

REAL CHANGE

ISSUES • INSIGHT • IMPACT

SCAN-Do

Public access channel gets back to business

By CYDNEY GILLIS
Staff Reporter

Forget free speech for the sake of free speech: these days, Seattle's public-access TV station is all about "products and services."

The shift in attitude is one of many changes taking place at the Seattle Community Access Network, which is working to meet the city's demand that it reinvent itself.

Among the changes, SCAN is moving to an all-digital format, remodeling its studios, charging volunteer producers new membership fees, and creating a long-term business plan — one in which a funkadelic music program or homespun talk show are the "products."

Executive director Ann Suter is also stepping down at the end of September, though Suter, who has worked for SCAN three years, says it has nothing to do with the changes.

SCAN provides classes, studios, and equipment for people to produce TV shows, which air on Comcast's channel 77. This spring, the station's staff and dozens of its 250 volunteer producers fought hard to stop a huge budget cut proposed in the city's franchise renewal negotiations with Comcast Cable.

The public outcry led the Seattle City Council to actually increase SCAN's budget (from \$660,000 to \$700,000 a year) by increasing a city tax imposed on cable subscribers. But, in a contract that started June 1, the city also stipulated SCAN become a more professional, self-sustaining non-profit.

While SCAN and its board spend the summer wrestling with how to do this, and whether or not it will stay in the facility that Comcast deeded over to it just off Aurora Avenue North, the station is remodeling its two studios with \$188,000 in capital funding it got in the new deal.

New digital equipment is on order, Suter says, and a third, very small studio will open in January. While the station is currently open only eight hours

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LINDE KNIGHTON SAYS HER LEFT-OF-CENTER WASHINGTON STATE PROGRESSIVE PARTY HAS A LOT IN COMMON WITH LIBERTARIANS AND OTHER THIRD PARTIES: "IT'S BEEN A REALLY HARD ROAD FOR ALL OF US" TO GET RESPECT AND MEDIA ATTENTION. PHOTO BY MARK SULLO.

I'll Scratch Your Back...

Third parties try bridging differences for their own survival

BY LYDIA DePILLIS
Contributing Writer

A year and a half ago, the Bellevue Public Library played host to an odd gathering: members of Washington's minor parties, from Libertarians to Freedom Socialists, getting together to start a discussion about how they could help each other get noticed.

Major party status, earned by gaining five percent in a statewide vote, puts a group — at least officially — on par with the Democrats and Republicans as a force to be reckoned with. An Eastern Washington Libertarian called the meeting after his party lost that distinction, and people in attendance agreed that collaboration was needed to give voters more choices than just red or blue.

Nothing formal came out of the gathering except a list of names and email addresses. But in the months leading up to November elections, a number of third-party candidates are struggling to move out of the shadow of the Democrats and Republicans and are turning to each other for help.

"It's been a really hard road for all of us," says Linde Knighton, a Progressive

Party candidate for state representative in the 43rd district, who has called the loose group the Third Party Coalition. "What's really brought us together is that we've been treated so badly."

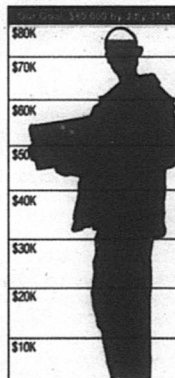
Knighton barely qualified for the race, since she wasn't aware that

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Take us to the Top

Last week, generous readers helped move the summer fund drive forward with another \$14,735 in donations and pledges, bringing us to a total of \$376,235 raised since June 1.

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AUGUST 9 - 15, 2006

PROFIT SNEERING

Thanks to war and poor U.S. policies, oil companies are making bank. Let's take 'em to task.

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Seeing the devastation wrought by mountain-removal mining, an activist brings the fight to stop it to Seattle.

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Black Gold

Oil companies are gulping millions because of war and economic uncertainty. Let's bite back

By JOHN R. BURBANK
Economic Opportunity Institute

Our state legislature has the power to impose a windfall profits tax on the big oil companies doing business in Washington.

Two weeks ago the papers reported that Exxon's profit for three months exceeded \$10 billion, 40 percent greater than a year ago. BP's profits were over \$7 billion. Shell's were \$6 billion.

These windfall profits shouldn't be any surprise. First we have the Middle East, with Iraq in civil war, George W. Bush threatening Iran, and bombs falling on Israel and Beirut. Next we have our inability to curb our own consumption of oil, while new industrial giants like China and India need more oil to fuel their economic growth. And third, we have the U.S. thumbing its nose at global warming, carbon dioxide emissions, and the need for renewable energy.

Who benefits from this situation? The major oil-producing companies. When the spot market price of crude oil goes up, Exxon wants us to believe that it is out of their hands. But Exxon produces more crude oil than the Middle East kingdoms of Qatar, Oman, and Kuwait combined. Of all companies and countries combined, Shell is the seventh-largest producer of crude oil. BP is in the top dirty dozen as well.

It is in the interest of oil companies to have an unstable Middle East, because this drives up the price (but not the actual cost) of the crude oil they produce. It is in their interest to have demand go up while supply stagnates. It is in their interest to keep refinery capacity tight, because this bottleneck ensures a high price for gasoline. It is in their interest to discourage renewable resources, because this would threaten their monopoly on energy production.

So when George Bush decided early in his presidency to purchase oil for the "strategic oil reserves," he was doing the oil companies a favor by decreasing available fuel for businesses and consumers. And when Bush threatens Iran, he is doing the oil companies a favor by adding uncertainty to the oil futures market and driving up oil prices.

Wouldn't it be nice to have a President who truly looked after the interests of the American people rather than the profits of the corporate few? Keep dreaming. That's why the talk of a windfall profits tax on oil is just that: talk. Nothing like this will happen inside the beltway of Washington D.C. with the current buffoons in power. But we can do something right here in our own state.

Our state legislature has the power to impose a windfall profits tax on the big oil companies doing business in Washington. Right now, people and businesses are sending ten of millions of dollars a day out of our state's economy to pay for oil company revenues. A state windfall profits tax would bring in an estimated \$600 million a year or more. It would be triggered when the average annual retail price of gasoline exceeds \$1.75, which is about 50 percent more than the oil companies have stated they need for normal investment and returns to shareholders. The tax would be paid on corporate profits allocated to Washington state and rise by two percent for every 10-cent increase over \$1.75. Fifteen oil giants would pay the tax annually, alongside the standard business and occupation tax.

Our state legislature has the power to impose a windfall profits tax on the big oil companies doing business in Washington. We could channel windfall profits into rapid and convenient mass

transit and trains, to get us out of our cars. We could retrofit schools, libraries, and other public facilities to save energy, lowering long-term costs to taxpayers and slowing global warming. We could mitigate the high cost of fuel for schools, other public facilities, and private businesses.

But is gasoline at \$3, \$4, or \$5 a gallon a big deal? You will hear people say that in Europe, gas is a lot more expensive than here. They're right. It is about double our cost in the United Kingdom and Norway. But the difference is that the majority of the revenue goes to taxes that fund the public transportation system, with trains that go 100 miles per hour and subways and trolley cars that get people from home to work easily. Here, more and more of the cost is finding its way into profits and CEO compensation. That's how Exxon repurchased \$23 billion in shares last year, driving up the value of its remaining stock, while giving its outgoing CEO a \$400 million pension package. No oil companies will build a good transit system or help jumpstart the renewable energy industry. But we can, by using their windfall profits to enhance our quality of life. That's a lot better than enhancing the profits of Exxon, the pay package of Shell's CEO, and the treasury of Saudi Arabia. ■

John R. Burbank is founder and executive director of the Economic Opportunity Institute (eoionline.org) and a syndicated columnist for the daily News Tribune in Tacoma. He also speaks Finnish and has published in the Journal of Finnish Studies.

[Take Action]
If you want to support the Campaign to Hold Big Oil Accountable, email comments@wataxfairness.org or go to wataxfairness.org.



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 StreetWriters 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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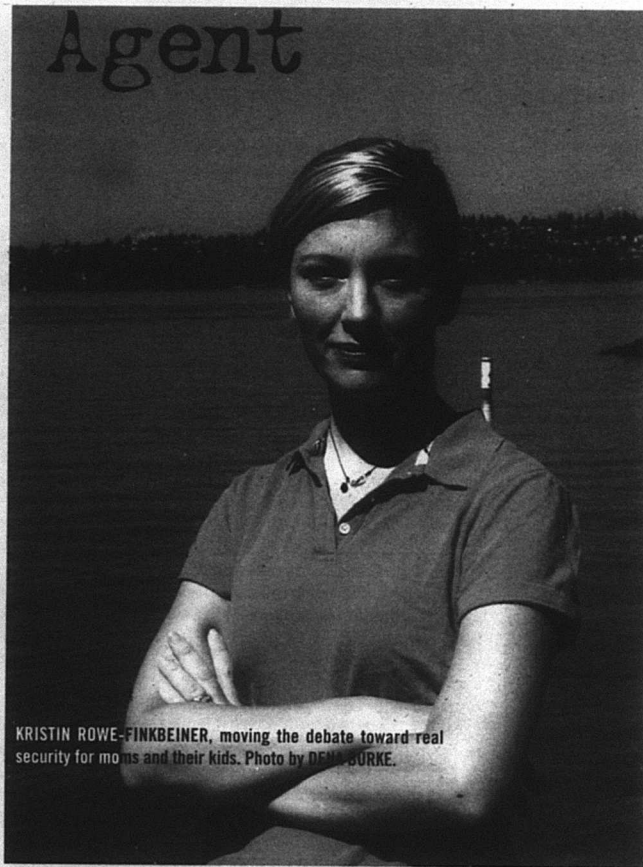
Change Agent

Mother and activist Kristin Rowe-Finkbeiner is fighting for paid maternity leave, affordable child-care, and true family-friendly workplace environments. She has written *The F Word: Feminism in Jeopardy*, co-written *The Motherhood Manifesto*, which is being made into a documentary, and cofounded the organization Moms Rising (www.momsrising.org).

Rowe-Finkbeiner describes Moms Rising as "a ladder to empowerment." With almost 60,000 members and 50 aligned organizations, it provides opportunities to share stories and avenues for political activism. It is currently promoting a ceasefire petition to media executives to stop the Mommy Wars, the ineffective debate about whether a mother's place is at home or in the workforce. In its place, Moms Rising wants to begin a dialogue on real issues, such as fair wages and affordable health care. "All moms are working moms, whether they are employed or not," says Rowe-Finkbeiner.

"There has been a bipartisan ignoring of the issue," laments Rowe-Finkbeiner, but gradually national politicians are addressing it. Sen. Hillary Clinton highlighted Moms Rising in a speech at the Take Back America Conference in June.

—Dena Burke



KRISTIN ROWE-FINKBEINER, moving the debate toward real security for moms and their kids. Photo by DENA BURKE.

Just Heard...

Up high, down low

Which way to go on the Alaskan Way Viaduct: elevated structure or tunnel? Depends on whom you ask.

A non-partisan group, the No Tunnel Alliance, will hold an open meeting today, Aug. 9, at 7 p.m. at University Baptist Church, to put forth reasons why a tunnel option should be grounded. (That doesn't necessarily mean they want an elevated structure.)

The meeting comes on the heels of an Aug. 8 transportation committee meeting of the City Council, where councilmembers were given an update on four potential options for elevated structures that would seek to manage traffic during a viaduct replacement. Each of the four options, the council was informed, would detract in some way from the waterfront.

Even still, to Sally Bagshow, president of Allied Arts, replacing the elevated structure is the way to go. "We have the opportunity," Bagshow told councilmembers, "to make this city the most beautiful city in the world."

Waxing about taxing

Nobody likes taxes, but somebody's gotta pay. And starting July 2007, the people paying will be employers. And those looking for parking spaces.

The City Council voted on Aug. 7 to impose an employee tax, making firms that gross \$50,000 or more annually pay \$25 for each employee. Drivers seeking to park in commercial lots will experience a tax that starts at 5 percent next year and culminates in 10 percent in 2009.

These taxes are meant to accompany a property levy the City Council will place on the November ballot. The proposed levy lift, to take effect in January, would have the owner of a \$400,000 house paying roughly \$155 a year. Passage of the levy would inject \$36.7 million into funding for transportation repairs.

—Rosette Royale

Driving slowly

It's been three months since Waste Management reached a late-hour agreement with 350 garbage truck drivers serving Seattle and several Eastside cities. And since the company has yet to enact the wage increases that were part of that deal, the workers could be on strike starting Wednesday, says Dan Berger, secretary-treasurer of Teamsters Local 174.

"By the wee hours of [Wednesday], we will have a signed agreement or we will have pickets," says Berger.

They'll get their contract, says WM manager Jerry Hardebeck, who attributes the delay to the company's waiting for Local 174 to settle an issue of job transfers with another local. Hardebeck says WM will sign, and other union's workers can come see him "if there's ever a time when they feel their rights were being impinged upon."

—Adam Hyla

Let it Be Known

Activist spreads news of mountaintop-removal mining, a "sin"

By Lydia DePillis
Contributing Writer

[More info]
Learn more about the devastation caused by mountaintop-removal mining at the website of the Ohio Valley Environmental Coalition: www.ohvec.org.

Corina Lang astride her car emblazoned with anti-mining messages. Photo by Lydia DePillis.



Corina Lang didn't grow up in a state where mining companies blow the tops off mountains. But after seeing the results of a practice that has devastated rural Appalachia, she decided to help in the best way she could: getting in a truck and driving across the country to tell people about it.

Federal regulators effectively stopped mountaintop-removal mining — a technique in which huge machines strip up to 10 square miles of dirt off a mountain to get at the coal underneath — in 1977, with the Clean Water Act. But in 2002, the Bush Administration changed the rules: the Act's definition of "waste" no longer includes the trees and rubble that pour into valleys as fill, contaminating groundwater in areas that often include houses and schools. The result, as scarred landscapes and ruined communities attest, has made for both a human and an environmental disaster.

Lang is matter of fact about the destruction, but she speaks with a quiet frustration. "It looks like something out of the Loraax," Dr. Seuss's parable of conservation, says Lang, her weathered face disbelieving. "This is never going to come back. Never."

Although she's helped out environmental causes

around her home in southern Illinois, Lang — who has a degree in zoology and has worked as a substitute teacher, veterinary technician, horse stable manager, and wine steward — hasn't always made environmental activism her life. She learned about mountaintop removal at a conference organized by Heartwood, a coalition of environmental organizations east of the Mississippi. In between jobs, she decided to take the news on the road and last week swung through Seattle in the middle of a five-week odyssey around the United States with her dog and a truck covered with her anti-mining message.

She's been giving a few presentations on the issue and distributing literature and will slow down on the highway to give drivers a long look at the websites and facts lettered on her light brown truck. But most of her outreach is done person-to-person, at gas stations and campsites, farmers' markets and street fairs — and sometimes, as with a recent stop at the Fremont Sunday market, people already knew about the problem. She asks passerby to write to their legislators — there's already a bill in Congress that would put a stop to the practice — as well as Oprah, who featured the issue in *O* magazine and could, says Lang, give it even more prominence with a segment on her TV show.

Liberal Seattle might seem like an easy place to get sympathy for an environmental catastrophe. But you don't have to be a Democrat to get mad about fewer jobs (most of mountaintop removal is done by machine), perpetual noise, polluted streams, and barren slopes.

"It doesn't matter what your politics are. Most people think this is wrong," says Lang. She's gotten a little funding for her trip, and much of her support has come from churches in the southern states affected by the practice.

"Many people there have strong faith. They believe this is a sin against God." ■

The Lucky Ones

Real Change vendors who "win" lottery settle in for long wait

By ISRAEL BAYER
Contributing Writer

On June 1, Susan Ford, along with at least two other *Real Change* vendors, won the lottery. Unfortunately, the lottery Ford won didn't have monetary value, nor did it have any real effect on her life — at least not for the next 12 to 21 months.

In May, an eye-opening 5,949 applicants applied for a lottery spot on



Susan Ford, a *Real Change* vendor, won a Seattle Housing Authority lottery for a Section 8 housing voucher. Photo by Brooke Kempner.

the Seattle Housing Authority's Section 8 housing voucher waiting list, nearly 50 percent more than the spaces available. Four thousand applicants received a number on the current waiting list, which had been frozen since July 2003.

Ford's Lottery number is 1,045. According to a letter sent by SHA, the number will remain with her application until it gets to the top of her waiting list.

"I was kind of shocked, because I thought I got a Section 8 voucher," says Ford. "At first I was excited, it was a big deal, but then it wasn't a big deal. In theory, I could have my own place by then."

Ford has spent most of her life as a certified nurse in the home health care system. She ended up on the streets two years ago after life took a series of turns for the worse.

"I want to go back to work, but you can't work because you don't have housing," she says. "Nobody is going to hire a person who doesn't have a home address."

Five hundred lucky winners can expect to receive vouchers for housing

within the next six months, while the remainder will have to wait anywhere from six months to two years, according to Scott Freatel, a communications specialist with SHA.

Once their number comes up, participants must find rental housing on the open market. They'll pay 30 percent of their income for rent and utilities; the balance is paid for with the voucher.

Of the 1,949 remaining applicants who didn't receive a place on the waiting list, it's a hard-knock life. It could be as long as two years before another lottery takes place, says Freatel.

"Nearly 200 people are remaining from the tail end of the last list, and should get into housing by late August, when applicants from the new list will be processed," he says.

"I don't like the idea of a 30-month wait," says John Porter, another number holder with *Real Change*. "But I'm thankful that I'm on it." Porter, a 16-year Air Force veteran, currently lives in transitional housing.

When asked what Ford looks forward to when she gets housing, she says, "I want to take a nice, long, hot bath and read a book." ■

Short Takes

Keeping an eye on Eyman

When the initiative-happy Tim Eyman heard the Washington Secretary of State intended to validate signatures he turned in to get I-917 — an initiative to snip car-tax taxes to \$30 — on the November ballot, he sent his lead signature gatherer to watch over the process. When local business, labor, and transportation groups heard that, they decided it might be a good idea to keep a close watch on Eyman.

"It's really important to have citizens checking in on the process," says Rachel Smith, field director of the Transportation Choices Coalition.

Signatures gathered for I-917 have come under increasing scrutiny since they were handed over in early July. It was then that Eyman claimed that he was turning over 300,000 signatures. A count by the Secretary of State could only identify 266,606. Eyman shot back with an accusation that, somehow, the lower estimate was due to signatures disappearing while in the office's possession.

By taking a random sampling of the signatures in hand, the Secretary of State's office determined that 18 percent were invalid. In other words: the valid John and Joanna Hancocks that had been gathered fell short of the 224,880 necessary to ensure the initiative a slot on the ballot. Now, every single signature that was turned in has to be validated, a process that will take at least until September.

Thus far, the process of signature validation, says Smith, has not been the most exciting. Signature counters have been working from 6 a.m. until 9:30 p.m., says Smith. Volunteers have been taking shifts to watch counters as they pore over bound volumes of signatures that are then crosschecked with a computer database. With Eyman's people there, looking over the counters' shoulders, Smith says it was imperative to make sure that no fraudulent or duplicate signatures found themselves being counted as valid.

"We're down there to make sure there's no funny business," says Smith. "We don't necessarily trust Tim Eyman."

—Rosette Royale



Little lights

Laura Coffin & Arianne Bergman with their message of world peace and forgiveness were among 1,500 people at the Hiroshima to Hope Annual Peace Event Aug. 6, honoring the victims of the bombings at Hiroshima and Nagasaki. Photo by Elliot Stoller.

Harold Watkins, 1962-2006

Harold Watkins, a housing activist in Seattle throughout the 1990s, passed away in Oregon on June 28th. His generous spirit and big heart will be missed by many.

We each remember well the day we met Harold in the spring of 1991. Along with Harold, on May 19 we joined with Operation Homestead, a direct-action housing activist organization, to reopen the abandoned Arion Court apartments at 1814 Minor Ave. in Seattle. Harold was one of the first people inside the building and one of the last to leave five days later. He worked tirelessly to get the lights and power running and later helped keep together a group of people who campaigned to obtain the building for permanent low-income housing.

For us and Harold, our experience that day was a launching pad for years of volunteer work to protect apartments like these from the wrecking ball. With homelessness and rents on the rise and buildings being cleared out by their landlords, Seattle was rapidly losing low-income housing. Direct action takeovers of abandoned buildings were a way for self-motivated people like Harold to take matters into their own hands and create solutions.

Harold's commitment to the Arion Court Apartments was remarkable. During the planning of the renovations, Harold attended weekly meetings for over a year to assist with the architectural and structural rehabilitation of the building. He also assisted the

Low Income Housing Institute (the building's owner) in developing and implementing a plan for resident management of the building. When the building reopened in 1994 and provided housing for nearly 50 people, we recall Harold beaming with joy from the results of his hard work.

After the successful effort to reclaim the Arion Court,

Harold helped to found the Homestead Organizing Project, an organization dedicated to renovating abandoned housing for use by people who were homeless. The project received City of Seattle funding and later affiliated as a program of the Church Council of Greater Seattle.

Harold was a key leader in the establishment of the project's first property, the Cherry Street Housing Cooperative, two formerly abandoned duplexes in Seattle's Central District. These dwellings provided housing for over 100 people between 1994-2004. Harold was a

member of the cooperative, contributing hundreds of hours to renovations and self-management.

Harold left Seattle six years ago to return to Oregon, where he was born.

Harold is survived by a daughter in Seattle, Sophie Segel, and family members in Ore. A memorial service will be held in Clackamas, Oregon on Aug. 12 at 1 p.m. For more information, please contact Ginger Segel at (206) 860-2034.

—Jim True and Jon Gould

In the Mix

Seniors' housing moves up to a more affluent clientele

By CYDNEY GILLIS
Staff Reporter

"It isn't appropriate to put younger people in proximity to older people. A 25-year-old is interested in getting laid and listening to loud music, and that's not what an old lady is interested in."

— Jim Joelson,
Sunrise Manor
resident

Sometimes you have to do what's necessary in order to survive. But what the Seattle Senior Housing Program did back in 2003 hasn't made life any easier for the city's lowest-income elderly or disabled.

Seattle voters created the program in 1981 with a 20-year bond of \$48 million. Three years ago, with the bond exhausted and no federal subsidies to maintain the program's 23 buildings, SSHP reorganized itself, moving from a model in which rent was based on a third of the tenant's income to a model of four rent tiers, which currently range from \$231 to \$672 a month.

The goal was to make the buildings, which have about 1,000 elderly and disabled residents, pay for themselves by renting more units to retirees who could carry more of the costs.

Three years later, SSHP operates in the black, clearing more than \$900,000 last quarter on rental income of \$3.5 million. But success has its price: each quarter, there are fewer of the poorest tenants with incomes below \$10,900, or 20 percent of the area's median income.

As those tenants pass away or move on, their places are taken by residents in three, slightly higher income brackets of up to \$43,600 a year. To reach self-sufficiency, says Judith Anderson, SSHP's senior property manager, the program needs to meet an income-mix target in which no more than 31 percent of the program's tenants have incomes at or below \$10,900.

As of the quarter that ended June 30, the lowest-income tenants made up 38 percent of SSHP's residents, down from 41 percent last quarter and 43 percent the quarter before.

In the meantime, the program is about 5 percent short of the residents it needs in each of the next two income brackets (targeted at \$16,350 and \$21,800 per year, respectively), but slightly over its 4 percent target for the top-income tenants.

"Slowly but surely, we are getting there," Anderson says of the income mix. But, "A lot of people coming in right now are lower income."

No one who qualifies will be turned away, she says, but there are other programs offered by the Seattle Housing Authority and private groups for the lowest-income applicants.

"People have the perception that we're low-income housing," Anderson says. "We're not. We're affordable housing."

The 1981 city ordinance that created the program designates the housing for low-income persons, but that was before the 2003 reorganization. Keith Gormezano, an activist resident of the program, says to meet its income-mix targets, the program could and should take more disabled people with Section 8 rent vouchers, which, in theory, would provide full rental income at the top tier.

Gormezano adds that the 1981 ordinance states the program is for low-income elderly or disabled residents. A 1982 agreement with the city, however, stipulates a mix of 90 percent elderly (62 and over) and 10 percent disabled under 62.

It's a mix The Advocates, a group representing SSHP's elderly residents, insisted the program return to in 2001 after a mentally ill 34-year-old killed his girlfriend at Sunrise Manor in Ballard.

Gormezano calls it discrimination, particularly against the homeless, who often have disabilities. Jim Joelson, a Sunrise Manor resident and president of The Advocates during SSHP's reorg, says the housing must be kept for the elderly.

"It isn't appropriate to put younger people in proximity to older people," Joelson says. "A 25-year-old is interested in getting laid and listening to loud music, and that's not what an old lady is interested in."

As far as rental vouchers, Anderson says the program has 150 and cannot get any more. But SSHP has another five years to meet its income-mix targets and a waiting list of roughly 300 names, though she notes most people on the list are under 62 and disabled.

To find qualified seniors 62 and older, she uses free or low-cost advertising such as putting up flyers at community centers, placing ads in neighborhood newspapers, or posting notices online at craigslist.org.

"I'm stubborn about spending any money because it will raise the rents," Anderson says. "I'm doing everything I can to keep rents affordable." ■

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On Familiar Ground

Today Show reporter Mike Leonard on cross-country travel with his lively octogenarian parents

"Most of us are told we can't do things, and expected to fulfill a certain role, and when we strive beyond the role, we get squashed down pretty quickly. So [this story is] about getting back up, and getting back up, and believing you can do more than what people believe you can."

It is not down in any map; true places never are.

—Herman Melville

By ROBIN LINDLEY
Contributing Writer

In late 2003, Marge, 82, and Jack Leonard, 87, were despondent after moving from San Diego to an isolated rental house near Phoenix. Their son, NBC *Today Show* reporter Mike Leonard, was troubled by the misery of his usually lively parents.

Leonard, known for quirky features stories (what it's like to be named Joe Blow; where lost socks go), came up with a unique solution after a fitful night: a last-lap, transcontinental trip by recreational vehicle, concluding in Chicago for the birth of Marge and Jack's first great-grandchild. Against the sage advice of his wife, Cathy, Leonard rented two RVs and brought along his adult children, Kerry, Brendan, Matt, and wife Margarita.

Leonard chronicled the 8,000-mile trip in his acclaimed new book, *The Ride of Our Lives: Roadside Lessons of an American Family* (Ballantine Books). The Leonard clan traveled through the desert southwest, the bayous and small towns of the southeast, and then up the eastern seaboard to Marge and Jack's New Jersey hometown and then to New London, Conn., where Jack was stationed during the war, and where a child they lost rests.

After 60 years of marriage, the hopeful and engaging Jack and the downbeat but funny and salty Marge seem an odd match. Leonard reports a sample exchange:

Jack: "We should have my new boss, Fred, and his wife, Connie, over for dinner."

Marge: "Fred's an asshole."

Jack: "Come on, Marge, you can't say that just because he wears Harvard cufflinks. And why don't you like Connie?"

Marge: "Connie thinks her shit is cake."

On the road, both Jack and Marge are

indifferent to natural wonders and historical sites like the Grand Canyon and the Alamo but perk up at the sight of familiar franchises: Office Depot, McDonald's, Costco. "Look Marge, another Subway."

In passages that are by turns funny and poignant, Leonard shows that his dad Jack is not a pushover, but a resilient person who overcame many setbacks, and his mom Marge is not just wary and funny, but a protector and fighter. And Leonard writes frankly of his own failures and how a dream of creative work led to a career as an award-winning national broadcast journalist, and now as a bestselling author.

Leonard recently talked about his new book, his family, and his own journey.

Real Change: How did this RV odyssey with your parents come about?

Mike Leonard: They were living in California and moved sight-unseen into a rental home in Phoenix. [W]hen they moved there, they were isolated. They couldn't walk anywhere, had nobody to talk to. I felt their spirits sagging. My dad was 87 and my mom was 82. I thought, "They're a couple of live wires, but they made the wrong decision and the next stop is a nursing home." I didn't know what to do because I was in Chicago [with] kids, a job, and all that.

I went to bed that night and... woke up the next morning with this strong sense that I had to get an RV and pick them up [for a] last-lap adventure across the country.

This was December [2003], and I wanted to plan a journey so we could swing through Chicago when my daughter had her baby. My wife said no, but I had to do it. I researched how to rent RVs. I called to take time off.



A month and a half later, we were on the road.

RC: And you wrote your first book about this trip.

Leonard: When the journey was over, we had 50 to 60 hours of videotape. I transcribed it on legal pads, and culled that down to four four-minute pieces [for] television. The *Today Show* pieces aired to a huge reaction. People kept saying, something in your parents is like my parents.

I sat on the porch and wrote this book [over] eight or nine months. It took a lot for me because I was a lousy student. Five years in high school, and I never got good grades in English or any course. Even though I wrote for NBC, I never thought of myself as a writer.

RC: You've been praised as a natural storyteller.

Leonard: I knew the story was good. The ups and downs of my family mirror what happens in most families. Most of us are told we can't do things, and [are] expected to fulfill a certain role, and when we strive beyond the role, we get squashed down pretty quickly. So it's about getting back up, and getting back up, and believing you can do more than what people believe you can.

I didn't know the book would get so much into my life. You can see I've picked up qualities of my mother and my father. My father's a resilient character who gets back up when he's knocked down, and that helped me. And I'm wary, like my mom. I see the world as a fighter, like [her]. I played hockey and boxed. I'm a combination of the two.

And I said I was a dumbass in high school, and the reader would want to know if you were a dumbass in high school, how did you write a book, how did you get a job in TV? And that's why I... explain how I got where I got.

RC: It seems you've picked up lessons

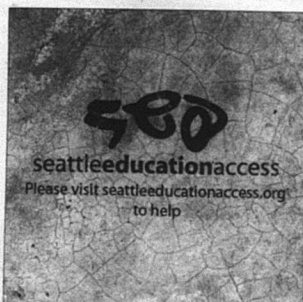
Mike Leonard, reporter with the *Today Show*, takes to the road with his folks. Photo courtesy of Mike Leonard.

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Continued from Previous Page

from your parents on resilience, persistence, and following your heart.

Leonard: When I was about 15 or 16, I felt destined to do something creative in life. In retrospect, maybe it was a wish— maybe because I was so unaccomplished in school. I didn't have any creative stripes on my sleeve. [When] I was rejected, it wasn't so much me being strong, but just getting back on my feet because I was heading home. I just knew I was going to be creative. So when I was in a non-creative job, searching titles or working construction, I had [to return] to something creative. The inevitability pushed me away from the comfort of earning a salary.

I keep telling my kids that, whatever you want to do, keep putting one foot ahead of the other and know you'll get there. Don't make it too defined. Don't say, "I'm going to be an anchor of the evening news."

Just say, "I'm going to work in the news business." You don't know if you'll be a writer or an editor. You'll find that along the way. Just keep going. If your goal is wise enough... you'll get there because that's your home. That's what happened to me. It looks like you're strong when you get up, but when you have no other choice, you just get up.

RC: And your parents are an influence.

Leonard: They are. I never remember them saying you're going to be great, but I never remember them saying you're not going to be great. I was getting D's, but I don't remember them saying you're doomed. We were always able to laugh. The horizon was wide open.

RC: Many books chart ways to follow your heart, but your story embodies it.

Leonard: I get a kick out of people who have read the book who say they are giving the book to their high school or college kids or to [a] 20-something daughter who wonders what she wants to do in life. In a sense, it's a blueprint. I didn't want to be preachy. I just said this is what happened, and this resulted. I hope people take our story as their story.

A friend in Atlanta said life is easy, but we make it hard. That's a profound thing. We all know basically what to do, but if we throw in ego or pride or fear, it muddies the equation [and] we're not quite as clear.

RC: How has your family responded to the book?

Leonard: I didn't let my parents read the book until [a week before its release].... With the ups and downs in their lives, I knew they'd come across as heroic figures. My father can't be deemed an optimist unless you see he's been knocked down, and then you know he's

resilient. You can't say he's resilient; you have to see why he's resilient. And my mom's a feisty character, but you have to see she's feisty because of the crap her dad pulled on her family. She decided to fight instead of give in, and yet without telling us, without dragging it up. She was a real wise-ass, making the Ex-Lax cake [for a teacher] and that stuff. She turned to humor and feistiness instead of caving in.

My dad said he cried when he read about his father because, he said, "Now people will know my dad." His dad worked digging ditches and ended up a supervisor in construction. Never saw his family again after he left Ireland. My dad has always wanted to praise people like that, and now, his dad who's been forgotten... will be seen by thousands as a strong and decent man. I think my dad cried because his parents finally got their due as immigrants who made a good life for him.

RC: How are your parents doing now?

Leonard: My dad's 89. He had cancer and they took off his ear, but he's still swinging away. My mom is 84. They're treated as semi-celebrities, which is a crazy thought.

RC: Your book shows the importance of one's family legacy.

Leonard: Yes. I love what my daughter Carrie said at the end, how some of the littlest things in life are the biggest. She was talking about the baby, but it's about everything. It's those little moments.

RC: Your children seem very impressive.

Leonard: They're all good kids. I think one thing that was helpful as they grew up is I wasn't afraid to show them my failures. I was still their dad. I was boss. But they knew that I had struggled, [and] I had failed a lot. And they weren't so afraid to fail themselves as long as they tried. Each of the kids has become creative because they aren't expected to [achieve] some false standard that I set, that I pretend to be somebody I'm not. They know I'm a screw-up, and I screw up everyday. I'm not a saint: I'm not the perfect son, not the perfect husband, not the perfect father. I make mistakes all the time. This trip wasn't a chivalrous act: I just had the opportunity, and I did it without thinking about it. ■



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City Park

As I came to work this morn
newbie, keyless in the dark
I found a concrete, bulkhead seat
near people sleeping by the door
as sow bugs and ants were scurrying
toiling before the dawn
with all that is, in full motion.
I sat and waited for the key
and writing under golden street lamps
saw a man approaching, distant
a youth, and from his affect
maybe homeless
long drum strapped along his side
dressed in many layered patterns
muted by the murky dark that lit by day
would have surely glowed a rainbow.
He was playing softly, gently
a beautiful drum beat melody
and seeing me changed trajectory.

Surrounded by my grocery bags,
a change of clothes and tools and tea
I thought of fear then settled,
settled,
sitting on a place of peace
knowing full well that only mine
will ever find a path to me
and watching his approach
the motion of his drawing close
intentful gait and almost here
putting hands in his pockets
at the very last moment he veered away
saying with his eyes of sadness
he had no change to give me.

—KRISTEN SPEXARTH

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Awkward moments, many at celebrations the families have together, are the stepping stones by which the reader of *Digging to America* crosses between families and cultures.

Digging to America
Ann Tyler
Alfred A. Knopf, 2006
Hardcover, 288 Pages, \$24.95

Review by SALLY JAMES
Contributing Writer

When two Korean orphans arrive in Baltimore, the airport walkway rings with a bell-like emotional tone. Love is in that thrum of sudden motherhood for two very different families, but there is also conflict. The pink swaddled bundles carry powerful questions into the homes of their adoptive families.

Ann Tyler takes us to the slippery slope of what it means to be something hyphenated. Are you Iranian-American? Are you Korean-American? What of your ancestors do you carry with you and what do you leave behind? Once you identify yourself as different from the Americans, for example, can you ever slither out of the corset you've created?

Grandmother Maryam Yazdan, who is herself an immigrant from Iran, brings a slanted and spicy narration to the journey of the Korean daughters and their parents.

Susan, her granddaughter, is named Susan because it resembles the name she had in Korea, Sooki, and because "it was a comfortable sound for Iranians to pronounce." The other family from the airport, the Donaldsons, trumpet a different attitude toward culture by leaving their daughter's name intact as Jin-Ho.

E Pluribus You

Mother Bitsy Donaldson compares herself to Ziba, Susan's mother. Narrator Maryam views Bitsy as sincere, and her confidence in her own parenting as misguided. Ziba often hesitates and questions her own parenting.

"Susan gets up so early. Seven," says Ziba.

"Seven! Count your blessings. Jin-Ho is up at five-thirty or six. But here's what you do, Ziba, nap," says Bitsy.

During the course of this conversation, Bitsy expresses shock that Ziba works outside the home. Bitsy asks: "How can you leave your baby?" and suddenly there's an awkward silence. Ziba isn't sure how to reply.

Awkward moments, many at celebrations the families have together, are the stepping stones by which the reader crosses between families and cultures. What makes the book richer is that Maryam, widowed, is forced by a romance to deeply examine her own prejudices and beliefs.

"Oh those Donaldsons, with their blithe assumptions that their way was the only way! Feed your daughter this and not that; let her watch those programs and not these. So American, they were," Maryam thinks at one point.

Maryam feels the Donaldson's arrogance is the arrogance of all Americans.

Contrary to any logic, she falls in love with Dave Donaldson, the grandfather of Jin-Ho, and that is part of the suspense that carries us through the second half of the novel. We are bystanders as she wars with her own

beloved prejudice, not sure she's ready to abandon it.

At one point, Dave comes and talks to Ziba about his romance with Maryam.

Ever so delicately, he is trying to find out what her dead husband was like. Ziba did not know him. Dave wonders if Maryam expects Dave to ask her son, Rami, about his mother's hand in marriage. Ziba laughs.

"A little spurt of a giggle escaped her. Now it was Dave's turn to blush. "Sorry, but what do I know?" he said.

"Well, or me either," she told him. "Maryam belongs to a completely different generation..."

This wise novel illuminates the many ways we see the world from different angles, cultures, and generations. It seems a miracle that any two people see the same way for long. Dave and Ziba, rather than being divided by their different cultures, are united by bafflement with Maryam.

In another lovely moment, we find out about the book's title.

Jin-Ho asks her grandfather, "Do you remember when Susan and I tried to dig a hole to China?"

"I remember it very well," Dave said. "Your dad sprained his ankle stepping into it after dark."

"So the kids in China," Jin-Ho said, "are they digging to America?"

Maybe they are, Dave tells her. Tyler shows us that the digging never stops. We keep digging, and we keep finding new ways of seeing our own cultural identity. ■

Sally James is a freelance writer living in Seattle.

Cameras, not Cant

Docurama Film Festival I
Various Directors

DVD review by LESTER GRAY
Arts Editor

Rachael Romera's lyrical reflections on a terrorized childhood prove to be one of the more stylized works in Full Frame, a collection of documentary shorts. Full Frame is one of 10 separate DVDs comprising Docurama's Film Festival I, a release of highly accomplished and award-winning documentaries.

Ms. Romera's autobiographical *In the Shadow of Eden* recounts her upbringing in the sparsely populated outback of Australia. There, her father, a man of aberrant psychology, subjected his daughter to various mental and physical abuses. Romera, a woman of considerable intellect, who even as a child had a uniquely strong sense of self and considerable skills of intellect and artistic vision, conveys a poignant story of violation and the pursuit of redemption.

Ms. Romera's style is more the exception than the rule. Most of these offerings derive their power from a studious avoidance of editorial bias. They are stories of human struggle, their complexity left intact, unburdened by rhetoric and finger-pointing explanations.

A case in point is *Omar and Pete*, a chronicle of two middle-aged felony offenders just released from the Maryland Penal system. Having spent most of their life behind bars, with little to no marketable skills, the transition to life on the outside for these men proves arduous, if not impossible. Fighting drug addiction and unfortunate choices of employment, Omar's passion to succeed is continually damped by harsh reality. Having witnessed his efforts and failures, respectively stupendous and heartrending, we accompany him to a parole

revocation hearing. Like those deciding his fate, the audience has an opportunity to make an evaluation as to whether Omar deserves to be a member of our society.

Two other works provide similar rare perspectives: payoffs on the filmmakers' investment of time and patience. *Aging Out* follows three young adults whose lives have been spent in the foster care system, moving from home to home. When they "age out," usually at 18, they must leave the nest, often with ambivalence. Like the subjects of *Omar and Pete*, they're without the basics — they don't even understand what they don't understand. In the *Police Tapes*, a compassionate, less sensational version of television's *Cops*, the camera crew follows the police as they cover cases from domestic disputes to homicides in a high crime area.

Most moving and certainly not without a point of view, *Broken Rainbow* tells the agonizing story of the Hopi and Navajo nations, uprooted from their means of sustenance when oil and other industrial goodies were discovered under their land. This several-decade long battle over relocation still continues.

Clearly evidenced by this collection are the profound changes, so long predicted, resulting from more affordable access to movie and video equipment. Because of the advent nearly 40 years ago of family albums consisting of 8 and super-8 film clips, personal histories are appearing. And with even consumer-grade videocameras able to shoot in low-light situations, tracking subjects into varied environs is more possible than ever. Now storytellers whose dispositions may not have been suitable to writing or painting see new possibilities, giving rise to more contributors and a wealth of perspectives. ■

The Festival's full list of titles is available at www.docuramafilmfestival.com.

Because of the advent nearly 40 years ago of family albums—consisting of eight and super eight film clips, personal histories are appearing. And with even consumer-grade videocameras able to shoot in low-light situations, tracking subjects into varied environs is more possible than ever.

A Comedy of Terrors

Adventures
in Irony



©Dr. Wes Browning

My favorite Shakespearean tragedy is the play I call *Mercutio, a Tragedy of About Six Scenes Cobbled Together from Romeo and Juliet*, by William Shakespeare.

I'm writing this the morning of Aug. 7, 61 years and more than a day after the dropping of "Little Boy" on Hiroshima. That event, in juxtaposition with recent history, no longer has the power to surprise me.

Consider this stupid quote from Osama bin Laden: "As I watched [in the eighties] the destroyed towers in Lebanon, it occurred to me [to] punish the unjust the same way [and] to destroy towers in America so it could taste some of what we are tasting and to stop killing our children and women." So the destruction of towers of Lebanon inspired him to want to destroy the World Trade Towers... to start killing... so that we will be inspired to... STOP killing? Why does he think we are so different from him?

Oh, right. He thinks we're different from him because he hears us telling ourselves so. He's a terrorist. He targets civilians cheaply using our own overgrown commercial airlines against us. We are not terrorists. We are noble soldiers who have earnestly invested some of our unique vast hoards to amass expensive precision war machines so that we can kill only combatants, except of course when civilians accidentally get in the way, which of course they always do, saddening us always.

CNN says this morning that so far, on this 27th day of fighting between Israel and Hezbollah, there have been 95 Israeli deaths, including 35 civilians, and 716 Lebanese deaths, mostly civilians. We are saddened by every one of those deaths, just as we are saddened by the non-terrorist unfortunate deaths of Hiroshima victims who got in the way of our non-terrorist justified war weapon which we dropped on them. Collateral damage is a bitch.

Some of you are probably thinking right now that I'm anti-Israel in all this mess and I want Israel to roll over and let Hezbollah annihilate it. I don't

want that at all. But before I discuss that, I want to talk about my favorite Shakespearean tragedy.

My favorite Shakespearean tragedy is the play I call *Mercutio, a Tragedy of About Six Scenes Cobbled Together from Romeo and Juliet*, by William Shakespeare. I call the whole play, *Romeo and Juliet, A Comedy*. What else can you call it when the so-called hero and hero-whine are candidates for the top Darwin Awards of their century?

How is "melancholy" Romeo, "Montague's only son," a tragic hero? What heroic stature does he have at the outset of the conflict? He is heroically melancholy? He is heroically hard up? He is heroically able to pounce around with a sword and pretend he knows how to use it? He is, heroically, a stupid fish? How do we pin down this guy's tragic flaw? The same way we pin down Juliet's tragic flaw — we lock them both together in a crypt without any air holes and wave generally in the direction of it. Oh, look now! We don't have to; they've killed themselves with their mutual shared stupidity, saving us the trouble. There are your tragic flaws; they're both perfectly dead, thus imperfectly alive.

Meanwhile, Mercutio has three things going for him. 1) He actually can use the sword, although nobody's perfect, especially when Romeo's on the team. 2) He actually has a brain and sense. 3) He knows they're all ludicrous, and he has a heroic gift for saying so.

We have no trouble finding Mercutio's fatal tragic flaw. In spite of knowing what I know, namely that Romeo is a fish ("... flesh, flesh, how art thou fishified!" —Mercutio to Romeo), in spite of correctly deducing that Romeo is a madman, Mercutio remains faithful to his crazy stupid friend until his very end when he is stuck, thanks to help from the very same stupid friend he is faithful to.

So where was I? I was going to say I can't turn my back on stupid humans either. But I can still call down a pox on all their houses anyway.

I hope that makes sense to someone. ■

Overheard in the Bus

Bus Chick,
Transit
Authority



Carla Saulter

Saturday after-
noon, southbound
16

Woman, to the
man: "How did
you tattoo your-
self? Never mind
— I don't want
to know."

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Monday evening, north-
bound 48:

A woman and man
in the seats across from me are
getting to know each other.

Woman: "Oh, my God,
you're funny." [short pause]
"Take me home with you."

Man: "No."
Woman: "You got a wife?"
Man: "No."
Woman: "Then take me home with you." [an-
other short pause] "I'll cut your hair."

Tuesday evening, westbound 545:
A man and two women, probably coworkers,
are making small talk on their commute home
from work.

Woman A: "Where did you go to grad school
again?"

Woman B: "At University of Oregon."
Woman A: "Oh. Is that next to California, or
am I missing a state?"

Wednesday, midday, westbound 10:
Two women get on at 15th and John, talking
music.

Woman A, to Woman B: "I've got all kinds of
stuff. I've got everything from Shania Twain to
Kid 'n Play. Gospel, hip-hop, every genre. The
sad thing is, since I'm not going to have kids or
anything, when I die, my music collection is just
going to go in the trash."

Thursday afternoon, eastbound 4
A group of teenagers is cutting up in the back.
The bus reaches a crowded stop, where another
group of teenagers is waiting to get on.

Girl in back: "Lord, my sister's about to get
on this bus."

Boy in back: "Oh, that one with the back-
pack?"

Girl: "No, the one with the pajama-bottom-
lookin' pants and corner-store flip flops."

Saturday, noon, northbound 36:
A man and a woman are sitting in the elevated
seats behind me, apparently discussing family
business.

Man: "I have to communicate all that stuff
through Mom. I can tell her stuff to tell him, but
if I say, 'Hey Jason...', that's breaking the no-con-
tact order."

Woman: "What no-contact order?"

Man: "For saying I was going to kill him,
which I did. I said I was going to blow his f-ing
head off for chasing me around the house with a
machete."

Saturday afternoon, southbound 16
A man and woman who are both sitting in the
back are making conversation to pass the time.

Woman, to the man: "How did you tattoo your-
self? Never mind — I don't want to know." ■



Fri., July 21, 10:29 p.m., 2900 Block
W. Government Way.

Officers were dispatched to a report of a man cutting his own neck with a knife. Upon arrival they saw the subject, a transient Native American male aged 37, leaning up against a Metro bus stop. One of the officers recognized him from a previous contact and the officer could see that he was bleeding from the right side of his neck. Subject was intoxicated, and was saying, "My head told me to do it!" The officer asked him what he had used to cut his neck, and subject gave him a bloody pair of kids' scissors. The officer summoned Seattle Fire Department to the scene, and they arrived and treated the man's injuries. An ambulance was called, and American Medical Response arrived and transported the man to Harborview Medical Center. The officer followed and filled out a committal form for the subject and wrote an incident report. The subject was admitted into Harborview for treatment; the scissors were disposed of in a biohazard container.

Thurs., July 27, 1:43 p.m., S. Jackson
St, Metro Shelter.

Suspect, a transient Native American male aged 43, was contacted for trespassing/camping at the Metro shelter in the 650 block of S. Jackson St. Upon contact the suspect gave a false name, but the officer knew her from prior contacts, and he ran a name check on her. After a radio check, officer found a current SMC warrant for prostitution. This was verified, and she was taken into custody. A search turned up a crack pipe located in her purse, which field-tested positive for cocaine. Suspect was booked into King County Jail.

Thurs., July 27, 2:45 p.m., Third Ave.,
Downtown Emergency Service Cen-
ter (DESC).

Officers responded to the report of an assault at the DESC, and upon arrival contacted the victim, a transient white female aged 48. She stated she had been sitting at a table in the shelter and got up to get a snack. She left her things at the table, and when she came back there was a bag on the chair she had been sitting on. She pushed the chair with the bag away, and grabbed another chair to sit on. At that point the suspect, a Black male aged 49, came over and accused her of going through his stuff — meaning the bag on the chair. He then grabbed the victim's bag and threw it. Another client of the shelter picked up her bag and gave it back — the suspect continued to argue with her about her going through his stuff, and attempted to grab her bag to throw it again. She held onto her bag so he could not grab hold of it, and that is when suspect punched her in the left eye. They struggled some more, but suspect was gone when the police arrived. The victim suffered a black eye, but declined medical attention. Suspect is at large.

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.

Letters

editor@realchangenews.org

The Greatest Falafel on Earth

The greatest falafel on earth is made behind a wall that says so bottom floor of eight-story parking structure under bland gray spiceless northwest skies. Sun faded and carbon hazed, camel wanders dull dunes and skinny palms under the silver moon of a circulating fan blowing odors of cooking beef, garlic, mint over cars parked in lot. The same café serves the best gyroes ever under calendar pages of the Great Pyramid of Cheops, Istanbul's Blue Dome of the Mosque; the Parthenon. All the men and women behind the counter look related, baklava hair and halva skin, sure hands squirting garlicky lemon sauce into diaper-soft pita that fold like a camel's lips around fried chickpeas, tomatoes, red onions. Radio background noise of precision strikes on Baghdad souks, belt bombers exploding in Tel Aviv coffee shops, tears streaming as a I bite into raw garlic slathering the greatest falafel on earth, the best gyroes ever.

—DAVID THORNBRUGH



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Sprawl and Response

Dear *Real Change*,

Re: "Sprawled Out: Antony Flint says rampant growth destroys community and makes us less healthy," (Aug. 2): Smart growth, which also means densification and urban redevelopment is on the contrary, the number-one cause, of housing inflation and unaffordability, and of displacement of minorities and of the poor, an inescapable effect of restricting the supply of land for housing.

Seattle isn't yet at the extreme state of California, but we are heading there. The only way the non-rich can afford housing in close-in areas is by doubling and tripling up (illegally) in housing. Thousands of workers in the San Jose area have to live in the Central Valley and get bussed for hours to work.

But doesn't high density work in Europe, you ask? Sure, because there is a giant social (public) housing sector, up to half of all housing, for the middle classes, not just the poor. The provisions for affordable housing in U.S. new urbanist cities is laughably inadequate. A worthy goal of smart growth is preserving open space, but this is more honestly achieved by public purchase than by zoning, which results in 20-acre estates for the super-rich.

P.S. It's not the left that brought you smart growth! I've been a socialist since I was 14 (now 72).

Richard Morrill


Bus Chick rules

Dear *Real Change*,

I started buying the *Real Change* papers to support people working hard. I would buy them, then recycle them. I'm not really into reading the paper. Once I opened the *Real Change* and read the bus rider's articles I was hooked. I was bummed today when I bought a paper and didn't see that article. Please bring them back. That woman is funny.

Julie Bensen

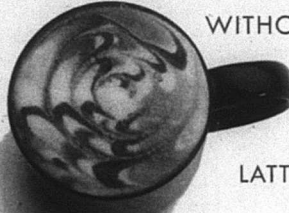
Ed. responds: Bus Chick: Transit Authority graces page 9 three weeks out of four in Real Change; she's out of service the first week of every month.



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(UW Research Study)

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CLASSIFIED

Employment

Don't agonize; ORGANIZE with Washington Citizen Action. Work to get health care for everyone in Washington! POC, GLBT wanted. Part-time 206.389.0050x113, full-time x112.

Opportunity

The Seattle MultiCultural Sangha presents a day of meditation for people of color. Tickets \$25. Saturday, Aug. 12, 10 a.m. - 5 p.m., University Friends Meeting House, 4001 Ninth Ave. NE.

A support, discussion, and social group for trans and questioning youth ages 14-22. 7 p.m., Tuesday, Aug. 15, Lambert House, 1818 - 15th Ave.

Event

Join us for a morning hard-hat tour of the Alaskan Way Viaduct on Aug. 19. Get the facts on the cut-and-cover tunnel and elevated structure alternatives, estimates, and funding, and learn the latest on construction plans. RSVP to viaduct@wsdot.wa.gov by Friday, Aug. 11, with "August viaduct tour" in the subject line, or leave a message at (206) 269-4421. More information will be sent in a confirmation email or return phone message once you RSVP. Space is limited. Please note that for safety purposes, no children will be allowed on the tour.

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.

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

Saturday 08/12

Code Pink co-founder and activist Diane Wilson and journalist Peter Laufer discuss the cost of the Iraq War and the struggles against it. *Wilson is author of An Unreasonable Woman: A True Story of Shrimpers, Politicos, Polluters, and the Fight for Seadrift, Texas* and helped initiate Troops Home Fast. A Vietnam War resister and former NBC news correspondent, Laufer is author of *Mission Rejected: U.S. Soldiers Who Say No to Iraq*. 1:30 p.m., Elliott Bay Book Co., 101 S Main St.



The little-known story of the anti-war movement of the '60s and '70s that did not take place on college campuses, *Sir! No Sir!* shows the GI movement against the Vietnam War that occurred in barracks and battlefields and penetrated the elite military academy of West Point. Hundreds went to prison, and many went into exile. Until Thurs., Aug. 17. Tickets \$8 general, \$6 senior and child, \$5 member. 7 p.m. and 9 p.m., Northwest Film Forum, 1515 12th Ave. Info: www.simosir.com.

The Duwamish River Festival includes live music, food, face painting, Bert the Salmon, health information, natural yard care tips, kayak tours, and information on the Superfund cleanup of the river. 11 a.m. - 3 p.m., Duwamish River Park, 7900 Tenth Ave. S. Info: www.duwamishcleanup.org.

Celebrate a beautiful culture with traditional music, dance, handmade crafts, storytelling, and children's activities at the Cambodian Heritage Celebration. Noon, Seattle City Center, 305 Harrison St.

Sunday 08/13

Listen to guitar, harmonica, and vocals as the Washington Blues Society plays in the Seattle Peace Concert. Noon - 6 p.m., Gas Works Park, 2101 N. Northlake Way. Info: www.seapeace.org.

Thomas Brinson served in a combat unit during the Vietnam War, but afterwards he struggled with his violent experiences. He found healing through poetry and forging a commitment to peace. In 2003, he was a member of the Nonviolent Peaceforce in Sri Lanka and has worked with grassroots organizations for resolving conflict. He presents his talk, "Becoming a Warrior for Peace." 7 p.m., University Temple United Methodist Church, 1415 NE 43rd St.

Tuesday 08/15

Safe Schools Coalition is a meeting and partnership of government agencies, schools, churches, human rights organizations, and individuals working to create schools where everyone feels safe, every educator can teach,

and every child can learn regardless of gender identity or sexual orientation. The event includes project planning, problem solving, and cool freebies. 2 p.m., Planned Parenthood, 2001 E. Madison St. Info: www.safe-schoolscoalition.org

Can an honest candidate without money be elected in Washington state? *The Road to Clean Elections*, a 15-minute video narrated by Bill Moyers, shows the benefits of publicly financed elections. After the screening, there will be a discussion on how to organize and implement the film's ideas. 7:15 p.m., Phinney Neighborhood Center, Room 6, 6532 Phinney Ave. N.

Friday 08/18

The Rebirth Brass Band from New Orleans plays funk and jazz to celebrate the spirit of their home city and support the survivors of Hurricane Katrina. Tickets \$25 and up to benefit the Social Change Caravan. 8 p.m., Royal Esquire Club, 5016 Rainier Ave. Info: www.theroyalesquire.org.

Thursday 8/17

Dan Berger's book, *Outlaws of America*, is a well-researched account of the life and times of Weather Underground, a splinter group formed during the '60s that believed peaceful protests were ineffective. His writing features a groundbreaking discussion of the 1981 Brinks case, when the group's members allied with the Black Liberation Army in a failed robbery that resulted in the deaths of three men and the incarceration of several activists. 7:30 p.m., Elliott Bay Book Co., 101 S. Main St.

Director's Corner

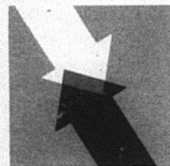


As if anyone needed more evidence that the Class War is alive and well and being waged from Washington, DC, last week's Democratic "victory" on the estate tax is a case in point. File this one under, "those bastards are so smart that even when we win, we lose."

Republican leadership found it in their reptilian hearts last week to finally support a raise for America's working poor. But only if it came with a pay cut for 1.1 million workers in tip-dependent industries and a gift to the rich of at least \$368 billion over the next 10 years. As nearly everyone by now knows, Democrats weren't fooled, and the measure fell four votes shy of moving forward.

But here's what most people don't know. The *New York Times* reports that the Bush administration will cut the team of 345 Internal Revenue Service lawyers who audit estate tax filings by nearly half. As Lee Farris at United for a Fair Economy puts it, this is an estate tax "backdoor repeal." The Bush administration has a positive genius for the circumvention of democratic process.

But here's a democratic process for you: mid-term elections. As progressives learn to play the games the right has mastered, Washington's pathetic failure to raise the minimum wage in 10 years is sure to be a wedge issue that resonates.



First things First

Get Involved • Take Action

Get Low-Income Folks Out to Vote

Issue: People with lower incomes are less likely to vote. Poverty Action's Vote for a Change campaign is a comprehensive, targeted, and proven solution to increasing voter participation.

Background: Issues like housing and poverty will only matter to elected officials when they understand that those issues are important to voters. At the same time, it is vital that low-income voters understand how the decisions made by elected officials directly affect their lives, know how to register to vote, and how to get to the polls on Election Day and have access to the information they need to make informed decisions about voting.

Census data confirms that low-income voters are registered and vote at lower rates than higher-income citizens. While 82 percent of people with incomes of over \$75,000 were registered to vote in 2000, and 75 percent of those registered actually voted, just 59 percent of people with incomes between \$10,000 and \$14,999 were registered, and only 44 percent of those registered actually voted.

Low-income people face several challenges to voting: less-flexible jobs that may not allow time off for voting, transportation impediments that make getting to the polls more difficult, and a greater likelihood of misinformation about their rights as voters that may make people shy away from voting.

Still need more reason? Word is out that Initiative 920, which would repeal Washington's estate tax, will be on the ballot in November. As it becomes increasingly difficult for people to meet their basic needs, it is astounding to think that Washington could vote to keep money in the hands of the extremely wealthy at the expense of critical social programs. With this issue on the ballot, it is crucial that the voices of our low-income communities be present (and loud) at the polls! Don't sit out this election year — help Poverty Action get voters with low income to the polls!

It's not too late for you to make a difference this election year! This year's primary election is Sept. 19. Poverty Action will be going door to door in low-income neighborhoods, registering and educating voters on Aug. 19 — the last day to register by mail in order to vote in this year's primary election.

Action:

When: Aug. 19, 10:30 a.m. - 1:30 p.m., training at 10 a.m.

Where: Messiah Lutheran Church, 805 Fourth St. NE, Auburn.

Why: Voter rates decline dramatically with household incomes, meaning that those most affected by policy are least involved in the process.

To sign up: Contact Marcy at 206-694-6794 or marcy@povertyaction.org. Can't make it in August? Other canvassing dates are: Sept. 16, Oct. 21, Nov. 4, Nov. 7 (Election Day)!

Got kids? Families welcome during event and canvassing. Water and snacks provided. Poverty Action will be working to coordinate carpools from the Fremont Public Association in Wallingford. Carpools will leave at approximately 9:15 a.m. If you'd like to join or drive a carpool, please let us know!

Information from the National Low Income Housing Coalition and Statewide Poverty Action Network used for this alert. For more information, visit www.povertyaction.org.

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

SCAN, Continued from Page 1

a week — due to staff layoffs made earlier in the year — SCAN will be open 56 hours a week starting Sept. 11. It's also looking to hire up to six full-time or part-time staff members.

In the meantime, every producer who is a Seattle resident has been charged a new annual membership fee of \$45. Each producer has also had to get "recertified" to use the facility by taking a special information class.

"We wanted to cover the new contractual obligations," Suter says. "We introduced a new arena of rights and responsibilities, reminding people that they are entitled to things but also obligated to things."

"Some have said, 'Thanks, I'm glad you're doing this,' and have been patient and understanding," she says of the producers. "Other are frustrated that we're closing most regular business hours and feeling annoyed they have to take the class."

Among the new obligations, the city wants SCAN and its volunteer producers to create more professional-looking shows. Last year, in the wake of controversy, SCAN pulled a late-night porn show — a type of program the city would like to see the station get away from.

With Comcast now removed from the picture, says Steve Schrock, who has produced a SCAN public affairs show for 16 years, it's ironic there are more restrictions. But Schrock says that's to be expected: He believes that Comcast and its predecessors — AT&T and TCI — were counting on subscriber complaints to kill public access and take it off their hands.

"You had absolute freedom and it didn't cost a nickel, but that was because they were hoping it would die," Schrock says. "If you're going to actually preserve and nurture public access, it's going to cost money and it's going to have rules." ■

PARTIES, Continued from Page 1

the Secretary of State had raised the number of signatures required for a spot on the ballot, and says that filing requirements have gotten more stringent every year. In the fall, she'd like to see a centrally located event where minor party candidates could tell the public what they're all about. Representatives of the Green and Libertarian parties have indicated a willingness to participate, but solid plans have yet to materialize.

One obstacle is the difficulty of uniting people with such divergent views behind a common cause. Putting aside message to talk about a common strategy can prove challenging, says Libertarian Party activist Richard Shepard, a Tacoma attorney.

"On some level, there's some hesitation to coordinate because it's so easy to slide into discussion about message," most third parties' "stock in trade," he says. "They don't have influence, they don't have leverage, they have a message."

Also, some of those at the Bellevue meeting found it hard to trust those who called it.

"There was some meaningful engagement, but they were primarily interested in their own agenda," says Green Party

state chair Jody Grage of the Libertarian organizers. "It was not really a meeting-of-the-minds approach."

In theory, third parties can agree on the need for a few election reforms: instant runoff voting (IRV), for example, where voters can rank their choices and therefore register their preference for more than one party. Greens and Libertarians collaborated to put IRV on the Pierce County ballot this fall. Also, since major news organizations rarely ask about third party candidates in their election polls, voters sometimes don't even realize that they have more than two choices. Shepard notes that, when they are included, the number of undecided voters goes up as well: in a recent poll on the race for Maria Cantwell's Senate seat, Green Party candidate Aaron Dixon garnered 2 percent, while 7 percent remained undecided.

"It dawned on the voters that they didn't want to choose," says Shepard. "As long as they're lumped into this amorphous mass, they don't get recognized."

Third parties also struggle constantly with getting their candidates on debate platforms. 2004 Libertarian gubernatorial candidate Ruth Bennett says this is key to attracting press coverage, which is one of the only ways to ensure a party's legitimacy in the eyes

of the electorate. For the first time ever, the Libertarians' candidate for Senate, Bruce Guthrie, has a physical campaign office, and she'd like to get him on TV as well—even if that means debating among Greens and independents.

According to Seattle Green Party volunteer coordinator Mike Gillis, who's involved in Dixon's Senate race, that might be difficult: Although GOP candidate Mike McGavick's campaign has indicated a willingness to share the stage, Democratic incumbent Maria Cantwell has been less friendly to the idea. And, he notes, the Greens will need help to open up the debates.

"Third-party unity is sort of a necessity," Gillis says. "I don't think any of us have the wherewithal to do it on our own." ■

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