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ISSUES • INSIGHT • IMPACT

SEPTEMBER 20 - 26, 2006

Questions, no Answers

An immigration raid in Bellingham instills fear in Latino community

By ROSETTE ROYALE
Staff Reporter

Why, when Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) raided Northwest Health Care Linen in Bellingham on Aug. 30, did the agency separate the Latino workers from those who were Sikh, Russian, or Southeast Asian? Why were the Latinos questioned when other workers weren't? Why were the Latinos the only ones arrested and then threatened with imminent detention? Why?

These, and other questions, have been running throughout the Latino community in Whatcom County since the raid, says Rosalinda Guillen, executive director of Community to Community. But it's the answers to these queries — along with determining the exact number of people arrested — that have instigated a growing sense of alarm for the nearly 8,000 Latinos who call the county home. "We're trying to figure out: What is the motivation?" she says.

The questions began flowing, according to Guillen, in the late morning of Aug. 30, when ICE stormed the offices of Northwest Health Care Linen, a company that provides linen services to medical providers in the Puget Sound. It was around that time, says Guillen, that she began to receive phone calls telling her of the raid, with callers asking of her: Why is this happening? Is this just the start? But it wasn't until the next day, says Guillen, when she met with a number of workers who were not arrested, that the story began to materialize.

All the workers with whom she met, she says, were Latino, and they described how more than 40 ICE officers, bearing guns and wearing bulletproof vests, separated employees according to race. ICE asked whether the Latino workers were undocumented, to which, according to the employees, none of the sequestered individuals an-

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LESLIE MILLER, CHAIR OF THE SOUTHEAST DISTRICT COUNCIL, HAS CONVENED RAINIER VALLEY NEIGHBORS TO STUDY THE FORMATION OF A NEW DEVELOPMENT AGENCY — ONE THAT COULD SEIZE PROPERTY BY EMINENT DOMAIN. PHOTO BY MICHAEL DOPPS

Domain Address

Groups differ on whether eminent domain is good for Rainier Valley

By CYDNEY GILLIS
Staff Reporter

It's not exactly a mutiny, but the anonymous flyers that have shown up on telephone poles in the past few weeks certainly look bad for an economic development plan afoot in Seattle's Rainier Valley:

"Say No to Eminent Domain in Rainier Valley," one flyer reads. "The CRA is Racist, Classist, Fascist."

CRA stands for community renewal agency, a proposed city entity that would promote commercial investment and affordable housing development in southeast Seattle along specific commercial tracts of Rainier Avenue South and Martin Luther King Jr. Way South where Sound Transit plans its Mount Baker and Othello Street light rail stations.

Unlike the Seattle Housing Authority, which can condemn properties only to buy or build low-income housing, the renewal agency could use eminent domain on businesses within the two zones.

The idea, says Steve Johnson, interim director of the city's Office of Economic Development, is to aggregate separate parcels of land so developers can create the type of high-density urban hubs of retail and housing the city wants to see around the stations.

Light rail construction and soaring housing prices already threaten the

valley's diverse low-income neighborhoods and minority-owned businesses. But, on the commercial side, he says, "Rents in the market are still too low to make projects pencil out."

That's where a state-authorized community renewal agency comes in: Declaring the area a blight would qualify it for low-cost financing that developers could use for mixed-use projects. But Johnson stresses that eminent domain would be just one tool in a box of financing and other resources the agency could tap, and only as a last resort.

All plans, he says, would be subject to two votes: one by five citizens on a new Community Renewal Board and one by the Seattle City Council. The checks and balances, however, don't quell the alarm of Rainier Valley property owners just learning of the idea.

"I've had no notification," says Phyllis Ohrbeck, a real estate agent who owns a 20-unit apartment building two blocks south of the Othello station site. "The bottom line is in a few short weeks I could have my property condemned and taken away."

For now, Johnson says, the agency is only a proposal, one that probably won't go to the City Council until early next year, if at all. In the meantime, the Office of Economic Development

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GOING SOUTH?

For young people living in south Seattle, the ubiquitous minimart typifies a growing problem.

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FOR THE TREES?

The push behind urban forestry — to have more of the one-legged wonders — might get nipped in the bud.

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FARE THEE WELL?

Ten years after welfare reform, some people see success. Others view nothing but failure.

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CAN I GET A WITNESS?

When minister Robin Meyers gave a talk on moral values, he found he was preaching to the choir.

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THE BEST POLICY?

Concerns about homelessness and other societal ills will be washed aside by Dr. Wes' modest proposal.

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The Issues of Today Are the Issues of Tomorrow

Poverty and racism and being young in the South End

By VIRGINIA SURUDA
Guest Writer

We need to stop treating the South End and the people who live there like these are not serious issues.

Did you know that there are 35 minimarts strung through the southern end of the Rainier Valley, from Franklin High School to South Henderson Street? Most people would ask why this is important and what does it have to do with environmental justice. Community Coalition for Environmental Justice's 2006 Summer Youth Academy answered that question.

From July to September, five youth of color had a chance to go out in our communities and not only learn about the environmental justice movement, but also teach people about some of the problems going on in our neighborhoods. Most of the youth participants in the group live in the South End or grew up there. Everyday we are exposed to many different harmful things including drug use, gang activity, air toxins, and fast food industries.

We gave out a survey to 50 residents asking them what South End issue was of greatest concern. The options were drug use, gang activity, dirty air, housing demolition, and illegal dumping. We found that most people consider gang activity as the biggest concern. We also asked in the survey what the South End needs the most in order to make things better. Most people picked better educational opportunities and job opportunities for youth, because it would make things in this community safer and calmer. I believe they were right.

The South End is full of many different temptations for young people. From Franklin High to Henderson, you can find a minimart on practically every corner. These minimarts have many different kinds of tobacco and alcoholic

beverages that are not only sold, but also heavily advertised out front. A lot of these places sell tobacco to youth who are not yet 18, as well as alcohol to people under 21. For some low-income people, the temptation is hard to resist. The high alcohol content of malt liquor can offer a quick escape from the reality of being poor. Or if you are down to your last dollar, you may as well take a chance on a lotto ticket.

Have you ever noticed the 18 fast-food establishments from Franklin to South Henderson? The U.S. Department of Health and Human Services blames poor diets and physical inactivity for causing as many premature deaths as tobacco. Fast-food restaurants are targeted towards low-income communities of color, where food options are limited. You're not going to find an organic food co-op in these areas where people don't have a lot of money; fast food is the cheapest option. In the past, CCEJ has addressed this by starting community organic gardens in the Central Area and giving the produce directly to low income people at Yesler Terrace.

You will also find a large number of payday loan businesses in the South End. A 2005 study by the *Seattle Post-Intelligencer* found that "In Washington, there are a disproportionate number of payday shops in areas with higher percentages of Black people." Payday lenders take advantage of people in a cash crunch by charging incredibly high interest rates on short-term loans. One local non-profit organization, LELO, is working with poor people to fight predatory lenders.

South End residents are very aware of the problems in their neighborhoods and wish that they could do something about it. Our survey revealed that

people were overwhelmingly concerned with gang activity. A woman told me that every night, she hears at least five gunshots outside her home. She believed that if there were more job opportunities and better schools, youth would have better things to do. She was right.

So, many teens who are living in the South End can't get jobs because of their background. Many of them have already been to Juvie or jail and already are convicted felons. People won't hire convicted felons to work for them, so these teens are forced to make the wrong decision of selling drugs or getting involved in gangs.

I believe that one solution is to have more living wage jobs available for youth and all people, so that they can better support their families and maintain a healthier lifestyle. We also need better after-school programs for youth, more adult mentors in schools, and better public schools in general to keep young people from making a living on the streets.

We need to stop treating the South End and the people who live there like these are not serious issues. We have to be aware of the problems going on and address them at their root causes: poverty and racism. ■

Virginia Suruda, 18, has worked for CCEJ for the last year and a half as a youth organizer. She is starting a program in health care at Seattle Vocational Institute. CCEJ's mission is to achieve environmental and economic justice in low-income communities & communities of color. Contact us at (206) 720-0285 or visit our website at www.ccej.org.

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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Email realchange@speakeasy.org
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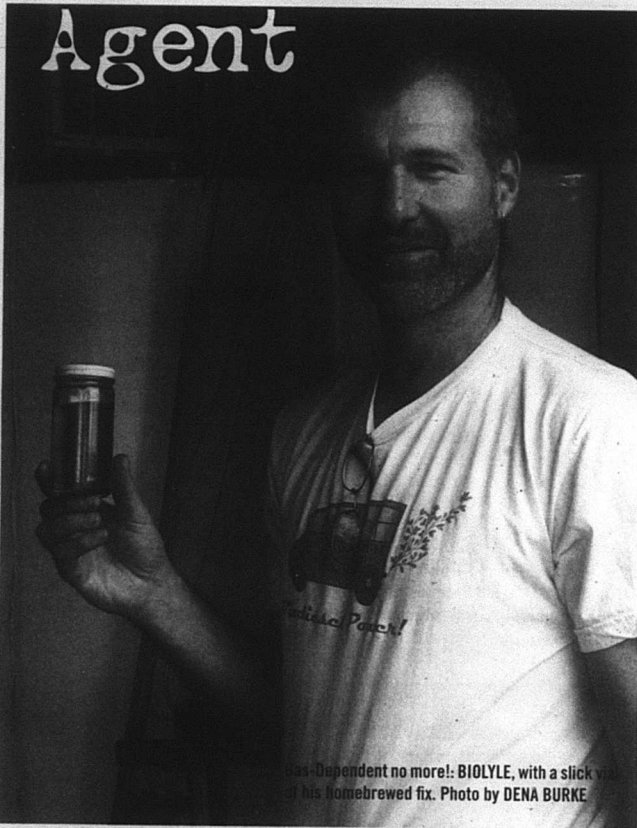
Change Agent

When the Iraq War began, Lyle Rudensey was frustrated with his dependence on oil. He purchased a diesel car on eBay and began filling it with biodiesel, a renewable, non-toxic, biodegradable fuel. He loved the subversive feel of whipping up a home batch of biodiesel, which costs him about 70 cents a gallon.

Now going by his nickname BioLyle (www.biolyle.com), he teaches others about his passion for ecofriendly fuel by leading hands-on workshops on the basics of biodiesel. Many students purchase older cars with diesel engines, and then through BioLyle's classes, they learn how to collect grease for free from local restaurants and construct their own homebrewing process. "There is no conversion process if you have a diesel engine," explains BioLyle.

BioLyle also leads the Breathable Bus Coalition, a grassroots organization advocating the use of biodiesel in school buses. The toxic fumes and exhaust from diesel engines "has 15 known carcinogens," says BioLyle. The group is hoping for the financing and support to turn Seattle School District buses over to biodiesel. "It's cleaner and healthier for children," says BioLyle.

—Dena Burke



Oil-dependent no more! BIOLYLE, with a slick of his homebrewed fix. Photo by DENA BURKE

Just Heard...

Gap Happy?

It might be conventional wisdom to say that people are scrimping and saving just to get by. But a new report, the 2006 Washington Job Gap, shows that most workers aren't even getting by: They're getting taken to the cleaners.

The numbers say it all: For a single person looking to make a living wage, she'll have to bring home \$11.16 an hour. The state's minimum wage? \$7.63 an hour.

Twenty-six percent of single non-Hispanic white workers in the state earn less than a living wage. The percentage jumps to 27 percent for Asian citizens, 30 percent for Blacks, 32 percent for Latinos, and 41 percent for Native Americans.

To view a full report on the state of the state's living wage, visit www.nwftco.org.

Out with the really bad?

It's a time-critical time down at the toxic-laden Terminal 117, with a time-critical action plan to remove the site's heaviest concentrations of PCBs set to begin Sept. 20.

Former home of the Malarkey Asphalt Co., Terminal 117, contains some of the highest levels of PCBs ever recorded in the Puget Sound area. The imminent removal, which is being overseen by the EPA, hopes to bring levels down to 25 parts per million (ppm). Residential safe limits stand at one ppm. Mike Szerlog, of the EPA, estimates 200 cubic yards of contaminated soil will be excavated and hauled away during the next six to eight weeks. As long as the rains don't extend the timeline.

—Rosette Royale

Parks putsch?

Here's a little input for Seattle's Board of Park Commissioners: You need new faces, accountable to the people.

That's the gist of legislation introduced this week by David Della, chair of the City Council's Parks Committee. While Della acknowledges the hard work of the board's seven volunteers, who take non-binding advisory votes on Parks Department projects, he and co-sponsor Peter Steinbrueck want to liven things up a bit.

The two want to add a board member and give the City Council the right to appoint four of its members, or half the board. The mayor currently appoints all members of the Parks Board, which has faced complaints in recent months that it disregards citizen input.

The Council's Parks Committee is scheduled to discuss and possibly vote on the measure at a meeting set for Wed., Sept. 27, 5:30 p.m. at City Hall.

—Cydney Gillis

Cover Me

Seattle's mature trees need TLC, say environmentalists, arborists

By ANGIE JONES
Contributing Writer

"It's clear in our minds that what the mayor and the Office of Sustainability and Environment [which co-authored the study] has put together is basically a document that helps the city do what it has always done, which is to hoist all responsibility to the private sector." says another — Cheryl Trivison, Seattle Urban Forest Stakeholders

lize Jones' office overlooks Pioneer Square's Occidental Park, where she witnessed the removal of 17 healthy 35-year-old London Plane trees earlier this year as part of a \$2.3 million renovation.

Jones believes that despite good intentions, the diminished tree canopy is a true reflection of municipal attitudes toward conservation and development of urban forests.

Mayor Greg Nickels released a draft Urban Forest Management Plan Sept. 6, which is now open for public examination and expected to be finalized by the end of the year. Eight days prior to its release, Jones and a non-governmental group of arborists, architects, and other people concerned with urban verdure pre-empted it with a three-page "manifesto" outlining the longstanding failure of the city to care for its oxygen-producing, air-cleaning, stormwater-controlling resource.

"It's terrific that the city's focusing on urban forests," Jones said. "We want [them] to thrive. We want success."

But even after reviewing the Mayor's draft, the group, which calls itself the Seattle Urban Forest Stakeholders, remains unconvinced that real progress will be made.

The "Emerald City" has historically boasted its trees, inhabiting over 6,200 acres of open areas and park land. But beyond their infamous hue, trees are a vital part of our city's infrastructure, crucial to clearing air pollutants, oxygen production, and stormwater control.

There's no disputing the fact that the city has neglected its trees. Due to increased development, invasive plant species strangling existing trees,

and removal of healthy trees from parks, Seattle's average canopy cover — which is a measure of the land covered in trees — is only 18 percent today, 50 percent of what it was in 1972. Forty percent is the average urban tree cover recommended by the American Forests conservation organization.

The Mayor's new plan aims to expand the tree canopy to 30 percent over the next three decades by spending an estimated \$4.4 million in the next two years for tree planting, pruning and inventory, \$1.5 million for care of trees on city streets, and additional money to update building codes to protect trees. The city's office of Sustainability and Environment will take the lead on urban forest issues, and will help coordinate efforts of the nine city departments involved.

The Urban Forest Stakeholders argue for the creation of a solitary city tree department headed by a forester who would conduct an inventory of every tree in the city; the doubling of Seattle's canopy cover with trees chosen for their ability to contribute to a healthy urban environment; the drafting of a tree ordinance "that has teeth;" and the inclusion of citizens in the city's process of making arboreal decisions. They're not satisfied with the city's draft plan.

"It's clear in our minds that what the mayor and the Office of Sustainability and Environment [which co-authored the study] has put together is basically a document that helps the city do what it has always done, which is to hoist all responsibility to the private sector," says another SUFS member, Cheryl Trivison.

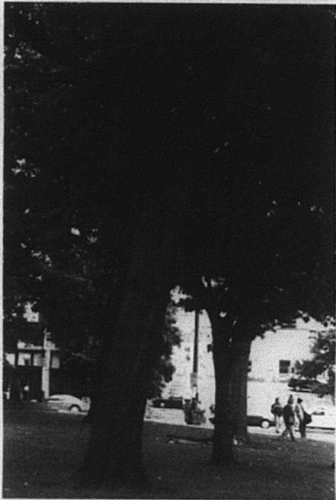
Trivison is disturbed by the city's incentives to boost the tree coverage on private land, while there is a lack of stewardship of public-sector trees, particularly in parks.

Although the city adopted tree protection guidelines in 2001, mature, healthy trees, such as the 11 50-year-old Oak trees scheduled for

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Urban Forestry:
11 City Hall Park
trees are slated for
removal. Photo by
Ken Dean



removal from City Hall Park, continue to be destroyed, says Trivison.

Seattle Parks and Recreation representative Dewey Potter says the same rationale applies to removing

trees from City Hall Park as it did in Occidental Park: "To create a more open, welcoming, and useful space for everyone."

Potter explained that the city plants two new trees for every one removed, and as close to the site as is possible.

Environmental advocates argue that it's not simple stem count that

matters; it's the mature canopy that brings life to the city. According to its manifesto, "The measure of the canopy is the number of people it shelters; the measure of a city is the extent of the canopy that is allowed to grace it."

The group's members are also concerned by what they consider a rushed process for finalizing the plan.

"If you're putting out a document of this importance, citizens have to assume you want it read," says Trivison, referring to how the Mayor's plan was drafted behind closed doors. "The manner in which it was put forth doesn't reflect this."

Comments on the plan are due Oct. 20. If citizens wish to contribute to the final draft, the city has allowed them about two weeks to review the 80-page document before attending one of two community forums.

"That's mighty short notice," says Jones, who thinks additional sessions should be held at a later date in order to provide community members a better chance to provide informed input. ■

[Resource]

The Seattle Urban Forest Stakeholder's Manifesto can be viewed at open2100.blogspot.com/2006/08/urban-forests-in-peril.html.

[Input]

Public meetings on the 30-year tree plan take place Sat., Sept. 23 at 11:30 a.m. at the Meadowbrook Community Center and Tues., Sept. 26 at 7 p.m. at the Jefferson Community Center. The proposed plan is available online at www.seattle.gov/environment. Comments will be accepted until Oct. 20.

[Opportunity]

The city is giving away 2,000 trees to residents who apply for Plant-a-Tree-for-Free coupon at community centers citywide. Request a tree through the end of October at www.seattle.gov/environment/trees_request.htm.

Short Takes

Budgeting for life

It's not hard to add up the needs: There's \$83 million in human services that need to be funded now and aren't, a county task force says. But coming up with the money won't be easy.

One year ago, King County Executive Ron Sims formed the Healthy Families and Communities Task Force to determine the cost and funding sources for a list of critical services identified by the King County Council's Regional Policy Committee.

In its final report, the task force proposes some ways to fill the \$83 million funding gap. Among them, the County Council, which is heading into budget season, could pass a sales tax increase of 0.1 percent to raise \$26.1 million a year for substance abuse and mental health treatment — a move the council can make without a public vote.

Another \$7.6 million a year is expected to come from the six-year Veterans and Human Services Levy that voters approved last fall. There's also \$1.3 million in state funding available for information services that will be part of a new, statewide 2-1-1 referral line.

That leaves a gap of \$48 million a year. To fill it, the task force proposes putting two to three property tax increases on the ballot over time, each in small increments of no more than 5 cents per \$1,000 of assessed value. The task force also recommends a public education campaign on what the human needs are.

—Cydney Gillis

WTO settlement reached

After nearly seven years, settlements between two non-violent protesters and the city have been reached in regard to the World Trade Organization Conferences of 1999.

Victor Menotti, of San Francisco, will receive \$62,500, and Doug Skove of Vashon Island will get \$12,500 from the City of Seattle, according to a press release issued by the American Civil Liberties Union.

The ACLU represented both plaintiffs in court.

In August 2000, five other plaintiffs involved in the lawsuit reached a settlement of \$5,000 each.

The new settlements put the city's total payout at \$100,000.

"This serves as a way to hold the City of Seattle accountable for violating the free speech rights of peaceful protesters," Doug Honig says of the settlement. "Hopefully it sends a message to city officials about what they should do in the future when we have large-scale protests, and that they need to distinguish between people who are breaking the law and protesters who are peaceful."

Menotti's and Skove's lawsuits took longer to settle than the others because they depended on a ruling from the Ninth District U.S. Court of Appeals. In June of 2005, the Ninth District ruled that the city did not violate the Constitution by implementing a No-Protest Zone, but also stated that the protections of the Bill of Rights remain intact even during times of civil unrest.

The Ninth Circuit sent the cases back to trial court to determine if the plaintiffs' rights were violated.

"Though the court said a No-Protest Zone was constitutional, it also said individuals could have had their rights violated by the way the city enforced the No-Protest Zone," Honig says.

Menotti charged that the city violated his rights when police arrested him for voicing his concerns of WTO policies to a journalist and interested citizens on the corner of Fifth and Pike. Though he was arrested, criminal charges were never filed.

Skove contended his rights were violated when police came up from behind him and snatched his sign that read, "Is the WTO in Control of Seattle?" on one side and, "I have a Right to Non-Violent Protest" on the other. Despite his complaints, officers told Skove he was not allowed to protest in that location on Sixth Ave. and confiscated his sign.

— J. Jacob Edel

Water under the lens

Is drinking water really safe to drink? The answer may be 'no' according to the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, which has recently awarded the University of Washington nearly \$600,000 to

research emerging methods to detect harmful organisms in drinking water.

While chlorine and other disinfectants have shown to be effective in preventing the outbreak of diseases such as cholera and typhoid, there is concern that the very disinfectants used to treat water might have harmful consequences. According to the EPA, while the scientific evidence is inconclusive for humans, some of the chemical by-products produced during the treatment process have shown in experiments to cause cancer in animals.

Even after treatment, water can be contaminated by a variety of chemicals that pose a health risk, yet go undetected because current testing methods rely on "indicators" such as viruses to determine safety.

In response to the problem, the University of Washington will work with the Seattle Biomedical Research Institute to research several emerging technologies to directly detect a variety of waterborne pathogens. It is hoped that these methods will provide broader and more efficient ways to detect and measure harmful components in drinking water.

"This research is on the cutting edge of a critically important environmental and public health priority," said Ron Kreizenbeck, Acting EPA Region 10

Administrator. "The UW's work will help develop new and better testing methods for routine use and for investigating outbreaks of waterborne infectious diseases."

The research grant to UW is one of 10 awarded nationwide by the EPA's Office of Research and Development, and is funded by the Science to Achieve Results (STAR) program.

—Kevin Himeda



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Qualifying the Needy

Welfare reform is now 10 years old. Are America's poor better off?

By PAUL RICE
Spare Change News

In 1996, Bill Clinton, facing a Republican Senate and House, worked with them to create the Personal Responsibility and Work Opportunity Reconciliation Act of 1996 (PRWOA), a landmark piece of bipartisan politicking which would, in effect, change the face of welfare for the first time in 60 years.

Welfare reform, once a hotly contested issue in U.S. politics, no longer burns with the contentious fire it used to. Now, on the 10th anniversary of one of the most fundamental shifts in human service policy this country has ever seen, advocates and policymakers are looking back at the first 10 years of a multi-billion-dollar aid industry. Caseloads have dropped, saving state governments money. But that doesn't mean people have moved out of poverty.

The system in effect before the shift, Aid to Families with Dependent Children (AFDC), was a product of Franklin Delano Roosevelt's New Deal, left over from 1935. Introduced when the U.S. economy was reeling from the stock-market collapse of 1929, and many wives had lost their husbands to the First World War as well as to other economic and social duress, AFDC offered money to mothers in order to support their children without requiring them to look for work in a practically non-existent job market.

Fast-forward 50 years from 1935, and the situation, at least in the public's eye, was very different. Single, unwed mothers had replaced widows as the primary recipients of welfare, and allegations of abuse were widespread. In the late 1980s, Ronald Reagan gave a speech describing a "Welfare Queen" who enjoyed cruising the streets of Chicago in her "Welfare Cadillac," which was obtained by milking the system. Intrepid reporters out to score an interview with the "Welfare Queen" soon found out that she didn't exist. But Reagan's portentous words got the ball rolling, and thus welfare reform became a top priority of the people, with Clinton saying in his 1992 presidential campaign that welfare "should be a second chance, not a way of life."

It came to a boil in 1996. Bill Clinton, facing a Republican Senate and House, worked with them to create the Personal Responsibility and Work Opportunity Reconciliation Act of 1996 (PRWOA), a landmark piece of bipartisan politicking which would, in effect, change the face of welfare for the first time in 60 years.

The welfare program legislated in PRWOA was similar to AFDC in that it still provided money to families with children. Called Temporary Assistance to Needy Families (TANF) because it is indeed temporary, as opposed to AFDC, five years was the limit for how long a family could receive welfare checks, at least in most states.

Then there was the most important, most lauded, and ultimately most controversial element of welfare reform: work.

The criticism usually leveled at AFDC was about the program's lack of incentives for encouraging people to stop using it. There was also the chance that even if you got a job, it might pay less than your welfare check after taxes.

TANF changed that. Often referred to as the "welfare to work" program, it created work requirements and employment quotas that states must meet. Mothers with children receiving welfare have to be finding work and staying employed, even if it means working a job for no pay, in order to receive cash assistance. States have exceptions to these rules, specifically to exempt mothers who must stay at home.

Welfare reform received mostly favorable reviews from both political alignments, and was carried to even greater heights by the economic tidal wave of the late 1990s, when caseloads shrunk by nearly half, more single mothers found work, and the number of children living in poverty dropped.

Frank Conte, director of communications for the Beacon Hill Institute, a conservative economic policy center at Boston's Suffolk University, sees welfare reform as a giant success.

"We've been fortunate to see the welfare caseloads drop [since TANF's implementation]," Conte says.

But not everyone is in agreement about the alleged success of the program.


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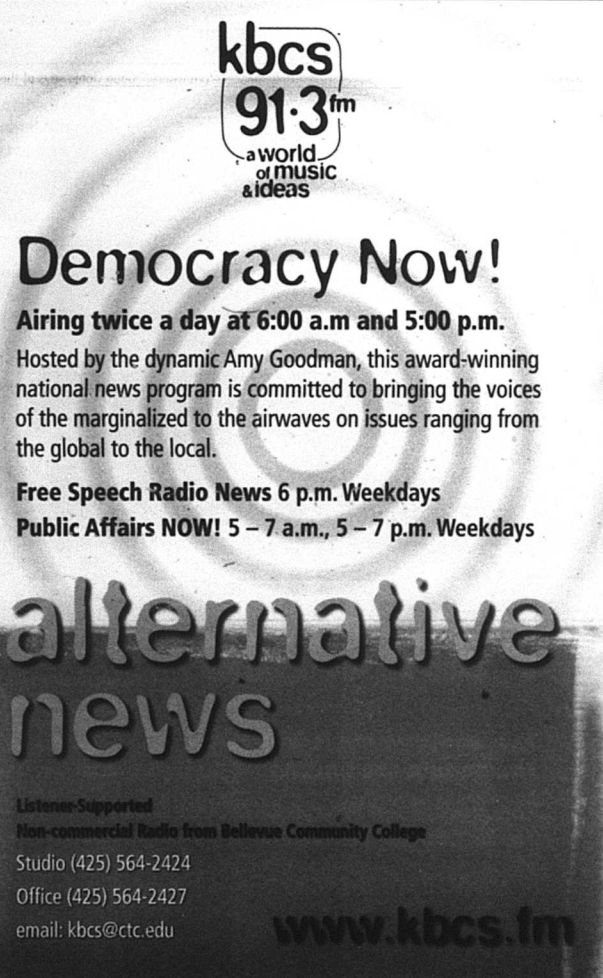
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The God that Failed

Oklahoma minister Robin Meyers says the Christian right can be countered with the voice of "an insistent minority"

Interview by TIMOTHY HARRIS
Contributing Writer

"Polls consistently show that Americans are more united on most important issues than they are divided. The problem is the media only hammers away at those things that we are divided over, those really visceral culture-war issues that we can keep fighting about so we don't have to concentrate on the fact that the minimum wage hasn't been raised for 10 years."

Shortly after the reelection of President Bush, "moral values" were in the news, and minister and rhetoric professor Robin Meyers was asked to speak at an Oklahoma University peace rally. Meyers sat down in a coffee shop and asked himself what, exactly, is so moral about the Bush Administration? The words poured onto the page.

The speech was a huge hit, and he gave a few copies away. These got onto the Internet, where they multiplied like loaves and fishes.

Soon, Meyers got a call from Barbara Kingsolver's publicist. "Robin, you don't know me," she said, "but are you the Oklahoma minister who gave this speech?" Yes, he said. "Are you really from Oklahoma, and are you really a minister?" He again said yes. "Well, then you've got to do something with it," she said, "because it's very powerful and people are responding to it. Everywhere I go in New York City, people are talking about 'The Speech.'"

"The Book" — *Why the Christian Right Is Wrong: A minister's manifesto for taking back your faith, your flag, and your future* (Jossey-Bass, 2006) — did even better, and Myers has joined the likes of Jim Wallis and Michael Lerner in reclaiming religion from the evangelical right. *Real Change* caught up with Meyers during his packed Seattle visit last summer to talk about religion, politics, and why he likes using the F word.

Real Change: You use the term "Christian fascism" in your book. It's a term

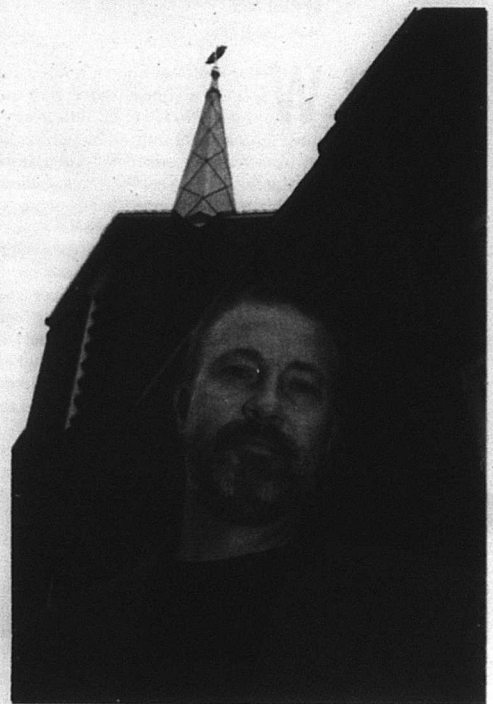
that a lot of other writers on this subject have been careful to avoid. What do you see as being gained by using that label?

Robin Meyers: Well, I'm trying to scare people. I think the hour is late. I think Christian fascism is already far-advanced in this country. People have accused me of going over the top a little bit, but my purpose in writing the book was to light a fire under people. I'm just terrified that people are disengaged at a critical point in American history. "Fascism" is an ugly word and a strong word, and it conjures up images of Nazis and jack-booted thugs and all that.

But the fact of the matter is, fascism is just defined by certain trends and policies and behaviors in a culture, no matter what that culture is. In my book I refer to the 14 characteristics of fascism published [in the Spring 2003 issue of *Free Inquiry* magazine] by Lawrence Britt. Tell me if you don't think these are not evident and ascendant in the United States: powerful and continuing nationalism; disdain for the recognition of human rights; identification of enemies and scapegoats as a unifying cause; supremacy of the military; rampant sexism; controlled mass media; obsession with national security; religion and government intertwined; protection of corporate power; suppression of labor power; disdain for intellectuals and the arts; obsession with crime and punishment; rampant cronyism and corruption ("You're doin' a heck of a job, Brownie"), and fraudulent elections.

We've had two fraudulent elections. Who would have thought we'd ever have a debate in this country over whether we should torture people? Or whether we should be able to spy on people without a court order? Or look at their bank records? We are already deep into a kind of totalitarian mentality that uses a sort of generalized fear of the next terrorist strike.

You know two things are going to happen now as we move towards the elections. This is classic fascism: We're going to keep telling people reasons why they should be afraid and trust the government to do what it needs to do. And we're going to throw out one or



Robin Meyers, an ordained minister, delivered a speech in response to President Bush's rhetoric on "moral values." That speech became the genesis for the book, *Why the Christian Right Is Wrong*. Photo by Brooke Kempner

two of those really juicy culture war issues like gay marriage.

RC: The electoral map doesn't favor progressives. The Mega-Church phenomenon and the evangelical right in general are growing, while participation in mainline denominations is on the decline. How do you recommend people engage to try to deal with this problem that you've identified?

Meyers: In my tradition in the church, making change in the world has always been a question of an insistent minority, which had the truth on its side, moving in a sort of an insurgency against an entrenched and powerful majority. We saw that in the Civil Rights Movement, in the Women's Rights Movement, and now in the Gay Rights Movement. Things are still changing, people are still afraid and resisting change, but we're not as far apart as we think we are.

Polls consistently show that Americans are more united on most important issues than they are divided. The problem is the media only hammers away at those things that we are divided over, those really visceral culture-war issues that we can keep fighting about so we don't have to concentrate on the fact that the minimum wage hasn't been raised for 10 years.

RC: The evangelical right has been able to create a self-contained culture that excludes information that might contradict their worldview. So few of them, for example, are likely to read your book. Is it possible to create a dialogue under those circumstances?

Meyers: Yeah, actually, I'm one of those people who believe we can't give up hope. I think there are many thoughtful



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Continued from Previous Page

evangelicals we don't hear much about who have strong personal beliefs, but nevertheless believe Jesus was a friend of the poor, and a friend of women, and a friend of people left out of our culture, and persecuted, and maligned (and that would include people who are gay or lesbian, people who carry some stereotype in the culture, people who are non-mainstream). All those kinds of people that Jesus seemed to go out and say, "I know you think you're out, but you're not really out, come on in."

So I think Evangelicals are beginning to realize their Gospel's been stolen too, not just liberal Christians like myself. I mean it's easy to say, "Robin, he's such a liberal guy. He always has been." But there are very thoughtful Evangelicals now starting to look around and saying, "Hey, you know, I think Jesus is a missing person in this administration. I think we've all been used."

RC: How is it that Christians can read the same Bible and come to such different conclusions?

Meyers: I wish I knew. A little knowledge of the Bible is very, very dangerous, because people are arriving at their agenda and going to look for the passages of scripture that will support them, out of context. Homosexuality is a perfect example. There are a handful of prohibitions in Leviticus, a handful by the Apostle of Paul. In each case, it's about homosexual activity, which was con-

I wear this jacket that has different threads in it. Naturally, that would be really a serious problem in Leviticus. I have a son, 12 years old. If he talks back to me I could have him stoned to death — "Oh no, we don't do that anymore." See how we pick and choose? But we already have decided what we think about homosexuality, so we pluck these texts out of their contexts, and say, "See? Homosexuality is wrong." But guess what Jesus said about homosexuality? Nothing.

RC: Are there areas where you think the Christian right is right?

Meyers: I think whenever a person's personal faith pushes them to be a better person, kinder person, a more compassionate person, it is a good thing, whether I agree with all of their belief structures or not. The question is whether religious faith transforms people into better human beings or whether it simply canonizes their dysfunction. They layer religion over their prejudices, and fears, and hatred. And now they think those fears, and hatreds, and prejudices are ordained by God.

The question is whether religion is confirmational or transformational? For some people it's confirmational: "I have a set of beliefs and I invite God in to bless those beliefs." For other people, they say, "God, what should my beliefs be?"

When one reads the Bible carefully from start to finish: it's about loving the poor, it's about praying for one's enemy, it's about taking care of children, it's about taking care of the

natural world, being grateful for our piece of bread every morning, it's about showing compassion. I mean, these are not dispositions that we think of as characterizing this administration. To the contrary, they are interested in the strong getting stronger.

RC: Why is it that we rarely see the kind of passion from progressive Christians that we see on the right?

Meyers: I wish I knew the answer to that, because at one time we did. Martin Luther King Jr., for example, had a passion for social change, and he was a Southern preacher. He was a Baptist preacher. And he stood on the steps of the Lincoln Memorial and quoted Scripture and he called us back to our best selves. I don't know what has happened. We ended the Vietnam War with clergy and laity concerned. We had great social justice preachers in the '50s, '60s, and '70s. Bill Coffin at Riverside, Dorothy Day in the Catholic Worker movement — I could go on and on and on. You know what I'm talking about.

And all of a sudden it isn't chic any-

more to be a social justice type in the church. In the church now, we seem to be fighting against the culture instead of trying to change it. We almost seem to be circling the wagons because people are frightened, saying, "We'll give you refuge in here." It's a very weird time we're living in, Tim, a very, very weird time. I want to say to my Evangelical friends, "Read the Sermon on the Mount again." It's the most radical document in the world. It would turn American values and American society upside down. ■

[Online]

Meyers' speech is online at www.politicalopinion.us/meyers.htm.

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But in those days they knew nothing about sexual orientation. The concept that a person could be born with a strong desire to be with a person of the same sex was simply unavailable to them, and besides that, these are scriptures written in a pre-scientific, ancient culture when we believed disease was caused by demon possession, women were second-class citizens, really pieces of property, that you had to eat certain kinds of food to please God, that you had to sacrifice animals to please God. This whole host of ancient, cultic practices, and most Americans, even very conservative ones, [say]: "Oh, we don't pay any attention to that anymore."

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Putting Her Neck on the Line

This is a frank, funny, bittersweet book about the betrayal of change.

I Feel Bad About My Neck: And Other Thoughts on Being a Woman
by Nora Ephron
Publisher: Alfred A. Knopf
\$21.95

Review by Jane Adams
Contributing Writer

Nora Ephron isn't delighted about getting older. In her wry, clever collection of essays she gives the lie away — the one promulgated by all those determinedly cheery books packed with bromides and homilies about how wonderful it is to be over the hill instead of under it; in fact, just in case you thought this was a sweet fairy tale by the moviemaker who brought you *Sleepless in Seattle* and *You've Got Mail* and the writer of *Heartburn* and *Crazy Salad*, she gives it away in the title, *I Feel Bad About My Neck*. She also feels bad about her nails, skin, chin, veins, teeth, upper arms, and the hair on her upper lip as well as her head,

although what she feels worse about is the effort required to maintain them all well enough to walk out the door without worrying that if you happen to bump into a man who once rejected you, you won't have to hide, a scenario that explains her refusal to leave her apartment without eyeliner.

There are no epiphanies here, no shock of recognition, except perhaps to non-Manhattanites who will be stunned to discover that there are people who consider \$25,000 a month rent for an apartment on the Upper West Side a bargain. But Ephron's fresh take on subjects familiar to anyone of a certain age — empty nests, deteriorating eyesight, the loss of the dreams of youth and the friends of a lifetime — displays her heart as well as her sense of humor. Many of the essays in this slim volume will also be familiar to regular readers of the *New Yorker*, where they first appeared, particularly her confession about her days as a White House intern

(she may be the only young woman who worked in the JFK White House whom the President never made a pass at) and her wry and telling description of falling in and out of love with another presidential ladies' man.

This is a frank, funny, bittersweet book about the betrayal of change — whether it's realizing your bikini days are long gone, finding yourself buying clothes in the store where Nancy Reagan buys hers, or discovering, when you've been away from New York for a few years, that all the old familiar landmarks from your dentist to your dry cleaner have moved on too: "Anything you think is wrong with your body at the age of 35 you will be nostalgic for at the age of 45" is as good a summation as any, and better than most. ■

Jane Adams, Ph.D., has been writing and reporting on women's issues for nearly three decades. She has appeared on Oprah, NPR, and CNN.

Torpidude and the Times

All the King's Men
Written and Directed by Steven Zaillian
Opens Fri., Sept. 22.

Review by LESTER GRAY
Arts Editor

In 1950, Robert Rosen's *All the King's Men*, with a mediocre script and less-than-stellar performances, took home Oscars for Best Film, Best Leading Actor, and Best Leading Actress. Based on Robert Penn Warren's Pulitzer Prize-winning novel of the same name, it tells the story of a small-time rural politician, his improbable rise to the state's top office, and his precipitous descent into megalomania and moral turpitude. Now, more than half a century later, this meditation on morality has been deemed worthy of revival.

Running a populist campaign, Willie Stark (Sean Penn) harbors a deep contempt for the state's corrupt political machine, underwritten by big business. He takes his case to the rural poor. He's one of them. With promises of schools, roads, and health facilities, he rides into office and the seductive trappings of power.

Jack Burden (Jude Law), a newspaperman following the campaign, finds Stark's fiery rhetoric good copy and insidiously seductive. As coverage of the candidate's campaign increasingly finds its way into Burden's column, the

newspaper objects (they support the opposing candidate). Jack resigns. But his unemployment is brief. Aware of the journalist's sympathies, Stark, once in office, adds the journalist to his staff.

Joining the new governor's inner circle, Burden effects a sycophantic cortege of three. Sadie Burke (Patricia Clarkson), a woman press attaché, a rarity in those days, has responsibilities both administrative and intimate. Sugar Boy (Jackie Earle Haley), driver, bodyguard, and borderline sociopath, has a love of two things: guns and the governor.

Lubricated by flowing liquor and oiled by lasciviousness (there is a very creative scene involving Stark and an ice skater), Stark's administration and *All the King's Men* move forward and sideways in fits and starts. But this is Burden's story as much as the governor's. It is through his eyes that we watch power wielded without conscience or compassion. Unfortunately, as in the 1950s version, the young man's thoughts that enrich and contour the novel remain, with one exception, unexpressed. Where we might have observed the struggles of compromise, we witness only indifference and weakness.

Sean Penn is the film's foundation and strength, adding nuance and depth to a role with little arc: a straight-line depiction of a man intoxicated by power. In a crowded (didn't I mention Kate Winslet, Mark Ruffalo, or James Gandolfini?) script, Patricia Clarkson and Anthony Hopkins, playing an uncompromising judge, both make contributions far outweighing their time on the screen. Haley, buried in the credits under all the marquee names, yet quite visible throughout the story, likewise does well for himself and the picture.

All the King's Men is a sequence of spectacles seasoned with Southern epigrams on a tapestry of lush cinematography, the narrative sacrificed. It has been part of the formula this summer in Hollywood, its wisdom for the most part confirmed at the box office.

As a character study, *All the King's Men* runs shallow. As intrigue, Steven Zaillian's (*Schindler's List*) script falls flat. As political commentary, which the theaters are full of, this movie is like wood in a forest. And therein may lie the central problem. In the context of current affairs, Willie Stark, with his naked ambition and my-way-or-the-highway autocracy, might be seen as just one of the guys. ■

All the King's Men is a sequence of spectacles seasoned with Southern epigrams on a tapestry of lush cinematography, the narrative sacrificed. It has been part of the formula this summer in Hollywood, its wisdom for the most part confirmed at the box office.

Sean Penn as Willie Stark in *All the King's Men*





Adventures
in Irony

©Dr. Wes Browning

How about that
Immigration
Problem? I can
solve it!

infants for veal. For another thing, it's like saying, "In the great tradition of Halloween, boo." It's lame.

That's why I want to use this column to do a Lame Modest Proposal Blowout. I want to make such a fool of myself doing Lame Modest Proposals, no one else will dare. Or, at the least, they will learn to keep their intentions hidden.

All Modest Proposals begin by naming a problem that begs to be solved. The less said about the problem, the better. In Swift's case, it was the Irish Problem. My first Modest Proposal concerns something related to the Skinny Model Problem.

It turns out skinny models are bad for your health, because they cause anorexia, so some Spaniards have banned them from their Spanish fashion shows. This might have been my first Modest Proposal, but as I've just told you, it's been done. So my First Modest Proposal will solve the Young Model Problem instead.

The Young Model Problem is that young models make people want to be young, which is bad for your health. Therefore I would ban all models under the age of 45. This would also solve the Skinny Model Problem in one swell foop, as they say.

As you may have noticed, cartoons and papal speeches have offended Muslims in large quantities, and this is a Problem, namely the Offended Muslim Problem. Therefore, I propose that all of us, men and women, wear burkas, pray however many times a day the Muslims pray (I suppose I should have looked that up before starting this), and take up the habit of

The Oddest Proposal

If you're like me, you wince every time you read a letter to the editors of a newspaper that begins, "In the great tradition of Jonathan Swift, I would like to present the following Modest Proposal..." For one thing, the letter writers' proposals are never as good as Swift's idea to substitute Irish

ordering fast food only in Arabic, the language of the Great Prophet.

No, we don't become Muslim. That's not the idea. No one is offended by any of us not being Muslim. The idea is to be proactive. Instead of insulting them, we flatter them with imitation. Don't forget to put all the Disney characters at Disney World in burkas. Otherwise, they'll know you aren't being sincere.

You might say, "But what about the American pig farmer? Won't I have to stop eating hot dogs, and won't that be devastating for the American pig farmer?" Answer: At this stage in the game, there's no helping the American pig farmer, whose dreams were shattered long ago. But, as far as your jones for hot dogs is concerned, don't worry; they make them from chickens these days, as you'd know if you'd ever used a food bank. Get out and live a little.

How about that Immigration Problem? I can solve it!

It often happens a problem's solution leaps out at you when the problem is well-framed. Let's frame it well! We Americans are upset that, instead of Americans doing crappy jobs for little pay, Mexicans and Guatemalans are doing crappy jobs for little pay.

When you put it that way, the solution is obvious, isn't it? Ban crappy jobs!

Think about it. Why shouldn't everybody from Bill Gates down be cleaning their own stinking toilets? Hey, I clean mine. I don't pay Poles or Mexicans to do it. I own a scrubber and I use it.

Similarly, I can solve the Homeless Problem. What really is the problem? Too many street people! What's the solution? Get rid of the streets!

Self-reliance is the American Way. If we didn't have streets we would all have to walk to our decent, non-crappy jobs. So? That amounts to leg-reliance, and legs are part of your selves, aren't they? So it's self-reliance too.

No streets would mean no street people. And, as an added bonus, we would also simultaneously solve the SUV Problem, the Oil Problem, and the Asphalt Problem. ■

Happier, Healthier, Wealthier, Walking

Despite the large number of fabulous, active, interesting people who choose to be car-free, it is still considered an "alternative" lifestyle. We bus- and bike-dependent types are often viewed as martyrs; angry, political types with

something to prove; or die-hard environmentalists participating in "sustainability experiments." But I have a shocking revelation: Some people choose not to own cars out of good, old-fashioned, American self-interest.

I wrote an essay on the personal benefits of car-free living for this month's issue of *Seattle* magazine. And then, a couple of weeks ago, I found an entire book on the subject. Chris Balish's, *How to Live Well Without Owning a Car* (Ten Speed Press, 2006) shows people how to improve their lives — especially their finances — by (don't make me say "I told you so") giving up their cars. Here's an excerpt from the first chapter:

"Without a car to constantly take care of, you'll have fewer hassles, lower stress, less aggravation, and less to worry about. You may even find you have more free time.... You may also improve your health, get more exercise, lose weight, and sleep better. In other words, you'll be happier, healthier, and much wealthier."

How to Live Well Without Owning a Car is filled with good arguments for not owning a car and good information about how to live without

one. It's extremely persuasive — so persuasive that I predict it will convince a fair number of people to dump that extra couple of tons they've been lugging around. Here are some reasons why:

It is written by an attractive, successful, image-conscious Midwesterner — a demographic not known for its high percentage of car-free people. It provides many alternatives to driving cars, including walking, public transit, bicycles, and scooters, and though it focuses on the financial benefits of not owning a car, it doesn't leave out any of the others: environmental, social, physical, emotional. It explains the detrimental effects of our car-centric culture without demonizing cars or judging the people who drive them. It gives useful, specific information about how to prepare for, and eventually live, a car-free life. It includes a chapter about car-free dating. It promotes car-sharing for situations that require a car. It offers strategies for reducing car use for those who can't give up their cars completely. It is full of inspiring testimonials from people all over the country who are happily living car-free (and "car-lite") lives.

Buy *How to Live Well Without Owning a Car* for every prospective bus chick you know. Buy it for all your broke friends who are two value meals away from selling their plasma. Buy it for your upstairs neighbor, your Aunt Mae, and your cousin Junior. Buy it for your fraternity brothers. Buy it for your dentist.

Better yet, tell all those folks to check it out at the library. It is, after all, a book about saving money. ■



Sat., Aug. 26, 4:45 p.m., Pike Place Market.

A Hispanic male aged 63 was contacted by market security for trespassing. A name check revealed an outstanding warrant, which was verified via radio. Suspect was trespassing from the market again and was arrested and booked into King County Jail.

Thurs., Aug. 31, 11:50 p.m., Second Ave. Doorway.

A transient white male aged 65 was found standing in a doorway on Second drinking from a can of beer. He was obviously intoxicated: His eyes were bloodshot, he had the odor of intoxicants and urine about his person, he was slurring his words and had a staggered gait. The complainant, an employee of the building, had asked the man to leave the premises at 11:50 p.m.; he was still there when the officer arrived at 12:06 a.m. Suspect stated, "I had no place to go, so I stayed." A name check revealed an outstanding warrant for trespass — this was verified, and the man was arrested and booked into King County Jail.

Sat., Sept. 2, 10:04 a.m., Minor Ave. N., apartment building.

According to the complainant, the assistant manager of the apartment building, she was checking on the parking garage when she saw the suspect, a transient white male aged 25, underneath a 2006 Honda belonging to one of the tenants. She saw that he seemed to be loosening the plastic shrouding from under the engine. She contacted police, who approached the building from the alley side. They found the suspect there, rummaging through a trashcan. Officers approached the man, and he stated that he owned the apartment building and lived in an apartment inside. He rambled on about being homeless for five years, and that he has been working for five days but they will not give him his money. The victim/car owner responded to the scene and stated he could find no damage to the vehicle. The suspect then burst out saying that the car was his. Damage to the vehicle was minor. Officer states that based on the behavior of the suspect, he was suffering from some emotional and/or mental problems. Suspect was arrested and booked into King County Jail for trespass and property damage.

Sat., Sept. 2, 1:32 p.m., Alaskan Way S., Public Boat Landing.

An officer on patrol at the public boat landing observed the suspect, a transient Native American male aged 68, lying on a blanket drinking beer. The suspect had been previously verbally trespassed from this location by the same officer and had been given a number of warnings about "camping" and drinking at this location. Officer states the suspect is a chronic public inebriate and likes to loiter here with other drinkers. The boat landing is littered with beer cans, furniture, trash, urine, and feces, and he states despite daily warnings and trespass admonishments, this individual insists on using this visitor photo spot for illegal activities. He was arrested and booked into King County Jail for criminal trespass.

Compiled from incident reports of the Seattle Police Department by Emma Quinn. Get 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

How to Live Well
Without Owning a
Car is filled with
good arguments
for not owning
a car and good
information
about how to live

Got something to say about public transportation in Seattle? E-mail Bus Chick at buschick@gmail.com or visit blog.seattlepi.nwsource.com/buschick.

WELFARE, Continued from Page 5

Sharon Parrott is director of the Welfare Reform and Income Support Division for the Center on Budget and Policy Priorities (CBPP). She co-authored a recent study that aims to show that TANF's rave reviews often miss the bigger picture.

Parrott cites three major reasons for the apparent success of getting single mothers employed in the 1990s: the excellent economy, work supports such as childcare, and welfare reform.

"But, when the economy failed in 2000, everything changed direction," she says.

Parrott came across myriad facts that indicated some major stumbling blocks in TANF's ability to help the most needy of families. Although child poverty decreased in the 1990s, according to her study the number of children living in deepest penury, below half the poverty line or around \$6,000 for a family of two, increased by nearly a million between 2000 and 2004, while the number of children receiving assistance through TANF declined during the same period.

She also points out that the reduction in welfare caseloads championed by TANF's advocates is likely due to ever-changing fiscal poverty levels and could actually be a result of poor families qualifying out of welfare even while they remain in poverty.

Another question remains unanswered: When the caseload levels dropped in the 1990s, it was heralded as a success of welfare reform. But was it the result of an increased number of welfare recipients transferring to working lifestyles, or was it the new federal quotas for caseload levels and stringent work requirements that were pushing people off assistance?

"There was no investigation of how caseload levels were reduced so significantly," she said.

Wagner applauds TANF and dismisses its critics. "The criticism of TANF pales in comparison with that of AFDC," he says.

Parrott agrees. "I don't know anyone who thinks AFDC was doing a great job for poor families."

But she also knows that states are working hard, perhaps too hard, to meet the federal requirements and cut spending.

"There is a fiscal incentive for states to reduce their caseload," Parrott says. If a state does not spend the entirety of their TANF block grant on welfare, it is allowed to transfer that money to other programs that fall under human services.

And, she says, "The cheapest and easiest way [not to spend money] is to restrict access," which means states will be meeting their federal requirements, while those in need who don't fit into certain categories will find themselves forgotten. ■

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[Online]

The Center on Budget and Policy Priorities' summation of 10 years of welfare reform is available at www.cbpp.org/8-17-06tanf.htm.

Letters

editor@realchangenews.org

Ending homelessness one family at a time

Dear *Real Change*,

Thank you for the September 6 article "In a Family's Way," describing the changes now taking place in services for homeless families in the Seattle area. The transition does present some very real difficulties to overcome. It's true that Family Services of King County is able to give fewer families shelter vouchers this year. Readers should note, however, that the families we do work with in-depth are more likely to reach independence and leave the system permanently, never needing a motel or shelter voucher again — a positive outcome on which we can all agree.

The long-term goal is ending family homelessness permanently, one family at a time. The challenge is to make the system adjustments necessary for reaching that goal, while still meeting immediate needs on the streets and in the temporary shelters. We knew that shifting to the in-depth services leading to permanent solutions would cost more money, not less, during several years of transition. Limited resources meant hard decisions about funding priorities. We support continued funding for emergency services in the short term. And we at Family Services strongly believe that the longer-term help for those currently in transition will help end the cycle of homelessness and eventually free up resources and services to help even more people in need. We are confident that in the long run, homeless families will receive better assistance and find themselves transitioning to a stable

environment much more quickly when the focus is on "housing first." Family Services is working hard to bring this vision into reality.

Ruthann Howell, CEO/President
Family Services

Confused, cowardly, culpable

Dear *Real Change*,

I just read your story "A Just Desertion: Absent soldier hidden aboveground" in the August 16-22 edition of *Real Change*. I'm writing because I'm pretty confused as to how you can portray this man's actions in a positive light and give him a venue to spread the message he seems to be trying to convey. The man volunteered to serve in the armed forces and then broke his contract and the law by not reporting for duty. Not only is this cowardly, but the fact that he sees it as a viable option shows he doesn't understand how his service in the military worked. Why would you write an article about a coward who lacks intelligence enough to understand commitments he makes?

Randy Brown
Washington, DC

Ed. replies: *Since he laid low in Tennessee for a few months, there's no doubt that Webb understood the terms of his pledge to the Texas Army National Guard. But since then, he's been speaking with the media and the public around the country. He even worked for the Census Bureau. This story wasn't about the gall of the some 6,000 people who have skipped out on the U.S. Army. It was about the federal government doing such a hapless job of finding them.*

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.

CLASSIFIED

Opportunity

Let's Talk About It: Prostate Cancer Education Program designed for African-American Men over 40. Mon., Sept. 25, 6-8 p.m., Safeco-Jackson Street Center, 306 23rd Ave. S. Info: (206) 461-6910

Festival Latino: celebration of culture with music, dance, and food. Fri., Sept. 29 - Sun., Oct. 1. SuperMall, 1101 SuperMall Way, Auburn

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The raccoon looks soft as a kid glove
along the roadside as if it had been sleeping
with its striped tail bowing on its prayer rug.

I wish I had fur so soft and beautiful as this
dusky fur and could steal away with such a coat,
cosmic looking as the great spiral nebula.

For its resting place looks peaceful as though
it was making its way for the gully so full of glowing
clematis that it could take off its mask for once.

—MICHAEL MAGEE

Calendar

This Week's Top Ten

Saturday 9/23

Steven Hill's book *10 Steps to Repair American Democracy* is a blueprint for reinventing the government and its people. Instead of analyzing the thought process of the Founding Fathers during the birth of our nation, he delves into what they would do now. Hill will also discuss the Pierce County campaign for instant-runoff voting, Charter Amendment 3, which appears on the November ballot. 7:30 p.m., Elliott Bay Book Co., 101 S Main St.

Fingal, the new Irish traditional music trio, plays their repertoire of jigs, reels, and songs in Gaelic and English. The respected performers include James Keane on button accordion, Randal Bays on fiddle, and Daithí Sproule on guitar and vocals. Tickets \$15 and up. Town Hall, 1119 Eighth Ave.

Tuesday 9/26

The price of oil has more than doubled since 2004. Christopher Flavin, president and CEO of the Worldwatch Institute, an international research organization focusing on environmental sustainability and social justice, discusses the effect of rising oil costs on our global and local economies. Tickets \$10 World Affairs Council Members, \$15 general. 6:30 p.m., Mountaineers Club, 300 Third Ave. W.

Wednesday 9/27

Thomas Hager, author of *The Demon Under the Microscope*, delivers his lecture "The Drug That Shaped Modern Medicine," about the dramatic history of the first antibiotic, sulfa. The Nazis discovered it, and the Allies won the war with it. It conquered diseases, changed laws, and ushered in a new era of modern science. Tickets \$5. 7:30 p.m., Town Hall, 1119 Eighth Ave.

Thursday 9/28

Pulitzer prize-winning investigative journalist Seymour Hersh, whose articles in the *New Yorker* exposed the prisoner abuse scandal at Abu Ghraib, discusses his specialty: abuse of power in the name of national security. 7:30 p.m., Town Hall, 1119 Eighth Ave.

Friday 9/29

Award-winning journalist Michelle Kennedy delivers her talk "Without a Net: Middle-Class and Homeless (With Kids) in America," in which she describes how a couple bad choices can push a smart,

educated woman and loving mother below the poverty line. 11:30 a.m., Fisher Pavilion, 305 Harrison St. Info: (206) 694-6802.

The award winning documentary *Independent Intervention* examines the U.S. media coverage of the war in Iraq and brings new light to the disparity between what Americans see on TV and the realities on the ground in Iraq. The film features an all-star cast of social justice champions, including Amy Goodman, Noam Chomsky, Dahr Jamal, and more.

7 p.m., Keystone Church, 5019 Keystone Pl. N.

Sasha Su-Ling Welland, University of Washington Professor of Anthropology, discusses her part-biographical and part-historical book, *A Thousand Miles of Dreams: The Journeys of Two Chinese Sisters*. She traces the lives of her grandmother, who won a scholarship to study medicine in the west, and her great-aunt, who remained in China and worked as a painter and writer

and had an affair with Virginia Woolf's nephew. Through these personal stories, she traces the history between China, Europe, and the US during the 1920s and 30's. 7:30 p.m., Elliott Bay Book Co., 101 S. Main St.

Saturday 9/30

The National Environmental Justice for All tour is a guided bus and boat tour of the impact of toxic waste and gentrification on the South Seattle communities. The event will close with a People's March through Columbia City. 9 a.m. - 4:30 p.m., Rainier Community Center, 4600 38th Ave. S Info: (206) 720-0285.

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



www.emeraldspokes.com

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Director's Corner

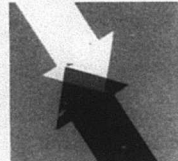


When a report materialized from Seattle's Department of Planning and Development last June, showing 681 units lost to demolition in 2005, another 1,551 lost to condo conversion, and an increased number on the way in 2006, the reaction was slow to come. Last week's *Real Change* forum on housing loss ensured that, at the very least, this issue isn't going away.

About 150 people, including housing activists, four city councilmembers, tenants, and homeless people, packed City Hall's first-floor meeting room to discuss what can be done. While there was little agreement on the scope of the problem (Displacement Coalition leader John Fox claimed that affordable housing is being lost to market forces at "three to four times the rate it is being built," while Adrienne Quinn from the City's Office of Housing dismissed claims of housing loss as "fiction") most panelists at least acknowledged that a problem exists. Nicole Macri of DESC reported that rising rents have led to an increase in families and disabled women looking for emergency shelter.

A wide variety of remedies were suggested, ranging from tenant-owned co-ops and offering non-profit developers first opportunity to purchase endangered housing, to a city cap on condo conversions.

The take-away was a strong sense that the housing market, left to itself, does not tend toward affordability, and that real urgency exists in addressing this problem. The dialogue that began last week is sure to continue.



First things First

Get Involved • Take Action

Lift up Hotel Workers with Your Support

Issue: Hotel workers all across North America are rising to lift each other above the poverty line and grow the middle class. Seattle is home to the Westin, one of the larger union properties targeted in this effort. The coordinated national effort is moving along, but negotiations have stalled locally at the Westin.

Background: Today, 80 percent of jobs in the U.S. and Canada are in the service sector. Hotel and restaurant jobs are the largest percentage of those service industry jobs and make up 50 percent of the lowest-paying job categories.

Hotel workers — largely minority and immigrant women — work hard to create a welcoming home away from home for business travelers and tourists. Few people realize that hotel rooms are dangerous places to work and are becoming even more dangerous because of constantly increasing workloads. The addition of room amenities like heavy mattresses and triple sheeting means that these women are pushing heavier carts, carrying heavier loads and lifting heavier beds every day. Room attendants work hard to make travelers comfortable away from home and their injury rates are 25 percent higher than other service workers. Their effort should be valued and their health protected.

The average daily hotel room rate in Seattle is higher than many of the most profitable hotel cities in North America, yet the average wage lags behind — even though the housekeepers all work for the same multinational corporations.

As the local focus of Hotel Workers Rising campaign, employees at the Westin Hotel continue their months-long negotiation process for respect and a fair contract.

In July, over 100 people gathered at the Westin lobby to show their support for the workers. Management took notice and added language to the contract offer that protects immigrants and adds a non-discrimination clause for gender identity. But the paltry wage increase, increased workloads, and repeated cancellation of talks are insulting, so workers are turning up the heat.

Action: Come down during a five-day show of public support. Join the workers for an informational Walk and Work picket. Meet them and talk about life inside the hotel and show your support for their struggle and for creating good jobs with fair pay. Westin workers have asked community members to be present on the picket lines to show hotel management that there is public support for good health care, living wages, and better working conditions.

Join workers Sept. 18-22 from 11 a.m.-1 p.m. and 4-6 p.m. outside the Westin Hotel on Fifth & Stewart.

Also, join the Drink-In on Sept. 21. Gather together at the hotel lobby, drink a beverage of your choice, and demand progress for workers that have been presented with less than adequate contract proposals.

Westin Hotel Lobby (Fifth & Stewart), Sept. 21, 5:30-6:30 p.m.

To learn more, contact Jessica at jlawson@unitehere.org or call (206) 728-2326 ext. 21 or for information on the national campaign, visit www.hotelworkersrising.org.

RAID, Continued from Page 1

swered. When the workers asked ICE officials why they were being detained, the workers say they got no replies, only shouts to be quiet. The workers described people crying, she says, of being traumatized by the experience. When recounting their experiences, she says, the workers were crying and visibly shaken. "I cannot say enough about the wrongness of this kind of behavior [by ICE]," says Guillen.

Then the arrests began.

Press reports of the raid indicate that 26 people were arrested that morning, with five of those being released soon after, as they were deemed primary caregivers to children. But Guillen says that initially, she was told that 38 people were arrested. Putting a tack on the exact number is hard, she says, because some of the families of those detained are unwilling to speak, with a number having already left the country. One of those arrested, she adds, was deported to Mexico the very same night. All of those caught in the raid were taken to the Northwest Detention Center, maintained by ICE, in Tacoma.

A call to a representative from ICE was not returned as of press time.

Magdeleno Rose-Avila, executive director of the Seattle-based Northwest Immigrant Rights Project, says his organization has heard that 28 individuals were arrested. But the number of people detained isn't really important. "It's the tactics that matter," says Rose-Avila.

In the past, he says, officials in raids used to be dressed in immigration uniforms; now, they come suited in black jackets, arresting people in an aggressive manner. "They've tried to equate immigration with terrorists," says Rose-Avila.

Indeed, ICE sits under the umbrella of the Department of Homeland Security.

The arrestees, whatever their true number, only represent a portion of those detained in ICE's Tacoma facility, which, estimates Rose-Avila, sees 100 new people a week, some flown in

from as far away as Miami. While his organization tries to inform those being detained in Tacoma of their rights, he says most enter an immigration hearing pro se, where they defend themselves, as lawyers are not provided to those with financial hardships facing immigration charges. He says, with the Northwest Detention Center considering raising its bed count from 800 to 1,000, that there are simply too many people for his organization to represent. Asks Rose-Avila: "Who's going to defend these people?"

On Guillen's end, she says she is trying to quell the terror that this raid has set alight. Of the primary caregivers who were released, she says one of them has covered her windows with cardboard, afraid to speak to anyone. Another woman who was eight months pregnant at the time of the raid recently gave birth to the child, three weeks early, she says. The woman, she says, blames the raid on leading to a premature birth. None of these primary caregivers is currently working, she says. All will be deported.

From the released workers, Guillen says a portrait is beginning to emerge of how people were treated during the raid, of deliberate attempts to target Latinos. These retellings have left the community with more questions than answers, which means, she says, the community can only speculate.

"It's like this is a deliberate attempt to raise the fear level in the community," says Guillen. "Why?" ■

DOMAIN, Continued from Page 1

is paying a consultant at the Southeast District Council to hold meetings and collect community input, with a second public forum planned Oct. 19 at the Rainier Cultural Center.

The council, which has not endorsed the proposal, is part of a larger planning group called the Southeast Neighborhood Investment Initiative, which includes business and nonprofit housing interests such as the Rainier Chamber of Commerce, the Rainier Valley Community Development Fund, HomeSight, and Southeast Effective Development (SEED.)

Johnson says the initiative grew out of the Southeast Seattle Action Agenda, a plan created last year by community leaders called together by Mayor Nickels. But one detractor, Rainier Valley resident Ray Akers, says the new agenda differs from previous neighborhood plans that never called for eminent domain.

"Rather than taking the community's plans and starting to implement them, he gathered all these historic plans, put them in a blender on high and cherry-picked what he wanted," Akers says of the mayor.

"Low-income people be damned. Get out of the way," Akers says of the approach.

Earl Richardson, a participant in the planning group and executive

director of SEED, an active nonprofit developer in Rainier Valley, rejects Akers' characterization.

"People tend to focus on the eminent domain authority, but that's not what this is all about," Richardson says. "This is a tool that will allow us to bring some resources to get some development accomplished.... The CRA is going to hopefully make it a bit more enticing by trying to go out and buy the land."

Some in the group, however, question how CRA-backed development, even if by nonprofits, won't run off low-income residents and small businesses, given that rents in new buildings are always higher.

"I'm not sold on it yet," says Darryl Smith, a real estate agent and board member of the Rainier Chamber of Commerce. "Eminent domain talks about taking, not the financial portion. It's talking about property assemblage, not how you deliver toward the larger goals."

Until those details are worked out, Smith says, "It's still a moving target." ■

[Events]

The Southeast District Council will host a second public forum on a proposed Southeast Seattle community renewal agency on Thurs., Oct. 19, 6:30 to 8:30 p.m., at the Rainier Cultural Center, 3515 S. Alaska St., Seattle.

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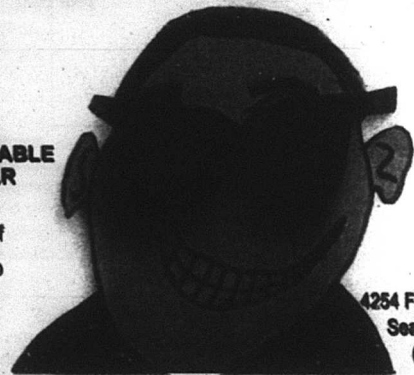
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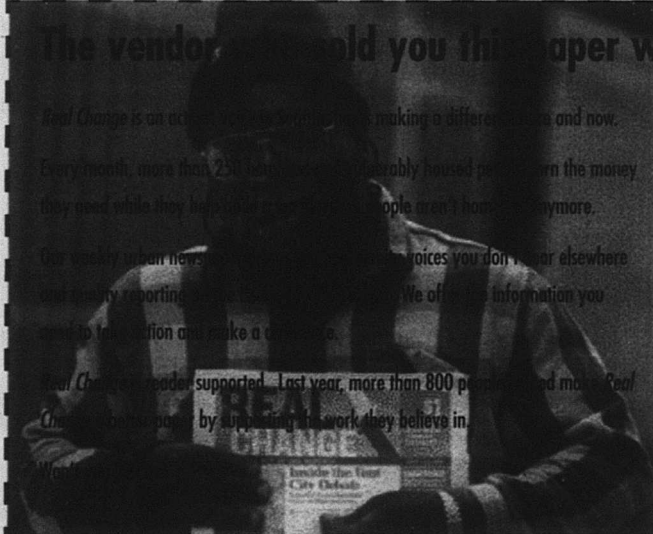
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