of "housing heroes," most with secure seats. This strategy, they say, rewards legislators for good work, improves their standing with party leadership, and helps them land positions on key committees.

Recent state-level housing wins are encouraging. The Housing Trust Fund has grown from \$50 million per biennium in the early 1990s to \$121 million today, due largely to the efforts of key House Democrats.

However, housing still ranks low on the legislative priority list, especially in the Senate. High budget allocations for housing coming out of the House tend to get knocked down in the Senate, and while the House established a separate Housing Committee in 2004, the Senate has yet to do so.

According to Rep. Larry Springer (D-Kirkland), housing has become a pressing issue only in the last 15 years, which partly explains why it hasn't shown up on many legislators' radar screens. But demand for affordable housing in Washington is growing at the rate of 14 percent per year. In order to accommodate that growth, Springer emphasizes that housing advocates need to not only develop a consensus among themselves, but also reach out

to private-sector groups such as realtors and builders.

"Don't come to me unless you've already spent time talking to people who are going to oppose this," says Springer, who helped pass a bill this March that allows cities to enact af-



BEN GITENSTEIN, CHAIRPERSON FOR VOTERS FOR AFFORDABLE HOUSING, WANTS TO MAKE ALL 10-YEAR PLANS TO END HOMELESSNESS VIABLE. PHOTO BY KEN DEAN.

fordable housing incentive programs. The measure had support from the Low Income Housing Alliance, the Washington Association of Cities, and the Business Industry Association of Washington, which Springer called "one of the most unholy alli-

ances in Olympia. They never agree on anything."

Housing Committee Chairman Mark Miloscia (D-Federal Way) agrees that housing advocates need to bring the for-profit world on board, saying that all parties involved must commit to a tangible goal — such as providing affordable housing for all within 20 years — before talking solutions.

Other issues have champions outside Olympia: Bill Gates Sr. throws his weight behind education, for example, and King County Executive Ron Sims stumps for the environment. Miloscia says he needs similar help from the big population centers to get things done.

"I need them to tell the governor that it's one of their top three issues," he says. "If I don't have Seattle and King County out here rattling the cages, then no one will." ■

HOTEL, Continued from Page 1

where people can afford to live in decent housing with their families."

Those rallying cheered on the mayor as he made a promise to everyone in attendance. "We're going to win this battle, and we're going to win this war."

Erik Van Rossum, who is one of the UNITE HERE Local 8 coordinators of the rally, said the goal of the rally was to "raise awareness" and help workers "lift one another above the poverty line."

Union official Rick Sawyer said the Westin fight will "set the benchmark" for hotels and their workers all across Seattle. "This is not just an issue that affects hotel workers," he said. "It affects the whole community."

UNITE HERE stands for the Union of Needletrades, Industrial and Textile Employees and the Hotel Employees and Restaurant Employees International Union. ■

[Resource]
Learn more about Voters for Affordable Housing by visiting their website at www.housingvoters.org.

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Washington Breast & Cervical Health Program

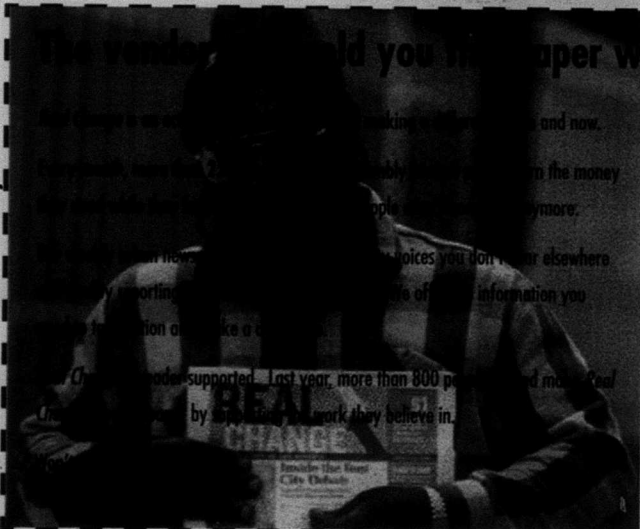


The Washington Breast and Cervical Health Program (WBCHP) is dedicated to increasing access to healthcare for all women. We provide access to high quality mammograms and women's health exams for women ages 40-64.

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