

Vendor of the Week

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Illustration by Natasha Michaels



Dogs at Play in L.A.

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VOL. 15, NO. 18  
APRIL 23 - 29, 2008

# REALCHANGE

## Is There Room for Poetry?

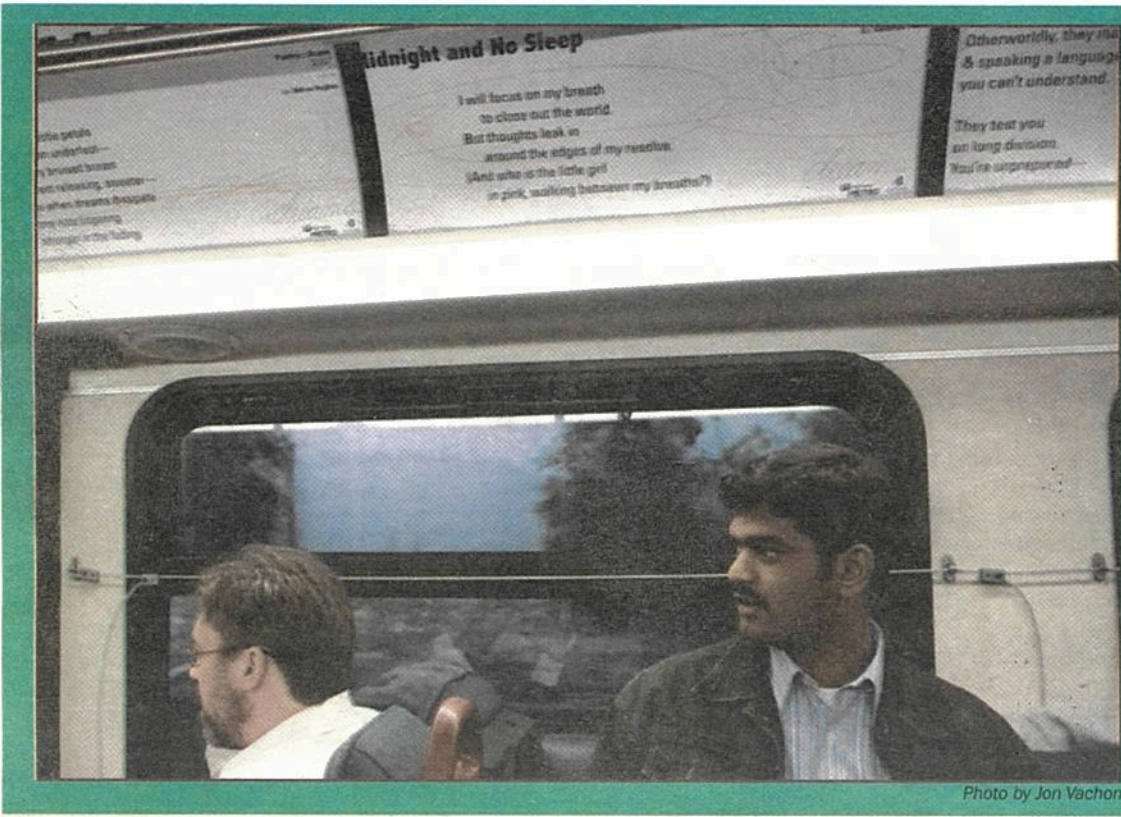
**A Special Issue:** The once vibrant spoken-word scene has all but gone underground...see page 4.

**"Real estate is so high,** it's hard to find good space for readings," says lit journal publisher Phoebe Bosché.



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Photo by Lucien Kruterson



### Verse rides in the back

**Why does Metro** send its Poetry on Buses work to the rear of the coach?...see page 5.

Photo by Jon Vachon

**Reckoning with the Slump:** Meet the new recession, same as the old recession...p.2

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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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## How can we soften the force of a new economic slump?

### A way up

By **MARILYN WATKINS**,  
Guest Writer

It seems like the economic news keeps getting worse: fuel prices still climbing, food prices soaring, foreclosures, layoffs. The only silver lining is that we're doing better in Washington than the rest of the country. Now a report has come out confirming what many of us suspected — the rich are getting richer, while most of us are just getting by.

From the late 1990s to the mid-2000s, incomes of the wealthiest one fifth climbed faster than inflation, by 9 percent nationally and 12 percent here in Washington. In contrast, families in the bottom fifth lost ground, while those in the middle didn't gain enough to notice. The Economic Policy Institute and Center on Budget and Policy Priorities analyzed Census data to reach these conclusions.

All indicators suggest we're entering

**Tax cuts for people who already have everything don't provide much economic stimulus.**

**Businesses decide to expand when there's demand for their products, not because the wealthy have more to invest.**

another recession. The Northwest got slammed by the 2001 downturn. The high tech collapse and terrorist attacks hit Puget Sound's two most high-profile industries hard. It took until 2005 before jobs in this region started coming back. Then, through the end of 2007, we enjoyed healthy job growth, and ended up with a stronger economy than the rest of the country.

But the benefits of that growth spurt went mainly to those on top. The major-

ity worked hard just to stay afloat. Now we're facing another period of uncertainty. Some of our neighbors — and some of us — will get laid off, lose our homes, lose health insurance, struggle to pay for necessities.

Government policy can make a big difference in how quickly we recover from recession and how the fruits of a growing economy get distributed. Washington has already done a lot of what states can do. A decade ago, voters attached a cost of living adjustment to our minimum wage. Now the lowest paid workers don't lose ground to inflation. We've frontloaded some construction projects, like the pontoons for the new 520 bridge, creating jobs now while lowering long-run costs. And two new programs to boost family economic security will start next year, tax rebates to low-income workers and family leave insurance, which will guarantee new parents a few weeks of paid time off starting in October 2009.

One important area where Washington can do better is unemployment insurance. In 2001, half of unemployed workers qualified for benefits, but in 2003 the legislature made qualifying harder. Now less than one third of the unemployed get benefits. That hurts workers and businesses. Unemployment insurance both tides families over between jobs and helps businesses who rely on the patronage of those families. Next session the legislature needs to establish realistic qualifications for this essential safety net.

The federal government can do far more than states. Our slow recovery from the last recession and the growth in inequality can be largely attributed to failed federal policies. The Bush response to recession in 2001 was to cut taxes, mostly for the wealthy. According to an analysis by Citizens for Tax Justice, the average millionaire in our state is saving \$69,500 on their 2007 federal income taxes because of those tax cuts.

Tax cuts for people who already have everything don't provide much economic stimulus. Businesses decide to expand when there's demand for their products, not because the wealthy have more to invest.

A better federal strategy would be to invest in infrastructure. We are surrounded by crumbling and outmoded highways, levies, and other structures. The federal government should finance safe bridges, expand mass transit and energy-efficient schools and other public buildings. These investments would immediately create good paying

**We'll get through this recession. The question is, how much and how long will people suffer?**

jobs and pave the way for broad-based economic growth.

The federal government should also provide block grants to state governments as they face falling revenues and rising demand for services. It should provide extended unemployment benefits and health insurance for those who lose their jobs, and increase financial aid for higher education. And it should follow through with some practical relief for homeowners caught up in the mortgage crisis.

We'll get through this recession. The question is, how much and how long will people suffer? And can we come out of it having made the investments that open doors of opportunity and lead us all to a better future? ■

*Marilyn Watkins serves as the policy director of the Economic Opportunity Institute, a leading progressive public policy institute working on economic security issues in the Northwest. For more information, visit [www.eoionline.org](http://www.eoionline.org).*



**I've been thinking a lot lately about 10-year plans to end homelessness.** With all the front doors closing and

back doors opening and so little federal support for the housing that's desperately needed to make the theory real, I've come to think of this paradigm as a wind swept tunnel, where most of the actual motion is from the hot air that constantly rushes through.

A week ago, the city delayed release of their new protocols on homeless

## Director's Corner

camping by four days to dump the story in Saturday's paper. Ironically, the media frenzy around the Dalai Lama buried the story as well.

Compassion is one of those things everyone says they support. Mayor Nickels presented the Dalai Lama with the key to the city while his staff worked overtime to spin a policy that screws the poor. The value of city concessions to concerns with outreach, notification, possession storage, and shelter availability was more than undermined by new language that radically limits the actual protections provided by these protocols.

The Mayor had an opportunity here to move to higher ground. City rhetoric, which has been all about compassion and

ending homelessness, has taken the high road. Their actions, however, have taken the low road of covert policy formulation, consistent media manipulation, and shameful avoidance of responsibility.

The Dalai Lama speaks of compassion as being something more than some squishy idea that's up for grabs by anyone capable of forming three consecutive syllables. Compassion, he says, is a verb. It is action. This action is informed by empathy and driven by personal responsibility.

The mayor's policy, which exempts the city from taking responsibility by denying services and basic rights to the majority of homeless campers, falls far short of this very useful definition.



Just Heard...

Mayor Sneaky

Three city councilmembers are none too happy with the mayor. Last year, the council approved Mayor Nickels' request for \$550,000 to pay for cameras at three sites and Capitol Hill's Cal Anderson Park, but put a hold, or proviso, on the money until council got written protocols on how the cameras would be used. In January, however, the mayor went ahead and had the Parks Department install three surveillance cameras at Cal Anderson Park ("City outfits Cal Anderson with cams; downtown parks next," April 16-22).

At a Parks Committee meeting Tuesday, committee chair Tom Rasmussen and councilmembers Jean Godden and Richard Conlin chided the executive branch for subverting the council's will. Postponing a vote to lift the proviso, they asked for clarification on who has access to camera footage. They also threatened to tie the executive's hands with a vote.

"The violation of the proviso," said Rasmussen, "indicates the only way to address these concerns is by law."

Budget chair Jean Godden, who said the mayor had subverted her colleagues' will and nullified their budget authority, will take another look at the mayor's move in a committee meeting May 1. The parks committee will reconvene May 13 to take a closer look at the protocols.

—Cydne Gillis

Blunting SEPA's force

Say goodbye to your right to challenge most development projects in Seattle's most dense areas.

On April 21, the Seattle City Council voted 8-0 to pass revisions to the city version of the State Environmental Protection Act that literally raise the roof on a neighborhood's ability to block or mitigate the effects of a development ("City lightens land-use review," April 16-22) in the city's urban centers: downtown, lower Queen Anne, South Lake Union, Capitol Hill, the University District, and Northgate.

Under the old law, a SEPA review was required for projects of more than four, six, or eight units in low-rise and commercial zones and for projects of more than 20 units in mid-rise and high-rise zones. That stays the same in most of the city, but in the urban centers developers can now build projects of up to 30 units in most zones and, downtown, high-rises can go up to 80 units with no environmental review.

—Cydne Gillis



Change Agent

Poet: Dakota Camacho makes a room of wordsmiths into a family.

Photo by Katia Roberts

Every last Friday of the month, Hidmo Eritrean Cuisine fills with people of all ages ready to get down to some of the best hip hop in Seattle. The event is Hip Hop Period and the man behind it is 16-year-old spoken word artist Dakota Camacho.

Camacho sits across from me at the Hidmo, a place he calls his home away from home. He is articulate and calm, but when it's time to slam his quiet voice can rise into rapid, impassioned vociferation. He writes about everything from

police harassment and corporate imperialism to his love for his sister.

Dakota started to perform after getting involved with Youth Speaks, an organization that fosters poetry in the lives of youth. He sees poetry as a force that both communicates struggle and provides safety. "The spoken word community is a place where no matter how I'm feeling I have family," he says.

Check out Hip Hop Period on April 25 at 2000 Jackson. Doors 7:30. \$5 for those over 21, free for youth.

—Stephen Perry

Neighbors skeptical of top-down planning

A recent meeting of the City Neighborhood Council opened with a parody of the Rolling Stones song, "I can't get no satisfaction."

Community members sang "I can't get no validation, I can't get no validation, but I plan and I plan and I plan and I plan, I can't get no...."

The song addressed a feeling among citizen activists that the neighborhood plans they drew up a decade ago aren't getting the attention they deserve from city officials.

Seattle residents and members of the City Council attended the public forum on Sat., April 19, to discuss ways to update and implement 38 existing neighborhood plans.

Stella Chao, Director of Neighborhoods, says the title "Neighborhood Planning" means finding a vision for your neighborhood and getting the tools to help achieve that vision.

In order to put plans into action, approval from Mayor Greg Nickels

is required. Some members of neighborhood committees don't believe the mayor's recent proposal is in their best interest. Nickels has proposed dividing the city into six sectors that would each update the plans of neighborhoods within their boundaries; the committees would prefer that each neighborhood create its own plan with government funding.

"The community must 'own'

the plans, down to the final wording. When [city] staff writes the plans, there is a potential for misunderstanding or miscommunication between the community and the author/editor," wrote Chris Leman and Irene Wall, neighborhood council chairs, in a letter to the mayor.

Jim Diers, author of *Neighborhood Power: Building Community the Seattle Way*, said it is important for neighborhoods to take control of their own plans. While thinking holistically, neighborhood plans are able to build a deeper sense of community by involving everyone versus being spectators in the changes the government might be making.

But to be effective, plans need proper funding.


"If we can put a lot of money into a tunnel that was never built, we can put it into our neighborhoods," said Diers. "We need to build at a neighborhood level — from the bottom up. This is how we relate and build community."

Seattle city councilmember Tom Rasmussen said the key to getting noticed and having plans implemented is strong, well-written plans. Unlike the grassroots preferences of the neighborhood activists, Rasmussen said planning starts at the top because the mayor makes the decisions.

See NEIGHBORS, Continued on Page 11

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## The once-vibrant scene of late '80s and early '90s has all but gone underground

### Poetry venues vanishing

By **CYDNEY GILLIS**,  
Staff Reporter

**P**hoebe Bosché is still a bit miffed about what happened at Richard Hugo House.

Last fall, after 10 years of renting a cheap space at the nonprofit literary center on Seattle's Capitol Hill, she says she got a call on her cell phone from its director, Lyall Bush, telling her Hugo House was renting out her office and those of a couple other groups to two theater companies.

Bosché, a Seattle poet and co-publisher of the 17-year-old art and literary journal *Raven Chronicles*, says the eviction was about money: Hugo House advertised for and selected the two theaters to take up residence, she says, at a cost of \$10,000 a year — something no literary group could ever afford.

Bush says it was a programming decision. After taking over two years

ago from director Frances McCue, who co-founded Hugo House in 1996, Bush says he wanted to expand Hugo House's own in-house readings and productions to really promote the writers who participate and get away from a confusing community center model of various groups using the space.

Either way, Bosché moved in November, as did the *Raven Chronicles* quarterly reading series and a monthly reading series put on by Subtext. Bosché now pays a bit more for part of an office in the University District building that houses Jack Straw Productions, and Subtext has taken up residence at Wallingford's Good Shepherd Center.

The moves reflect changing times in Seattle. With rising real estate prices and fewer and fewer cheap venues, Bosché

and others say, the once-vibrant poetry scene of Seattle's late '80s and early '90s has all but gone underground. In addi-

**"You can't just put up posters and expect people to come," says Hugo House's Lyall Bush. "If there's going to be a major literary center in the city, we have to have strong, clearly delineated programs built to serve writers and help writers find audiences."**

tion, Hugo House's series and events, there are still readings on any given night of the week — with hip-hop a growing draw for those under 30 — but most readings today, the writers say, are generally small, intimate, and more diffuse or infrequent.

"Real estate is so high, it's hard to get good space for readings," Bosché says.

The featured readers and weekly open mike of Red Sky Poetry Theater, which started in 1981, is one of many series that are gone now. It lost its space at Capitol Hill's Globe Cafe two years ago and never found another. Belltown's Speakeasy Cafe and its backroom theater, which hosted poets, film and music — including Subtext's New Writing series — burned down in 2001.

In their place, other series and venues have opened, such as Capitol Hill's Gallery 1412 at 18th Ave. East and E. Union. It

has recently started a performance series called Apostrophe that features experimental music, a modern dance piece, and one poet each month. And Shoebox, a new theater at 1404 18th Avenue, is running a monthly literary series called No Comment — readings by famous dead authors, curated by writer Rebecca Brown.

For groups that can't afford a venue in the hubs of Capitol Hill or the University District, however, drawing an audience can be tough, as Subtext co-organizer Nico Vassilakis has discovered.

The group's 14-year-old New Writing series, which takes place the first Wednesday of every month, pairs out-of-town and local writers working in experimental or "difficult" styles, Vassilakis says. While the series found a great new home at Good Shepherd — the stained-glass Chapel theater, underwritten by a group called Nonsequitur — fewer people are showing up to the readings since the move from Hugo House, he says.

"We're having troubles with that of late," he says. "One reason, of course, is the move to Wallingford. People on Capitol Hill could just walk in. In Wallingford, you've got to be set that you're going to a reading."

Bush appreciates the difficulty building an audience — one reason, he says, that he decided to take all of Hugo House's curation in-house.

"You can't just put up posters and expect people to come," Bush says. "If there's going to be a major literary center in the city, we have to have strong, clearly delineated programs built to serve writers and help writers find audiences."

"It would be a bloodless endeavor," he says, "if everyone showed up and said [the reading] was just OK." ■



*Raven Chronicles* publisher Phoebe Bosché says the shifts in the local poetry scene are in some ways economic: "Real estate is so high, it's hard to get good space for readings." Photo by Lucien Knuteson

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## The caged bird sings no more

# Closure of Eleventh Hour ends Seattle Poetry Festival

By CYDNEY GILLIS,  
Staff Reporter

It was a warm April day in Seattle. All the same, August Wilson stood in a suit on the stage at Richard Hugo House, reading lines not from the plays that won him two Pulitzer Prizes, but from the poetry that made his stage drama sing.

Lyric images rolled off Wilson's page with power and precision. On the same stage, at the same event, the words of Edwin Torres — a pencil-thin favorite of the Nuyorican Poets Cafe in New York — rocketed off the stage in a wild-tongued mix of Spanish, English, and mayhem.

Two very different styles and generations of writers. One Seattle Poetry Festival, the very first one put on in 1998.

That's the reason founders Noel Franklin and Bob Redmond say they started the event: to bring together po-

**"You can find an open mike every single day of the week,"** but the poetry festival was "one of the places where groups would come together and share work and connect and build off each other," says slam organizer Daemond Arrindell.

ets, rockers, and performance artists to share, cross-pollinate and draw in new audiences who could pony up some cash to actually pay the writers.

Last fall, however, the remaining organizers of Eleventh Hour Productions, the nonprofit behind the event, decided to fold, ending not only the festival but a Real to Reel performance series and Emerging Voices, a program of workshops that Eleventh Hour poets conducted in schools.

The Seattle Poetry Slam, which had merged with Eleventh Hour in 2001, has found another nonprofit to affiliate with, says organizer Daemond Arrindell, who has an event planned April 27 at Chop Suey — the annual Grand Slam finals — which served in 2005 and 2007 as the grand finale of the April poetry festival.

The festival was important, he says, because it built bridges in Seattle.

"You can find an open mike every single day of the week, but very few of these organizations and programs are connected to each other," Arrindell says. "The poetry festival was one of the places where groups would come together and share work and connect and build off each other. It's really sad it's gone" — something he thinks people may not pick up on for a while.

Eleventh Hour had produced the festival once a year, then took a hiatus

in 2003 and 2004 after Franklin and Redmond moved on. In 2005, the group started producing the event every other year, but, because of the two-year gap, Arrindell says, "there is a very big hole in the poetry community that not a lot of people recognize yet."

It's a hole that co-founder Bob Redmond, now senior programming manager for One Reel, the producer of Seattle's Bumbershoot festival, also finds sad. Because Eleventh Hour had no deficit and a good track record, "I feel like it's premature," he says. "It's kind of like your good old uncle suddenly died, and he didn't even have liver spots."

From the first humble three-day event in 1998 at Hugo House, the festival grew in 2001 to a mammoth two weeks at eight venues, from the Broadway Performance Hall to Seattle Center. Headliners over the years included Sherman Alexie, Exene Cervenka, Guillermo Gomez-Pena, Ishmael Reed, and the Kamilche Guerrilla Girls.

The final 2007 festival, held over three days at Hugo House and two other venues, presented nearly 200 writers and drew an audience of 1,500, says Eleventh Hour's last administrative director, Linden Ontjes. But it was a labor of love that the all-volunteer group just couldn't sustain. Ontjes wanted to finish a book. Another board member got a job at Microsoft and another moved away.

"We were all hands-on and all unpaid, and we were all serious, committed artists," Ontjes says. "It wasn't a matter of a burnout as much as a matter of loving closure," with the group deciding to call it quits after running a month of Theodore Roethke readings at ACT theater last August.

After doubling the group's revenue, expanding programming, and putting on two successful festivals, "We ended at the top of our game," Ontjes says. Franklin sees it a bit differently.

"They just decided not to create a transition strategy and chose to close the agency," she says. But, "I have mixed feelings because the festival had moved



Linden Ontjes oversaw the last poetry festival in 2007, a labor of love that her all-volunteer group couldn't sustain. "It wasn't a matter of a burnout as much as a matter of loving closure," she says. Photo by Brooke Kempner

away from its original spirit."

The last poetry festivals had a more homogenous literary lineup, Franklin says, which tends to draw less audience and make less money. "Something as simple as bringing a playwright like August Wilson and having him read his poetry or a rock 'n' roller like Exene Cervenka — you get their audiences and their attention and honor the diversity of their voices."

But, says Redmond, "The whole thing was never about legacy or permanence or immortality. It was a way to do something fun and give a chance for people to be heard — and they did." ■

Cydney Gillis was the volunteer coordinator for the first Seattle Poetry Festival in 1998.

### [Grand Slam April 27] The Seattle Poetry Slam's 2008

Grand Slam, which will pick four finalists to represent Seattle at this year's National Poetry Slam competition, starts Sun., April 27, at 8 p.m., with a featured performance by New York writer Rachel McKibbens, star of the documentary *Slam Planet: War of the Words*. Chop Suey, 1325 E. Madison St., Seattle. \$12 advance, \$15 at door. For more info, go to [seattlepoetryslam.org](http://seattlepoetryslam.org) or call (206) 419-5867.

## Why does poetry go to the back of the bus?

### Rules of the road

By ADAM HYLA, Editor

Harried and half-awake commuters, kids on their way downtown, people bundled up and slumped over, going nowhere all night: if they're not plugged into earphones, if they don't have some reading material, they can at least look out the window. Or scan the overhead signs: Ride Right, Operator of the Year, See Something? Say Something. Or the several poems solicited by the county and posted

in each coach. If you're sitting in the right place.

Because the poems, with rare exceptions, ride in the back of the bus.

It's official policy by Metro: paid advertising goes up on the left side of the coach, the rules, employee of the year posters, and other in-house signs — including the works of citizen poets selected in the biannual Poetry on Buses program — go on the right side of the coach.

But Metro's policy is to put the poems in the back, past the rules, behind the coach's back door.

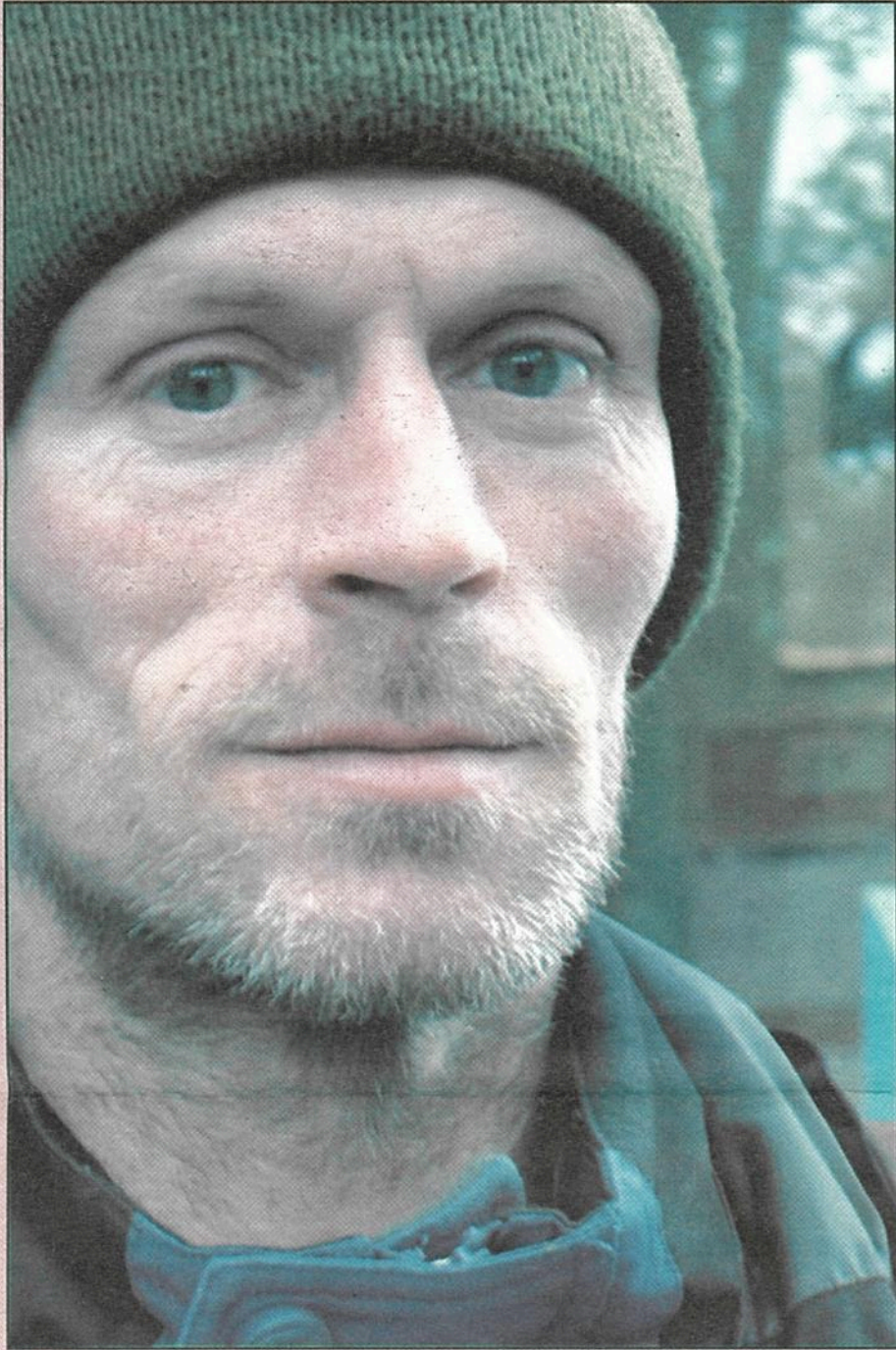
Why does poetry ride in the back of the bus?

It's nothing personal, Metro spokesperson Linda Thielke says; rules should go up front so that drivers can reference them when dealing with unruly passengers. The placement "makes it a little easier for refreshing things," she says, since the other signs are changed out more frequently.

See BUS, Continued on Page 11



## Vendor of the Week



## Mike Wiggins

Let it be known, before I begin, that the purpose of this profile is not sublimated *Real Change* propaganda. That said, we don't mean to brag, but some interesting and often amazing things happen in this office.

My strongest memory of Mike Wiggins is a dark night (it felt like night—really it was maybe 4 p.m., but it was one of those sinister, joyless days in late January in Seattle), a night that he desperately needed bus fare.

He had just found a few distant relatives on the Olympic peninsula, members of a branch of his family, people to whom Wiggins had been estranged until a few days before. They had invited him up for the weekend.

Wiggins isn't the kind of guy to ask you for money. He explained the situation to me, left with some papers he had on credit, and (I found out later) sold them all in time to make a bus headed for the Olympics.

As we begin our interview, Wiggins suggests a headline in that characteristic surfer drawl of his: "Homeless dude finds estranged family members."

I tell him I don't think that'll quite cover it—Wiggins is more—a lot more—than a "homeless dude."

Though born and raised in Beacon Hill, Wiggins spent a good chunk of his life in San Francisco's Haight-Ashbury, where he did everything from anti-nuclear proliferation protests at Livermore Laboratory to attending physics lectures gratis.

"These kids were paying hundreds of thousands of dollars for this junk," says Wiggins, who "snuck" into lecture halls at UC Berkeley. "I just hung out." Since then, he's had his holdups and let-downs, lived a life so full that I can only say that you should ask him about it yourself.

You can find Wiggins at Sixth and Olive. Expect to laugh.

—Story and photo by JP Gritton

Who's the special person who offers you Real Change?  
Nominate them for Vendor of the Week:  
[editor@realchangenews.org](mailto:editor@realchangenews.org)

## Rain

falls in a language, a clattering tongue:

I fall I fall; I win I win  
I am relentless, I hit  
the pavement and run

people know less than turtles  
about me; less than blue eggs

even the cat under the porch  
understands what I say  
with my thousand thousand  
little tongues; she waits  
out the wet night's chatter

I am more real than anything

—Elizabeth Romero

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## radio.

Our purpose is to entertain, educate, and involve. KBCS is the only station in the greater Seattle area offering ongoing training opportunities. Become the media at KBCS.



## Meet the public: Seattle on Poetry

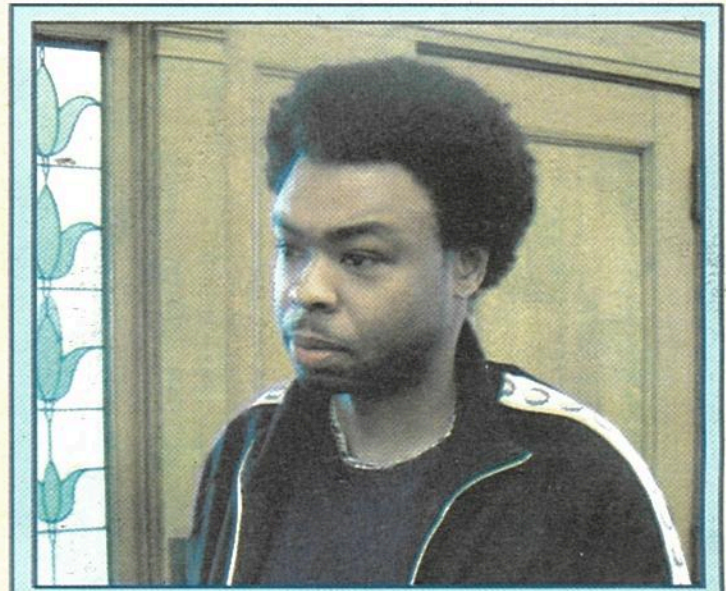
**R**eal Change interviewed denizens of the Seattle Public Library about poetry in their lives. Here are a few of the responses.

*Interviews and photos by Stephen Perry*

Jason Spainhower, Systems Analyst

**Favorite Poets:**  
Charles Simic,  
James Tate

"Good poetry is both very personal and tends to age poorly. A lot of the poetry you're really into for a while and then think, 'Well...it made sense then.'"



Dartagnon, Administration

**Favorite Poets:** KRS-One, Mos Def

"There are so many lyrics and words I've got in my head. Poetry is a good way to organize your thoughts, it's a good way to keep yourself sane."

Victoria Withrow, Teacher

**Favorite Poets:**  
Lucille Clifton,  
Marge Piercy

"A woman is not a pear tree thrusting forth her fruit in mindless fecundity.' That's Marge Piercy. I think it's really powerful feminist work that she does."



Mary Pollard, Retired

"Being Irish, Seamus Heaney is one of my favorites. Seamus Heaney composed the poem 'Digging' while watching his father digging potatoes outside his window. He knew that he would never be able to handle a spade as well as his father, but he had his pen and he was going to use that to dig and find the truth."



DeLois Day, Youth Counselor

"By working with the youth, oftentimes they read me some of their poetry. Some of it is very dark. As a mature person it doesn't seem to make any sense, but I guess it makes sense to them."



## A dog's life, in verse

### ■ Sharp Teeth

By Toby Barlow, Harper, 2008, hardcover, 312 pages, \$22.95

By ADAM HYLIA, Editor

Sing, Muse, the audacity of Toby Barlow, who has here written a first novel of uncommon force and stark poetry, an epic set to blank verse.

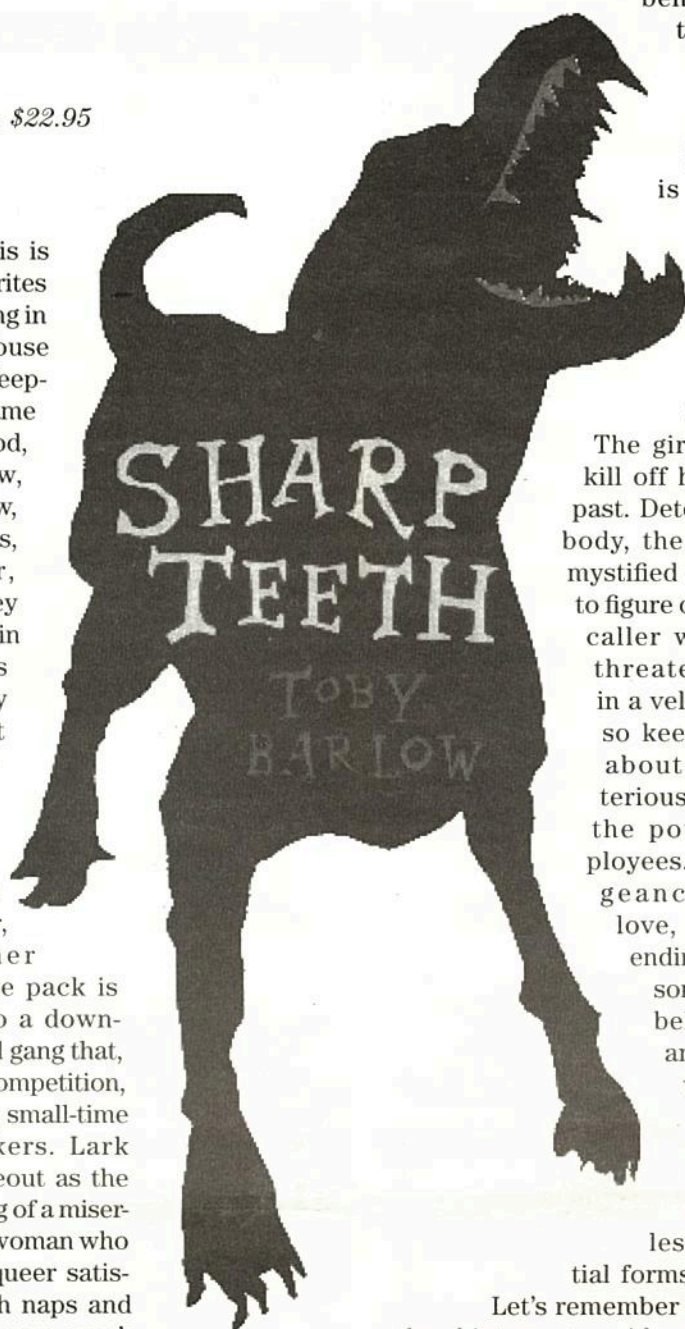
The plot: Anthony, brown and out of work, gets a job at the local pound, where all the fellow dog catchers reek of failure, whiskey, and a dog's death; he meets and falls for a girl, only the girl is not a girl strictly speaking but the female member of a pack of werewolves. She was recruited by the pack's leader, Lark,

**"There's blood everywhere, but it's the creatures at the edge, licking the corner of the ruby pool, that hold your curiosity."**

a straight-edge alpha male who keeps his crew tight by sexual tension, for the girl may be a she-dog but she's nobody's bitch. Lark's an uncommon hero; as others seek immediate gratification, Lark waits patiently; while others kneel down to their appetites, Lark stands up. For kicks, the pack heads east from its L.A. home to the desert; coolers packed with water and steaks, they will their change, then run down rabbits and feral cats all night. They work, we're not sure at what, but it involves tailored shirts and Hol-

lywood. This is their life, writes Barlow, living in their big house together, sleeping in the same room: "Blood, fat, marrow, grease, sinew, muscle, guts, hide, fur, sleep. / They may twitch in their dreams when they sleep / but they sleep deep."

The girl shacks up with the dogcatcher, and in her absence the pack is betrayed to a down-market rival gang that, killing the competition, shuts down small-time meth cooks. Lark finds a hideout as the full-time dog of a miserable single woman who gives him queer satisfaction with naps and kibble. The new gang's plan: send home a man-wolf for every



L.A. family, deep undercover, "each dog behaving, sitting, fetching / waiting for the day the final signal is set / and the real change begins."

Lark needs to rebuild his pack.

The girl needs to kill off her dogged past. Detective Peabody, the noir-ishly mystified cop, needs to figure out why the caller who keeps threatening him in a velvety lisp is so keen to know about the mysterious deaths of the pound's employees. Sex, vengeance, meat, love, the never-ending quest for somewhere to belong, swift and decisive violence: it's all patched over by more or less substantial forms of denial.

Let's remember our unspoken history: genocide, stolen land, murder by neglect, enslavement, op-

pression. "There's blood everywhere," Barlow writes,

"but it's the creatures at the edge, licking the corner of the ruby pool, that hold your curiosity."

And so they do: werewolves are just more exciting than insurance companies and university regents. Blood—the bond that runs in common among a pack, the stuff spilled in sacrifice or warfare across our hearths—it's everywhere from page one, where we find ourselves in East L.A. "where the panther black cars pause on their haunches / while their blonde women eat inside / wiping the blood red / mole from their quiet lips." Other memorable lines: drinking tea, the girl contemplates how long she can keep her wolf self a secret, thinks: "We are all china barely mended / clumsily glued together / just waiting / for the hot water and lemon / to seep through the seams." The dogcatcher "in love is unlikely / in its grace, / like a drunk with a magic trick. / There's no reason it should work, / but it does."

And Lark's ruminations as he watches his pack rebuilt with a woman who puts out at its center:

"...there are no rules anymore there's only the ever constant law of evolution become what is or you will be what is not. And while you're at it keep on living true to the lines of the old children's story, that still echo in your memory. Go dog go."

Toby Barlow is nudging poetry to become what is, as evocative and contemporary as Homer when he was heard by firelight.

Go, dog, go. ■

Cover illustration by Natasha Michaels

## Ballade

adagio

If I knew the answer  
to your shady grace  
imp disposition  
tranquil certainty  
and to your clear  
days, whatever  
notes in sequence

I would probably ask  
you to accompany me  
just like that  
with the quickness  
an overture sounding  
a gesture sibylline  
a glance to the  
impatient horizon  
over a few hills  
to a river and then  
a city of lights  
we could just ask  
ourselves questions  
and decide a few things  
a duet perhaps, reverie  
for flute and oboe

vivace

As it is  
I don't know you well  
do I, but I do know  
you see me as I am  
taken with your dusky  
charms, the mischief  
in your eyes dancing  
as you pass you touch  
the unstruck chords  
of my being, yes you do  
like a very fey pianist  
which is a mystery  
like magnetism  
and chance intention  
how you will answer me  
what you will say

how it will go  
when you give me that look  
when you meet me there  
and we slide into bed  
as if into a pool  
sliding into you  
our tongues playing  
like ardent otters  
and everything suddenly  
applauds, everything  
breaks into laughter

grazioso

—Robert Demalvilain  
RC, March 21, 2002





Adventures  
in Irony

©Dr. Wes Browning

I have a new game. I watch the presidential campaign news with half my brain shut down. I don't need illegal drugs, I have a natural gift! Besides, my doctors prescribe brain-shutting-down medicine, because it makes me so darn happy. They've seen me not happy, and it wasn't pretty.

So let's put those filters up and examine the 2008 presidential race not with our right brains or our left brains, but with our leftover brains!

I was especially excited last week when the McCain camp said Obama isn't fit to be president because the leaders of Hamas have said he's the Cat's Meow. The exact quote used was a statement by Ahmed Yousef who said in an interview: "We don't mind — actually we like Mr. Obama. We hope he will [win] the election and I do believe he is like John Kennedy, he is like Kennedy, the Cat's Meow. Of course Kennedy loved Israel and would have despised us and crushed us militarily, but hey, he was American, you take what you can get."

Subsequently McCain deflected similar charges against him by sort of renouncing his endorsement from John Hagee, the man who said "Everybody gets me wrong when I say the Catholic Church is the Great Whore. I didn't mean ALL of the Catholic Church, just most of it. Gee, lighten up people." McCain says he still likes Hagee 'cause he has that old-timey religion, but he now acknowledges that Hagee is political ratbait. His exact words (this part I'm not

## ©Dr. Wes: This is your brain, running on empty

making up!), in response to being asked whether it was a mistake to accept Hagee's endorsement were, "Oh, probably, sure." He then went on to say that, still, he was "glad to have his endorsement."

In other election news, Hillary Clinton has charged Obama as being "out of touch" for saying working class Americans are bitter. She went on to explain, "Where was he when they came out with Prozac? I've been using it since I married Bill! Bitter? Who, me?"

**I was especially excited last week when the McCain camp said Obama isn't fit to be president because the leaders of Hamas have said he's the Cat's Meow.**

Speaking of questionable endorsements, Hillary Clinton has been endorsed by none other than the ringleader of the vast right-wing conspiracy, conservative billionaire publisher Richard Mellon Scaife, who sank millions of dollars into the effort to keep Whitewater alive. Tomorrow Barack Obama will charge that Clinton is unfit to be president because, "That is just so whack."

In the latest news, upon hearing Obama say that McCain would be a better president than Bush, Clinton responded with, "We need a nominee who will take on John Mc-

Cain, not cheer on John McCain." McCain responded with, "We need a nominee who is John McCain; and let me tell you, I am not bitter either." Hamas responded with, "John McCain is better than Bush, but he is no John Kennedy. We never knew John Kennedy, but, look at McCain, he is surely no John Kennedy." Hagee responded with, "John Kennedy is just what we don't need. We need a candidate that won't suck at the tits of the Great Whore. I did NOT just say John Kennedy would have sucked at the tits of the Great Whore. We need John McCain." Richard Mellon Scaife responded to that with, "Twinkle twinkle little bat."

Questions for Further Abuse

1. Turn to your right and explain to your neighbor how the identity of endorsers became more important than all other issues such as the economy, the war(s), health care, homelessness, the environment, education, racism, energy, or food prices. If you have no neighbor on your right, talk to the wall until the bell rings.

2. Compare and contrast the odiousness of endorsements from Hamas, Hagee, and Scaife. Remember, comparisons themselves are odious, so wash your hands after.

3. Obtain drug treatment if necessary. Then, when you are clean and sober, listen to Dylan's "Subterranean Homesick Blues" on a continuous loop for five hours. Now you're clean and sober, and nevertheless half your brain is out to lunch. See? I told you it was possible. ■

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



Wed., April 2, 9:24 a.m., Yesler Way.

Complainant, an employee of Seattle City Parks Department, called police to have subject, a transient Black male aged 29 removed from a park bench in Pioneer Square Park. Subject was sleeping under the pergola, and was completely covered in a brown sleeping bag. Officers arrived on the scene and spoke to the complainant and a witness, also an employee of Seattle City Parks, who stated that subject has been a chronic problem under the pergola for a few months, and refused to leave the park. Officers advised complainants that they were quite familiar with the subject as he has been refusing to leave the bench for around six months. Each time he is contacted he states he cannot leave the bench as he is "Waiting for a sign from God." Most of the time he is at least cooperative and will sit up on the bench when asked. The Park employees informed police that they needed to hose off the area where the subject was sleeping, and they would not have a problem with him if he would just sit up — they knew he was most likely to refuse to leave as they have also encountered him numerous times. Subject was awakened by officers — he told them he could not move as he was waiting for a "message from God." He then pulled his sleeping bag over his head and went back to sleep. The Parks employees began to hose off the area, being very careful not to spray water on the subject, however citizens began to yell at them and the police officers, not knowing the details of the incident, because they thought the Parks Department was deliberately spraying water on him. The subject still refused to move, or even to talk to police. Witnesses began to try and advise officers on the best way to handle to situation, and officers tried to explain the situation, and that the subject has been excluded from the park in the past. The citizen complainants persisted in telling the officers that the subject was mentally ill and needed help, all of which officers were aware. The citizens stated that they hear the subject singing and yelling on the bench on a regular basis and that he never leaves. Officers again advised the complainants that this is a well known fact. Finally officers called an ambulance to the scene, and had the staff complete a mental health contact report so that subject could be transported to Harborview Medical Center for mental health evaluation, as they felt the situation was becoming a spectacle to those who knew little of the ongoing situation. On this occasion subject went with ambulance staff without incident, however it appeared to police he was becoming more 'defiant' and refuses to speak the more contact he has with police and the Parks Department. They also noted he may be suffering from malnutrition as he appears to have lost around 50 pounds in the last six months.

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.

Faith,  
Culture,  
Politics



Rev. Rich Lang

## Rev. Lang: Playing by the rules of the Reichstag fire

these struggles, and others, our nation forges its destiny.

But for me, I think our nation's fate was irreparably sealed in November 2000 when corporate interests consolidated around George W. Bush performing a Supreme Court-led *coup d'état* against democracy. Having perverted the democratic process, the assault on our nation continued with the events of Sept. 11, 2001.

The official story would have us believe that 19 low-life Arabs outwitted the entirety of our military and intelligence apparatus, causing the free-fall destruction of three buildings with two planes, crashing another plane into the most heavily defended building in America, completely disintegrating both it and its passengers, crashing yet another plane into a field, disintegrating both parts and bodies — feats never accomplished before or since — and then, as a kind of dessert, a bunch of military-issue anthrax shows up in the offices of two key Democratic Party leaders. The after-dinner drink, straight out of the Nazi playbook, was to ram through an unread, undebated PATRIOT Act that has led to our current surveillance society

of lawlessness. The really bizarre turn of events is that the American people actually accept the official story, and become irate with those who call it into question. It's like how we feel when someone spills the truth about Santa Claus. It reminds me of Jesus' question to his disciples: "Are you being willfully stupid?"

For those of us who see the world through a Biblical lens, the implosion of our imperial quest is not surprising. God, the spirit of life itself, opposes the consolidation of power that imperial quests represent. Such idolatry is always violent, and always leads to delusion and eventual self-destruction. Our nation has embarked on a voyage of sorrows with the worst yet to come. I think it's time for the Church to publicly talk about this. I think we need a Truth Commission. Anyone want to help? ■

Rev. Rich Lang is pastor of Trinity United Methodist in Ballard and a member of the Real Change Organizing Project. He can be contacted through [www.tumseattle.org](http://www.tumseattle.org).

What the hell is going on in this country? I'm simply staggered by the weight of worries and the depth of anxiety experienced as the idealism that once made this nation honorable (flawed, but honorable) atrophies. It's like watching someone you love very much waste away into inevitable death. Or, more to the point, it's like watching one's own body waste away into death. We seem to be living in a time of irreparable loss. How did this all happen?

There is never any one factor. Life is far too dynamic and complex to limit causality to one factor. The death of our nation is the result of thousands and thousands of decisions. Throughout the history of our nation there have always been struggles between corporate power versus individual liberty. There have always been struggles between imperial government versus those who insist on limited government. There have always been struggles between landowners and the landless. Within



## Letters

editor@realchangenews.org

## 20-cent bags: it all adds up

Dear *Real Change*,

It sounds nice and responsible, but Mayor Nickel's "green" 20-cent fee on grocery bags is just a front for a regressive tax on the poor ("BYOB - Bag, that is," April 9-15). It hurts us who are already struggling to pay for rent and food, and is an incredibly disproportionate penalty for the homeless. It's \$50 a year a single person can't bear to pay. It's a less-visible \$80 per year or more if we switch to canvas bags —yet still it results in more plastic waste for landfills.

It will cost me \$50 per year to use five plastic grocery bags a week. More if I double-bag to walk without them breaking. And like myself, many poor people are disabled, elderly, or have children with them and cannot afford a car. If we use the awkward fabric bag alternative, two of them by hand or by cart, in the rain, we'll pay up to \$30 in extra bus trips and an extra \$12 per year to wash them. Now, instead of reusing plastic grocery bags for trash, or just recycling them, I'll have to purchase plastic trash bags for \$30 a year and dump them half-filled before the garbage rots. It all adds up quickly when you don't even have enough money for food.

Let people who drive to the store in petroleum-burning cars made with plastic — consumers who use shopping carts to move bagged groceries between the store, the trunk of their car, and back home again in the rain — comfortably finance fairer "green" resolutions. (My government-subsidized housing provides bins for mandatory recycling and enforces it with fines). That will help all of us without hurting the growing poorer classes who literally count pennies to survive.

Thanks for another short-sighted classist solution, Seattle.

Revel Smith

**Correction:** We got the wrong man. *Real Change* cut out an incorrect photo from deep within the guts of the internet; the interview of EU ambassador John Bruton ["From Europe with Love," April 9-16] was decorated with a photo of who, far as we can tell, is Bertie Ahern, Taoiseach (or prime minister) of Ireland. John Bruton is the former Taoiseach of Ireland.

**Correction:** This photograph, right, shows two of the Parks Department cameras installed and turned on in February on poles above the playfield and restrooms at Cal Anderson Park on Capitol Hill. A photograph that appeared with last week's story "City outfits Cal Anderson with cams; downtown parks next" (April 16-22) showed another camera installed after 9/11 by Seattle Public Utilities on top of the park's old gatehouse, a building that was misidentified in the photo caption and story.



Photo by Ken Dean

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"We are tied together in the single garment of destiny, caught in an inescapable network of mutuality. And whatever affects one directly affects all indirectly."

—Martin Luther King

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BUS, Continued from Page 5

The private-public county arts commission 4Culture, which put on the poetry selection process annually until 2005, when it was scaled back to

**It's official policy by Metro: in-house signs**  
— including the works of citizen poets selected in the biennial Poetry on Buses program — go on the right side of the coach.

every other year, has also noticed the verses' rear-of-the-coach consignment. 4Culture spokesperson Lara Holman Garritano says the group plans to bring up the placement with Metro. Garritano notes that a few coaches are filled with all 55 poems from the current selection — 55, she says, because that's the number of poetry placards that can fit on a typical coach.

She says the number of poems chosen next round may be revised upward; in the last round, 4Culture

got 3,000 submissions, more than twice the number of the previous year. Changing the poetry selection process to biennial was a result of staffing shortages, she says: "It got to the point where there was a lot of labor involved, staff was finishing it and starting the next immediately." Now, because they ride for a full two years, the process "gives the poems a little bit more life on the bus."

As to the rear placement: "I don't think it's intentional," says Garritano.

Cody Walker has also noticed the poems' placement in the back of the bus. Walker was elected the city's Poet Populist last August; he's also a part-time instructor at the University of Washington, a Writer in Residence at Richard Hugo House, and a creative writing teacher at two local schools. One of his poems was accepted in the 2007 on-board collection, "Dreams." As was one by a younger student for whom English is a second language.

Is it demeaning to consign the poems to the back of the bus? "I certainly haven't thought of it that way," he says. "I just honestly haven't thought about it." ■

You can download the 2007-2008 poems here: [www.poetryonbuses.org](http://www.poetryonbuses.org).



Metro says: House rules up front, poetry in the back. Photo by Jon Vachon

NEIGHBORS, Continued from Page 5

Dennis Ross, developer of the Admiral Plan in West Seattle, says there are three steps to success. First, he said, complete the existing plans: Instead of developing new plans, the goals in existing plans still need to be implemented. Second is consistency. While affordable housing is being displaced, high-end housing is increasing. Last is commitment in fulfilling and implementing the plans.

"You have to take the ownership in your neighborhood," said Cindi Barker, information coordinator for the Morgan Community Association. "New tools and new passions keep the city folks working. Energize your own neighborhood."

City councilmembers have not yet voted on the mayor's proposal, but members of the neighborhood council hope to influence this decision by stressing the importance of bottom-up planning.

—Noelle Rivera

**Citizens call out police misdoings**

The Seattle NAACP chapter has declared a "state of emergency" on the issue of police accountability, according to James Bible, president of the Seattle/King County branch of the organization.

Bible spoke at a public meeting Thurs., April 17 on police accountability that was sponsored by the local chapter of the NAACP. About 30 people gathered at Hidmo Eritrean Cuisine in the Central District to listen to testimonies of police misconduct.

Nine people relayed their experiences with law enforcement. Many used the word "dehumanizing" to describe their police encounters. Many described abusive treatment in their initial encounters with police and then a great silence when they complained. Organizers of the event asked participants to give their accounts anonymously.

One testament came from a mother recounting an incident when her 17-

year-old son was apprehended in a stolen car. He had been in a fight a few days earlier that had left him with a broken nose. She said the policeman handled her son roughly, which caused the wound to open up again, requiring five stitches.

She acknowledged that her son was a "youth at risk," but did not think the way the police dealt with him was helpful. "If I am telling him to follow the law, I want the law to follow the law," she said.

Hearing the testimonies was a panel of six community members, called the People's Panel on Police Accountability. The panel included Mako Fitts, an assistant professor at Seattle University, as well as Michael Brooks, who has an ongoing police complaint of his own ("72 Hours: Held three days for a crime he claims he didn't commit, a man seeks answers," March 21-26).

"The focus is on the inequitable treatment of people of color, poor people in areas of rapidly changing demographics," said Fitts.

The testimonies were being recorded onto audio files. According to Fitts, the panel will then look for trends in the individual testimonies to later use in making recommendations at the policy level.

For now, the purpose of the meetings is "to conduct thorough, accurate research that can withstand the scrutiny of other sociologists," said Bible.

"We need to make crystal clear that a vast cross-section of King County is experiencing problems with police misconduct and accountability," said Fitts.

He added that this project was the first of its kind in King County.

This was the second of such meetings. In total, about a dozen public meetings are planned, running until July 10.

—William Kim

Noelle Rivera and William Kim are students in the University of Washington News Lab.

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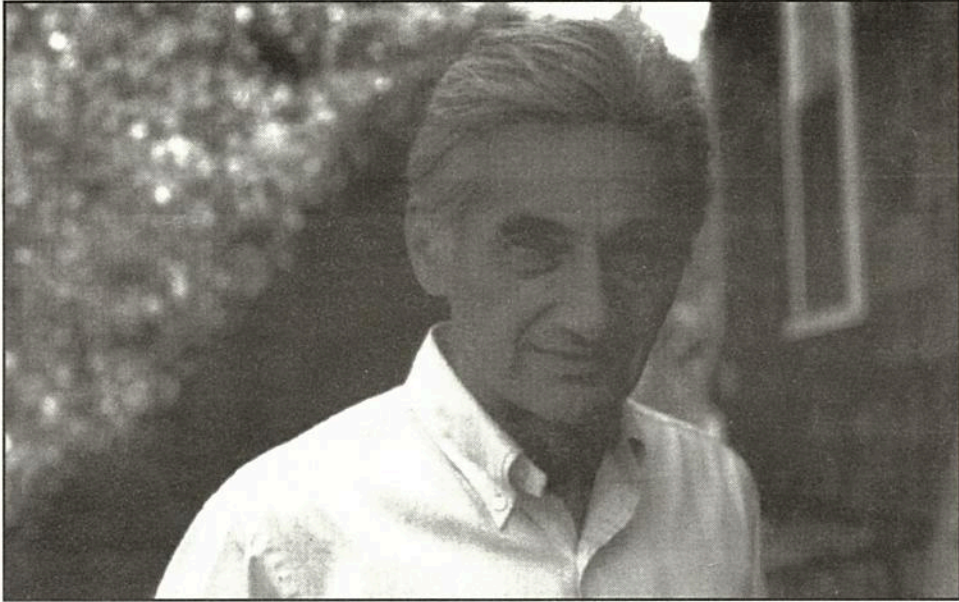
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One day, someone is going to do a documentary about Eddie Vedder's contributions to film music scores, but until that time, **Meaningful Movies is showing *You Can't Be Neutral on a Moving Train*, a documentary on legendary historian Howard Zinn's life and works.** Featuring interviews from famous progressives like Noam Chomsky and Alice Waters, as well as music by Eddie Vedder (see how that came around?). This film illuminates the man who has inspired thousands to become socialists — I mean, activists. This free showing takes place Fri., April 25, at the Keystone Church, 5019 Keystone Pl. N., at 7 p.m. Film info at [www.meaningfulmovies.com](http://www.meaningfulmovies.com).

# Calendar

## This Week's Top Picks

### Wednesday 4/23

Maybe there's a reason besides liberal guilt to serve the public interest. Maybe we can actually become better people on multiple levels. **Charles Halpern** has done just that, cultivating inner resources during his years of public work to become a much wiser person, all of which he details in his new book ***Making Waves and Riding the Currents***. He speaks about mindful social activism at Town Hall, 1119 8th Ave., at 7:30 pm. Tickets are \$5 at the door on Seneca Street. More info on the web at [www.townhallseattle.org](http://www.townhallseattle.org).

### Thursday 4/24

It's too bad there's still a need for events like these, but it's great that there is a **Night Out for New Orleans** hosted by **Common Ground Collective**. Featuring music by **Jim Page** and the **Filé Gumbo Band**, this event aims to provide short-term relief and long-term community building for hurricane-ravaged areas of the Gulf Coast. Local activist Aaron Dixon will be holding a presentation on the situation in New Orleans to let you know how much your support is needed. Taking place at Woodshed Studios, 300 Fairview Ave. N., at 7 p.m. Cost is \$10-20 on a sliding scale.

### Friday 4/25

If the Taiko drums from the Cherry Blossom and Japanese Festival got you pumped up last week, this week at the Seattle Center is the **World Rhythm Festival**. This three-day fair features over 100 percussive performances and workshops all for free. And of course, dancing, also free. Events start at 10 a.m. and run at various times, check out the Seattle World Percussion Society's website, [swps.org](http://swps.org), for times and locations.

### Saturday 4/26

President Bush may have announced a greenhouse gas reduction goal recently, but as there was not really any specific legislation attached, it looks like we'll have to save the world ourselves... yet again. Start with your car at **Green My Ride! This all-day**

**alternative transportation festival will show off the latest rides and technologies** so you can be the first one on Queen Anne to say, "Oh, nice 2007 hybrid, but my car has even less emissions." Takes place at the Phinney Neighborhood Center, 6532 Phinney Ave. N., starting at 9:45 am till 3:45 pm. Info at [greenmyride.info](http://greenmyride.info).

### Tuesday 4/29

It's 6 p.m. and you're standing outside Ballard High School, you've got three hours to kill, and your stomach is growling. You could walk over to Zesto's or you could step inside the high school and enjoy **Eat Local Now!** (Assuming you bought tickets in advance, since the event always sells out). **BALLE Seattle and Sustainable Ballard are providing a huge dinner made from local food along with speakers discussing the current issues facing local farms** as well as how urbanites can access and enjoy more local food. Tickets are \$35 if you're over 5 and \$15 for students. Located at 1418 NW 65th St. Website located at [EatLocalNow.org](http://EatLocalNow.org).

It's a bit political with a touch of ironical — a taste that Seattle loves right along with salmon — it's **Slowpoke, a biting critical comic written by Jen Sorensen**, and she's coming to a bookstore near you. Seriously though, this is a ridiculously great comic that comes together in Sorensen's new collection *One Nation, Oh my God*, that Sorensen will be promoting and signing tonight at the UW Bookstore, 4326 University Way NE, at 7 p.m. Check out her stuff at [slowpokecomics.com](http://slowpokecomics.com). More info on the reading at [www.bookstore.washington.edu](http://www.bookstore.washington.edu).

Calendar compiled by Corey Kahler.  
Tell us what's in store, why don't ya?  
Email it to [calendar@realchangenews](mailto:calendar@realchangenews).

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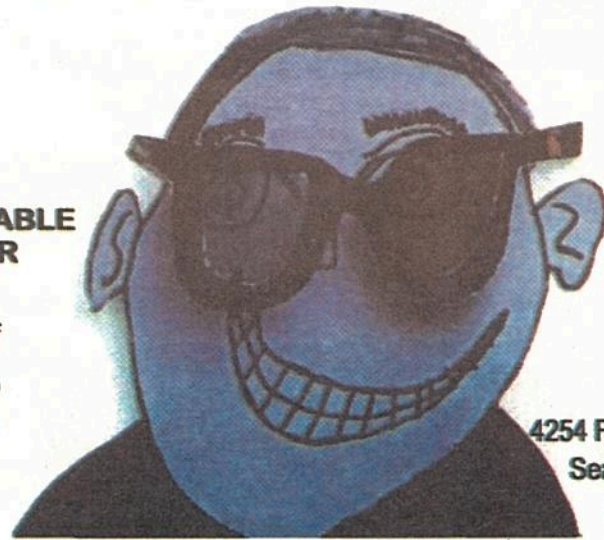
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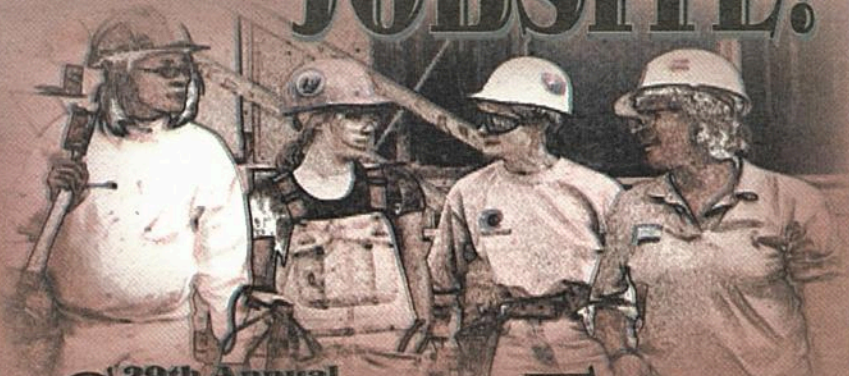
The PCC Food Bank Program packages and distributes one million servings of nutritious bulk foods to local food banks each month, helping to reduce hunger in the Puget Sound region.



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