

# \$1 REAL CHANGE

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## Subprime Loans Fleece Reverend

**Rev. Tony Brooks** took out a subprime mortgage loan that cost him his home. In South King County, subprime loans lead to hundreds of foreclosures. ...see page 5.



Photo by Rosette Royale

## CD residents balk at development

**Megan Haas attended** a developer's forum on a new apartment project at 23rd Ave. and E. Union. Now she has questions about the fate of the CD. ...see page 5.



Photo by Katia Roberts

NAACP v. Urban League over OPA...p.3

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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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**It's easy to take the work that we do for granted, but papers like *Real Change* help make social change movements possible. We are a progressive institution. Like a tree, our strength comes from the ground up.**

## Beyond Charity

By **TIMOTHY HARRIS**, Executive Director

**W**e had some great news this week: The Seattle Foundation came through with \$30,000 to support our organizing work. That boosts our front-page fundraising speedometer to the point where my 1993 Toyota Corolla starts shaking.

Many people have chipped in to get us where we are both this year and in years past. Every time we receive a gift, I feel great gratitude for the community of generous and decent people who make our work possible.

Our fund drives aren't just a means of raising the money we need to continue. They are an affirmation of all that we do.

The caring community that surrounds our vendors. The opportunity for self-help. Our critical work as a local independent media resource. Our unique role as a watchdog and catalyst

**I love that each day, because of *Real Change*, for a moment or two, hundreds of people—sometimes thousands of people—who might otherwise have nothing whatsoever to do with each other establish a connection that plants a seed.**

on issues of homelessness and poverty. Our effective activism.

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**Yesterday, I received a troubling phone call** from a person who was desperate to find housing, but it wasn't for himself. A plumber he had recently hired confided

that he was homeless and living in his car with his wife and infant child. The new employee — we'll call him Bob — was a

There is pain in the world. And there is privilege. The relationship is complicated and all too often ignored. By getting at this, we come to what it means to be authentically engaged in the process of social change.

Creating a different reality isn't a huge, overwhelming impossibility. It comes down to thousands of small things that happen everyday.

So your support of our work—by buying the paper, by making a donation, by taking action, by telling a friend—matters. When we all do our part, things add up.

We are in the final days of our fund drive, and even with the support from the Seattle Foundation, are almost \$52K short of raising our \$140,000. It is, truly, an audacious goal. Our development guy Joe has a saying I like. He says, "scared money don't make none." We asked ourselves how much money we really need to get to where we'd need to be, and that amount became the goal.

This is nearly twice what we raised during last year's drive.

**Last night, our** board began the process of a mid-year budget and planning review. That sounds bureaucratic and boring, but it's what successful organizations do. We compare what we said we were going to do to what actually happened and make adjustments to cope with reality.

Our reality is that our hopes for foundation support this year are very much at odds with the funding environment. Funders are overwhelmed by the wreckage of decades of bad public policy, and, as the federal government continues to retreat from its social responsibilities, they are increasingly left holding the bag.

This means enormous competition and narrower and narrower specialization in what gets funded. Organizations like ours, which are neither fish nor fowl, tend to lose.

Our friends at the Seattle Foundation notwithstanding, big foundations don't often support organizing for social

justice, no matter how effective or well conceived. There's a reason that it's called "charity."

This is why we need your support. There's work to be done. We're good at doing it. We need resources to pull it off. About 35 percent of our support is

***Real Change* is an open book. We depend upon our readers for nearly half of our support and believe that you deserve to know what we know.**

income from the paper itself. Less than 20 percent comes from foundations. That leaves people like you.

It's easy to take the work that we do for granted, but papers like *Real Change* help make social change movements possible. We are a progressive institution. Like a tree, our strength comes from the ground up.

***Real Change* is an open book.** We depend upon our readers for nearly half of our support and believe that you deserve to know what we know. That's why we've made pretty much everything about ourselves public at [realchange.wikispaces.com](http://realchange.wikispaces.com).

Want to read our board minutes? You can. Want to look over our strategic plan and tell me what you think? I'd love to hear from you. Want to see our latest circulation numbers? Read our fundraising plan? Review the high points of our thirteen-year history? It's all there.

Our next issue will go to bed on Monday night so our vendors can get it the day before the holiday. All donations received by then will count toward the final fund drive total. Please make a secure online donation at [www.realchangenews.org](http://www.realchangenews.org) or send a check to 2129 2nd Ave., Seattle, WA 98121. You make the difference. ■

## Director's Corner

good guy, and my man on the phone wanted to help.

"He already has a job," he thought. "How hard can it be to find housing?"

As it turns out, plenty hard. Bob has no real credit history, and a 12-year-old felony on his record. Until recently, his family had lived with relatives. When that became untenable, they moved into their car.

In a tight rental market, no one wants to touch someone like Bob. He makes too much money to qualify for assistance programs and not enough to buy his way out of the problem.

**So Bob earns** about \$2,500 a month as a plumber's apprentice and spends about

\$1,700 of it on a weekly motel rental for his family.

I wish I could say that I have a solution, but I don't. No one else seems to either. Bob's boss had been calling around for a week and hitting nothing but brick walls.

So I said I'd put the word out and see if anything came back. If you have any ideas, email me at [rchange@speakeasy.org](mailto:rchange@speakeasy.org)

See Tim Harris' daily blog at [apesmaslament.blogspot.com](http://apesmaslament.blogspot.com).

## Just Heard...

### Citizens want tax increase

A meeting in Shoreline on June 25 produced an unusual result—hundreds of voters asking King County Councilmembers to raise their taxes. Led by County Councilmember Bob Ferguson (D-North Seattle), the town hall meeting was called to gauge public support for a one-tenth of one cent sales tax increase in King County to fund gaps in mental health services budgets in the county. The meeting resulted in a record turnout for a council-led town hall meeting and calls for County Council to approve the tax increase. It would raise an estimated \$47 million a year and be earmarked for services for the mentally ill and pay raises for mental health workers, typically underpaid. There is currently no formal proposal to raise sales taxes and it is unclear when Council would take up the issue, according to Ferguson's office.

—Philip Dawdy

### Police oversight rally

James Bible isn't giving up. He's demanding that Seattle Police Chief Gil Kerlikowske resign—regardless of what James Kelly or Carl Mack have to say about it.

Bible is the president of the Seattle-King County NAACP. On June 28 at 4 p.m., he will lead a City Hall rally calling for the chief's resignation, along with the firing of two police officers—Gregory Neubert and Michael Tietjen—who were accused of planting drugs on a man they arrested in January.

Bible has been calling for the chief's resignation ever since the release of a drugstore video that contradicts the police officers' original incident reports. He made the demand again on June 22 after the Seattle Times obtained a leaked report from the citizen review board that oversees internal investigations, the Office of Professional Accountability Review Board. In it, board members said the chief had interceded in the investigation of Neubert and Tietjen.

A few hours after Bible gave his press conference, the Urban League and its director, James Kelly, held its own press briefing with Carl Mack, Seattle's former NAACP chief. Kelly called the report a "draft" and Mack said it didn't merit ruining the good police relations he had built.

"Once the report is final what are they going to do?" Bible asks. Given all the incidents of police abuse that the NAACP is currently following, Bible insists now is the time to demand real police accountability.

—Cydne Gillis

## Change



Phil Mitchell

Photo by Elisa Huerta-Enochian

"The first time I heard about global warming I did what most people do," says Phil Mitchell. "I tuned out." But the more Mitchell looked into what scientists were saying about the state of the planet, the more he realized the detrimental effects of worldwide climate change.

Mitchell founded 2People ([www.2people.org](http://www.2people.org)), an online citizen network committed to building public mandate for real solutions to the climate

crisis. With over 700 members in the U.S., and representation in more than 38 countries, the site aims to close the gap between what is scientifically necessary to address global warming and what's politically possible.

He also established the Greater Seattle Climate Dialogues ([www.climate-dialogues.org](http://www.climate-dialogues.org)), a campaign of environmental learning and discussion that begins with small, community-based conversations, resulting in an expansive

coalition of partners, sponsors and endorsers who can advocate for policy change on a broad scale.

"No reasonable person wants to pass on a dying and unstable world to their children," says Mitchell. "They're just not connected, they are not empowered." 2People and the Climate Dialogues offer both a virtual and real world forum where people can come together to affect change.

—Amy Besunder

## Candidates campaign before immigrants

On June 21, candidates for Seattle City Council and King County Prosecuting Attorney gathered at Town Hall to participate in a forum to address immigrant and refugee issues in the Seattle community. The event was hosted by Hate Free Zone as part of the organization's continuing effort to enfranchise the immigrant and refugee communities in the democratic process.

"Immigrants are hungry to participate in democracy," said Shankar Narayan, Hate Free Zone's policy director. "Part of that process is empowering voters."

The forum was designed as an opportunity for candidates to clarify their positions on immigration issues. "We wanted to get candidates on record talking about immigrants specifically, and to make candidates accountable to the immigrant community," said Narayan.

The event drew candidates from four of the five City Council positions that will be decided in an August primary, as well as two of the three candidates for King County Prosecutor. The candidates' presence, according to Narayan, was indicative of a growing effort to capture immigrant and refugee voters.

The council candidates committed to increasing funding for translation services in city hall and for immigrant and refugee welcoming centers. Additionally, the candidates supported the creation of an advisory council that would be

made up of members of the refugee and immigrant community and would advise city government on relevant issues. All candidates additionally pledged to take part in a local delegation to Washington, D.C. that would call for a moratorium on federal immigration raids until comprehensive immigration reform is passed.

Both Democratic prosecutor candidates—Keith Scully and Bill Sherman—committed to establishing a position of refugee and immigrant liaison in the prosecutor's office, as well as to using the prosecutor's office to push law enforcement agencies to be sensitive and respectful in their dealings with the immigrant and refugee community. King County Prosecuting Attorney Dan Satterberg, appointed to office in May after the death of longtime prosecutor Norm Maleng, did not attend.

The City Council candidates present were City Councilmember Jean Godden and her challenger Joseph Szwaja, as were City Councilmember David Della and his opponent Tim Burgess. Bruce Harrell, John Manning, Alfred Runte, and Venus Velazquez are all vying to replace City Councilmember Peter Steinbrueck who is not seeking reelection. City Councilmember Tom Rasmussen, who faces no opposition, was present while City Councilmember Sally Clark was not.

—Patrick Reis

## Wood gets axed

So much for more low-income people running for city office. Christal Wood has lost her case.

On June 22, King County Superior Court Judge John Erlick ruled against Wood's challenge to candidate fees collected in Seattle. Under current rules, to run for Sally Clark's seat on the Seattle City Council, Wood would have to pay \$966, an amount equal to 1 percent of Clark's salary. The King County Elections division offers an alternative—collecting 966 valid signatures. But Wood had argued that, either way, a lack of resources precludes low-income persons from being able to participate in the free and equal elections guaranteed by the Washington State Constitution.

Erlick disagreed with Wood, ruling that "free and equal" pertains to the right to vote, not the right to run for office. Wood is considering an appeal of the judge's decision.

"If we were talking about an equal protection between gender or race, then he would have looked at it with a little more scrutiny," Wood says. "But the judge's values are not with protecting low-income people from anything. It's not surprising."

—Cydne Gillis

A non-profit wants the old INS building for “workforce” housing. A developer has other ideas

## Two Opposing Sides vie for Future of Historic Building

By CYDNEY GILLIS, Staff Reporter

Thousands of immigrants passed through its cells over the years. Now a private developer is poised to turn Seattle’s version of Ellis Island into an office building instead of the affordable housing called for by the International District community.

Developer Greg Smith wants to purchase the old Immigration and Naturalization Services Building from the federal government for \$2.1 million and convert it into a design center for eco-friendly architects and builders, complete with an organic cafe.

Another proposal by the Seattle Chinatown-International District Preservation and Development Authority (PDA) would allow the non-profit to get the 1932 federal building on Airport Way

**Both proposals depart from what the 1987 federal McKinney Act calls for – turning retired federal property into housing for the homeless.**

South for free and turn it into 75 units of “workforce” housing, with rents ranging from \$865 for a studio to \$1,175 for a one-bedroom – plus eight two-bedroom units at \$917 for federal Section 8 tenants.

Both redevelopment plans, which Mayor Greg Nickels will choose between in the next few weeks, would preserve the neo-classical architecture of the building and afford space for displays recounting

the building’s history as an entry point for Asian immigrants. But both proposals depart from what the 1987 federal McKinney Act calls for – turning retired federal property into housing for the homeless.

Any transfer to private hands, says Art Skolnik, a former historic preservationist officer for the state, would be a “boondoggle.” Despite Smith’s focus on sustainable development, his proposal amounts to “just an office building,” Skolnik says. “Let’s not play games.”

The mayor’s office called for the proposals in March to facilitate transfer and redevelopment of the INS Building, which closed in 2004 and is currently at the disposal of the federal General Services Administration.

GSA Realty Specialist Fred Zderic, who is negotiating the transfer with the city, says the agency put out a notice last year to try to meet the McKinney requirement. But the only homeless housing proposal it received was from the Salvation Army, which Zderic says backed out over the high cost of rehabilitating the old structure, which is a protected landmark listed on the National Register.

In its proposal, which was filed with the city’s Office of Housing, the International District PDA says it can convert the building for \$19.5 million. It lists the money coming from a combination of federal tax credits, fundraising, and a \$5.4 million bank loan, with no cost to the city – one of the requirements of the city’s request for proposals.

Prior to putting out the request, says the Office of Housing’s Rick Hooper, the city held a community forum on what to do with the INS Building. Its 30 participants, he says, chose affordable housing



Once the gateway for thousands of immigrants moving to the Northwest, the old INS Building on Airport Way has been abandoned since 2004. A developer wants to turn it into a design center, while a non-profit is pushing for “workforce” housing.

as their top priority for the INS Building, with executives from Chinatown’s Interim Development and Uwajimaya’s grocery now backing the PDA proposal.

Hooper says the two proposals were reviewed by an advisory committee of city managers and community representatives that he declined to identify. The call for proposals, however, did not stipulate housing as a priority criterion, Hooper says, because the mayor wanted to be “open to all the different possible uses of the building.”

While Zderic believes the city is leaning toward the PDA proposal, Hooper says that route would involve the city taking charge of the property and leasing it to the agency – a more complicated transaction to which the mayor’s office appears less inclined, according to Hooper.

Smith’s plan “is the best route to take for the sale to go to a private developer without any long-term city ownership,”

Hooper says. “We envision a simultaneous closing,” he says, in which the property would immediately pass from the city to Smith and his company, Urban Visions.

Peter Steinbrueck, chair of the Seattle City Council’s urban planning committee, which may have a say over the deal, credits Smith’s devotion to sustainable development and thinks a “green” design center is a great idea. But the INS Building, he says, “may not be the place for it.”

He also questions the International District PDA’s proposal and its focus on “workforce” housing, which calls for rentals affordable to people making 60 percent or more of the area’s median income.

INS BUILDING, continued on page 12

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## Subprime loans are landing many in King County to poverty

# Home loans drive homeowners out of their homes

By ROSETTE ROYALE, Staff Reporter

No one in the Rev. Tony Brooks' family had ever had a home built for him. So when the finishing touches were put on his \$75,000 Columbia City ranch house in 1988, he was making history. Remembering the night when he first slept under his own roof, he smiles. "That was the most awesome feeling—being of African-American descent, feeling you could leave a heritage and legacy to your family," says Brooks.

But then things went awry.

Aiming for financial stability, he refinanced his home in 1997. Around the same time, he remarried, but the marriage ended in divorce in 2000. Financial woes mounted. The home went into default. To catch up, he took out a subprime loan. The loan agent, says Brooks, told him the agency would consolidate his debt, promising a lower monthly rate while paying off all his bills. But Brooks says the agent didn't fully explain that, unlike his previous mortgage, his new payments would not include taxes, insurance, and escrow payments. The new loan raised his monthly payments from \$1,400 to \$2,500.

He struggled to meet the newly-inflated costs. A lawyer suggested he file for

**"Rev. Brooks was a casualty of a lender who gave the illusion of being someone who was out to help."**

— John R. Jones Jr.,  
ACORN, Washington  
State President

Chapter 13 bankruptcy. Self-employed as a barber and unable to meet this bankruptcy payment plan, Brooks filed another Chapter 13 plan on the advice of a new lender. A barbershop client suggested that Brooks speak to a realtor for help. The realtor advised a Chapter 7 bankruptcy. The Reverend filed for bankruptcy a third time.

The house was put on the market, but soon after, went into foreclosure. More than six months later, the house was sold. But the buyer abandoned the sale when the realtor sat on the paper work. "And after that," says Brooks, seated in a barber's chair at his Rainier Avenue barbershop, "I lost my home."

And with it, his family's legacy was lost as well.

The tale of woe that befell Brooks is a common one across the U.S. as foreclosures remain at high levels, according to statistics from the online foreclosure resource Realty Trac. Compiled by the Association of Community Organization for Reform Now (ACORN), they show

that in April mortgage companies filed 493 foreclosures against homeowners who were behind on their payments in King County. In April 2006, 504 foreclosure notices were filed. Of the 10 zip codes with the highest number of homeowners who faced foreclosure in April 2007, eight were located in south King County.

The high level of foreclosures was largely the result of subprime loans, says Nancy Wagner, an ACORN member. Broadly defined as a loan that's offered at rates above prime to borrowers who don't qualify for prime rates due to low credit ratings, she says that lenders target certain communities.

This sentiment was echoed by John R. Jones, Jr., who serves as ACORN's Washington state president. Fresh from a June 20 meeting with Federal Reserve Chairman Ben Bernanke in Washington, D.C.—where three dozen national ACORN members urged stronger loan oversight to limit foreclosures—Jones says that certain lenders make loans to borrowers they know cannot and will not be able to afford them. "We're losing our communities to the subprime lenders," Jones says. "And now we're losing our homes."

During the meeting with Bernanke, Jones says that ACORN suggested a national home-ownership protection model based upon a new Minnesota law. That law, he says, will require that all mortgage loans include, in their packages, taxes and insurance and escrow payments. With 75 percent of subprime loans offering adjustable rates that usually increase within two years, and 80 percent of those same loans carrying pre-penalty payments, he says the federal government should prohibit the loans outright. Such a scenario, he indicates, may have helped Brooks.



Rev. Tony Brooks fulfilled a family dream when he had a house built for him in Columbia City in 1988. He took out a subprime loan to refinance the home in 2000, starting a downward spiral that led to foreclosure. Photo by Rosette Royale

"Rev. Brooks was a casualty of a lender who gave the illusion of being someone who was out to help," Jones declares. "And he *was* out to help, but not Pastor Brooks. He was out to help himself."

Brooks, a Baptist minister, now lives in a low-income one-bedroom apartment in Rainier Beach. Having recently been fully ordained as a minister, he says what he's experienced helps him on the pulpit, making him a more passionate minister. "What's happening in our community today is that

there are a lot of people struggling, a lot of people don't know their rights," he says, "especially when it comes to real estate. And because of the lack of knowledge, we're perishing." ■

**[Resource]**  
ACORN offers assistance to those facing foreclosure through its website, [www.acorn.org](http://www.acorn.org) or through its foreclosure hotline: 1 (866)-67-ACORN.

## An apartment project slated for E. Union St. is dubbed neighborhood killer

# Residents criticize Central District development

By CYDNEY GILLIS, Staff Reporter

The days of cheap Philly cheese steaks may be numbered at the corner of 23rd Ave. and E. Union St. in Seattle's Central District.

With its sandwich shop, pharmacy, post office and liquor store, the intersection is a humble but well-traveled hub in a neighborhood of old homes that like so many in Seattle these days are about to get a great big box for a neighbor.

This time next year, Jim Mueller—the former Vulcan Inc. developer behind the shiny new edifices of South Lake Union—hopes to break ground on a six-story building with 90 units of housing, ground-floor retail and underground parking at a site where the Coleman Building once stood.

The building would be 65 feet tall, 25 feet higher than the city allows in the area today. Mueller hasn't decided if the studios and one-bedrooms he's planning will be apartments or condos, but the building will be the first of its size in the immediate area—another outpost of the growth that is currently stacking Seattle's neighborhoods with new apartments, condos and townhouses.

Like residents of other neighborhoods, people who live near 2203 E. Union and another site at 2501 E. Madison where Mueller is planning a 105-unit building express mixed feelings about the changes that development brings.

On June 19, after Mueller gave a public presentation on his plans at

23rd and Union, some participants said they were excited about the building's ground-floor retail and the services and foot traffic it promises to bring. Others echoed concerns raised throughout the city with critics saying Mueller is plopping down another cookie-cutter project with no thought for how it could reflect or engage its community.

Dominic Holden, who grew up in the Central District and now lives in a house at 21st Ave. and E. Union, says growth is inevitable. But he points to a mixed-used complex at 23rd Ave. and E. Madison St. as a prime example of where a developer

CENTRAL, continued on page 10



## Vendor of the Week

**Terry Cunningham**

The path from Dayton, Ohio to the Bartell Drugs in Ballard had more than a few twists and turns for Terry Cunningham, our vendor of the week.

After high school, Cunningham joined the Air Force. He was trained as a civil engineer and stationed in the San Francisco Bay Area. Four years and one honorable discharge later, though, Terry found himself without work in one of the country's most expensive places to live.

"But I liked the West Coast—it's laid back," said Cunningham. So he moved to Oregon, a place that still had that ineffable "California feel" minus the astronomical cost-of-living. Following a divorce in Oregon, Terry moved to Washington state 15 years ago.

Finding work in Washington has been tough, though—and, recently,

he was diagnosed with a rare form of bone cancer.

"Cancer's a double-edged sword like that," said Cunningham. The costs of health care for cancer patients make it difficult for employers to insure them.

Universal health care, anyone?

So, Cunningham has been selling *Real Change*, and became a top vendor. And, even in the face of hardship, Terry stays positive—he is always amazed at the generosity, compassion, and friendship he finds in his customers.

"*Real Change* works," said Terry, "it helps the homeless not just monetarily, but also because it makes the community more aware of [housing issues] and unemployment."

—JP Gritton

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



German director Werner Herzog made a legendary journey from Munich to Paris to see his muse, Lotte Eisner in 1974. Northwest filmmaker Linas Phillips replicates this honor by walking from Seattle to Herzog's house in Los Angeles. Phillips documents this amazing pilgrimage in *Walking to Werner*, which "captures beautiful West Coast landscapes and weaves Herzog's observations about life, dreams, cinema and 'ecstatic truth' into Phillips' moments of childish wonder, hysterical madness, crushing doubt, and enlightened triumph." Phillips attends the June 29 night of the film. A party ensues after the screening with live music by Today! 7p.m. and 9:15 p.m. Northwest Film Forum, 1515 12th Ave. \$8.50. Info: 206.267.5380 or [www.nwfilmforum.org](http://www.nwfilmforum.org).

# Calendar

## This Week's Top Picks

### Thursday 6/28

Urban sprawl seems an unstoppable American epidemic. But small town newsman Tom Hylton disagrees. Watch Hylton's film, *Save Our Lands, Save Our Towns*, to learn how "America's towns can be rebuilt and its countryside preserved from strip malls and subdivisions." 7 p.m., Camp Long Environmental Learning Center, Main Building, 5200 35th Ave. Info: [www.nweec.org/ea.htm](http://www.nweec.org/ea.htm).

### Friday 6/29

David Montgomery, University of Washington Professor of Earth and Space Sciences, reads from *Dirt: the Erosion of Civilizations*, his latest non-fiction effort, at Elliott Bay Book Company. Montgomery contends that dirt is the essential element for instigating an "agricultural revolution" by reincorporating it back into the ground, preventing erosion and preserving natural conditions. 7:30 p.m., Elliott Bay Book Company, 101 S. Main Street. Free. Info: 206-624-6600 or [www.elliottbaybook.com](http://www.elliottbaybook.com).

### Saturday 6/30

Annual **Socialist Alternative Yard Sale**: support local socialist activism. Donations needed as well as interested shoppers. 9 a.m., 6516 3rd Ave NW. Info: [www.SocialistAlternative.org](http://www.SocialistAlternative.org).

### Sunday 7/1

Unable to attend a street-side protest or wish there were an alternative way to demonstrate against the war? Join the activists with "**Obey the Law for Peace**," a national event to protest the war, by driving the speed limit or slightly under the posted speed limit for an entire week. Save gas, reduce the need of oil and, maybe, Seattle drivers will learn how to not drive like yahoos during the morning commute. Info: [www.ackme.info/peace\\_waukesha/Obey-TheLawForPeace.htm](http://www.ackme.info/peace_waukesha/Obey-TheLawForPeace.htm).

"Voices Rising," the LGBTQ of color literary art and culture festival with spoken

word, live art, performances, paintings, info tables and more. 1 p.m., Richard Hugo House, 1634 11th Ave. Info: [stormepoet@hotmail.com](mailto:stormepoet@hotmail.com).

### Friday 7/6

**911 Media Arts Center and Hazel Wolf Environmental Film Network** host the Green Film Series. The HWEFN shares a vast array of progressive films that discuss varying environmental issues; playing subsequent first Fridays. 7:30 p.m., 911 Media Arts Center, 402 9th Ave N. \$5. Info: 206.682.6552 or [www.911media.org](http://www.911media.org) or [www.hazelfilm.org](http://www.hazelfilm.org).

Pioneer Square spurs on the summer season with the **Fire Festival**. Organized by the Pioneer Square Community Association, this 30-year-old celebration features the Firefighter Combat Challenge, where firefighters from across the Pacific Northwest and British Columbia exhibit their skills. The festival also offers an impressive lineup of musical acts, including Seattle locals, Flood the Void. The Fire Festival "Pre-Funk" initiates the festivities on July 6 at 5 p.m. The Fire Festival Main Events Day takes place on July 7. 10 a.m., Pioneer Square. Info: [www.pioneersquare.org/fire.html](http://www.pioneersquare.org/fire.html).

### Saturday 7/7

While Seafair may be the star attraction for some Seattleites, the **Seafair Milk Carton Derby** is too much random fun to miss. Hundreds of crazily creative people pour hours into crafting the most impressive milk carton boats possible, only to debut their creations for a fleeting moment of glory. 10 a.m., East Green Lake Drive North. Info: SEAFAIR at 206-728-0123, ext. 350, [info@seafair.com](mailto:info@seafair.com) or [www.seafair.com](http://www.seafair.com).



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## Investigative reporter Jeremy Scahill on Blackwater USA, America's private mercenary army

# Dressed to kill, with impunity

By ROBIN LINDLEY, Contributing Writer

As they fund the military and corporate giants like Halliburton in Iraq, U.S. taxpayers are also spending tens of millions of dollars for the services of Blackwater USA, a secretive army of private mercenaries that operates with virtually no government oversight and beyond civilian and military legal constraints.

In his *New York Times* bestseller, *Blackwater: The Rise of the World's Most Powerful Mercenary Army* (Nation Books/Avalon), investigative reporter Jeremy Scahill unmasks this powerful, corporate armed force, founded by Erik Prince, a multimillionaire conservative with close ties to the religious right and the Republican Party. The book chronicles the reach of Blackwater from fighting—and dying—in Iraq, to policing the storm-ravaged streets of New Orleans in the immediate aftermath of Hurricane Katrina.

Scahill writes for *The Nation* and is a correspondent for *Democracy Now!* In testimony before the House Appropriations Subcommittee in May, Scahill urged Congress to investigate the private war contractors like Blackwater. He warned: "The privatization of war has both encouraged and enabled the growth and creation of companies who have benefited and stand to gain even more from an escalation of the war."

Scahill recently discussed the Blackwater mercenaries and other Bush Administration efforts to privatize government functions with *Real Change*.

### How would you describe Blackwater USA to a person who hasn't heard of the company?

We are in the midst of the most radical privatization agenda in our history. It seeps its way into schools, prisons, and

**Most Americans believe there are 145,000 U.S. troops [in Iraq], but almost never discussed are the 130,000 private personnel deployed alongside the U.S.**

law enforcement, and now we see this radical privatization of war unfolding on

the battlefields of Iraq.

Most Americans believe there are 145,000 U.S. troops [in Iraq], but almost never discussed are the 130,000 private personnel deployed alongside the U.S. armed forces. Some like KBR [Kellogg, Brown & Root] – a former Halliburton subsidiary – provide "logistical support services" to the military. They do the laundry, drive trucks, serve food to the troops.

But there are also tens of thousands of armed individuals who work for companies like Blackwater USA. It's not the biggest, it's not the most profitable, but it has the closest proximity to the throne in the United States. It's a company with deep political connections to the Republican Party and the radical religious right. Whenever a State Department official moves from point A to B in Iraq, Blackwater is guarding [them]. Since 2004, they've been awarded three-quarters of a billion dollars in U.S. State Department contracts alone. Impressive for a company that didn't exist a decade ago.

### The military once guarded ambassadors and other U.S. officials. Why would the Administration choose to outsource this military function?

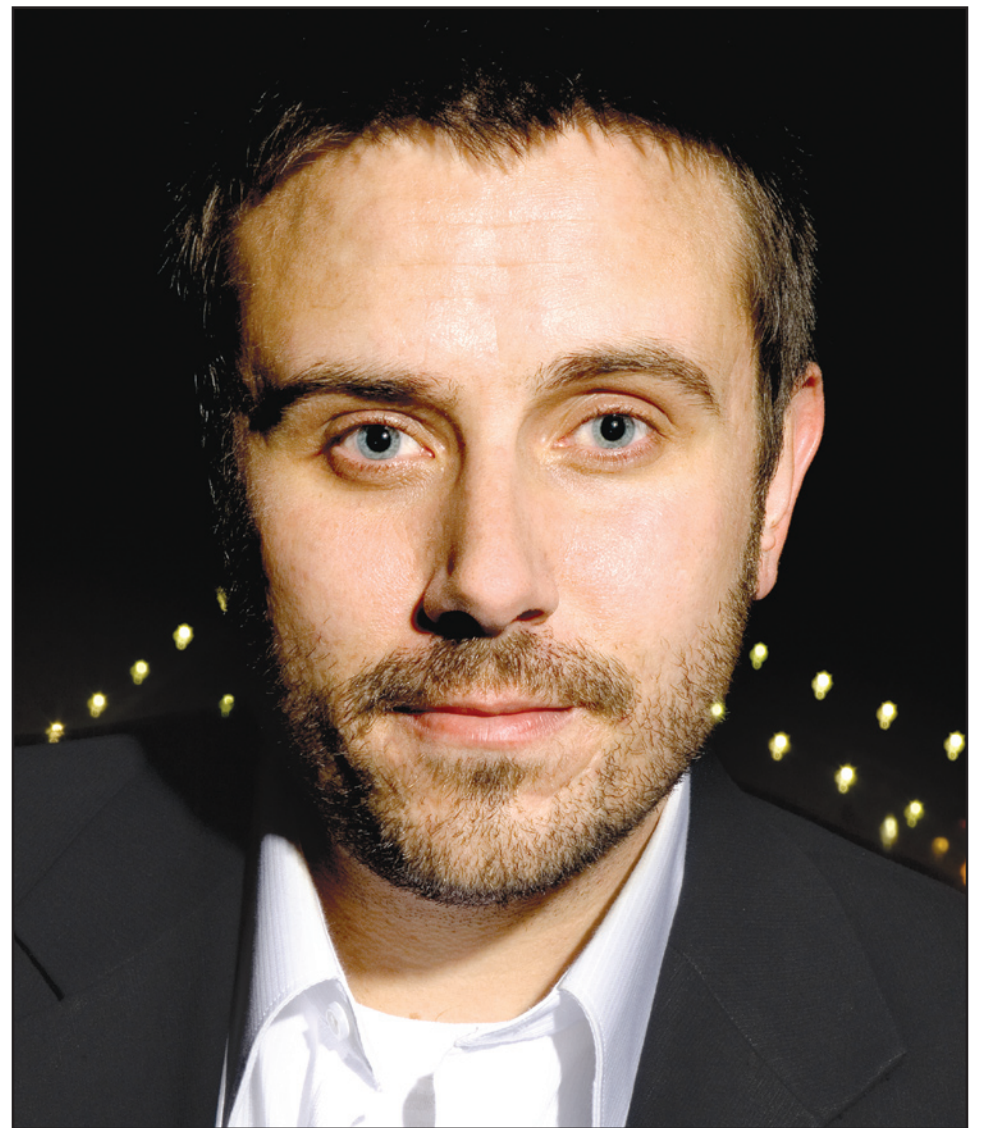
At the end of his term as Defense Secretary under George H.W. Bush, Dick Cheney commissioned a study from a division of Halliburton [on] outsourcing to the private sector the nonessential functions within the military bureaucracy [to] free up the active duty military to do the actual fighting.

Now, in Iraq, we see part of the combat function outsourced. The occupation would not be sustainable without this shadow army. The most disturbing thing is that no one is effectively paying attention to the actions of Blackwater or other private forces in the war zone, so you take the American people away from a system of accountability and oversight.

### And Blackwater argues that it's above the law and immune from lawsuits.

In the case of Blackwater, here is the basic story. In March 2004, four Blackwater operatives were ambushed and killed in the [Iraqi] city of Fallujah. Their bodies were dragged through the streets and hung on a bridge. This is when the war turned: the Bush Administration ordered a siege on the city of Fallujah, and basically destroyed it, and this inflamed the Iraqi resistance and led to attacks on US forces.

A few months after the ambush, in January 2005, the families of the four men killed in Fallujah sued Blackwater in a groundbreaking wrongful death lawsuit, charging that the company



As reporter Jeremy Scahill shows in *Blackwater: The Rise of the World's Most Powerful Mercenary Army*, U.S. taxpayers are footing the bill for more than just Halliburton and its ilk: they're also bankrolling Blackwater USA, a secret squadron of private mercenaries who work with very little governmental oversight. Photo courtesy of Nation Books/Avalon.

had sent their loved ones in jeeps instead of armored vehicles, short two men on the mission, and without heavy weaponry.

Blackwater responded by arguing [it] can't be sued for wrongful death because,

**When contractors shoot up Iraqis with no provocation, [they're] viewed as the Americans, and so [there's] a blowback effect: troops are attacked in revenge for something the contractors did.**

"We're a part of the U.S. total force and therefore we should be entitled to the same immunity from civilian litigation enjoyed by the U.S. military." At the same time, Blackwater's PR specialists from the Alexander Strategy Group [a Republican lobbying firm] waxed poetic about how it would be inappropriate to place Blackwater under the Uniform Code of Military Justice, the court martial system.

Then, in Iraq, Paul Bremer's thank you gift to Blackwater and other contractors when he left in June 2004 [as head of the Coalition Provisional Authority] was to [grant] sweeping immunity to all contractors from prosecution under Iraqi law. No military law has been effectively applied to these forces, no U.S. civilian law, and certainly no Iraqi law.

### You write that Blackwater's activities adversely affect military morale.

There's a real morale crisis on the ground in Iraq. If you're a rank-and-file soldier, you see these [Blackwater] guys stroll [like] rock stars with better body armor in many cases, better vehicles, better weapons, and no fear of being prosecuted for any crimes, and they're getting paid much more than you. Blackwater pays its men between \$450 and \$650 a day. Some of these guys make more than the Secretary of Defense or the commanding generals.

The other problem for the U.S. military is a blowback factor. When contractors shoot up Iraqis with no provocation,



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## A Terrorist, in the Making?

### ■ The Reluctant Fundamentalist

By Mohsin Hamid, Harcourt 2007, Hardcover, 184 pages, \$22.00

Review by Elliott Bronstein, Contributing Writer

“Excuse me, sir, but may I be of assistance?”

Perhaps you’ve heard those words – or something like them – as you stood, confused, in the middle of some far-off, foreign market. Perhaps you’ve said something like that yourself to one of our own dazed tourists standing under the giant clock of Pike Place

**The Reluctant Fundamentalist** provides no easy answers to our questions, or solace for our foreboding.

Market. Sure, the place is home to us. But foreign (maybe even a threat?) to someone else.

A stranger offers to help. “Yes. Please!” you reply – all the while think-

#### ■ The First Man-Made Man: The Story of Two Sex Changes, One Love Affair, and a Twentieth-Century Medical Revolution

By Pagan Kennedy, Bloomsbury, 2007, Hardcover, 214 pages, \$23.95

Christine Jorgensen may have wooed the press in 1953, but she was, by no means, the world’s first transsexual. Beating her across the finish line was Michael Dillon, who in the 1940s shed his birth identity, Laura, to become the man he had always dreamed of being. Too bad his dream was short on stardust.

Born in England in 1915, the then-Laura found frustration in how people treated her as a female. Donning a boy’s haircut in her late teens and even taking to pipe smoking didn’t change things. But a change of sorts came through a physician specializing in “sex problems” who gave her a vial of testosterone pills. A deepened voice and stubble followed. Newly confident, Laura became Michael. Who now wanted a penis.

A plastic surgeon obliged, constructing for Dillon, in at least 13 painful operations, a phallus that author Pagan Kennedy describes as “a frankfurter, oddly fat and smooth.” Mission accomplished, the virginal Dillon tried to woo Roberta Cowell, who hoped to lose “her” own testicles to become a woman. No dice on the romance front. Dillon, taking to lengthy peregrinations, found himself in Tibet, seeking spiritual enlightenment. Instead, he found penury, dying alone in 1962.

Kennedy largely handles this bio with brio. On the page, Dillon’s Tibetan hegira loses steam. Even so, the book chronicles a trailblazing transsexual who never attained what Jorgensen did: fame.

—Rosette Royale

ing a second, unspoken question: “Can you be trusted? Do I dare to put myself in your hands?” In Mohsin Hamid’s captivating new novel, *The Reluctant Fundamentalist*, the Pakistani narrator easily reads the fear in the face of the American standing in front of a teahouse in Lahore, Pakistan’s second largest city. And so he offers immediate reassurance: “Do not be frightened by my beard: I am a lover of America.”

The narrator’s name is Changez. He is a native of Lahore and a fluent English speaker – the perfect tour guide for the tired, thirsty American whose voice we never hear and whose name we never learn. No, we are in for a different sort of travel experience: throughout the course of this tight, tense novel, we *become* that man, sitting in a Lahore tea house and listening to Changez tell us the story of his life.

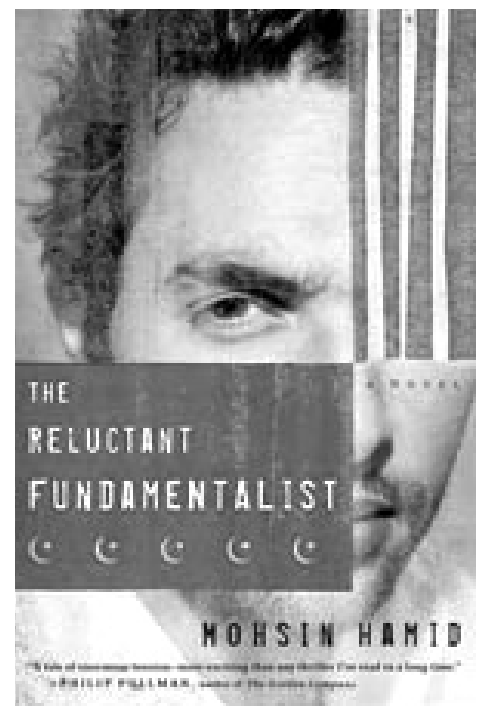
It is the tale of a smart, ambitious Pakistani student who journeys to the United States in the late 1990s to study at Princeton, and who becomes enamored with America in general and with one captivating, melancholy woman in particular. Upon graduating, an American business executive takes Changez under his wing. Changez begins his professional climb as a commercial

evaluator with the high-flying firm Underwood Samson.

And then – as we continue to listen to this bearded man’s voice while the daylight fades outside the teahouse – Changez’s own story merges with our history as Americans. He watches the World Trade Towers shiver into dust . . . and he smiles. And in that smile dwells the contradictions, divided loyalties, and mixed emotions of a world whose relationship to the United States was always more complicated than we chose to admit.

Round about this point in the novel, we begin to wonder just who – or what – is this man who insists on ordering dinner for us . . . And who is the anonymous American in whose place we nervously sit. Can we trust Changez? Can Changez trust us? As the sky grows dark in Lahore, Changez’s story takes on an ominous tone. His fascination and identification with the U.S. begins to bottom out, and we begin to understand how easy it is for yearning to become anger, and for respect to twist into contempt.

*The Reluctant Fundamentalist* provides no easy answers to our questions, or solace for our foreboding. Read it once for the gripping narrative, then again for the clues you should have spotted. Of course, by then, perhaps it’s too late for



Changez and his new American acquaintance, locked in their conversation like a pair of handcuffed prisoners. For that odd couple, safety may be beside the point. When you can hear the sounds of war for yourself, it’s probably too late to buy your plane ticket home. We’re safe at home in our easy chairs, reading Hamid’s book. Aren’t we? ■

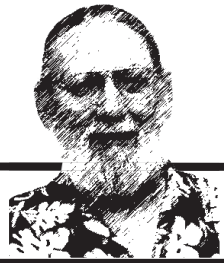
Your book purchases can benefit *Real Change*. For more information, go to [www.realchange.org](http://www.realchange.org), click on the Powell’s button, and browse the books recently featured in our pages.

### Divine Ritual

In the beginning  
god created coffee and tea  
He cleaned out the old grounds  
poured in fresh water  
hit the switch that began the gurgle  
Meanwhile  
the tea pot began to churn  
grew to a slight . . .  
god removed it immediately  
the sound of the whistle hurt his head  
Having selected mugs  
he poured hot water onto a tea bag  
let steep four minutes  
removed bag  
added honey  
stirred  
while still swirling  
added cream  
watched as the galactic universe expanded  
reaching and integrating itself  
till becoming a smooth golden brown  
He poured the coffee  
black, strong  
no funny business here  
took them brimming upstairs  
placed the tea on mrs. god’s bedstead  
the coffee upon his own  
climbed back into bed  
resumed where he had left off  
reading a mystery

—Larry Crist





Adventures  
in Irony

©Dr. Wes Browning

## ©Dr. Wes: Take me to Your Leadership

The online list of members of the King County Governing Board of the Committee to End Homelessness (CEH) may be out of date. But we can use it as a rough indication of the Governing Board's makeup. Let's see, the list includes: King County Executive Ron Sims, Seattle Mayor Greg Nickels, Seattle City Councilmember Tom Rasmussen, former Governor Mike Lowry, St. Mark's Episcopal Cathedral Dean Robert Taylor, former Seattle Mayor Norm Rice, Blake Nordstrom—and OK now I'm tired of typing these names, but so far I haven't found any dimwits.

Likewise, a similarly scientific half-assed glance at the Interagency Council, which implements CEH policies, didn't turn up more than a couple of hollow-headed chair warmers—too few to significantly lower the group I.Q. of the IAC.

So why, given that, has the CEH outsourced its brains?

"Wes," you say, "there's no way they've done that! You are surely making that up!"

It's a fact! I found it out like I find out everything I know about the CEH. I go to meetings, get the handouts and, then, find out from someone else. Two weeks ago, I learned through people in SHARE/WHEEL that the Consumer Advisory Council (CAC), yet another CEH subcommittee, would be forming a speaker's bureau called Leadership Tomorrow. The CAC consists of "consumers"—i.e., consumers of homeless people's services: i.e., homeless and formerly homeless people. So who better to form a speaker's

bureau to go out and tell the people of King County what homelessness in King County is all about?

Leadership Tomorrow, that's who! The very same day I found out about the speaker's bureau plan, the same people in SHARE/WHEEL who told me about it also handed me 15 pages of stuff with

**Normally, you'd think that when people are solicited to form a speakers bureau in accordance with their experiential expertise on a subject, you do not tell them what to say.**

the CEH logo on it including a Q&A about homelessness and a guide to a slide show about homelessness. The Q&A part of the handout SAID on its own page one it was "a sampling of questions posed to [CEH chairperson] Bill Block and his responses" and that it may "serve as a guide for managing the Q&A portion" of the slide show.

The contents of the Q&A and the commentary for the slide show included genuine information mixed with misleading statements (about the one-night counts, for example) smashed up with opinion masquerading as information (propaganda) such as whether the tent cities are really about shelter. Or how panhandlers ought to be dealt with. Or whose problem homelessness is, the cities or the suburbs.

Normally, you'd think that when people are solicited to form a speaker's

bureau in accordance with their experiential expertise on a subject, you do not tell them what to say. So those of us at *Real Change*, who subsequently read the 15-page handout, could be heard all the way from our offices in Belltown to the Exchange Building shrieking and hooting about it, like monkeys in the jungle that just saw a big gnarly cat.

Well, Bill Block heard our hoots and he reassured us. "No, no, no," he said. That handout wasn't for the CAC homeless speaker's bureau, it was for the rest of the CEH. And it wasn't written by him, he told us, it was put together by Leadership Tomorrow. Why did it have his name on it, I wondered. Would heads roll? Not likely.

So my question now is, who the freak are Leadership Tomorrow and when did they get to be the brains of the CEH? Whatever happened to "Leadership Today"—the big geniuses that were appointed to the Governing Board and the IAC because they were such hot and sweaty kick-ass leaders?

Does the fact that Leadership Tomorrow is doing the thinking about homelessness for the CEH mean that not only are all the homeless and formerly homeless members of the CAC and the other CEH subcommittees all just tokens, like we all knew, but so are Norm Rice, Lowry, Sims, Nordstrom and all the other big names on the top committees?

Is Greg Nickels just on the Governing Board for show?

I sure hope so. That's funny. ■

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



**Wed., May 30. 7:00 p.m., Second Ave., Recovery Café.** Subject, a transient Native American female aged 26 finished dinner at the Recovery Café, and then told staff she was upset about something. She sat at a table and became unresponsive. It was unclear if she was unwilling or unable to communicate. She had papers in her pocket advising "What to do if you feel like hurting yourself." As she sat, she was picking at her hands. Her hands were bleeding, and she continued to pick at the cuts. Seattle Fire responded to the location, and subject was transported to Harborview Medical Center by ambulance.

**Sat., June 16. 1:25 p.m., 2700 Block, East Union St.** Officer observed suspect, a transient Black male aged 49 driving a car in circles around the 2300 block of East Union St. Suspect stopped his vehicles at several different locations around the block that the officer knew to be active in narcotics sales. Suspect stopped at each of these locations for a short time, and then drove away. Around an hour later, the officer saw the same suspect driving eastbound on East Union St., then stop his car in a bus zone. Officer stopped the suspect for the violation and identified him via his driver's license. Radio came back with an outstanding warrant, and suspect was arrested and booked into King County Jail.

**Sat., June 16. 8:38 p.m., 42nd Ave. SW, House.** Officers were dispatched to a mental health call at the above address, and on the scene verbally contacted the complainant, the subject's brother. Complainant told the officer that the subject—his brother, a transient white male aged 31—has lots of mental problems, mainly schizophrenia. Subject had recently been hospitalized, and was kicked out of their mother's house. He has been loitering around the complainant's property, and has been off his medication—he has had a violent history towards his brother and family in the past. Subject was hiding in the garage, and reluctantly exited as the officer entered. He complied with instructions and was handcuffed, but refused to answer any questions about his mental state. Based on the statement of the complainant, officers called an ambulance, and subject was transported to Harborview Medical Center for a mental health evaluation.

**Sun., June 17. 1:30 p.m., 500 Block, Third Ave.** An officer received information that the suspect, a transient white female aged 46, had an outstanding warrant. She was stopped and the warrant was verified. Suspect was arrested and booked into King County Jail.

**Sun., June 17. 6:17 p.m., Sixth Ave. S. and S. Washington St., Private Parking Lot.** An officer observed two men sitting in the bushes in between two parking lots. There was an unopened can of beer next to them. Officer was able to identify one man with a picture ID, and ran his name via police radio. Radio came back with an outstanding warrant, and the man, a transient Black male aged 35, was arrested and booked into King County Jail.

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.

### Small Spaces

With a basket  
she  
does  
rise.  
Fruit—  
seen on the space where my  
thoughts  
are,  
dampness . . .  
does  
rise . . .  
now!  
and again.  
In the  
secret  
places  
made warm . . .  
by apples.

—Stan Burris



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**CENTRAL, Continued from Page 5**

can go wrong. The complex is so tall, he says, that it looms over the surrounding neighborhood, providing little hint to passing pedestrians that there's a Safeway store just inside.

"In essence, the building bisects the neighborhood," Holden says. "They could have designed something that attracts pedestrians and shares some of the architectural characteristics of the neighborhood, but for reasons of style or frugality, they did not."

Mueller said at the meeting that he has hired a music historian to help the design at 2203 E. Union capture the flavor of what was once a vibrant club scene in the area. During a question-and-answer period, however, he turned down requests to provide a community meeting room, plaza or garden or build the project without any parking—a pitch for more affordable units that could be occupied by car-less downtown workers.

At the \$2.25 per square foot that Mueller quoted, a 500 square foot studio in the building would rent for \$1,125.

Without parking, Mueller told the group gathered at Central Cinema, he couldn't get financing for the project. And, at 16,000 square feet, he says, the project is just too small to accommodate amenities and still make money. But there is a public benefit, he says. The hazardous dry-cleaning fluid left over from a previous business will be removed.

Mueller's responses disappointed Megan Haas, a nearby resident and co-founder of Seattle's Utilikilts.

"I felt like he was being very honest when he said he wanted

to make money," says Haas, who now consults with companies on how to create community-centered businesses. But Mueller is not a true entrepreneur, she says, because he's not willing to step out and take risks.

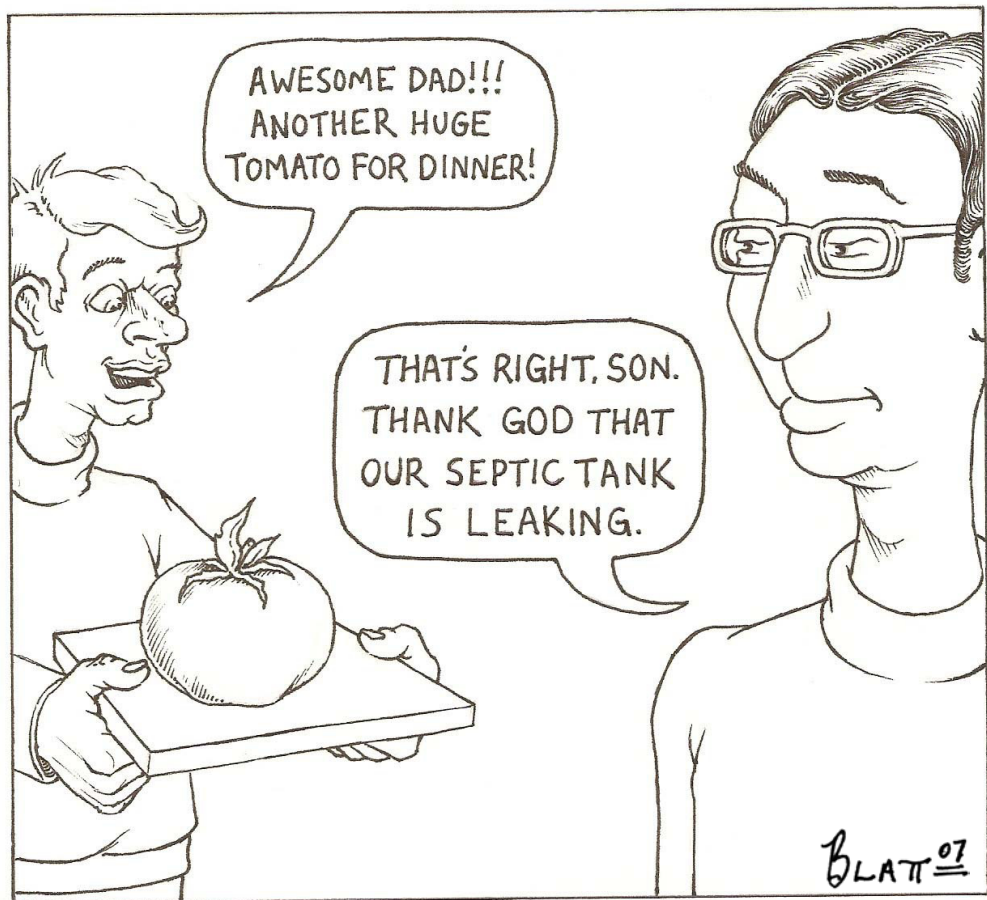

"In a situation like this, where the Central District is very hot [in terms of real estate], almost nothing could fail here right now," Haas says. With profit all but guaranteed, Haas insists the developer can afford to step out and be creative in his design.

At the very least, he could offer lower rent to local retailers or build larger units to bring in families. Instead, she says, "there's no garden, no nothing."

In an area filled with artists, builders and long-time residents who know each other and say hello on the street, Haas says that's sad. "This neighborhood has a pulse," she says. But this project "is going to neutralize that pulse." ■

**[Event]**

The first Design Review Board meeting on the proposed development at 23rd Ave. and E. Union St. is scheduled for Wed., June 27, 6:30 p.m. at Miller Community Center, 330 19th Ave. E. Questions about the project can be e-mailed to [askunion@jcmueller.com](mailto:askunion@jcmueller.com).

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Working Wheels is a program of Solid Ground. [www.solid-ground.org](http://www.solid-ground.org)

**BLACKWATER, Continued from Page 7**

[they're] viewed as the Americans, and so [there's] a blowback effect: troops are attacked in revenge for something the contractors did.

Brig. Gen. Karl Horst, the deputy commander of the 3rd Infantry Division around Baghdad, got so outraged he tracked contractor violence. In just 60 days, he documented 12 instances of contractors firing at Iraqi civilians, resulting in six deaths and three injuries. That's just one general paying attention for two months, so you replicate that and you have a disturbing situation that could have disastrous consequences for active duty U.S. troops.

**And you note that many Blackwater employees are not American citizens.**

Blackwater has hired scores of Chilean, Colombian, Fijian, Polish, Bulgarian mercenaries—the list goes on and on. This keeps a draft off the table, and you no longer have to depend on your citizenry to staff your military. Ultimately, it means that the military has endless offensive possibilities limited only by the amount of money an administration allocates for the purchase of armies.

**Do we know how much taxpayers have paid for the services of Blackwater?**

Just with the State Department, Blackwater has a contract for \$750 million in so-called diplomatic security services. That doesn't count the work for the U.S. mili-

tary, for covert intelligence agencies, for other private companies or for domestic work. It made tens of millions of dollars on its Hurricane Katrina deployment, and does a steady business in training state, local and federal law enforcement.

This company's activities are totally shrouded in secrecy. Leading members in Congress are unable to get detailed infor-

**The Blackwater guys told me they were making \$350 a day plus per diem. I got Blackwater's contract with the federal government: they billed taxpayers \$950 per man, per day, and raked in \$240,000 per day for its Katrina operations.**

mation about it despite the fact that they are on the U.S. government payroll.

**You were the first to report on Blackwater's work in New Orleans after Hurricane Katrina. Can you discuss their domestic operations?**

Blackwater showed up within hours of the hurricane hitting the U.S. Gulf [Coast]. A big amount of its work was for the Department of Homeland Security, Federal Protective Service. I encountered Blackwater operatives on the streets of New Orleans with M-4 rifles and pistols strapped to their legs. The guys on the ground told me that they were there to confront criminals and stop looters [and were] authorized to use lethal force if necessary. One guy was complaining that there wasn't enough action on the streets of New Orleans—a chilling statement.

The Blackwater guys told me they were making \$350 a day plus per diem. I got Blackwater's contract with the federal government: they billed taxpayers \$950 per man, per day, and raked in \$240,000 per day for its Katrina operations.

Now Blackwater is starting a new domestic operations division. They've just recently opened a new training facility [in]

Illinois they call Blackwater North, [but] there's growing resistance to Blackwater in that community. And in Potrero, Calif., just outside of San Diego, Blackwater is fighting fierce, local resistance to a new camp they want to call Blackwater West. About half of the residents have signed a petition against Blackwater. People are waking up to [Blackwater's] activities, and they don't want guns fired in their community, a lot of heavy traffic, helipads, and gun enthusiasts.

**You've been disappointed by the lack of oversight of Blackwater in Congress. Is that changing?**

Now several influential Congressional committees are taking up this issue. Leading the charge is Rep. Henry Waxman (D-Calif.) who, within a month of the new Congress taking power, began holding hearings on contractors.

This issue will be impossible for the Congress to ignore because of the extent this war has been privatized, the way the active duty military is treated versus the private sector, the tremendous cost to U.S. taxpayers and the unaccountability of the forces acting in the name of this country. This will outrage people from across the political system. If you ignore contractors like Blackwater, you ignore half the occupation force, so this has to be a central part of the debate on Iraq policy.

**What can average citizens do to assure oversight of war contractors?**

The best thing people can do is encourage their representatives to join members of Congress whose eyes are opening to this system. The heads of the top 20 war contractors in Iraq should be called in front of Congress to account for the money they've spent and the actions they've engaged in—in the names of the people of this country. Let's bring this out in the open and see if the American people believe this system is in the spirit of democracy, open government and international diplomacy. ■

*Robin Lindley is a Seattle attorney and writer. In 2006, he chaired the World Peace through Law Section of the Washington State Bar Association.*



## CALL TO ACTION

### Don't Let Developers Speak for You

**Issue:** Seattle City Councilmembers are expected to take a landmark vote on development in the city as soon as *today*. The vote will demonstrate whether our elected officials make decisions that benefit workers and the larger community or whether they will give in to developers' requests for giveaways and special treatment. Developers are putting incredible pressure on councilmembers, who need to hear from you, too.

**Background:** In 2005, the City of Seattle sold the historic Alaska Building on Second Avenue to Kauri Investments and Ariel Development. City Council agreed to sell the building for \$500,000 to \$1 million less than they could have received by selling it for office space because the developers said they would build much-needed workforce housing in the building on the edge of Pioneer Square. However, that wasn't written into the sales contract. Now, the developers want to build a hotel instead.

In order to complete their hotel plans, the developers need a special rezoning to add 50-plus more hotel rooms to the existing structure in a building addition. They are pushing Council for special treatment: a so-called text amendment instead of going through standard procedure, which would be a contract rezone. The contract rezone requires more information to and oversight from City Council, which ultimately decides if this is the best use for the land.

Until recently, City Councilmembers appeared willing to do the right thing: deny the text amendment and require the developer to do what everyone else would have to do and go through the contract rezone process. Last week, the developer delivered a letter to

**Action:** Contact City Councilmembers immediately and tell them to do the right thing: Vote no on the Alaska Building text amendment. Instead, require a contract rezone.

*Richard Conlin: 206-684-8805, richard.conlin@seattle.gov*  
*Tom Rasmussen: 206-684-8808, tom.rasmussen@seattle.gov*  
*Sally Clark: 206-684-8802, sally.clark@seattle.gov*  
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**INS BUILDING, Continued from Page 4**

That price range, he says, isn't affordable to working-class Seattle residents.

In today's development parlance, the word workforce "is used to describe the middle of the workforce to the exclusion of lower-income wage earners," Steinbrueck says. "The higher the income, the more housing choices a person has."

"Until we have thousands more units that are affordable to the working poor," he says, "we shouldn't be shifting resources." ■

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- Are there social service programs that I can turn to for help instead?

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