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REAL CHANGE

# Made in ~~China~~ Prison

**Former inmate Paul Wright** exposes the companies profiting from a captive workforce while paying them a pittance— if at all...see page 7.

**What's prison like?** "Ha! Basically Washington, dehumanizing, alienating experience," says Wright. "That's kind of the point."

Microforms-Newspapers  
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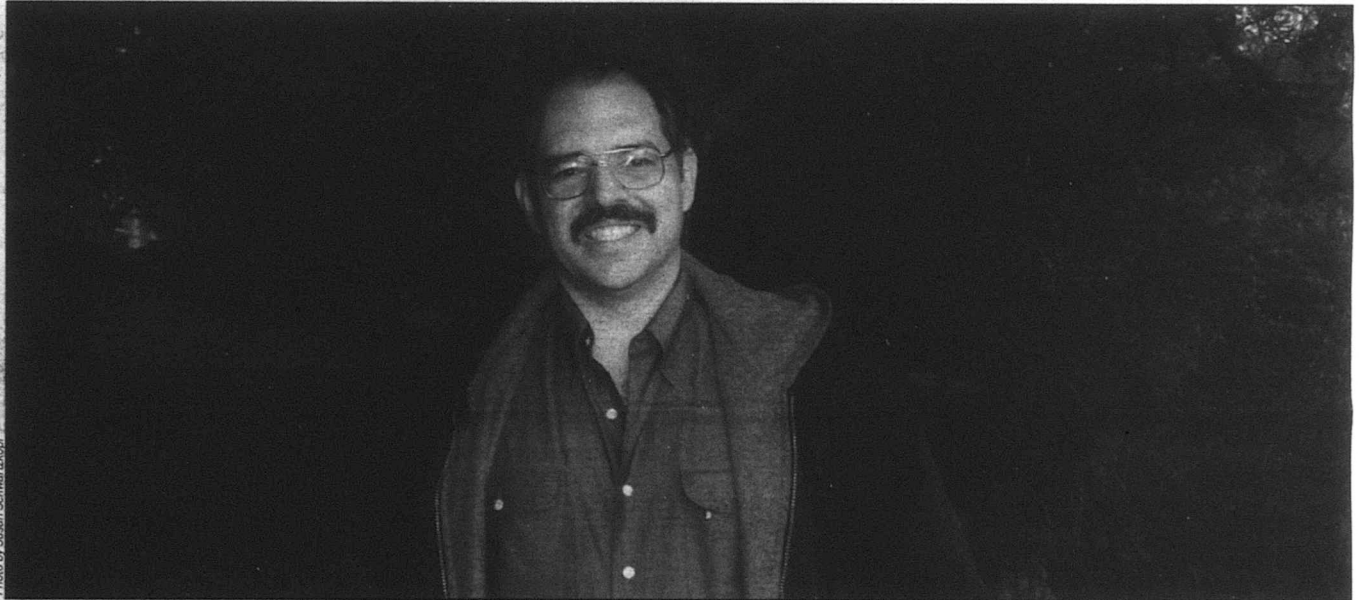


Photo by Susan Schwarzkopf



Photo by Cydney Gillis

## Trespassed from Home

**Trespass orders harass youth** and determine where they can and cannot go, say Black families...see page 5.

Slash and ruin

p. 4



Vendor  
of the  
Week

p. 11

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.

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



## We know we have a problem. But how can we quit the War on Drugs?

### What Will It Take?

By NORM STAMPER, Guest Writer

**T**he drug war is lost. Over. Done. Kaput. Yet we continue to fight it. At huge costs to our treasury, health, safety, and personal freedoms. What will it take for us to accept the irrationality of this war, and put an end to it?

Since 1971 when Richard Nixon made his infamous declaration, we have spent over \$1 trillion prosecuting the "War on Drugs." What do we have to show for it? Illicit drugs are more readily available at higher levels of potency and lower costs than ever (labeling the current spike in cocaine prices a "success," as the drug czar has done, is like saying oil producers lose money when prices go up). Our kids have virtually unfettered access to mood, mind, and behavior altering drugs. Yet we cling to our failed strategy, pumping another \$69 billion down the rat hole each year.

Over 2.3 million Americans spent last night behind bars. In 2006, arrests of nonviolent drug offenders hit an all-time high of 1.9 million, 830,000 of them for marijuana offenses, 90 percent of them for simple possession. Feel safer?

Let's be clear. The drug war has never been a battle against substances. It's

**Let's be clear. The drug war has never been a battle against substances. It's always been about people: poor people, young people, people of color.**

always been about people: poor people, young people, people of color. Not only has the drug war failed to achieve its mission of a "drug free" America, it has visited incalculable damage upon the lives of tens of millions of marginalized individuals and their families, all struggling to survive in this nation of plenty.

It's not only Americans who suffer. The U.S.-led global war on drugs has produced a \$500 billion international trafficking industry; political and economic destabilization; environmental

devastation; and wholesale street violence in countries around the world, especially in Latin America. Thanks largely to obscene profits, and U.S. demand for meth, heroin, and cocaine, thousands of Mexicans will die this year, victims of shootouts, execution-style killings, and decapitations. The children of snitches, competing traffickers, honest cops, and judges will not be spared.

Here at home, we've seen drug-related corruption and criminality within our own police forces; the tragic deaths of law enforcement officers and innocent citizens (including grandmothers and toddlers), caught in the crossfire between rival drug dealers - or gunned down on police raids gone bad; development of mistrust between local cops and the people they serve; and cruel, pointless harm to the physical and fiscal health of entire neighborhoods.

Today, we spend seven times more of our tax dollars on enforcement than on prevention and treatment. Drug addicts seeking to kick their addictions are hard pressed to find help; most don't. Even sensible harm-reduction approaches, like clean needle exchanges are scarce or nonexistent in many areas, a testament to blind, ideological opposition and/or the timidity of political leadership.

The solution? The re-legalization and regulation of all drugs.

**Prior to 1914**, except in places like San Francisco (which, taking aim at its Chinese population, criminalized opium possession late in the 19th century) all drugs were legal. Then Congress, acting out of fear of "drug-crazed" blacks, Latinos, and Asians, began criminalizing every drug in sight. In 1920, with the passage of the Volstead Act and the 18th Amendment, we effectively criminalized America's all-time favorite drug.

Not surprisingly, alcohol prohibition gave instant rise to a whole new lawless class, making criminal syndicates rich beyond their wildest dreams, and robbing government coffers of untaxed billions. Prohibition guaranteed armed conflict between rival dealers. Thou-

sands of bootleggers and innocent folks were struck down by machine gun fire. Overdose deaths skyrocketed, the result of bad bathtub gin. Sound familiar?

In 1933, we wised up to the folly of prohibition and passed the 21st Amendment (thereby repealing the 18th, the only such repeal of a constitutional amendment in the history of the country). It was a good day for sanity and common sense.

### What will it take for us to end the drug war?

The same wisdom, will, and courage it took our aroused forebears to admit that alcohol prohibition was a failure.

Ah, but didn't it increase the number of alcoholics? No. Well, surely it made alcohol more accessible to children, right? No. What repeal of prohibition did was to create industry-wide standards, enforced state by state, for the controlled regulation of the drinkable drug. When's the last time you saw the driver of a Budweiser truck shooting it out with an Old Milwaukee distributor?

Regulation works. Not perfectly, of course. But who would you rather have controlling today's illicit drugs? Cartels, with their kingpins and armed street traffickers, pushing product of lord knows what substance, quality or dosage? Or the government: presiding over every aspect of the growing, manufacturing, packaging, pricing, and regulated sales of those same drugs?

What will it take for us to end the drug war? The same wisdom, will, and courage it took our aroused forebears to admit that alcohol prohibition was a failure. Please join me in speaking out for a better answer. Demand an end to the War on Drugs. ■

#### [Event]

**Former Seattle Police Chief Norm Stamper and award-winning independent journalist Silja J. A. Talvi** will be reading from their books on Thurs., Feb. 14 at 5:30 p.m. at the Rainier Valley Cultural Center. For more information, turn to Page 12.



**It's Tuesday, and a crew from KOMO just left the Real Change office** after interviewing me for a piece scheduled for 6 p.m. tonight. Issaquah

has followed suit after Tacoma and Auburn in enacting new panhandling laws to place "time, place, and manner" restrictions on public solicitation. Similar legislation is under consideration in Federal Way, and Seattle City Attorney Tom Carr has stated that our own

city should perhaps adopt some aspects of the Tacoma approach. Carr seems to like the sunset-to-sunrise restrictions in particular.

The trend toward the criminalization of survival activity, whether it be panhandling or camping, is something that should concern us all. Issaquah's legislation prevents solicitation within 300 feet of any freeway on- or off-ramp, as well as at 13 other specific intersections. Tacoma's is so comprehensive as to effectively ban panhandling altogether.

There is an inevitable logic to the cascading adoption of anti-panhandling ordinances by communities throughout the region. When a city like Tacoma puts the squeeze on panhandling, the need doesn't go away.

It just resurfaces someplace else. No city, apparently, wants to be that place.

As the options of the very poor become more circumscribed, the desperately poor will be driven further and further from where services are available, and possibly into more heavily criminalized aspects of the underground economy. These include shoplifting, prostitution, drug sales, and theft. This is in no one's interest.

It's time for communities to consider how they might more aggressively act to address the root causes of poverty; underemployment, and declining housing affordability. When we simply outlaw that which makes us uncomfortable, nobody wins.

## Director's Corner

## Just Heard...

### Lock Vista saved

Tenants at Seattle's Lock Vista Apartments got a memo last week telling them the Ballard complex will not be converted to condos after all.

As reported last week ("For the owners, it's just business," RC, Jan. 30 - Feb. 5), a development company that tried to buy and turn the 191 World War II-era rentals into condos wasn't able to pull off the deal, ending months of tenant anxiety and move-outs for which the owners must feel guilty: The memo tells tenants to take \$300 off their March rent and that "we value your residency" — at least until another buyer comes along.

In the meantime, "everyone seems to be so relieved and so glad they stuck it out," says Lock Vista resident Helen Murnane, 70. "I am so pleased that I don't have to move."

### Foreclosure aid

When families lose their homes to foreclosure, it's not only traumatic, it's bad for business and, by implication, the city's tax base — a notable point in a press release from Greg Nickels on a new aid program he has started to address the subprime mortgage crisis.

Last week, Seattle's mayor said the city is giving \$200,000 to two groups — Solid Ground and the Urban League — to provide 40 families with counseling and bridge loans of up to \$5,000 so they can stop a foreclosure or sell their home. The program is for those making below 80 percent of median income, or \$60,000 for a family of four.

Solid Ground's Mortgage Hotline is (206)694-6766 or try the Urban League, (800)368-1455.

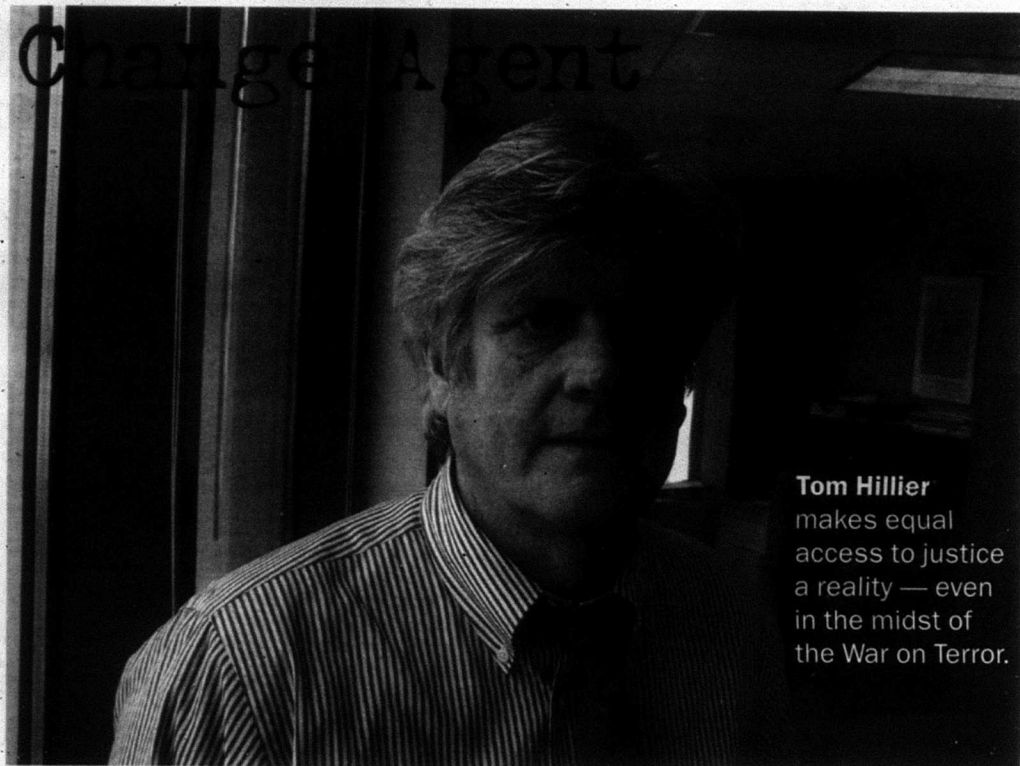
### Parade permit appeal

A Seattle group that claims it was mishandled by the police for trying to hold a legal street march argued before the 9th Circuit Court of Appeals this week that Seattle parade permits are unconstitutional.

In 2003, the October 22nd Coalition to Stop Police Brutality applied for and got a permit for its annual march, which started that year at Seattle Central Community College. But, as the 80 marchers were forming, officers told them they had "rescinded" their permit to use the street because there were so few of them — even though the permit did not specify a required number of marchers.

The march proceeded on the sidewalk, but attorneys at the ACLU argue that such arbitrary changes, or requiring a minimum number or proof of insurance for marchers, impinges on free speech — something a previous judge disagreed with. The coalition says a ruling, which is expected later this year, could affect all groups that stage marches in Seattle.

—Cydney Gillis



**Tom Hillier**  
makes equal  
access to justice  
a reality — even  
in the midst of  
the War on Terror.

Photo by Adam Hyla

**D**rugs. Guns. Fraud. Immigration. Those are the words issued like thunderbolts from the hands of FEMA, the FBI, the IRS, or ICE. When they strike, people go to the federal Public Defender.

"We represent people who don't have enough money to pay for legal representation, as most people accused of crimes don't," says Tom Hillier, 60, the third-longest serving public criminal defense attorney in the nation.

Does he like the work? "They pay me to resist authority," he says. "What could be better?"

Blessed by geography, the legal arguments in this state, with its tribal lands and international border, are never boring.

Hillier takes the issue of the sentencing of Ahmed Ressaam, caught in Port Angeles in 1999 with nitroglycerin and four timing devices, before the Supreme Court next month. Ressaam's cooperation put meat on the frame of the FBI's knowledge about Al Qaeda; he's mentioned in the pre-9/11 memo "Bin Ladin determined to strike in U.S."

Ressaam has been "a showcase for prosecution in how to deal with terroristic events," says Hillier. It shows how much easier it is to extract information in court "than when you're torturing people in secret."

—Adam Hyla

## Where do the inmates belong?

**C**ity planners are looking at how to provide beds behind bars for 800-900 jail inmates when a contract for jail services with King County expires Dec. 31, 2012.

After that, 39 area cities are exploring three options: build and operate their own separate jails, jointly open one facility, or get the county to build their offenders a new home.

Somewhere in King County a new jail, or maybe a few, will be built.

First, the City of Seattle is asking the legislature to lift a ban on urban cities using sales tax revenue to build jails. That's one item on city lobbyists' work plan in Olympia this year.

"We need all available tools" for providing enough space for offenders, says Catherine Cornwall, senior policy analyst with the Office of Policy Management.

The cities will need 440 more jail beds in the next two decades. South King County cities have an average daily inmate population of 500 people; eastside cities have 196, while Seattle itself has 440. While some cities have their own jails, the county currently provides 330 beds for the city's misdemeanants: people brought to local authorities with charges like driving while intoxicated, domestic violence, petty theft and shoplifting, criminal trespass, and failure to appear in court. Those charged with felonies are the county's responsibility.

The expiration of the contract is made more urgent because Yakima County, which houses Seattle and other local cities' offenders, could not house the number of inmates it originally promised. Inmate overcrowding and access to lawyers has been a problem at the central Washington jail ("Locked in Doubt," March 30 - April 5, 2005). Local cities' contract with Yakima ends in 2010.

King County is a willing player in finding new jail space, says regional jail coordinator Claudia Balducci. "We are interested and planning with the cities to try to work with them past 2012, but we don't know yet what that looks like."

A feasibility study on how and where to house local inmates will be out this spring.

—Adam Hyla

## Mayor to ask police union

In a press conference Feb. 4, Seattle Mayor Greg Nickels said he would immediately implement half of the 29 recommendations from his police accountability panel — the easier, less forceful half, essentially, what is within his power to order without asking the police union's permission.

The mayor appointed the 11-member citizens panel last June in the wake of NAACP complaints that the Office of Professional Accountability (OPA), the police unit that investigates citizen complaints, is weak and fails to stop officer misconduct. Of the recommendations made by the panel Jan. 29, Nickels said that the Office of Civil Rights will provide citizens with advocates to help them through the police complaint process. The police chief is also to appoint an ethics officer and respond in writing if he rejects any of the OPA's recommendations — with the OPA auditor to track the handling of all recommendations, including the panel's.

## SPD's tool to fight homelessness: machete

## Police slash tent, let rain ruin possessions

By ADAM HYLA, Editor

James Bustamante doesn't remember where he was the night before he met a police officer on the path to his tent on Queen Anne Hill. He doesn't remember what day it was; sometime in early October. He doesn't remember what the police officer looked like. What he remembers is the weather.

"They picked a day to do it when it was raining," he says. "I think they do that all the time."

He remembers, too, what the officer held in one hand. A machete.

And the 39-year-old former butcher can recount what the officer said when he asked for time to clear out.

"I said, 'Wait a minute, I'll be out in a couple hours,' you know, because I just had my tent and a few things."

"He said 'No, if you try and get in the way I'll arrest you and have your stuff destroyed.'"

"He said, you know, 'Just get out of here.'"

"So I just turned around and left, you know. Didn't have nothing to do."

The next day he went back: out Elliott Avenue to the parking lot behind the Super Supplements, where a trail leads up into a forest of ivy and maple. The machete's slashes had exposed his things to the elements. The rain had done the rest. Everything was ruined.

"All my art" — Bustamante does pen and ink drawings in the fantasy genre, and has made money from the work. "My lantern. Propane tanks, sleeping bags, two duffel bags full of clothes, a couple pillows."

"I mean, my stuff was just thrown all

over the place, just all over. They did a hell of a job, I'll tell you that. Did the same to everyone else."

Two weeks later, Bustamante says, Parks employees came in and cleared up the mess. At his camp, they were mopping up after the police alone, Bustamante says; during his tenure in Kinnear Park he kept the premises clean, picking up cigarette butts along the trail. He was a regular at the Starbucks at the foot of the hill, which

**James Bustamante was living in the park with the consent of one city custodian: "He said 'I'm going to pretend you're not here.'"**

had a bathroom. Trash, too, was taken care of. "I had a trash can with trash bags; the guys at the vitamin shop... would even give me bags when I didn't have them."

"My place was spic and span; I don't drink or do drugs, if those guys say they saw beer cans they are absolute liars."

And that's why the maintenance lead for Kinnear Park turned a blind eye to his camp.

"The Parks people, they went up there one day" last spring, he recalls. "He wandered around, went up there and there and there, you know, then came back and said 'You guys are OK, if you ever need bags when you see me, you know, let me know and I'll give you

all the bags you need. This is a very clean, clean camp.'"

"He said 'I'm going to pretend you're not here.'"

The Parks Department estimates that this year it will spend \$175,000 on clearing homeless encampments from its property. That's about 20 percent more than it spent in 2006. For the Central West district of the city, in which Kinnear Park resides, they'll spend nearly \$25,000 — up 50 percent since 2006. The southwestern portion of the hill, where Bustamante camped, is estimated to need "up to eight cleanup projects with police and DOC assistance," according to Parks Department documents.

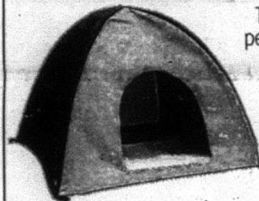
Bustamante left his ruined things where they lay. He stayed with his

wife in her subsidized apartment for the eight day maximum allowed by the rules, then found shelter with SHARE. Of shelters generally he has no good opinion. "They're disgusting. They live like animals," he says.

He's afraid to go back to sleeping in the woods. But cops don't scare him. He saw a couple in a Starbucks recently and asked them what they thought of Mayor Greg Nickels' stepped-up approach to keeping public property free of blankets, tents, and other survival aids. The mayor's staff are codifying an encampment clearance procedure that gives the homeless 48 hours to move on ["Trespass procedures get hearing," Jan. 30].

"The officers said that he's a very stupid man, a very stupid man. They said, 'That guy, you know, he's going to give us a pain in the ass. We hardly have enough people to take care of the city as it is, and now we're going to have to take care of all these people, thousands of them, their homes destroyed.'"

stealing is a crime  
survival is not  
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The City is clearing campsites where people are living. No advance notice is given and belongings have been confiscated.

There is an urgent need for new and used sleeping bags, blankets and tents

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Contact Danina at [Danina@realchangenews.org](mailto:Danina@realchangenews.org) / 206.441.3247 X211

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## Citation-happy cops circumscribe Black families' freedom

# Trespassed from home

By CYDNEY GILLIS,  
Staff Reporter

**V**aleria Baber is not an advocate of gangs — far from it. But the Rainier Beach mother says she sees why one of her four grown sons joined a gang called the Hoovers.

It's for protection, she says — to have someone who'll watch his back. And someone does, she says, almost day and night: a bicycle officer who dogs her son Delano using a little-known city law that allows him to "trespass" the 26-year-old vocational student and father of five from the street and even places where he's lived.

Delano Buckley isn't alone. Officers have trespassed all of his brothers and many of his African-American friends, including a whole houseful of parents and children who were once at a friend's Seahawks party. Another family in the Central District with two teen boys who aren't in gangs reports a similar pattern of officers trespassing the boys from the neighborhood store.

The Seattle Police Department says the trespass law is a useful way to combat illegal activity. But the other side of the story, parents like Valeria Baber say, is that the police are using yearlong trespass orders to harass Black youth and determine who can and cannot visit her home or anyone else's.

Buckley has a misdemeanor record, but he says he and his Hoover friends are not criminals — they are just buddies

**Baber says the police trespass people at will, without signed agreements: "Just because they're standing on the corner doesn't mean they're doing something illegal."**

who hang out. He's currently taking carpentry classes at Renton Voc-Tech and hopes to apprentice as a union carpenter. But the more trespass orders he gets, the more chances he has to be arrested for breaking them, which gets tricky, he says, when you've been trespassed from where you live.

Buckley says that's happened to him three times, the last time from a home he was sharing last fall with the mother of his children. He was standing on the street waiting for a bus, he says, when the bicycle officer approached, asked him where he was living and then wrote out a trespass order for the address he gave.

"I said, 'Man, this is corny,'" Buckley recalls telling the officer. "You're going to have to arrest me because I'm not going to move away from my kids because their mother works and I stay with them."



Valeria Hoover says two of her four sons, including Delano Buckley, right, have been trespassed from her apartment. When he got a trespass order from his own home, Buckley says he replied, "You're going to have to arrest me, because I'm not going to move away from my kids." Photo by Cydney Gillis.

Last August, Baber says, Buckley and another son who were staying at a unit she had at the Lake Washington Apartments were both trespassed after the same officers saw some boys smoking weed outside one of the buildings and chased them to her stoop.

As a result of that incident, which Baber says the officer blamed on her because the boys were friends of her sons, she was asked to leave the apartment complex and had to move.

Police spokesperson Renee Witt says that officers can trespass anyone who isn't named on a rental lease — if the property owner has previously signed

a trespass agreement authorizing the police to remove suspect visitors on their own, as the troubled Lake Washington Apartments has done.

Officers write the orders on a five-by-seven card that the person being trespassed is asked to sign without receiving a copy. But, "Before they go in and trespass someone, they will check with the manager [and] ask if the person has a legal right to be here."

"If the management says they don't want him to be here, there's nothing we can do about that," Witt says.

Baber calls that bunk — the police trespass people at will, she says, without

signed agreements or regard for anyone's rights: hers or her sons'. "Just because they're standing on the corner doesn't mean they're doing something illegal," she says. ■

### [Event]

**"The School-to-Prison Pipeline."** Solid Ground presents a Black History Month panel on the failure of the school system to educate youth and the path that sets up for African-American men to end up in the criminal justice system. Thurs., Feb. 7, 9-11 a.m., at Solid Ground, 1501 N. 45th St., Seattle.

## TV: The Early Years

TVs were big  
boxy affairs  
immovable monoliths  
cupboards with fake wood veneer  
with dials and knobs  
you had to touch  
and adjustable rabbit ears  
or an aluminum antenna  
attached to the roof or chimney  
which my father would climb up to  
and fiddle with  
depending which of our two chan-  
nels  
he wanted to watch

There was a contrast button  
vertical hold  
an on-off switch which also was  
volume  
It would take a full minute  
to warm up and come on-  
and when you switched it off  
the entire picture would contract  
into a tiny bright dot  
a white hole  
in the center of that dark green  
curved glass  
which also took a minute  
before vanishing

I imagined Nielson  
that ratings guy  
looking through that dot  
into our living room  
to see who was still around

—Larry Crist

## OPA, Continued from Page 3

In addition, the mayor is giving the OPA director control of her own budget, but not the ability to select her own staff — one of the critical items that the mayor says he will have to ask the Seattle Police Officers' Guild to approve. Others are the panel's call to expand the OPA auditor's role in tracking cases and to allow difficult complaint investigations to exceed 180 days — the current limit in the union contract.

According to the mayor, a law the City Council passed last year requiring the police chief to file a written report if he fails to follow the OPA's advice on disciplining an officer is also subject to the guild's approval. "I never predict," the mayor said of getting to yes with the union, but "it's my hope it will not take long to resolve."

## Teamsters fighting Seattle Times

Seattle's Teamsters have fought outsourcing before, but the battle that 75 drivers and mechanics are currently waging with The Seattle Times Co. is getting ugly enough that the workers could strike when their contract expires Feb. 29.

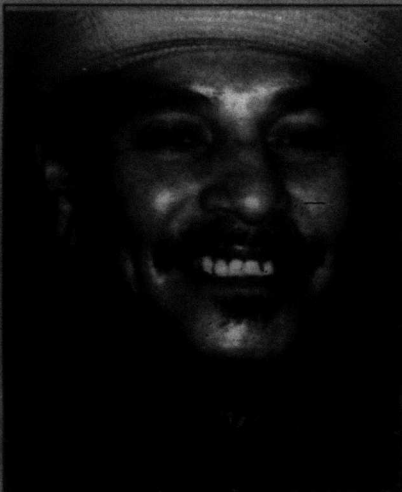
That's the day the Times has told the workers they'll be laid off, with their jobs to be outsourced to Penske Logistics. The Times, which operates business and circulation functions for itself and the *Post-Intelligencer* under a joint operating agreement, informed Locals 174 and 763 of the layoffs in a Jan. 15 layoff notice that the Teamsters say is bogus — the state-mandated notices, the union says, are required 60 days in advance of layoffs.

The Teamsters are trying to negotiate with the Times and Penske to maintain the jobs at the same wages, but, on Jan. 24, the Times filed an unfair labor practice complaint with the National Labor Relations Board, claiming the Teamsters are acting in bad faith. The Teamsters have filed a countercharge and, if push comes to shove, says Patty Warren, senior business agent for Local 174's 68 Times drivers, a walkout is possible come Feb. 29 when the union's contract and its no-strike clause expire.

"One of our primary issues right now is that the proposal from Penske would mean a wage cut for most of our members," Warren says. "We just took a year's wage freeze after the [Seattle Times'] fight with the P-I. They used that time to figure out a way to get rid of us."

—Cydney Gillis

## Seferino Nieto, 1950-2008



Those who knew Seferino Nieto describe a man who lived his life with joy. "He was always smiling," says Allison Vrbova, Nieto's case manager at Plymouth Housing's Scargo apartments. "He was fabulous."

Nieto, a 57-year-old *Real Change* vendor, was killed in a head-on auto collision Jan. 23 near Kent. Originally from Orange County, Calif., Nieto is sur-

vived by his mother, two sisters, a wife, five children and cousins, nephews and nieces.

After a memorial held Jan. 24 at Plymouth's Simons Senior Apartments, neighbor Fred Robinson said Nieto was a "sharing, loving human being" who "kept me off the street and taught me how to live."

—Cydney Gillis

## Success Story

One by one  
my teenage cronies died:  
Hux on a motorcycle  
Martin with gun in mouth  
Bill got it in the face too  
an argument over drugs  
Freeman drilled by machine gun  
as CAMP swooped down upon his gro-op  
Skip beaten into idiocy  
likewise Butch  
having survived the cliff

Otherwise i lost track of  
but rumor has it . . .  
Later there was AIDS  
but that was a different crowd  
and Hep C: another gang  
i had yet to meet

The old gang  
homophobic racist rednecks  
all died drug related  
yet no o.d.'s  
there was no killing them by doing too much  
just too much too often  
wrong time, wrong place, bad people. . .

Finally, my best friend and soul brother, Chris  
who i looked up too late  
had made it to 42  
when his parachute failed  
now there's a classic death  
Last i saw him he was 20 and had just robbed a bank  
but he went on, got out, stayed out  
two boys, worked in a tavern  
owned a Harley  
someone from the old crowd  
who made it

—Larry Crist



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Paul Wright started a newspaper to uncover what the rest of the media cover up

## Mass Incarceration in America

Interview by ROSETTE ROYALE,  
Staff Reporter

**R**emember back in 2000 when talk show host Kathie Lee Gifford was raked over the coals when it was revealed her clothing line was being made in sweatshops in Honduras and the United States? What might the reaction have been if the revelation, instead, had been that the clothes were produced in prisons? Would people have been shocked? Would they even have cared?

One person who would've cared, but probably wouldn't have been surprised, is Paul Wright. As editor for the past 18 years of *Prison Legal News*, the nation's only publication dedicated to prisoners' rights, Wright has stewarded a journal that's examined, among other issues, how prison labor has been used to package everything from our favorite coffee beans to making our sexiest pair of underwear. All over the country, Wright says that prisoners are a hidden form of sweatshop labor that's being paid a pittance. If they're even being paid at all. And the reason we don't know it, he says, is because the companies who profit, along with the prisons, don't want us to.

That may begin to change with last month's release of *Prison Profiteers: Who Makes Money from Mass Incarceration* (New Press, \$26.95), a collection of articles Wright and prison rights attorney Tara Herivel co-edited that document not only those whose bank accounts grow fat on a prison labor force, but those the prison industrial complex employs.

In town recently to talk to UW law students about prison labor in the state, Wright chatted with me about the production of women's panties and Kevlar jackets in prison, the inspiration for *Prison Legal News*, the prison abolition movement, and the circumstances leading to his 17-year conviction of first-degree murder.

**When we use the term prison labor, what exactly are we talking about?**

I think a good starting point is the fact is that the United States never outlawed slavery: what it does is it *limits* slavery to people that have been convicted for crimes. Prisoners can be paid a nominal amount: they are here in Washington, but in a lot of states — Texas, Arkansas, Louisiana, Florida, basically the heart of the Old Confederacy — prisoners work and are paid nothing for their labor.

**When you say paid, how much is that pay?**

Well, the prisoners that work here in Washington doing institutional jobs are on average paid 42 cents an hour, and the maximum amount they can make is \$55 a month, and the state takes a chunk of that. Then there are Class 2 industries — license plates, furniture, stuff like that — and those prisoners make a maximum of \$1.10 an hour. This is the type of work

that generally most prisoners can do or have access to. Then, most recently, there are the Class 3 industries, where prisoners work for private industry, and they are nominally paid the minimum wage. The reason I say nominal is they may be paid the minimum wage, but the state takes percentages of it for their so-called incarceration, for various other fines, and legal obligations and such, so the result is that they get paid maybe \$1.50 - \$2 an hour. And the key thing here is that the businesses are only in prison because they are getting huge amounts of taxpayer subsidies from the state government.

**So what companies profit from prison labor here?**

In the past, the companies that have used prison slave labor include Starbucks, Nintendo, Boeing, Victoria's Secret, Eddie Bauer, Planet Hollywood, Microsoft.

**What does Victoria's Secret get out of prison labor?**

They're having some of their items made by prison workers.

**You mean women's undergarments?**

Yeah, they're being made by sweatshop labor. And some of the companies — Microsoft, Starbucks, and Nintendo, for example — at one point, used prison slave labor at the Washington State Re-

**If you factored in the number of people in prison not working into U.S. unemployment statistics, you would have ... double-digit unemployment.**

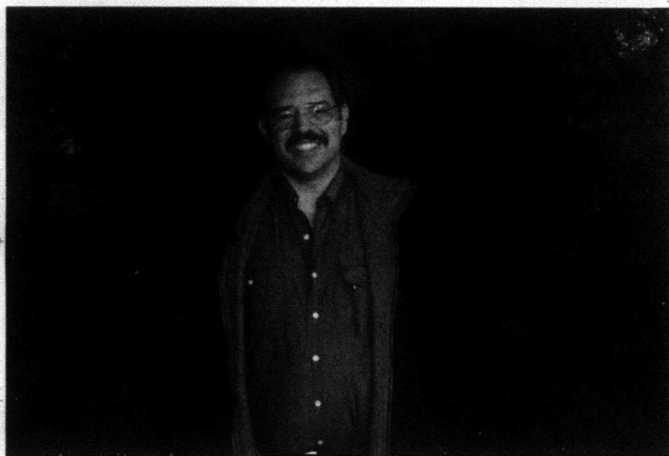
formatory, and at Twin Rivers [Correctional Center], to package their goods.

**Does that mean everyone in prison is involved in prison labor?**

No. Washington is one of the states where the Supreme Court invalidated the practice in 2004, finding it violated the state constitution. Washington was one of the states with one of the highest numbers of workers working for private companies, but even then, that was only 300 prisoners out of, oh, 19,000 total, so it's fairly insignificant. To put this into perspective: [there are] 2.3 million people locked up in prison and roughly 2,700 of them work for private companies.

**If it's statistically insignificant, is it something we should be worried about?**

Yes, because one of the things you have to understand about prison labor is the fact there are certain elements to it.



While serving 17 years in the Washington State Reformatory, Paul Wright started *Prison Legal News*, a publication dedicated to prisoners' rights. Now, he's co-edited a book, *Prison Profiteers*, that exposes those making money at the expense of the nation's 2.3 million prisoners. Photo by Susan Schwartzkopf

Former U.S. Supreme Court justice Warren Burger wrote a report in 1986 called ["Prison Industries: Turning Warehouses into] Factories with Fences," and what he wanted to do was turn back the clock to the time before the Great Depression, when prisons were largely self-sufficient based on their labor, where prisons manufactured goods and sold them on the market, and basically the money that was used from that was enough for the operating cost of the prison. With the Depression, unions, business leaders, and others sought the enforcement of laws that prohibited the transport of interstate commerce of goods made by prison labor, and the argument then, and now, is that labor can't compete with prison slave labor.

Most recently, you have prisoners who are working for prison industries that are unsafe, being exposed to heavy metals, toxic chemicals. This comes up in computer recycling. It's being touted as pro-environment, but in reality, you've got prisoners with no training, no specialized medical equipment and industrial equipment, being exposed to very dangerous conditions, very dangerous substances. Basically, they're a totally expendable work force.

The bigger issue in prison labor is the impact mass incarceration has on labor forces. In other words, the big story isn't the 2,700 that are working for private companies: it's the 2.3 million that *aren't* working for anyone. If you factored in the number of people in prison not working into U.S. unemployment statistics, you would have jobless numbers that would rival those in Europe. In other words, we'd have double-digit unemployment.

So on one hand, you've got 2.3 million people who've been pulled from the labor market and aren't working. On the other hand, mass imprisonment also functions as a massive jobs program, be-

cause you've got another 700,000 people that are working to keep them locked up. Then you have to ask yourself: OK, if those 700,000 people weren't doing those jobs, what *would* they be doing? To put it into perspective: in the state of Michigan 20 years ago, one out of every 20 employees was an employee of the department of corrections. Now, one out of every four state employees is.

But the prisons are just the domestic aspect of it. You can also look at the foreign angle and look at the number of people in the military, and that's one of those things that sets the United States apart from pretty much every other industrialized, capitalist country: the humongous size of our prison population and the humongous size of our armed forces. I think there's a definite correlation there, in that the police and prisons are to the United States what NATO and the U.S. Air Force is for the rest of the world.

**Well, does the military profit from prison labor?**

Yes they do. In *Prison Profiteers*, there's a chapter about how the federal prison industry makes about \$800 million of war material every year, from things like Kevlar helmets to body armor to cluster bomb casings, tow missile cables, Humvee armor and uniforms, to bunk beds and wall lockers.

**So undergarments and Kevlar, all these things are being made. How come we don't know about it?**

Well, one of the contradictions with prison slave labor is that, on one hand, the prisoners are demonized in the media. There are politicians, corporate me-

## Young, and coming up short

### ■ Shortcomings

By Adrian Tomine, *Drawn & Quarterly*, 2007, Hardcover, \$19.95

Review by JP GRITTON,  
Contributing Writer

This story actually happened, it isn't just a gimmick. Well, it is a gimmick, but it's true. I was on the bus reading *Shortcomings*, Adrian Tomine's new graphic novel, when the guy across the aisle asked what it was about. As I grasped for the right words, I realized that this was a question to which the book provided no easy answer — the first thing I thought of was that, like an episode of *Seinfeld*, *Shortcomings* is about friends and the people they sleep with. Is *Shortcomings*, then, a book about nothing?

The only thing I said was that it was a book about "a depressed guy." This isn't a very good way of describing the story, but maybe at the end of this review you'll understand why that's what I told him.

Ben Tenaka, *Shortcomings'* acerbic hero, has "a problem with depression and anger management...weird self-hatred issues... and relentless negativity"; he is "critical of everything, [has] no career ambitions anymore, [he has] what? One friend?" And aside from Ben's job, I'd be hard pressed to say what it is that he does, exactly. The manager of an Oakland movie theater, Ben is (was) the boyfriend of a girl who, from the book's first pages, we sense could do a lot better. Her name is Miko, and she is the beautiful, talented, patient ex we all wish we'd been nicer to when we were actually dating them.

With a feeling of powerless awe like the one we get when we see a bad car accident, we watch Ben royally fuck things up with his girlfriend. One night, Miko invites Ben to bed, telling him, "We don't have to go to sleep right away." Oh, did I mention she's in her underwear? Rather than accept her invitation, Ben

opts to watch some DVDs he can't even remember ordering.

*Shortcomings* is nothing if not the story of Ben confronted by the fact that his relationship is in the shitter. When

**Ben Tenaka, *Shortcomings'* acerbic hero, has "a problem with depression and anger management...weird self-hatred issues... and relentless negativity"; he is "critical of everything, [has] no career ambitions anymore, [he has] what? One friend?"**

Miko leaves Oakland for a prestigious internship in New York, Ben is confronted with a terrifying question: *What am I without her?*

And that question gives rise to a slew of others. What does Ben want to do with himself? Is Ben still attracted to Miko? If not, then why not? Now a bachelor (well, he's not exactly a bachelor, but it's complicated), Ben begins to meet other women. The world is suddenly full of them. These new women that Ben is meeting are exciting, interesting, articulate, and, without exception, blonde-haired and blue-eyed.

It ever so slowly dawns on Japanese-

American Ben that he is pathologically drawn to white women. So the question is not as simple as "What is Ben without Miko?"; that question permutes, grows, multiplies, finally becoming something else: "What is America?"

Is America Ben's home? His oppressor? Has America been sleeping with Ben's girlfriend?

There through it all is Alice Kim, Ben's best friend. Alice makes *Shortcomings* succeed because she is apparently the only character unafraid to tell Ben exactly how it is (though that's not to say she's not without shortcomings of her own. In addition to a rabid and desperate promiscuity, Alice is living a lie: her parents still don't know she's a lesbian).

By the book's conclusion, we sense that Ben's journey is really just beginning, in the literal and figurative senses of the word. But more than that, Tomine manages to convey that Ben's quest is a long-time coming. The truth is that the Ben we've known isn't just "a

## SHORTCOMINGS



depressed guy"; he has actually been hovering somewhere between denial and depression, a nowhere land that has twisted him into a sarcastic, jaded asshole whose existence is work, sleep, and watching DVDs.

*Shortcomings'* Ben Tenaka faces a cruel choice: either suffer the questions or suffer the consequences of ignoring them. ■

Your book purchases can benefit Real Change. For more info, go to [www.realchangenews.org](http://www.realchangenews.org), click on the Powell's button, and browse the books recently featured in our pages.

### ■ Herman Melville

By Elizabeth Hardwick, Viking, Hardcover, 2000, 161 pages, \$19.95

When I was 21, my big-city cousins went on a mission to get me drunk in Times Square on New Year's Eve. En route we found ourselves on an empty street, the end of which was plugged by a police barricade. All around there was sound: cars, people, an electric hum that must be the vibration of real cities. (Seattle doesn't have it, so don't bother checking.) My two cousins — older, beautiful — walked up and talked a broad-shouldered cop into letting us pass. Champagne bottle in tow, my black-clad cousins strode toward Times Square like they owned it. I recognized the same style and moxie in the work that *New York Review of Books* co-founder Elizabeth Hardwick brought to American letters for decades. Her take on the life and extensive writings of Melville is a delight for its class: where other literary historical analysis gets heavy,

she casually points out how little is on the table: "...so much about Melville is it seems to be, may have been, and perhaps." Perhaps because no one's term paper is on the line, Hardwick doesn't see the point of arguing for one grand conclusion about *Moby-Dick* — though she redeems the maniacal Ahab's first mate, Starbuck, "his reason and experience a torture, for he is standing and waiting for a doom foreseen." Even the man himself is a bit more prosaic than we often allow: in an era when novelists weren't quite so lionized, Melville was acting not as the dark oracle of Americana but as a middle-class husband determined to sow his hard seagoing lessons and harvest a remunerative career — so his kids could stay in school and refrain from peddling sweets door to door. ■

—Adam Hyla

## Untitled

You denied me the simplest need  
restroom access is for ferry passengers only  
you profiled me  
you are dirty you must be homeless  
you ridiculed me  
take a walk you piece of trash  
I recall a line in a movie  
a truly wonderful but tragic story  
"I am a human being"  
Do you know the meaning?

—John Bayly



Adventures  
in Irony

©Dr. Wes Browning

Let's get serious about justice!

Ha, ha! No, seriously, we'll talk.

First of all, why am I interested in justice? Well, I have a big disclaimer to make here: I want some. So I may be seen to have a conflict of interest. Or you might say, "He hasn't had any justice, so what would he know about it?" On the other hand, wanting some makes you attentive. It makes you look up "justice" and justice-related words in dictionaries and beg other people to tell you what they've heard about it. Eventually you get to know as much about it as anyone else who hasn't had it. I want to share some of what I have learned.

The first thing I learned was that, as justice is about fairness, and as fairness concerns mutuality, therefore justice is actually a verb that describes a social behavior rather than a state of being. In other words, you can't really HAVE justice, you can only do it, with other people. I learned that in a nursery, during a fight over a thingy with different colored wheels that spun around.

The second thing I have learned about it is that the mutuality part has to be consensual for it to be really good justice. The best justice is not enforced fairness but fairness that comes about willingly. You learn that by watching cops from a safe distance, and seeing people go in and out of jails.

The third and most important thing I have learned about justice is that imagi-

native people do it better. This works in two ways. If you're imaginative, you can put yourself in the minds of your partners. You can understand how their situation looks to them, and can therefore better know their needs and wants. Also, imaginative people are better at coming up with excellent ways to meet their partners' needs and wants without neglecting their own. Technique matters!

That last discovery is best illustrated

**The second thing I have learned about it is that the mutuality part has to be consensual for it to be really good justice. You learn that by watching cops from a safe distance.**

in the negative. Just look at the lousy justice that boring, unimaginative people give, and you'll see what I mean!

For example, Mayor Nickels and his administration have lately been trying to do justice with people in and around homeless encampments. How boring and unimaginative are Mayor Nickels et al? Well, they are dealing with homeless people who have no place to go but where they are, and they tell them to go there! Hello? There's no "there" there! Wake up!

An unimaginative person can't see how someone standing around at the

scene of an altercation with what is, or even what just looks like, a weapon, might be innocent, and not deserve to be ridden with bullets. So when off duty Mt. Vernon, NY police officer Christopher Ridley wrestled his own gun away from an assault suspect he had been trying to arrest in White Plains recently, and just then four White Plains officers appeared, someone said, "Drop the gun or we'll shoot," and when Ridley didn't drop his gun in the customary allotment of one-twentieth of a second (one-half normal reaction time), they shot him dead. They are now saying, "We didn't know he was a fellow police officer," which is believable, since Mt. Vernon is a good 10 miles from White Plains, so they'd likely never met. And if you don't have any imagination, what is true for you is only what you know is true.

The recent *Post-Intelligencer* "Victory and Ruins" series, exposing how authorities put justice on hold for the benefit of a few of the UW Huskies during that team's 2000 run for the Rose Bowl, provides a beautiful example of the need for good technique in justice-making. Timing is essential. It's extremely important to know when to turn on the lights. You have to have respect for all of your partners, not just ones who are doing you supremely enjoyable favors at the moment.

Otherwise you could be regretting your behavior six years later, once the glow has worn off. ■

Sound off and read more:  
[drwesb.blogspot.com](http://drwesb.blogspot.com)

## ©Dr. Wes on the ins and outs of justice



**Tues., Jan. 22, 2:39 p.m., Second Ave./Pine St.** Officer observed the suspect, a transient Black male aged 48, jaywalking at Second and Pine. He continued walking north across Pine in a marked crosswalk. The crosswalk sign showed a steady red light. Officer stopped the man and informed him of the reason for the stop. The suspect identified himself with a Washington State Department of Corrections ID card, and the officer ran his name and found him clear of warrants. He then contacted the suspect's DOC officer, and she requested they take him into custody for DOC violations. Suspect was placed into custody, and a search incident to arrest police found a small zippered purse in his front coat pocket. This contained a metal crack pipe with residue, and suspect admitted he had smoked crack about a half hour before. Suspect was transported to the precinct, where the pipe tested positive for cocaine. The pipe was placed into evidence, and suspect was booked into King County Jail.

**Tues., Jan. 22, 10:46 p.m., Linden Ave N.** Officer was dispatched to a report of a subject living in a vacant house on Linden. Upon arrival, officer noted that all the windows on the building were boarded up and the front door was unsecured. A check of the interior revealed the suspect — a transient white male aged 26 — in a sleeping bag on the floor. Suspect provided his name, and a radio check revealed an outstanding warrant from Edmonds Police District for marijuana possession. The warrant was verified, and the suspect collected his belongings from the building. Suspect was taken into custody and transported to the precinct, where his belongings were examined. A glass crack pipe was discovered, which was placed into evidence. Suspect was then booked into King County Jail.

**Tues., Jan. 22, 10:55 p.m., Victor Steinbrueck Park, Western Ave.** Officers were on patrol in Victor Steinbrueck Park, which is in Stay Out of Drug Area (SODA) Zone 1, and is known as a high narcotics area. They entered the park and saw the suspect, a transient Black male aged 28, look at them, then quickly cover his head with his hood and turn away. He grabbed his bag and quickly left the park. One officer rode in front of the man so he could get a look at his face. The officer recognized the suspect, and knew him to be on an active SODA order. Officer contacted him and verified the order. At the time the officer contacted him the suspect was sitting on a bench and talking to a known drug user, which is a clear violation of the SODA order. Suspect was arrested and booked into King County Jail.

Bus Chick,  
Transit  
Authority

Carla Saulter

The 48 is everybody's bus. The longest route in the city, it travels from Rainier Beach all the way to Ballard without once getting on the freeway. I take it from my home in the south end of the Central District to my church a little further north in the Central District, to my dentist in Columbia City, to the beauty shop on Rainier and Henderson, to Green Lake to meet my friend Donna for a walk, to my favorite coffee shop in the U District, and to Montlake to transfer to the bus that takes me to work — for starters.

I once had a driver — one of those cool guys who talks to you over the PA — who called the 48 "The Tiger Woods of the system: A long drive with a short putt to the beach," and "Dr. 48, the heavyweight of the system." The hip-hop group Blue Scholars wrote a song about it — a cool, "Posse on Broadway"-style tour of the city that is only possible on a route with so far to travel.

"Take six quarters out of the pocket. / Drop it in the box / Hop the #48, off

to pay homage / It stops often, I jot my observations, watchin' / Citizens walkin' off of the Joe Metropolitan / Proletariats and wayward sons / With old Filipino men speakin' in they native tongue / And the day is just begun."

Of course, there's a down side to all this distance: The route is never, ever, ever on time ("Someday My Bus Will

**There's a down side: The route is never, ever, ever on time — except, that is, on those days when you're late to the stop.**

Come," Feb. 21, 2007) — except, that is, on those days when you're late to the stop. It is not uncommon to wait over 30 minutes during peak times (when the bus is supposed to come every 15) with no sign of a 48 and then see three arrive at the stop within a minute of each other.

More than one frustrated rider has written an open letter to the route. Here's an excerpt from the most recent, posted on Craigslist under "Missed Connection":

## I sing of the great 48

"Dear Bus Route 48: Let me preface this by saying that I love you. You know exactly what I need. When I lived in Greenlake and had those random appointments in the Central District, you were my savior. And you go right by Ezell's Chicken! Score!... but [expletive], can you please be on time? Like ever?"

You can't blame the 48. Driving the length of the city on surface streets, dealing with light rail construction, hordes of students (Did I mention it passes several high schools?), rush-hour traffic, and the University Bridge would throw off the most efficient and determined vehicle. I've heard rumors from planners, drivers, and transit geeks that the 48 is going to be split into two routes, the same way they split the 7. I'm sure I'll be grateful for the more efficient, predictable service, but I know I'll miss my all-purpose route, my ride to everywhere, Dr. 48, Metro's heavyweight. ■

Got something to say about public transportation in Seattle? Email Bus Chick at: [buschick@gmail.com](mailto:buschick@gmail.com) or [blog.seattlepi.nwsource.com/buschick](http://blog.seattlepi.nwsource.com/buschick)

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

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## Letters

[editor@realchangenews.org](mailto:editor@realchangenews.org)

## Smile for the cameras

Dear Real Change,

As a downtown Seattle resident, I'd like to respectfully disagree with your position on surveillance cameras in parks ("Seattle to install surveillance cameras at Capitol Hill, downtown parks," Jan. 16-22).

Crime is a problem in Seattle and it is only common sense that surveillance cameras will provide some deterrent effect as well as provide evidence for prosecution. The ACLU's Doug Honig may claim that people committing crimes will just move out of camera range — but if I'm a visitor to the park, that's fine by me — at least it makes the park itself a safer and better place. And in reality some will not be aware of or ignore the cameras — Honig asserts that these do not reduce crime, but no support is provided for that assertion. The ACLU was, as I recall, also against putting cameras on Metro buses, which I ride and where crime and unruly behavior are problems.

Yes, these cameras capture lots of legitimate citizen activity also, but we don't live in a totalitarian state where that is a great concern; whereas crime is an actual and present concern.

As a downtown Seattle resident, I wish the area where I live (near Third and Pine) were saturated with cameras both to discourage crime and to help prosecute the offenders in the event of an assault. You cannot tell me the known presence of cameras would not discourage some crime.

Dan Hochberg  
Seattle

## Leaders must be loved, not feared

Dear Real Change,

I do not think that *Real Change* should have taken such an affirmative stand towards Ted Van Dyk ("Fools Rush In," Jan. 9-15) during their interview for several reasons. First, he is dishonest. Second, he is belligerent.

Fobbing off blame for the Vietnam War on Ros-tow or MacNamara, when Johnson was in charge, is absurd. Humphrey, for whom Van Dyk was an advisor or speechwriter, poisoned the 1968 Democratic campaign after the murder of Bobby Kennedy by refusing to repudiate the Vietnam War. The Chicago Democratic Convention was a nightmare.

Jim Marrs, of whom I am no fan, is certainly among the most knowledgeable men there are on the subject of Kennedy's murder. He is the only person in America to have offered a full semester course on that subject (at the University of Texas). He ends his prominent book *Crossfire* with an adage suggesting he believes Johnson knew. One of Kennedy's secretaries also said so on her deathbed. As a result, Van Dyk's tirade that a good leader must be feared and that something bad will happen to the disobedient smacks of Johnsonian bullshit.

Dignity, mutual interest, and, where possible, love, are the only bases for consent to governance.

I speak as a person bullied, tortured, and tormented in America for simply exercising the free will, God given and lawful right of freedom of speech, and state plainly that those who insist on ruling by fear will be answered in hatred. I think the existence of a person like me shows that there are and always will be those who do not seek power for ourselves who are not going to take threats from the likes of him as a reason to alter our views... ever.

Humphrey was a dark horse war bureaucrat. Good riddance.

Mac Crary  
Seattle

## CALL TO ACTION

**1 BDR APT: \$900 per month. 20 minutes to Seattle.**  
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**Issue:** This isn't an uncommon example of an apartment listing in Washington state. In most communities outside Seattle, it's perfectly legal for landlords to refuse to rent to prospective tenants simply because they pay their rent with a Section 8 federal housing voucher or another government subsidy. Since programs like Section 8 actually help guarantee that the tenant will pay rent on time, every month, this discrimination is usually grounded in simply not wanting to rent to people who the landlord considers undesirable. Sometimes, this provides the cover landlords need to avoid renting to people of color — always, it's discrimination based on a person's class. The legislature has the opportunity to remedy this by passing Senate Bill 6533, which outlaws discrimination based on a renter's source of income.

**Background:** Each night in Seattle more than 2,000 human beings are left with no other option than to sleep outside. An inadequate shelter system puts them on the street, and city encampment sweeps put them on the move. With their tents and blankets destroyed, some are forced to stay on their feet all night. Obtaining rental assistance, such as a Section 8 voucher is a source of hope for many, a chance to experience a luxury that many of us forget to be grateful for: a roof over our head. Many wait as long as three years for their name to rise to the top of the Section 8 waiting list — and when it does, individuals, families, and friends become hopeful.

Tenant-based rental assistance is Washington's largest source of affordable housing. Renters from across the

state rely on this support to stabilize their lives, raise families and engage in their communities. We should guarantee that people in need of housing assistance are able to effectively use Section 8 vouchers and other forms of assistance that help them pay the rent and stabilize their lives. It is nearly impossible to find or keep a job, practice sobriety, recover your health, or raise a family without a roof over your head. Section 8 vouchers provide a safe place to reclaim one's priorities.

Prejudice and discrimination are unfair roadblocks to safe, decent and affordable housing for too many Washington residents. SB 6533 will fix this and will ensure equal opportunity to apply and compete for housing. A similar bill has already passed the House and now must pass the Senate.

**Action:** Call the legislative hotline at 1(800)562-6000 this week, and send this message to your Senator and Representatives: "Enact Fair Rental Opportunities. Vote yes to outlaw discrimination based on a renter's source of income, SB 6533."

For more information: [www.tenantsunion.org](http://www.tenantsunion.org)

## WRIGHT, Continued from Page 7

dia hacks, and others who have literally made a very good living off of bashing prisoners and their families. On the other hand, there are also a lot of industries that are pretty much thinking about the bottom line and maximizing profits, so it makes them employ prisoners to package Microsoft mice or lingerie or Starbucks coffee. But they don't want anyone to know about it. So they'll exploit the labor, make the money while they can, but if they're exposed, that's a public relations nightmare. [Prison Legal News] did an exposé about Nintendo using prisoners of Twin Rivers Unit to make packages for their video games, and Twin Rivers is the Washington state Department of Corrections Sex Offender Treatment Unit. I can only say: Maybe I'm the only person who found it ironic that children's toys are being packaged by pedophiles?

### Can prison labor be stopped?

Not really. The State Supreme Court invalidated Washington's prison labor program, but this past November, Washington voters amended the constitution to allow the practice. So, if you ask people, "Should prisoners be put to use at hard labor?" they'll go, "Oh, yeah, that sounds great." But do you still want them doing that if it means you lose your job?

### You started *Prison Legal News* while you were in prison. What was your inspiration?

Basically, the fact that prisoners have no voice, and the injustices in the country and the people that are impacted by it. Prisoners can't rely on the corporate media to represent their interest or get the information that they need. Most corporate media coverage of prisoner issues is basically little more than press-release journalism. Journalists should ask for both sides of the story and ask both parties. But when it comes to criminal justice issues, it's pretty much a one-sided story. So stuff like that got *Prison Legal News* started and, unfortunately, 18 years later, things haven't gotten better.

### Can you talk about how you wound up in prison (Washington State Reformatory)?

Well, I was robbing a drug dealer and he tried to shoot me and my shot killed him, and I got convicted of first-degree murder and sentenced to 25 years in prison.

### Did you plead guilty? Not guilty?

I plead not guilty. I plead self-defense. And obviously the jury didn't buy it.

### So what goes through your head when you hear "guilty"?

It wasn't that unexpected, in the sense that I'm going through the pre-trial motions and stuff and I'm thinking: Wow, the judge isn't even making a pretense of splitting things down the middle or be-

ing fair; everything is kind of going the prosecution's way. Which I found out is sort of how things go in criminal cases. And I was thinking that surely this will be rectified on an appeal. Then I found that the appellate system doesn't really do much, either.

### Had you had any experience with the prison system before that?

No, except that I was on the other side of things: I was a military policeman at the time of my arrest.

### Well, that's one of life's ironies.

Yes it is. That's why some people get a little upset when I point out that there is not much difference between prison guards and police and the people they guard. Maybe a little more mental illness or more literacy, but aside from that, not much difference.

### How is it in prison?

Ha! Basically it is a brutalizing, dehumanizing, alienating experience. And that's kind of the point.

### A while ago I interviewed Angela Davis [RC, Dec. 26, 2007 - Jan. 1, 2008] and she's a proponent of abolishing prisons.

Yeah, and tear them down and replace them with what? She doesn't have a very good answer, does she?

### Well, her answer was more education—that we need to have more educational opportunities for people, and that that may be a way to help abolish prisons, by providing it beforehand, instead of during or after. Do you think abolishing prisons is a valid idea?

Before you propose abolition, you need to come up with an alternative. That said, I think first we need to analyze why prisons are used, and whether a different economic or political system would be of use. That's why I think the prison abolition movement has failed to gain a lot of traction, because there has been a lack of analysis on their part as to the role the prison system plays.

So let's start examining who's in prison today in America. The profile of the average prisoner is someone who is partially illiterate and mentally ill and substance addicted. You can start making changes on who's going into prison by other policy changes. One is the state of the public health system, specifically the public mental health system, in this country. Basically, mental illness has been criminalized, so that poor mentally ill people have pretty much been systematically shunted into the criminal justice system and imprisoned. One of the other things is the country's policies on drugs, which are basically a war on poor drug users. There are very few wealthy people in prison for drug offenses, but if you are poor and use drugs, there is a pretty good chance that you are going to go to prison.

One of the things that is pretty well understood by people in the field is that there is a high incidence of drug abuse

and substance addiction among people who are mentally ill: the two kind of go hand in hand. If you start figuring in that the U.S. has 2.3 million people locked up, very, very conservative estimates are at least 400,000 of those people are mentally ill. And then you've got anywhere between 80 and 85 percent of that 2.3 million people have substance abuse addiction. So, how many people are we looking at that are in prison who should be in prisons?

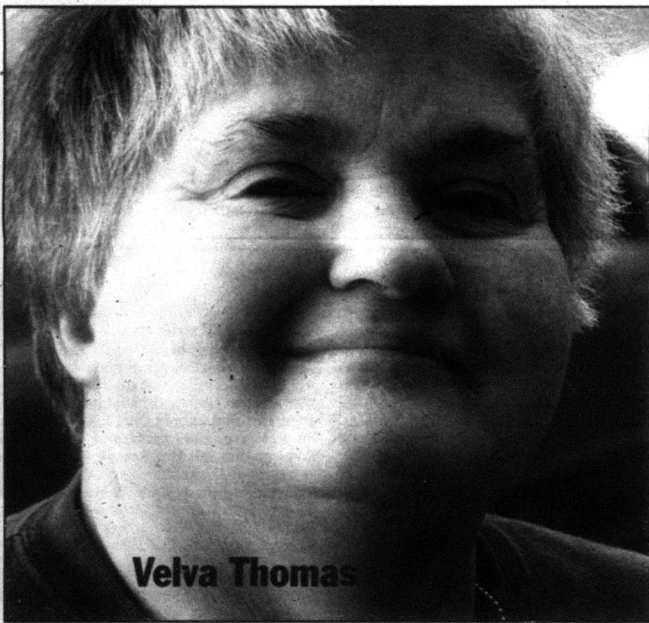
So, is prison abolition realistic? Well, you change your priorities of who's getting locked up, it's not only realistic, it is very possible. But, most people, I don't think, have any intention or inclination of even diminishing the prevalence of mass imprisonment in this country. We're going forward, full speed ahead.

### Is there anything people on the outside can do to help people inside?

Well, most people on the outside have no idea what's going on inside, and the government spends a lot of time and resources keeping it that way. There's no accountability [in prisons] if people are killed or brutalized or whatever. And unfortunately, America has a bipartisan criminal justice policy and no one is advocating any change in the status quo. One of the things I keep hoping is that, as more and more people are locked up, more people who aren't locked up are going to feel a direct impact of the criminal system and hopefully that will start the impetus for a type of change. Unfortunately, most of the people who are being locked up are all poor people, and their friends and relatives tend to also be poor people who don't have much political say in this country.

And that's the whole thing about the criminal justice system: On whose back is it falling? It's almost exclusively falling on the backs of poor people. ■

## Vendor of the Week



There are probably a few really good reasons why I shouldn't compare Velva Thomas to a teddy bear. For one, it's cliché. People are often compared to teddy bears. Not only that, but it's rarely an apt comparison — not only are people often compared to teddy bears, but they are often compared to teddy bears inappropriately. Comparing someone to a teddy bear is also just sort of — I don't know — maudlin or something. If somebody compared me to a teddy bear I would probably laugh politely and then walk away feeling cynical.

But it is in the best possible way that I use this metaphor to describe Velva Thomas. By "teddy bear" I mean someone who has not even a shade of ill will, someone who is not only genuinely kind, but visibly so. I would say that Velva Thomas is huggable, but I'm concerned that if anybody read that

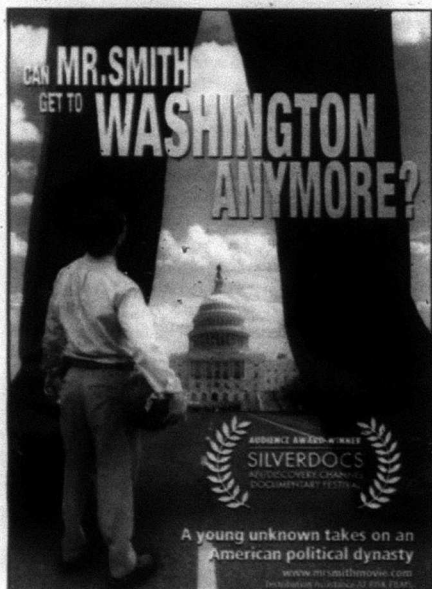
they would never buy another copy of *Real Change*. She's just really nice. Velva Thomas is nice.

Thomas was born in Tacoma but eventually made her way down to Seattle. Here, Thomas was introduced to *Real Change*, and she's been selling so long she can barely remember when she started.

After a time in Seattle-area shelters, Thomas found housing up north, in Everett. As it stands, she is the first and only vendor to sell so far north. She's gotten popular up there, where she sells at 25th Ave. and Colby St.; her sales are so good, in fact, that she's been able to join her church on trips and retreats.

"I think this is a good cause," she says of *Real Change*. "It makes us feel good doing this. This gives us something."

—Story and photo by JP Gritton



Who doesn't like a good underdog story, especially in politics? **Twenty-nine-year-old part-time political science instructor Jeff Smith** threw a wrench in the gears of Missouri's status quo when he ran for congress. His family thought he was kidding, but his candidacy turned out to be no joke. Can Smith and his 500 volunteers beat a member of Missouri's most powerful political dynasty? Find out for yourself. Watch, "Can Mr. Smith Get to Washington Anymore?" a film that chronicles this inspiring grassroots campaign. Come for the free movie on Fri., Feb. 8 and stay for the discussion following. Donations are kindly accepted. 7-9:30 p.m., Keystone Church, 5019 Keystone Pl. Info: [www.meaningfulmovies.org](http://www.meaningfulmovies.org).



The Ethiopian immigrant community expressed its grief for 32-year-old Degene Barecha on Fri., Feb. 1, outside the corner restaurant Barecha owned at 23rd Ave. and Union St. Barecha was killed on the premises Jan. 31; a 23-year-old man who frequented the restaurant is in custody. Photo by Katia Roberts.

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# Calendar

## This Week's Top Picks

### Wednesday 2/6

Chalk one up for the squatters! In 1971, in the heart of Copenhagen, Denmark, the shortage of housing and some freethinking youth spawned the birth of Christiania. For 36 years an 80-acre abandoned military base has been home for this anarchist squatter community. Today, the Danish government allows it to continue as "a social experiment" since evicting this community would be politically unfavorable. Check out the screening of *Christiania: Our heart is in your hands*. The film documents the community and its struggles through the perspective of longtime residents. 7 p.m., Northwest Film Forum, 1515 12th Ave., \$10 suggested donation, if you don't have the money, pay what you can they won't turn you away. Info: (206) 313-2976, or [busno.8@gmail.com](mailto:busno.8@gmail.com).

Is the Bible God's literal word or an anthology of stories and poems edited together by priests? Longtime Harvard professor James Kugel will weigh in on these questions as well as discuss his own place as both a modern scholar and practicing Jew. Kugel now directs the Institute for the History of the Jewish Bible at Bar-Ilan University. 7 p.m., Henry Art Gallery, University of Washington, 15th Ave. NE and NE 41st St. Tickets available in advance online at [www.nextbook.org](http://www.nextbook.org) or at the door \$8 or \$6 for students. Info: Michele Yanow [myanow@nextbook.org](mailto:myanow@nextbook.org) or (206) 774-2227.

If none of those suit your fancy, check out Edmonds' very own Rick Steves as he lectures on European travel. Let his blunders in travel be your gain and learn from a man who has found a way to make life one big vacation. Who knows, maybe the publicly admitted token will talk about Amsterdam. Save your pennies for your European vacation, event is free. 7:30 p.m., Town Hall Seattle, Eighth Ave. and Seneca St., enter on Eighth. Info: [www.ricksteves.com](http://www.ricksteves.com).

### Thursday 2/7

The ecological dance of the Puget Sound and its rivers is as complex and poorly understood as prime-time TV dance shows are simplistic and popular. That's a shame too, seeing as how the water churning through the Puget Sound is vital to the sustenance of the area. Join world-renowned oceanographer and expert Curt Ebbesmeyer as he discusses the importance of the water flowing through the Sound. Ebbesmeyer has been the focus of a multitude of radio, TV, newspaper, and magazine interviews; he speaks at 7 p.m. at the REI Flagship Store, 222 Yale Ave N. \$6 for members, \$8 non-members.

The Michael Randall Ealy Social Justice Foundation will be meeting to bring justice for Ealy, who was killed while in custody of Seattle police. Come and check out what's being done to bring justice to others who have died while being detained and to ensure that it doesn't happen again. 6:30-8:00 p.m., Center Park Residence Council, 2121 26th Ave S., enter on MLK Way. Info: [mresjr@yahoo.com](mailto:mresjr@yahoo.com) or [www.seattlejustice.org](http://www.seattlejustice.org).

### Friday 2/8

Tonight promises to be an evening of fury on the fret boards. Led Kaapana, a master of the slack key guitar (ki ho'alu) will be showcasing his world-class musicianship. Kaapana plays in at least eight tunings, several of which are Kaapana family secret tunings. His performances show off his generous spirit and sense of humor. Don't miss the opener either, Mike Kaawa is known throughout the Hawaiian Islands for his 12-string skills. Show's presented by KBCS 91.3 FM. 8 p.m., Town Hall, 1118 Eighth Ave. Advanced tickets \$15 or \$12 KBCS members. Info: (425) 564-2418.

Calendar compiled by Paul Uhl.  
Got something we should know about?  
Email it to [calendar@realchangeus.org](mailto:calendar@realchangeus.org).

## Policing and Incarceration What's Broken? How do we fix it?



Silja Talvi, author of *Women Behind Bars: The Crisis of Women in the U.S. Prison System*, and Norm Stamper, author of *Breaking Rank: A Top Cop's Exposé of the Dark Side of American Policing*.

Thurs., Feb. 14, 5:30 pm  
Rainier Valley Cultural Ctr.  
5117 Rainier Ave. S., 98118  
\$5 suggested donation

Two Important Authors One Reading to Benefit Real Change  
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This is a very exciting time in the world of politics. We have seen several interesting things happen within the past few months. We have seen a lot of energy and passion put into primaries, caucuses, and debates. This year, there is a lot of history being made on the Democratic side. For the first time, we will most likely have either a black or a women candidate representing one of the major parties. There are also strong candidates coming from the Republican side. Some of the more interesting events have been the debates. If you have followed any of the debates you will see the heart these candidates put into it. It really reminds me of one of my football games because you are constantly proving yourself and fighting for something.

Coming out of the Democratic side are **Barack Obama** and **Hillary Clinton**, two people who have really gone at each others' throats the past few weeks. They are both very good candidates and both have great strong points. For example, Barack Obama is all about making sure we fix our education system and he wants to get the troops out of Iraq in a smart, timely matter. Hillary Clinton also has great goals. For example, she has made it clear that she will give everyone in America health care and that she would remove our troops from Iraq as soon as possible. Regardless of your political stance, these are all great goals that most Americans have on their minds.

Of course, the candidates also take a very different stance on a lot of issues. They both have been criticized severely about certain things, for example, "[Obama is] a newcomer to the national scene, so voters haven't had as much time to weigh his strengths and weak-

## Status of the Candidates by Samuel Martin

nesses. And Obama can't reassure voters by pointing out how he handled some high-profile personal or political crisis." I honestly think that, if elected, they each could rise to the occasion, if need be. A lot of people wanted to see the "dream ticket" which would be Obama/Clinton or vice versa. "Clinton will not be overshadowed by an underling. Clinton is hugely popular in Democratic circles, but truth be told, that pales in comparison to the love and affection showered on Obama.... He has offered a vision of change, and having to answer to the years of strife under the Clintons would be too much."

On the other side of affairs is the Republican Party, which also has a few top candidates such as **John McCain**, **Mitt Romney**, and **Mike Huckabee**. All have proven themselves and have developed some political influence. John McCain is known to be a more liberal Republican on some issues. "We disagree on a number of issues, and if you look at Sen. McCain's position on a number of issues, you have a hard time distinguishing him from Hillary Clinton and Barack Obama." Mitt Romney has said. I have not had an opportunity to follow all of the Republican candidates' positions but I have had a chance to see McCain and Romney. John McCain feels that there should be troops in Iraq to provide long term consistency; he feels it will help the rebuilding process. Mitt Romney has taken a firm stance in ending illegal immigration and making stronger border control.

I believe all of these political figures have strong stances and great views. It is really up to you to choose who you feel is the best candidate based on your personal views. The best thing you can do in this election is to be

knowledgeable about the candidates.

There are a few dates to be aware of and ways to get involved. February 5<sup>th</sup>, also known as "Super Tuesday," there were 12 state primaries. Between Feb 9<sup>th</sup>-June 3<sup>rd</sup> there will be Democratic primaries throughout the remaining states. For Republicans, Feb 7<sup>th</sup>-June 9<sup>th</sup> will be the remainder of their primaries. June 28<sup>th</sup> there will be a PBS debate featuring the 2008 Democratic presidential candidates. August 25<sup>th</sup>-28<sup>th</sup> will be the National Democratic Convention in Denver. September 1<sup>st</sup> through 4<sup>th</sup> will be the National Republican Convention in Minneapolis. November 2<sup>nd</sup>, Nevada Democrats will host a presidential debate at the University of Las Vegas. November 4<sup>th</sup> is the national election day. Following these events and doing your own personal reading should give you enough knowledge to make an informed decision.

This is also very big for me as well: I get a chance to vote for the first time! Another huge difference-maker in this election is the youth vote. I have been talking to a lot of my peers and there are different views among them as to how they will be involved with the vote. It just goes to show that things are beginning to change and people are understanding the power of the individual. I once again would like to encourage you all to get involved, vote, and take control of the future of America. I know I will.

1. [www.seattletimes.com](http://www.seattletimes.com)

2,3. [www.cnn.com](http://www.cnn.com)

Other sources referenced for this article:  
[www.barackobama.com](http://www.barackobama.com), [www.hillaryclinton.com](http://www.hillaryclinton.com),  
[www.johnmccain.com](http://www.johnmccain.com), [www.mittromney.com](http://www.mittromney.com),  
[www.wikipedia.org](http://www.wikipedia.org), [www.boston.com](http://www.boston.com)

## Don't forget to vote! The presidential primary for Washington State voters is February 19<sup>th</sup>.



### Testimony to the Judiciary Committee on HB 3048 BY JIM THEOFELIS

The following is a transcript of Jim Theofelis's testimony to the Washington State House of Representatives Judiciary Committee on House Bill 3048: Legal Representation for Adolescents in Dependency Hearings, January 25<sup>th</sup>, 2008.

Good Morning. For the record, my name is **Jim Theofelis** and I am the founder and Executive Director of The Mockingbird Society. We are an advocacy based organization with a mission of building a world class foster care system through collaboration, innovation, and advocacy.

First, I would like to thank you, **Madame Chair**, and **Representative Goodman** for sponsoring HB 3048 and to all the members of the committee for hearing this important bill.

HB 3048 is clearly a bill whose time has come. As I mentioned earlier, our mission statement is to build a world class foster care system for the nearly 10,000 children and adolescents in Washington's system. One of the ways in which we define "world class" is the standard that kids in foster care receive the

same level of care and support that kids from intact families receive. I can tell you, as a parent, I would never, and assume most parents would never, allow a child to set foot into a court room without adequate legal representation. It is my contention that once the state has gone into a family's home and removed the children; the state then assumes a major responsibility as the parent. We have been very

therapeutic to put kids in this type of position without adequate legal support.

You can see from the bill that we have worked hard to introduce this concept in a measured fashion. HB 3048 would begin as a pilot project that includes training, a cap on the number of clients an attorney can have, and a study to determine the benefits of this proposal. We further scaled the proposal back to only include youngsters age 12 and older. We believe we will see improved outcomes for the adolescents who participate in this program, including ensuring that court ordered services are indeed provided to kids and families, better educational outcomes, and increased placement stability.

In the words of James Baldwin: "For these are all of our children; and we will profit by or pay for whatever they become." I believe this bill is the right thing for our kids in foster care and, if given the opportunity, HB 3048 will clearly demonstrate its effectiveness. Again, I thank you for hearing HB 3048 and I encourage a "Do Pass" vote out of committee. Thank you.

### HB 3048: Legal Representation for Adolescents in Dependency Hearings Establishing a pilot project in two regions, this bill would provide youth 12 and older an attorney for their Dependency Hearings.

fortunate in that the Washington Legislature has viewed the responsibility of caring for kids in foster care as a bi-partisan issue. The Dependency Hearing is a very critical hearing in which major life decisions are made and we believe it is inappropriate and counter-



## Letter From the Editor BY JIM THEOFELIS

The 2008 Washington legislative session is underway. The Mockingbird Society is once again proud to be actively involved in training, and supporting youth to participate in the legislative process. We are especially excited about this year's Youth Advocacy Day on February 8<sup>th</sup>. This is a day when youth who are typically left out of the civic engagement process are able to meet directly with state legislators and share their voice, experiences, and perspectives regarding public policy. The youth are directly involved in planning the day's events, training other youth on salient legislative issues, and being powerful advocates while in Olympia.

While I believe this is a great experience for the young people who participate, I also believe it's proven to be immensely beneficial to the legislators themselves. I know this because so many legislators have expressed the power that comes from listening to the young people themselves who have been in foster care and/or homeless.

On another note, The Mockingbird Society is experiencing another growth spurt. We are expanding our Youth LEAD

program to truly be a state-wide program engaging youth in communities across the state. Additionally, our Mockingbird Family Model continues to receive high praise from caregivers and we have plans to replicate in a number of sites including some outside of Washington.

One very exciting development is what we are calling Prevention Models. Our plan is to implement the Mockingbird Family Model with birth parents in an effort to give them the support they need in order to prevent their children being placed in foster care. Another example of our Prevention Model is to support relatives who are raising a child in their family, e.g., grandparents, aunts and uncles, older siblings, etc. We believe that children will do better with a safe and healthy relative and we want to give these relatives the tangible supports they need in order to be able to keep their young relatives out of the foster care system.

Finally, I want to thank all of you who continue to provide financial support to our work and mission.

Jim Theofelis

jim@mockingbirdsociety.org

## LETTER TO THE EDITOR

Hi Jim,

I just wanted to thank you again for the presentation that you gave at the grandparents group yesterday; I got so much from it. I had been really feeling the weight of parenting lately and your words have given me more strength to keep doing what I am doing. When you said thanks to us for doing the parenting because it is keeping more kids from having to go into the system, it really made me rethink a few things. Sometimes it gets hard and you feel like you don't know if you can continue but,

with people like you, it can make a difference. I am really interested in the program that you were talking about in regards to giving parents support so that they don't lose their kids. That is something I have been thinking about for quite some time because I have seen so many and heard about so many losing their children to the state. Please put me on your email list. Keep on doing what you're doing because it's all good.

Sandra

## The Mockingbird Society: The Story Behind the Name

The 1962 American classic *To Kill a Mockingbird* by Harper Lee is the inspiration for our name, The Mockingbird Society. Atticus, the widowed father of Jem and Scout, joins Miss Maudie in teaching his kids that it's a sin to kill a mockingbird because "...Mockingbirds don't do one thing but make music for us to enjoy. They don't do one thing but sing their hearts out for us."

What if we created an organization, a community, indeed a world, in which our most vulnerable children and youth were protected and valued with the same commitment that Atticus had for mockingbirds?

Join The Mockingbird Society today and help us give young people a safe place to nest and sing.

## Become a Member of The Mockingbird Society

We welcome you to join us in making a difference in the lives of our nation's most vulnerable children, youth, and families. As a supporter, you'll receive a monthly edition of the *Mockingbird Times*. Thank you for your contribution.

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Enclosed, please find my check made payable to **The Mockingbird Society** in the amount of (please note amount on appropriate line):

\$1,000 +	Protector	\$
\$500 - \$900	Champion	\$
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## Meet the Staff: Rhonda Smith

My name is Rhonda Smith. I am 19 years old. I'm from all over Washington. I was born in Seattle. I moved to Port Orchard when I was three. From 11 through 13 I stayed all over Kitsap County. I moved to Tacoma around the age of 13. When I was 16, I moved to Snoqualmie. Around the age of 17, I moved to Burien. Since I turned 18, I've been staying all over Seattle. I currently live in the University District. I am a senior in high school. I attend an interagency school. I also go to Seattle Central Community College. I love music and hanging out with my friends. Writing is something I've wanted to do forever.

I've been in the system basically my whole life. I got taken away from my birth parents at birth because my mom and dad were both into drugs. I got adopted when I was three years old. That didn't work out for very long. I got taken out of that home for abuse and my behavior. I moved out of there when I was 11 years old. I started acting out when I was around 10. My first time in juvenile detention was about a week after my 11th birthday. I hated it, but I couldn't stop going. Every time I've been locked up it was for assaults. The first foster home I went to was the worst. It was the day before Christmas Eve, in a house I've never been to in my life, with some nice people who took me in but I had never met them in my life. It was all just scary and I hated that.

I started getting into more trouble in and out of foster homes and schools. I had to leave Kitsap County because there weren't

any foster homes who would take me. So, I got moved to Pierce County. Things did get a little better for a little while. I moved in with a foster parent that was older and cared for the worst kids in the program. I lived with her for a little over a year. I left there because my behavior was getting worse. I always kept in contact with her, though.

One day at school, my old foster sister said that my recent foster mom lost her license. I guess there were some allegations about all types of abuse. I almost started crying. It was crazy because I had told myself that maybe when I started to control my anger she would let me come back, but that didn't happen.

Everything went down hill from there. A couple of weeks after she lost her license she had a stroke. As soon as I found out, I went to the hospital. It was one of the most painful things I had ever seen. The woman who took me into her home and loved me like I was her own couldn't talk or move. Months later I got arrested and got 9 months in Echo Glen. When I was released I got sent to a group home and later got told that the foster mom who had the stroke had passed away. After I left Echo Glen, I decided I didn't ever want to be in a place like that ever again. I'm going to change, I thought, and, sure enough, I did. I haven't been in trouble with the law since then; I've just been working on myself.

I think the foster care system has its ups and downs. I experienced a lot of downs but being in over 50 placements will do that to you. I am proud to be part of the Youth LEAD program because I love to write and I know what foster kids go through from personal experience. If I could give back anything or to anyone, it would be to foster kids.

## THANK YOU!

ALFRED AND LILLIE SHEMANSKI TESTAMENTARY TRUST AND FOUNDATION; AMARA; PHOEBE AND JEFF ANDERSON; ANONYMOUS; LINDA AND BOB BENSON; HOWARD BEERY; VIRGINIA BLAYNEY; KATHRYN BROOKS; MICHAEL CAMPBELL; KAREN COWGILL; SANDI EVERLOVE; CLAIRE GHAN; JEANNE KOHL-WELLES; SANDRA KRAUS; MAUREEN MARINKOVICH; SPENCER NOLAND AND PATRICIA GRAY; NORTHWEST CHILDREN'S FUND; DEBRA AND KEITH RONNHOLM; KERRY ANNE SCHULLER; SESSIONS FAMILY FOUNDATION; JAMIE SMITH; STUART FOUNDATION; JOHN AND JANET WALKER; MARK AND BARBARA WHITEHURST; SUSAN WILLIS, M.D.; WYMAN YOUTH TRUST

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**ABOUT US:** The Mockingbird Society is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit corporation developing innovative models for improving the outcomes of foster care, while advocating with decision makers for system reform. All contributions are tax deductible to the fullest extent of the law. Please consult your tax advisor regarding your specific tax situation. The *Mockingbird Times* is a monthly newspaper written and produced by youth who have experience in foster care and/or homelessness. All youth employees of The Mockingbird Society are paid between \$9.50 and \$12 an hour. Additionally, youth from across the country submit articles, art work, and poetry and are compensated up to \$25 per published piece. The *Mockingbird Times* has a monthly circulation of 50,000 copies being distributed across Washington State and the USA, through a private distribution list and as an insert in *Real Change*, a Seattle-based community newspaper. Youth involvement is the key to the philosophy, values, and success of The Mockingbird Society and, as such, youth are involved in all aspects of organizational development and decision-making. Donations to The Mockingbird Society may be tax-deductible and are greatly appreciated. No part of the *Mockingbird Times* may be reproduced without the written permission of The Mockingbird Society. All contents copyright ©2008, The Mockingbird Society.



## Movie Review: Martian Child

BY KENNETH LARSON-RETTINGER

Martian Child is a movie that stars John Cusack, Joan Cusack, and Bobby Colman. The plot in this movie isn't that great, but the motive behind the movie is really hard to miss. Perhaps it's the out of nowhere storyline, or maybe it's the fact that this movie isn't really based on anything, but truly, this movie is an inspiration.

The fact is, this movie probably isn't going to be that appealing to people that haven't experienced a lot of hardship in their life, but it really can move people that have had problems with their family. Perhaps it could even move people into thinking a little more about children in foster care because the child in the movie is in a foster home.

Children shouldn't have to think that they are from Mars because no one wants them. I think that is a good point in this movie because the child pretends to be from Mars and although that is not what all children in foster care do, it's not uncommon for a child to make up something about themselves since they don't feel like they belong. In my opinion, this movie is a must see if you have been in foster care or are adopted because this movie really touches on those points.

Martian Child reminded me of what it was like to be in foster care and finally finding the family that I was looking for. I cried at this movie because of the similarities that the title character experiences and the experiences of my life. One of the characters, Dennis, had a line that blew me away. He asks why parents leave you if you're a good kid; if they truly loved you, why do they leave. I used to wonder this, too, when I was younger. I hated when people would tell me that I was so smart and that my birth parents were so lucky to have a child like me. When I asked, "If I am so smart and likeable why did they get rid of me?" they replied that they didn't take that extra second to think about me.

This movie really helps you get the answers that you are looking for about your birth parents and about why, if you're truly as good a child as people say, someone would want to get rid of you. Also, it reminds you that you're just a child and you truly have no control over the actions of your parents, such as divorce or them abandoning you. If you need a little reminder of these things, or you just want to go see a really good movie, I would recommend Martian Child because it is a movie that will really make you think.

## Photo Gallery



Senior Youth Representatives Andrea Roldan and Samuel Martin lead the Life Advocacy 101 training.



Youth Representatives Kenneth Larson-Rettinger and Jessica Garcia learn how to advocate for themselves.

## Foster Youth Need You

Hundreds of children in our communities are in desperate need of a safe home.

Please call Foster Our Future at 1-866-958-KIDS

Foster Our Future is a contractor with Washington State Children's Administration. An experienced foster parent will answer your questions and mentor you through the foster licensing process.

*"Some children need a home for a day; others will need a family forever."*

## Small Charity Gives Big To Foster Kids BY SANDY MANN

In June of 2004, Owen Bunstine Sr. founded the NW Alliance For Foster Children, Inc. (NWAFFC) as a direct result of his personal experiences growing up in the foster care system. Seeing first hand how it felt to be deemed an outsider in society growing up as a foster child, Owen finds it very distressing to see how so many children in foster care are still labeled as outcast in our culture. "Children in foster care just want to have some kind of normalcy. It's bad enough that they don't have someone to call Mom or Dad, but they often have to leave home with only the clothes on their backs. They often get separated from their siblings and other relatives and are forced to live with strangers," says Owen.

The goal of the NWAFFC is to enhance the lives of those living in foster care within our community. They will make every effort to provide foster children with the fundamental things in life to help them feel better about their existence and fitting in with society. Owen started the NWAFFC with the vision of helping to

provide displaced kids and youth with things they might not otherwise be able to afford. "If we are able to help foster children with some of the little things in life that so many other kids take for granted, it would raise their morale and sense of well-being," Owen said.

The sole mission of the NWAFFC is to enhance the lives of children and youth in foster care throughout Pierce County, WA. With help from their network of donors and corporate sponsors, they work to enhance and enrich the lives of foster children through the programs they offer. They believe in the fundamental right of every child in foster care to have the opportunity to have a happy and healthy childhood. They are very proud of their programs such as the Wish Network, which gives foster children the opportunity to submit a wish which might seem impossible.

If you are a foster parent or youth in foster care living in Region 5 and would like assistance through the NWAFFC please visit them online at [www.nwaffc.org](http://www.nwaffc.org).



## Eating Disorders BY LEONA BILL

Eating disorders are more common among young adults and pre-teens. While they can affect both males and females, it's most often girls who have eating disorders.

Anorexia and bulimia are two types of eating disorders. Anorexia is characterized by emaciation caused by extreme eating behaviors like deliberate self-starvation. Bulimia is characterized by recurrent and frequent episodes of eating large amounts of food (binging) followed by purging behaviors such as vomiting and fasting.

Anorexia and bulimia may share some of the same symptoms, for example the obsession with food, but the way the obsession is handled is very different. A person who has bulimia will eat a lot but may later vomit while a person with anorexia will eat only very small amounts of food if they eat at all.

People with anorexia are worried about being fat. Even when a person with anorexia is dropping below the average weight for their age and height, they continue to obsess about gaining weight. An anorexic may be thin and still losing weight but in their own eyes they see themselves differently. An anorexic person looking at their reflection doesn't see how skinny they may be, they always see themselves as fat. A person with anorexia wants to lose weight and may over exercise to do it.

A person with bulimia will binge eat then purge by such methods as taking laxatives or making themselves vomit. When they throw up, they do it after they finish eating. People with bulimia may be at or above their healthy weight, but may have tooth decay from vomiting.

An eating disorder doesn't only mess up a person's body but also their mind as well. A person with an eating disorder may not realize that they have it. Most people with eating disorders have deeper emotional conflicts that need to be resolved. Depression can also be a possible cause of eating disorders. Some people, instead of turning to drugs or other substances to cover or hide their true feelings, develop an eating disorder. Like a person addicted to drugs, before a person with an eating disorder can quit, they have to realize that their habits are unhealthy and recognize that they have a problem. They must also be willing to admit that they have an eating disorder before they begin treatment. To get healthy, a person with an eating dis-

order must willingly address their problem as soon as they can.

The effects of either anorexia or bulimia are unhealthy and both can lead to death through health problems such as malnutrition or damage to their heart, liver, or kidneys, or losing potassium which can lead to heart problems. Females with eating disorders may lose their periods. People with an eating disorder might have stomach pain that they think are hunger but these pains can be caused by stomach damage. They may also have a lack of energy, feel light-headed or have anemia (a lack of iron).

Dr. Gregory Jantz describes Britney Spears as having a "binge personality" and being very compulsive. He says, "She'll do mega workouts and watch what she eats for two months and then return to her bingeing behavior, giving her temporary comfort." Spears has confessed to doctors that she has been suffering from the eating disorder bulimia since she was 16 years old.

The following are warning signs that might indicate a person has an eating disorder:

### Anorexia

- Is significantly below normal weight
- Denies feeling hungry
- Exercises excessively
- Feels fat
- Withdraws from social activities

### Bulimia

- Finds or makes excuses to go to the bathroom after eating
- Eats large amounts of food and doesn't gain weight
- Uses laxatives or diuretics
- Withdraws from social activities

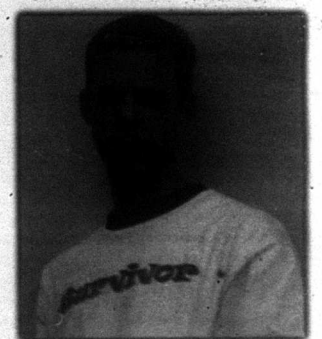
For further reading, see the following Websites: [www.kidshelth.org](http://www.kidshelth.org), [www.something-fishy.org](http://www.something-fishy.org), [www.caringonline.com](http://www.caringonline.com)

1. [www.nlm.nih.gov/science-news/2007/study-tracks-prevalence-of-eating-disorders.shtml](http://www.nlm.nih.gov/science-news/2007/study-tracks-prevalence-of-eating-disorders.shtml)

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If you have recently moved, need to change the number of issues you receive, or if the address we are mailing the Mockingbird Times to needs to be corrected, please complete and mail the subscription request form found on page 2 so we can update our records.

100% OF THE PROCEEDS FROM THIS BOOK  
HELP SUPPORT YOUTH LIVING IN FOSTER CARE.



**Nine**  
The Extraordinary Story of One of the Worst Cases of Multiple Child Molestation in Washington State.

Owen J. Bunstine, Sr.

Follow Owen Bunstine, Sr., in this gripping and horrifying true story of child rape and molestation at the hands of nine adults and juveniles. By the time he was placed in foster care at the age of thirteen, Owen had already learned not to trust anyone, even those close to him. Having spent his whole childhood being molested and used by other people whose job it was to care for him, Owen was later abused by the very system designed to protect and save him from this horrific life. According to Owen's social worker with the Department of Social and Health Services (DSHS), as well as his Washington State appointed attorney, Owen suffered one of the worst cases of multiple child molestation in Washington State history.

If you are interested in purchasing Owen's book, it can be purchased at any Barnes & Noble Bookseller or visit [www.ninebook.org](http://www.ninebook.org) for autographed copies. 100% of the proceeds are used to help support youth living in foster care.

## Without a Family

EMMA M CUMMINGS

Without a family  
Without a home  
Have you ever spent your birthday alone??

Do you know how it feels to leave a sister?  
To call her and tell her you're sorry  
And tell your mother you miss her?

Do you have a little brother?  
Have you ever woken to his screams?  
Because his dreams are filled with visions  
Of your drugged up father  
Beating your drunken mother?

Have you ever sat in a corner  
Curled in a ball crying  
Wishing the voices would just go away?  
Then popped little white pills  
Hoping to die before the dawn of another  
terrifying day?

Is your life a cloud of smoke  
From a pipe containing purple haze  
Or the bottom of the Bacardi bottle  
That you cling to in your drunken stupor  
Though it's been empty for half the day?

Have you ever wished that time would stop?  
That a hole in the floor would open  
And you would just drop?  
Do you ever wonder why you still live?  
Maybe it's time for you to learn to forgive...

## Creative Corner

### Spend the Nyte

MYKAL HAUNTED

I caught a glimpse of shadows,  
Moving like spiders.  
I take a deep breath,  
Then phantom coldly.  
I am the city.  
The nyte life.  
Is the day against me?  
Or do I long for the cloak-of-darkness beneath the sky?  
I stand open handed,  
I talk to the rain.  
The call of the wild.  
The after-hour king.  
Running from the sun.  
Hiding from the shadows.  
If they find me,  
Tell her not to cry for me,  
For it keeps me up at nyte.  
That's all.  
While some dance under bright lights.  
I sing about how I spend the night.

### This Is Who I Am

RHONDA SMITH

This is who I am, I don't need to hide  
This is who I am, no more tears to cry  
This is who I am, I know I will rise  
This is who I am, I stand tall with pride  
This is who I am, ready to let go of the past  
This is who I am, I will never be last again  
This is who I am, I've made it through the pain  
This is who I am, my life is no longer a game  
This is who I am, I'm getting stronger every day  
This is who I am, successful at everything I do  
This is who I am, real and improved  
This is who I am, ready to face the world  
This is who I am, shining like a pearl  
This is who I am, not ready to give up  
This is who I am, letting you all know what's up  
THIS IS WHO I AM

### Arrows

LYSE M.C.

Arrows all-point at me  
Lies at me  
Truth at me  
Hate at me  
Love at me  
Everything it's crazy at me  
Pain and hurt at me  
Fight toward me  
Anger  
Haters at me  
Heartache at me  
Heartbreak toward me  
Soaking into me  
The reality of Seattle  
The reality of stupid, jealous, loving people  
Insecurity, hate, hurt and pain of reality

### Once I had a friend

EMMA M CUMMINGS

Once I had a friend  
He betrayed my trust  
I blindly offered him all my love  
In return  
He disguised his lust  
Mistakenly I accepted it...  
While my heart turned into dust

### Get Published ~ Get Paid!

We are looking for articles, poetry, artwork and photography from our young readers who have experience in the foster care system and/or homelessness. If you want to be published in the Times, contact us at 206-323-5437 or via email at [newspaper@mockingbirdsociety.org](mailto:newspaper@mockingbirdsociety.org). For more info and to check us out, go to [www.mockingbirdsociety.org](http://www.mockingbirdsociety.org).

*So now is the time, more than ever, for those who truly value all the principles of democracy, especially including dissent, to be the most forceful in speaking up, standing up and speaking out.*

*~ Jim Hightower*



### Changing for the Better BY JESSICA GARCIA

I believe that when I went to treatment, it didn't help as much as I thought. My problem is that I keep failing and failing. I went to a clean and sober house, but it just got too hard for me because I had to do so many things that didn't seem to help with my situation. I felt over-watched and mistrusted like no one believed that I wasn't going to use or had faith in me.

I was put in a situation I couldn't handle and I began to fall way back, hanging around new people who I didn't drink with before but who basically do the same things as I did with my old using friends. I feel like I'm in a situation that is so hard and difficult, and I can't get away from it. But now, I finally realize something: It's me I keep running from. I'm not accepting change and not wanting to change.

I feel as though I'm distant from all my good friends and the people who love, care about, and respect me. I'm becoming a person who doesn't care about life. I'm just going with the flow, hanging with random guys, putting myself in risky situations and not caring about myself. I had to leave the place where I was living because I didn't come back when I was supposed to and I had relapsed. When I returned, I didn't lie. I'm honest so I admitted I relapsed. They told me that I knew the rules and could no longer stay there.

I really don't want to be a person with no future, in and out of jails. I want to be

back on track and not fall down. A part of me doesn't want to use but another part says, "Yes, I'm in a messed up position so I might as well." Before I got out, I was blessed by my higher power with so many things. I was still with the person I am in love with and he stayed and supported me. I got paid to go into treatment by The Mockingbird Society, which was such a blessing. I had tears of joy. The Mockingbird Society supports me so much and they don't give up on me. They also tell me not to give up on myself which keeps my hopes up higher. I don't want to give up on myself. I have come so far but I feel like I can't get out of the situation I'm in. The truth is, though, that I can. I have to put those things in my life what I want in it.

They say you are who you hang around and I believe that is so. Right now, most of the people I hang around are gang affiliated or drug dealers or on drugs and they feel miserable and don't care about themselves and don't want to go to college or have plans. I don't want that for myself. When I'm around these people, I'm unhappy, I feel stressed, I feel judged behind my back, and I feel used. I feel as though, in the end, I have no friends, just myself and God. I have faith in my higher power, but not enough to change.

I have great goals and good plans for my life and I want to get back to meetings and not give up on myself. I'm a good person with a good heart but when I'm using

I don't have a heart or mind. I don't care about anything but getting my drugs. I don't want to be like that, that's not who I am and I don't want to destroy the good me. I don't want this lifestyle of hating and deceiving anymore.

I'm going to let everyone who I think are my friends go and change my ways. It's the only way I can help myself. I can't give up on me. I'm going to stop going to the clubs and change everything. I'm going to college. I'm going to find a nighttime job

and keep working here at The Mockingbird Society, go to support meetings and change everything. I'm going to respect myself and be more and forget everyone else. I'm living here for me and I have to change. I can't keep getting messed up, not knowing what I did the night before. I want to respect myself and hanging with people who just want to party isn't for me. They won't get me anywhere and people who try to put me down won't get anywhere. I'm leaving those people alone.

### The Mockingbird Society's Youth LEAD Program Presents

#### LIFE ADVOCACY 101

Learn how to be your OWN best advocate in all areas of your life. Participate in activities that will give you the skills you need to "make things happen" for your personal success!

#### Receive your own personal Life Advocacy 101 TOOL!

Open to all youth and young adults ages 14 to 23.

Contact us to today to schedule your FREE Life Advocacy 101 Training for your group or organization!

Contact Sam at [samm\\_mockingbird@yahoo.com](mailto:samm_mockingbird@yahoo.com) or Najja at [najja@mockingbirdsociety.org](mailto:najja@mockingbirdsociety.org) for more information and details.