

# The county’s two biggest healthcare employers compromise worker health and safety

Eleanor Steinhagen

## Providence slashes tech unit workers’ sick leave benefit

Providence Health System, one of the country’s richest hospital chains, has eliminated sick leave for workers in its nine tech units at St. Peter Hospital. To protect this and other benefits, the technicians have unionized and are represented by UFCW 21.

They have been in negotiations for a first contract for several months. In addition to sick leave, issues on the bargaining table include PTO, retirement plans, health insurance, seniority, lay-offs and leaves of absence. A recent proposal from Providence included a pay scale that the techs say is inequitable as it fails to reflect their job requirements.

To raise awareness of their struggle for fair compensation, workers from the tech units gathered at the intersection of Martin Way and Lilly Road on January 29. Representatives from UFCW Local 21 and members of Olympia Democratic Socialists of America joined them.

“Why is it that other employees of Providence get to have annual leave and sick leave? Are we not as important as the dietary staff, transporters, and housekeepers?” wondered one technician via email interview. “Providence knows exactly why we decided to unionize,” said another. “I’m sure they’re asking themselves why we waited so long.”

## Whittling away compensation for those who do the work

After receiving more than \$2.5 billion in government COVID stimulus funding, Providence is moving to reduce compensation for the technicians by eliminating “extended illness banks” (EIB). These allowed individuals to accrue up to 64 hours of sick leave per year to use themselves or for family members. As of January 1, no more hours can be accrued.

The move affects 194 technicians from the hospital’s cath and echo labs, ultrasound, interventional radiology, CT, MRI, diagnostic imaging (x-ray), pharmacy, and respiratory therapy units. Working in a hospital puts these technicians on the front-line of the pandemic. Many, such as respiratory therapy techs, are at particularly high risk as they work directly with COVID patients.

To top it off, many technicians have discovered they’re being paid as much as \$10 per hour less than fair market value. The elimination of their sick leave, along with cost-of-living adjustments (COLAs) unequal to those of their unionized colleagues, drove them to join the

union. According to the US Department of Health and Human Services, at least \$1.2 million of the stimulus funding that flowed into Providence’s coffers has been allocated to St. Peter Hospital.

## Increasing disparities across skilled workers

“Since we began bargaining, Providence has become very transparent

with what their motives and intentions were and are,” said a worker via email who asked to remain anonymous. “If you weren’t already under a contract, Providence could take, would take, and will continue to take away from you, in the form of inconsistent COLAs, [arbitrary] merit pay raises, sick leave and other paid times off.”

The hurt and sense of betrayal is palpable. “We want to be treated the same as our RN co-workers who we work beside day in and day out,” said a technician who also wished to remain anonymous. “It is grossly unjust how unfair Providence has been to us,” said another.

► Healthcare, continued on page 12



Photo by Jose Veliz, Union Organizer with UFCW Local 21

## West Bay Yards

# A Development Agreement without a development?

Esther Kronenberg and Jerry Dierker

West Bay Yards Development Project was initially presented to Olympia’s Community Planning and Development staff (CP&D) in May. At a “presubmission conference” the architect provided 19 pages of detail, including a site plan, designs showing the location of all elements of the project, numerous renditions of the buildings, floor plans for the apartments, etc.

Instead of following with a formal project application, the developer applied for a “development agreement.” This would be a contract between city and developer that fixes for 15 years “the standards and other provisions that will apply to and govern the development.” (RCW36.70F.170)

However, that’s not how the City staff describes the West Bay Yards Development Agreement now pending. Staff “talking points” provided in response to a public records request say rather that this development agreement “establishes a framework and parameters of a future project” and vests that project to regulations now in effect. Adding that “there is no actual project being considered at this time,” they follow with two paragraphs about the project that is not being considered. They even include project specifics that the applicant has agreed to.

The City made no effort to inform the community about this project that isn’t a project, or about the Development Agreement that doesn’t meet the criteria for a development agreement. Despite this, there is growing public concern about both the process for and the consequences of pursuing the West Bay Yards Development Agreement without any environmental review or public participation.

Olympia has a dozen new “market rate” mixed use apartment buildings downtown with more on the way. There is only one stretch of shoreline still available and free of development along Budd Inlet at West Bay Drive.

► West Bay, continued on page 9

**Works in Progress (WIP)**, is a community newspaper based in Olympia, WA, that has been published monthly since 1990.

WIP's mission is to contribute to the struggle for justice across economic, social, environmental and political realms, and to expand participatory democracy across classes, races, and genders.

**Editorial policy**

Our priority is to focus on stories that are ignored or misrepresented in the corporate media, especially those that relate directly to our mission. We seek well-researched news stories, serious analyses of issues confronting our communities and account of personal experiences or reflections by local writers. We encourage articles that relate to the monthly theme, but material on other topics is also welcome.

Informed opinion pieces are accepted when accompanied by facts, examples, and sources. We discourage writing where a key point is stated as fact when it's unproven or in serious dispute. Writing that stereotypes groups or categories of people won't be accepted.

Once we receive a submission, we may choose to publish it or not. While the views expressed in the material we print are those of the author alone, WIP aims to print material that is consistent with our mission. WIP reserves the right to edit all submissions for accuracy, length, and clarity of expression. We will work with authors if there is a need for editing that extends beyond those areas.

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# Thinking about the theme

When we created the cover for this issue, it was to illustrate the sleight-of-hand in play by a city government that gives the appearance of due diligence on large real estate developments without transparency in their actual approval process. While we were referring specifically to West Bay Yards, the luxury condominiums planned for one of Olympia's most beautiful inlets, the metaphor is also apt for this month's theme: what's been revealed by the pandemic.

If you've ever been played in a shell game, you know things move very fast. You think you know where the hidden object will be when the shells stop moving, but you almost never do. Sometimes, there's nothing under any of the shells.

In this month's Perspective column, we look at SB5010, a promising bill introduced to curb racist practices in the insurance industry like using credit scores to determine rates. The bill was gutted by insurance lobbyists – more proof that a financial shell game still largely dictates where, how and if relief comes for those already on the lowest rungs of society. Our review of the book *Home wreckers* also makes this painfully clear.

Another indicator of financial disparity underscored by the pandemic is the lack of updated safety and health regulations for America's laborers. Lin Nelson explores the renewed resolve of a coalition working to create an Essential Workers Bill of Rights, and other vital measures that would protect and improve conditions and wages for them.

Workers rights are also explored in Eleanor Steinhagen's piece on the elimination of sick leave for tech workers at nine Providence health care locations. Steinhagen documents numerous other ways worker rights are being whittled away and the valiant efforts of UFCW 21 to negotiate fair deals for employees (with a corporation that recently received over \$2.5 billion in pandemic stimulus funding.)

People experiencing homelessness are among the most vulnerable in Olympia and the recent police action against protestors at Red Lion Inn downtown is yet another example of the city's questionable responses. As Mary Jo Dolis points out, while the unsheltered endure conditions that serve to spread a viral pandemic, owners of several new residential properties in town enjoy over \$10 million in property tax exemptions. Dolis suggests several ways Olympia could create permanent solutions to begin addressing the houseless epidemic, like adopting a model from Austin, Texas in which a significant portion of the annual police budget is being diverted to create new, permanent homes.

The pandemic has also revealed how pharmaceutical giants manipulate the flow of information to consumers by using a classic shell game to maximize profits. Lori Lively and Bruce Larson shed light on an affordable, safe, effective treatment for Covid-19 that's all but absent from public discussion.

Even as the pandemic reveals uncomfortable truths about who is cared for and who is not in our society, bold, creative people are demonstrating what can happen when we collectively reject

corporate and government shell games. The stories in this issue remind us of the many ways to resist the ruse: humor like Toby's that highlights the absurdity of designer toilets in new developments even as raw sewage runs through encampments a few miles away,

art like the soulful protest music of the late Anne Feeny, direct action by committed groups like Oly Housing Now, and legal steps taken by watchdogs like OlyEcoSystems. Talk about your game changers.

—LL

## Jerome Johnson 1961–2021

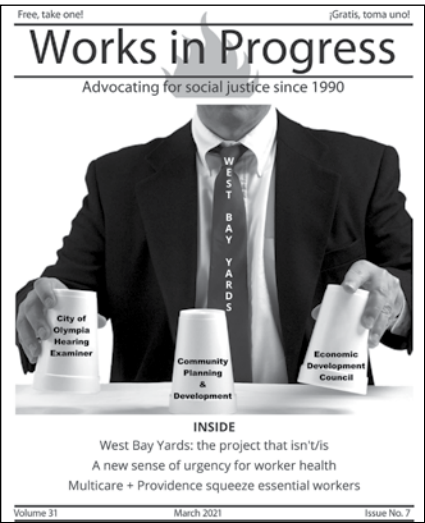
Jerome Johnson, a civil rights activist and leader who lived most of his life in the SW Olympia neighborhood, was one of the founders of *Works in Progress*. He was a dedicated soldier/writer for the paper for many years. He appeared on the cover of WIP in 1994, alongside Senator Cal Anderson and Governor Mike Lowry, as a member of a panel on anti-discrimination. He was also a Star Trek/NASA fan, and a radio host.

Jerome wrote “Farewell to Thurgood Marshall,” for the February 1993 issue of WIP. His words

then serve as a farewell to him today. In the article, he wrote that when his mother phoned him at work with the sad news of Marshall's death, that led to them reflecting on the fact that Jerome was the first black child to attend Garfield Elementary in Olympia in 1966. Jerome's article ends with a thanks, and here I've inserted his name: “Thank you Jerome. You said you did the best you could with what you had, and you accomplished truly great things. Rest well and in peace, my friend.”

—Pat Tassoni

## About the cover



## Upcoming themes

**April. Work v Jobs v Pay.** Deadline March 16

**May. Finding common ground.** Deadline April 15

**June. The big lie - examples? Uses?** Deadline May 15

**First there was a project:** Developers presented their West Bay Yards project to city staff at a “presubmission conference” last May.

**Then there wasn't:** Instead, there was a “Development Agreement” that the Community Planning and Development (CP&D) staff said was a “non-project.” The Hearing Examiner agreed—there could be no project since there was a “Development Agreement application.”

**Then there was:** Thurston Economic Development Council touts the West Bay Yards Development Project proposed by Brandon Smith and Ron Newman, sending you to a glowing project overview at the project attorney website: <http://ow.ly/4i7d50CodmZ>.

So what does the Development Agreement—a binding contract between the city and the developer fixing the terms that govern the—what? The project? There is no project. Oh, wait, there is a project: CP&D talking points say “the Development Agreement vests a future project at the site of the former Hardel Mutual Plywood facility...” Can you guess what cup the project is under?

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# Lennar home models in SW Olympia—Merlot and Chardonnay

I'm torn between Merlot and Chardonnay—those houses in that new Lennar development behind the Auto Mall. I mean, they both have the Shaker-style wood cabinets with crown molding. All the bathrooms have the elongated comfort seat toilets. And a whole list of other luxury features.

There is one difference—would it be better to get Chardonnay (notes of apple and papaya) with the electronic systems preconfigured for easy DIY set-up with the Activation Guide? Or maybe opt for Merlot (moderate acidity and soft but present tannins) with

the benefit of all-configuration done-BEFORE move-in?

Merlot is available for \$459,950 (not even half a mill). Chardonnay is less: \$444,950.

Alas, when I put in my household income of \$74,000 (just under the median for Thurston County) their mortgage calculator just froze up. I couldn't even qualify for the varietal I'm not familiar with: Hamilton at \$439,950.

I wonder if there are any homes for sale in Olympia that wouldn't cost nearly half our take-home pay. Not

houses that are the equivalent of wine. Maybe houses that, if you want to compare them to a drink, would be more like water: basic, essential and made available to anyone in the city. Regular toilet seats, and I could provide my own wi-fi setup. I could afford a house like that.

Otherwise, there's always the homeless encampment across the street from Wellington Heights.



(With thanks to Southwest neighbor Toby)

## “Have you ever been to jail for justice?”

This was Anne Feeney's theme song. The singer and labor activist who was a familiar face and voice in the South Sound, died February 6 of COVID 19, at age 69.

Her commitment was to workers and their supporters anywhere and everywhere. She came often to Olympia. She went to Aberdeen and sang several times at fundraisers for the Grays Harbor Institute, a radical radio and speaking organization that brought left figures of national repute to the Harbor.

Anne once joined with Dana Lyons (“Cows with Guns”) to launch “Teamsters and Turtles—Together at Last” on a tour that started in Bellingham, made one of many stops at Traditions Fair Trade cafe in Olympia, and continued south—drowning in song the idea that unions and environmentalists are at odds.

She performed for striking workers on countless picket lines, in union halls, and at some of the largest protests of the last century. Her performance at the demonstrations that shut down the WTO in Seattle

in 1999 was featured in the documentary *This is What Democracy Looks Like*. She organized dozens of tours supporting various causes, including the Sing Out for Single Payer Healthcare tour in 2009, and raised tens of thousands of dollars for strike funds and progressive causes.

She sang for steelworkers, car-wash workers, miners, strawberry workers, railroad workers, anti-sweatshop activists, homeowners fighting foreclosure, public transit supporters, auto workers oppos-

ing NAFTA, and many more. Her shoes will be hard to fill.

## Remembering Anne Feeney

Harry Levine of Citizens Band

Anne Feeney was a hell-raiser—an amazing human, activist, and musician. As a member of Citizens Band along with Grace Cox, Jim Cabbage, and Eliza Welch, we discovered Anne's music in the 90s.

She was just what we loved—fiery, funny, sarcastic and witty beyond belief.

We covered a few of her songs and we excitedly first met her in an elevator at the Folklife Festival. She had heard some of our music. In typical Anne Feeney style, she said, “Yeah...I heard your version of End Corporate Welfare and it's great—but you should be paying me royalties!” We put our tails between our legs, became fast friends, and immediately sent her a check for \$14 (we didn't sell a lot of CDs).

We did many shows in Olympia featuring her as a solo act and her show with Chris Chandler. We traveled on her Singout for Single-Payer Road Show. We shared the performance and festivities at Chicago's celebration of the IWW 100-year anniversary. She was such an entertaining human being whether it was on a car ride, at a diner, at a rally or at a show.

Anne was an inspiration for me and many other activists and cultural workers. She was also a great friend and house guest who stayed in touch. She asked about our lives and families.

As a razor-sharp organizer and a self-proclaimed agitator, she called shit on the left, middle, and right, always probing for how we could do more. More support for workers and union building. More hell raising.

I last played with her at the Oregon County Fair celebrating the 100th birthday of Woody Guthrie. She was dealing with cancer, but still ornery, still fiery.

Thank you Anne Feeney. You were so very human. You were incredibly honest. You gave us all so much. I Love You and Miss You.

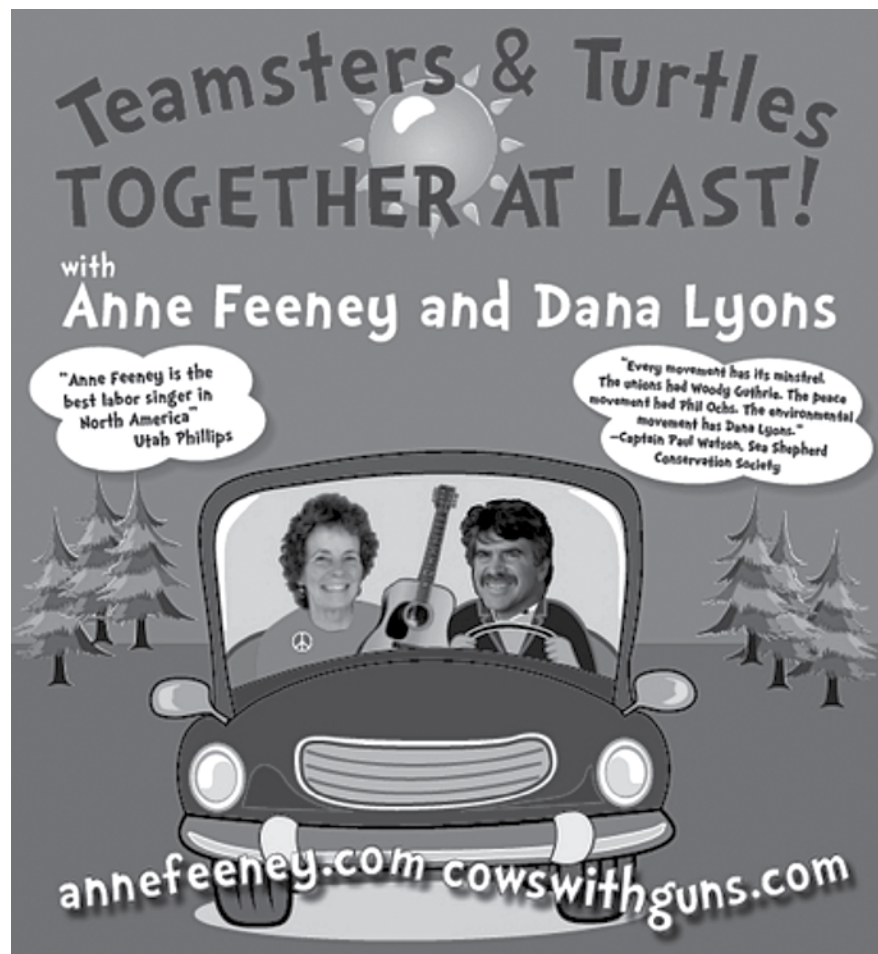
Link to Ann's songs at [www.olywip.org](http://www.olywip.org)

## Then this happened...

...**They should have had Olympia SWAT at the Capitol** on January 6. As 45 homeless people and their supporters tried to enter Olympia's downtown Red Lion Hotel, the police arrived in force (“they're not messing around”) to carry off the trespassers. Seven were arrested on the spot. Intrepid Olympia Mayor Cheryl Selby the next morning denounced the activists as “domestic terrorists.” (See story on p. 7)

... **More homeless in the making.** The total pandemic-driven bill owed by tenants in this country for rent, utilities and late fees as of January amounted to \$53 billion. The only end in sight is eventual eviction.

... **Cancel culture comes in handy!** Republican leaders in at least six state parties (Alaska, Wyoming, Louisiana, North and South Carolina and Arizona) censured their elected officials for not falling into line with Trump's attack on the 2020 election.



## Readers' Alert!

WIP has received a grant to print book reviews in 2021. How will it work? Each month we'll publish a list of books (listed below). If you'd like to be considered to review one of them, contact us at [olywip@gmail.com](mailto:olywip@gmail.com) and put BOOK REVIEW in the subject line. We will buy the book (or reimburse you if you buy it) and pay \$50 if the review is accepted. See the review of *Homewreckers* in this issue..

We plan to run one review each month, with a maximum length of 750 words. We currently have reviews scheduled through May, so there's plenty of time to read a big book!

*The Cigarette: A Political History*—Sarah Milov (choice, agency, desire)

*The Mirage of Police Reform*—Stinson (former police officer)

*Bring the War Home*—Kathleen Belew (white power movement & militias)

*Who Will Pay Reparations on My Soul*—Jesse McCarthy (essays)

*Deep River*, Karl Marlantis (a long novel set in Puget Sound)



Our work, our bodies, ourselves —apart, together

# An energized movement steps up for essential workers

Lin Nelson

A reinvigorated safety and health (S&H) movement is taking on the long historic injustice of work-related illness, injury and death. It's also digging deep into structured inequality to reveal the race/class/gender discrimination that shapes that inequality in both small and screamingly obvious ways.

During this pandemic we became newly able to see into the dailiness of each other's labors. With an honest look, we see the stark inequalities and injustices visited on those who're doing the work and bearing the risk. We are reminded again that work can sicken and kill.

The pandemic has injected groups organized to promote worker health and safety with a new sense of purpose. An electrified urgency is driving an intent to deal with the hazards, the lack of rights, the absence of medical leave, the exclusion from workers compensation, the risks of being a whistleblower, the threats of retaliation.

### Essential workers—celebrated and dismissed

One of the most grotesque features of this period is the simultaneous ennoblement and abuse of workers. We—as a society—need people to be on the front lines to hold it together for the rest of us: emergency workers, health care workers, transit workers, food service workers, agricultural workers.

Many of these essential workers are treated as disposable and replaceable. They are exploited and drafted into positions that put them at great risk, with no assurance of protection.

### Reinventing occupational health and safety

Worker health projects are linked together in the National Council on Occupational Safety and Health (COSH). Composed of councils or committees on OSH, labor councils, health care providers and related organizations that focus on immigrant communities and social justice, the COSH movement is reinventing itself around the current crisis.

In December the COSH network convened two weeks of intensive collective learning about the crisis. They followed up with more online organizing and the Feb 3 launch of a “Day of Action” to set the stage for an “Essential Workers Bill of Rights.”

National COSH Co-Directors Jessica Martinez and Marcy Goldstein-Gelb reported on the impact of the Day of Action:

*All across the country, workers joined with labor and nonprofit allies in a Day of Action to demand a seat at the table in workplaces and in policy arenas:*

- Workers from Nashville-based Workers' Dignity and Houston-based Fe y Justicia Worker Center shared powerful testimonies on a national call to release the document
- Members of Cincinnati Interfaith Worker Center rallied in front of OSHA
- In Massachusetts, MassCOSH worker-leaders and organizers spoke out at a livestream event

- In Richmond, Virginia, Legal Aid Justice Center held charlas (talks) throughout the day

- Activists used our Tool Kit of posters and social media images to blitz their networks.

Workers and advocates have continued to speak out ever since: At a recent OSHA Listening Session, hosted by the Secretary of Labor's office, dozens of COSH and other labor advocates spoke out about the urgent need for an emergency standard protecting workers from COVID. They urged the Administration to require all employers to have safety programs with workers at the table and to back them with strong enforcement.

### Workplaces that respect and protect their essential workers

A driving force today is the push for “Model Workplace Safety & Health Demands for Essential Workers.” Based on the real daily work of people across the country, the COSH network has laid out the following program:

- determination of points of exposure
- comprehensive worker-led training and updated information
- activation and empowerment of real S&H Committees (not paper committees controlled by management)
- making sure workers can report illnesses and exposures, take time off without penalty and have access to testing on a steady basis.
- provide supplemental pay to all essential workers.



### Another layer of risk for immigrant workers

Immigrant workers pay a special price—they are absolutely essential and at extreme risk. The National COSH movement is monitoring and resisting the workings of Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) around workplaces.

Immigrant workers are especially vulnerable to their employers and federal/state authorities if they report hazards, seek medical leave or try to file for unemployment when they're out of work. Workers who dare to report concerns and provide information about COVID and other exposures may find an ICE officer at the door when they leave work.



Their experience across the country leaves them in the crosshairs of interlocked authority systems devised by corporations, employers, immigration regulations, and even labor and health agencies. The current COVID-crisis highlights the virtual plantation conditions afflicting many workers called “essential” but treated as expendable.

## A reinvigorated safety and health movement is taking on the long historic injustice of work-related illness, injury and death.

### Protections on the books but no enforcement

Here in Washington where agriculture is a key part of the economy, many workers are at high risk. We do have a reasonable system of S&H protections, but their potential is weakened by the lack of steady enforcement, especially in agriculture. As the impact of COVID became clearer and workers started organizing in self-defense, Governor Inslee issued a preliminary and promising Executive Order in May 2020.

This was a decent start, but there are loopholes. Workers are still at

forward, especially in the agricultural economy. A recent article in the *Northwest Inlander* describes how a Mexican worker here on an H2-A visa encountered the eerie Catch-22 set up by employers. COVID exposure, the fight to get treatment, the denial of coverage, the lack of testing, the fight to prove the illness is workplace-related—and then the refusal of the employer to cover costs even after ordered to do so by Labor & Industries. (Article link below.)

On top of the usual hazards (exposure to agricultural chemicals, musculo-skeletal strains of the work) farmworkers this year faced the frightening prospect of COVID. Add a fire-and-smoke filled summer that left farmworkers in the fields with virtually no protection, under unyielding pressure to bring in the harvest and the picture is grim.

### Important partnerships to secure immigrant rights

The immigrant rights movement embodied by WAISN (WA Immigrant Solidarity Network) is working hard in the legislature and at the grassroots to obtain emergency and longterm funding for health and safety, especially for undocumented workers and their families. WAISN has conducted an in-depth survey on immigrant health, including at the workplace, in partnership with the ACLU and Northwest Health Law Advocates.

### Our work, our bodies, ourselves

The movement for workplace health in the age of COVID offers a powerful remedy for some of our ills. It addresses daily structural damage and risk; it brings people together across differences that have to be negotiated respectfully for the movement to go forward; it reminds us who we are and who we can be.

We can ignore these grim conditions... defensively protecting ourselves, staying apart, forgetting the historical and continuing injustices. Or we can work on building strategies that recognize the rights of labor and shared rights to health—as we move together into a very challenging future.

### Contact regional organizations:

WA Immigrant Solidarity Network.  
[www.waisn.org](http://www.waisn.org)

Community-to-Community  
[www.foodjustice.org](http://www.foodjustice.org)

Familias Unidas por La Justicia.  
[www.familiasunidasjusticia.org](http://www.familiasunidasjusticia.org)

United Farm Workers.  
[www.ufw.org](http://www.ufw.org)

WA State Labor Council.  
[www.wslc.org](http://www.wslc.org)

WA Labor Education and Research Ctr. [www.georgetown.southseattle.edu/labor-education-research-center](http://www.georgetown.southseattle.edu/labor-education-research-center)

NW Inlander: [www.inlander.com/spokane/covid-19-nearly-killed-a-washington-farmworker-](http://www.inlander.com/spokane/covid-19-nearly-killed-a-washington-farmworker-)

*Find all kinds of resources in English and Spanish, including toolkits, and learn more about the safety & health movement at [www.coshnetwork.org](http://www.coshnetwork.org).*

*Lin Nelson is a retired teacher from The Evergreen State College. Way back when, she was a contributor to Our Bodies, Ourselves. She's active with the Olympia/Thurston "Strengthening Sanctuary Alliance."*



# Affordable treatments for COVID-19 you don't know about (but should)

Lori Lively and Bruce Larson

Now that the campaign to vaccinate the planet for COVID-19 is well underway, news of effective, affordable treatments—and deterrents—is finally coming to light. Studies on ivermectin, colchicine and hydroxychloroquine, published in the US, Spain, India, Iran, Egypt, Argentina and elsewhere indicate that these drugs, used prophylactically and in early and late treatment, can greatly reduce severity of COVID-19 symptoms, reducing hospitalization and mortal outcomes. Their modest cost makes these medications a potential option for those who cannot afford lengthy hospital stays and the lost wages they entail.

### Doctors have the power to prescribe “off label” medications

Because these drugs are approved by the FDA, doctors can prescribe them when they judge it medically appropriate for a patient. Physicians do not need permission from the National Institutes of Health, the World Health Organization or the Centers for Disease Control for “off label prescribing” which is common and legal. According to the Agency for Health Care Research and Quality, one in five prescriptions written by doctors today is off label.

### Emerging information supports the benefits of simpler treatments

Thanks to an insistent campaign by courageous researchers and medical professionals around the world, news of the safety, efficacy, and affordability of ivermectin and other treatments is finally entering public discourse. These highly educated and credentialed doctors have shared their research with legislators, held public press conferences, and posted their findings to various social media channels

and continue to do so at considerable risk to their professional reputations.

Doctors from Frontline COVID-19 Critical Care Alliance (FLCCC) testified before Congress in December 2020, asking that their findings on ivermectin, specifically, should immediately become available for EUA (Emergency Use Authorization) by the FDA.

President of FLCCC, Dr. Pierre Kory, a lung specialist with experience in Intensive Care medicine, told the Senate Committee on Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs that ivermectin was essentially “a miracle drug” when used to combat COVID-19. Dr. Kory and his colleagues requested the data he shared be released promptly to save lives. Their request was ignored by the committee and barely mentioned in the news. Shortly thereafter, some of these doctors' social media accounts were deplatformed, their reputations disparaged and their message discoverable only to the most diligent online investigators.

### Why you haven't heard of the treatments

Pharmaceutical corporations are estimated to be the largest, most influential for-profit conglomeration on earth. They fund university chairs and endowments, make the highest allowable contributions to political candidates, and comprise the largest lobby in the United States. They “advise” governments and their leaders sit at the highest levels of corporate boardrooms. It is also well-known they don't like competition. In 2017, philanthropist and noted advocate for affordable health care, Gary West, wrote that:)

“The US healthcare industry keeps prices artificially high and competition low, operating by the

dictionary definition of a cartel: ‘an association of manufacturers or suppliers with the purpose of maintaining prices at a high level and restricting competition.’”

Pharmaceutical corporations are rarely held accountable for their practices, making the recent McKinsey case particularly instructive: Just last month the drug manufacturer agreed to a \$573 million settlement as proof came to light they continued to push their money-making opioid, OxyContin, to drug reps and physicians despite a national crisis of addiction and deaths resulting from over prescription of the drug.



It's not surprising, then, that at least one pharmaceutical giant, Merck, refuses to acknowledge any of the more than 18 independent studies on the safety and efficacy of ivermectin, stating on their website there is “no scientific basis” and “no meaningful evidence” for using the drug as treatment for COVID-19. And while the National Institutes of Health modified their original stance in January 2021, they still withhold outright endorsement of ivermectin, citing the “need for more research,” a tactic often employed to cast doubt on legitimate inquiry, notably making no reference to the studies.

### News media colludes with Big Pharma

According to public watchdog groups, the pharmaceutical industry spent almost \$4 billion on television advertising in 2018 (not counting online outlets). Undoubtedly, annual revenues from such an arrangement assure the continued existence of major networks, offering a reasonable answer as to why information on affordable, safe and effective treatments for COVID-19 continues to be minimized by the press.

A recent article from CNN's website reports that, after high COVID-19 death rates, India now has one of the lowest mortality rates on record. Could it be the dry, hot weather, they ask? A concerted government mandate for wearing masks in public? Other hygiene measures?

What the article fails to mention is that by June 2020 India had adopted wide scale use of hydroxychloroquine and ivermectin (a few months later) as compelling research emerged.

### Avoidable physical and financial suffering

Take the case of “Joe,” an Olympia-based Licensed Practical Nurse, who tested positive for COVID-19. Despite following his doctor's suggestion to stay home and drink plenty of fluids, his symptoms worsened, and he requested hydroxychloroquine or ivermectin. Although it was within her power

to do so, his doctor refused to issue the prescription, stating it was outside Kaiser protocols to prescribe those drugs.

When his oxygen levels dropped dangerously and he became extremely ill, Joe was taken by ambulance to Providence Hospital, where, over the course of three weeks, he required full-time, machine-generated oxygen to stay alive and keep his blood oxygen at maximum saturation. Joe was so sick and frightened during this time he requested that his last will and testament be drawn up.

When he showed no improvement after 9 days, his family asked that ivermectin be prescribed, along with supplements quercetin and Vitamin D3. The inquiring family members were chided for “reading the internet” and told that such treatments were unnecessary. When one doctor eventually agreed to test Joe's Vitamin D levels, the results were low and he was given high doses of Vitamin D3 for the remainder of his stay.

Joe eventually recovered enough to return home, but continued to need oxygen for three weeks following his release. Insurance covered his hospital bills but not his lost work time. How much time, money and fear could have been spared had the requests for ivermectin been granted?

### Is the goal public health or a healthy bottom line?

Pharmaceutical corporations counter suggestions for simpler, more affordable alternatives to their products by claiming they “need more study,” or worse, questioning the integrity of anyone who dares to disagree with their pronouncements. They are silent when the same argument is applied to their own behavior, especially when a new product is poised to yield staggering ongoing revenues. A compromised news media guides the national narrative to clamor for a vaccine that has no long-term studies, suggesting that shareholder profits may be more important to these corporations than preventing death and suffering from ordinary Americans. Food for thought as you wait in line for a jab.



*Author's note:* Scant information on these treatments is to be found through search engines like Google and Bing and some of that is misleading. The FLCCC doctors referred to in this article are not the group known as ‘America's frontline doctors’ who also take a position on ivermectin. For a fair assessment of the FLCCC message, we suggest visiting [https://brandnewtube.com/watch/ask-the-experts-ii-oracle-films-covileaks-2021-bbc-panorama-response\\_OvssgcJXMblheFt.html](https://brandnewtube.com/watch/ask-the-experts-ii-oracle-films-covileaks-2021-bbc-panorama-response_OvssgcJXMblheFt.html). As stated above, both ivermectin and hydroxychloroquine require a prescription in the United States.

*Bruce Larson has been collating research studies on COVID-19 for the last year. Lori Lively is Assistant Editor at Works in Progress and former editor of Sound Outlook natural health magazine. Supporting links to studies and research data are available by contacting them through WIP at [olywip@gmail.org](mailto:olywip@gmail.org).*

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Works In Progress

5



West Bay Yards: the elephant in the election

Dan Leahy

In Olympia's City Manager system, Council members exercise little direct control over decisions that shape the City and its neighborhoods. The Council delegates land turnover decisions to the City staff. The Council states they can't interfere in the planning process. They send citizens to the Hearing Examiner who reinforces staff decisions. Only with a Superior Court appeal can a citizen find an impartial forum.

There is one exception. City Council members decide on "development agreements" and a developer has applied for one to cover the biggest market rate housing project in years, the West Bay Yards. Their decision and the project itself will no doubt emerge as one of the biggest issues in the coming election where five of seven seats are up for grabs.

Four Council members want to retain their seats: Jim Cooper, Clark Gilman, Yen Huynh and Lisa Parshley. (A fifth Council member, Renata Rollins, is not running for re-election.)

Some candidates will face primaries. The winners of those races will be on the November ballot along with the candidates who didn't have primaries. Cooper, Gilman and Parshley have been strong supporters of the Walker John/Ron Thomas collaboration that reshaped the socio-economic status of downtown. They also approved eight-year property tax exemptions for market rate housing and new retail space in a city plagued by homelessness and vacant retail. Yen Huynh was only appointed to the Council in January. Will these Council members question a binding contract with a developer who wants to build 478 market rate rentals and 20,500 more square feet of retail space?

Jim Cooper has been a Council member for ten years. He has raised \$4,280 and has the backing of former City Manager Steve Hall, former Council members Curt Pavola, Joe Hyer and Nathaniel Jones, former Mayor Mark Foutch and Democratic Party leaders Senator Sam Hunt and OSPI's Chris Reykdal.

Spence Weigand filed to oppose Cooper. He's a fourth generation Olympian, a graduate of Whitman College, a residential realtor

with twenty-five years of experience and a Board member of the Washington Center. His priorities are creating affordable housing, improving small business vitality and addressing the root causes of homelessness. He has not reported any campaign contributions.

contributions.

Yen Huynh is a graduate of Evergreen's MPA program and works as a Diversity Program Specialist for the State Office of Minority & Women's Business Enterprises. She grew up in the South Sound

Sound area. Her three highest priorities are a better system to hold council members accountable, a compact with area governments to address public health issues associated with existing encampments of homeless persons and an increase in affordable housing. She has put in \$2,500 of her own funds and has the support of fellow candidate Spence Weigand. She has raised a total of \$4,280.

Dontae Payne had also applied for a Council position. Payne filed for the seat vacated by Renata Rollins. Payne grew up in Philadelphia, did two tours in Afghanistan with the US Army, settled in Olympia in 2015, graduated from Evergreen's MPA program and worked as an outreach representative for Governor Inslee. He is on the staff of Congresswoman Marilyn Strickland. His three highest priorities are housing/homelessness, public safety and environment/climate change. He wants the Council to continue its pursuit of missing middle housing. He supports the Social Justice & Equity Advisory Board and the Crisis Response Unit. He sees sea-level rise as one of the most threatening issues for downtown and wants to promote urban density and sustainable development. He's raised a total of \$1,389. Taewin Um is his campaign manager.

Sarah DeStasio and Candace Mercer have also filed, but neither has indicated which position they intend to run for. Neither has reported receipt of campaign funds.

Sarah DeStasio was born and raised in Olympia. She built a career as a caregiver and was a founding member of Capitol Homecare Cooperative. She has an MPA degree from Evergreen. She writes that she is committed "to accessible, transparent government; to housing as a human right, reflected in policies that protect houseless people, tenants and vulnerable homeowners and to the right of every worker... to safety, dignity and economic survival."

Candace Mercer describes herself as an "artist/writer/activist" who has worked with a variety of local groups including the Crisis Clinic, Northwest Justice Project, Rafah Sister City and GrUb. Her top priorities are homelessness/affordable housing, political violence/public safety and a focus on downtown small businesses.

Dan Leahy is an organizer. He lives in WestOly.



Lisa Parshley, first elected in 2017, has given her campaign \$5000 of her own funds. She spent \$4,100 of that on Soaring Heights Consulting (SHC). SHC's address in Aug. 2020 was the home of Council Member Jim Cooper. SHC is not registered with the Secretary of State. Parshley has retained Molly Sullivan and Rob Richards to run her campaign.

Talauna Reed has filed to oppose Parshley for position 5. Reed is a long-time activist, organizer and a leader of the Black Lives Matter movement. She leads the campaign for an independent investigation into the death of Yvonne McDonald and the confrontation between Officer Donald and Andre Thompson and Bryson Chaplin. She wants to prioritize finding permanent solutions for the homeless and police reform. Darek Ball is her campaign manager.

Clark Gilman was appointed to the Council in 2016 and elected to a four-year term in 2017. He has served as Chair of the Land Use and Environment Committee and now serves as Mayor Pro-Tem. He has not reported any campaign

area, a daughter of Vietnamese refugees, and served a one-year term on the Olympia Planning Commission.

Her three priorities are public health and safety, economic recovery and climate justice. In her application for the Council she wrote that she wanted "to work collaboratively towards a more equitable and inclusive future for Olympia, where all members of the public can feel safe, where economic recovery is realized for our small businesses and residents and where more sustainable solutions for climate justice are put into practice." Huynh reported \$1706 in contributions and also retained Molly Sullivan and Rob Richards to run her campaign.

Robbi Kesler applied for a seat on the Council and has now filed against Huynh for position 2. Kesler received her JD from the Sandra Day O'Connor College of Law at Arizona State University, has worked as an attorney for the state legislature and as general counsel for the Confederated Tribes of the Chehalis Reservation. She is an enrolled member of the Skokomish tribe and grew up in the South

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The right kind of sweeping

# Community support for an encampment

Leah Ordonez

On January 17, the Olympia community came together to clean up a tent encampment adjacent to Marathon Park by Capitol Lake. The camp had been devastated by a recent storm that left belongings and trash scattered all around. Leaders of several activist groups jumped in to help support the folks living in the encampment.

**The community comes together to stave off a police sweep**

Recent police sweeps behind Westside Lanes and in Tumwater's Port of Olympia had devastated the homeless community in Thurston County. Following the February storm, community leaders knew they had very little time to react before another sweep disrupted the small camp.

Community organizers created Facebook events, handed out fliers, and spread the news by word of mouth, bringing the community together. Friendly volunteers set up tables for distributing gloves and masks. Community members used wheelbarrows to carry garbage off to the dumpsters. Laughter and cheery conversations filled the camp as camp residents and

volunteers worked side by side to clean the area.

**The pandemic put more people out of their homes**

Due to the pandemic, many families have experienced devastating layoffs with loss of income. Homelessness has always been a problem, but currently it is an imminent danger for many who previously earned a relatively stable income.

charities and organizations have the capacity to shelter and protect. Social distancing mandates force shelters to cut their number of available beds in half when there were nowhere near 800 beds to begin with.

This is a dismal affair considering that the pandemic and current economic environment is making it impossible for over 32% of all families to pay rent, as of last summer. The alternatives for homeless individuals are narrow and bleak.

Laughter and cheery conversation filled the camp as camp residents and volunteers worked side by side to clean the area.

Even so, this has not stopped police from doing sweeps of homeless camps, cruelly throwing out inhabitants and causing them to lose invaluable belongings including such things as medication, shoes, job equipment-- and basic shelter. This is a crippling blow for individuals and families already struggling to survive.

**No room at the shelter**

Currently, an estimated 800-1000 individuals are without a stable place to live in Thurston County. This is well beyond what local

**Police sweeps don't solve any problems**

Some Olympia residents feel that sweeps are helpful and necessary. Some of these people have safety concerns about drug users who reside in the camps. Others worry about environmental risks that come with the debris and trash that can begin to collect in the areas.

Police sweeps do little to address these concerns. Following a police sweep, the majority of small objects -- glass, needles, rusted cans etc. are still present on the property -- it remains as unsafe as before the sweep.

This does very little to protect the environment or community members.

Throwing out residents does not cause them to disappear either. If anything, it just drives people to desperation as their belongings are trashed, refuges destroyed and they find themselves turned away from crowded shelters.

**Breathing easier in the camp**

By the end of the day at the camp, the team of community members and camp residents had removed the environmental hazards and other trash, noticeably improving the area. They had accomplished this while focusing on protecting the homeless community from possible police sweeps. Residents were able to breathe a little easier.

Future cleanups around the area are already scheduled. Everyone is doing their part to care for the environment and each other.

*Leah Ordonez lives in Olympia and is passionate about local affairs and social justice. She enjoys supporting small businesses professionally as well as through her pastimes.*

No room in the end

# Oly Housing Now tries to pressure officials

Mary Jo Dolis

Early in February, some of the wet, cold people living outside in Olympia tried to take rooms in the downtown Red Lion, aided and encouraged by activists from Oly Housing Now. Staff members of the hotel fled to the basement and called the police.

In contrast to what happened in the US Capitol on January 6, the police arrived immediately, bringing their "Special Weapons and Tactics" Team (that's the SWAT team) and maybe other police contingents. There was no friendly reception like the one initially accorded the Capitol attackers, nor anything like the friendly assistance those attackers were accorded on departing. Instead members of the Olympia group were rapidly arrested and charged.

The following day, Olympia Mayor Selby denounced the participants as "domestic terrorists" (a label she earlier applied to people who graffitied her home).

"This created an active crime scene that necessitated a police response appropriate to the scale of the actions of these terrorists," she said, in a statement covered in Fox News.

Oly Housing Now was employing a tactic that has emerged as the pandemic cuts deeper and deeper into the lives of people, forcing more and more people into the street. In order to impress public officials with the urgent need for housing, the approach is to pay for rooms for one night and then indicate their intention to stay.

In Austin Texas, this tactic wasn't needed. The Austin City Council voted to buy a hotel that will serve as permanent housing for dozens of chronically unhoused people, using money taken from the city's police budget to provide resources for the people who will live in the hotel. The council in August had voted to cut some \$100 million from the police department's budget. A recurring \$6.5 million payment from those cuts is being set aside to fund permanent supportive housing.

In Olympia, Oly Housing Now released this list of demands that address the need for immediate shelter to prevent the spread of illness and repeated dislocations faced by people currently without the protections offered by indoor living:



The city of Olympia must stop the sweeps and provide the encampments with resources to meet the COVID-19 Centers for Disease Control and Prevention hygiene recommendations, including overflow sites, isolation sites, protective housing, sanitation services, hygiene materials and 24-hour restroom facilities.

The city of Olympia must use public first responder/public safety emergency housing in the form of hotel vouchers to support the houseless community in Olympia.

The city of Olympia must increase impact fees on luxury and commercial properties in Olympia's downtown.

Thurston County and the city of Olympia must incentivize housing construction for people who meet the extremely low-income limit (\$26,200 for a family of four).

Olympia residents pay additional sales tax to support a Homeless Fund that, in a year of high consumption, can bring in up to \$2 million. Right now, funds are being used for two apartment complexes for people currently experiencing homelessness that hope to break ground in 2020 and 2021 with a mix of public resources from the City, County, State and other sources. There is no indication as to when these projects might be ready to house people.

The City also has a program that helps to provide "market-rate" housing. Currently benefiting from the program are four owners of nine high-end apartment buildings downtown. They are excused from paying about \$10,012,000 in property taxes over 8 years. The savings either bumps up the developer's bottom line, or serves to lower the rent a well-heeled tenant might otherwise pay.

*Mary Jo Dolis is a long-time resident of Olympia. She lived in 12 different rental houses by the time she graduated from high school.*



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# Enhanced mitigation for nearshore projects on Budd Inlet

## WIP Contributors

The National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS) in November of last year issued new mitigation requirements for nearshore developments – like West Bay Yards, for example. The opinion includes significant increases in mitigation necessary to protect juvenile chinook salmon and the Southern Resident Killer Whale from extinction.

The opinion, and the new mitigation framework created by NMFS, has the potential to significantly increase the cost of new projects as well as repair and maintenance projects located on or near Puget Sound shorelines. Advice from land-use attorneys is that prospective developers should be aware of these impacts as they look for opportunities on the shores of Puget Sound.

While the NMFS Biological Opinion only considered 39 projects that were under consultation between NMFS and the US Army Corps of

Engineers, the Opinion forecasts that nearshore Puget Sound projects that require a federal permit can anticipate significantly greater mitigation requirements and increased project costs for compliance. They will also likely face significant delays in Endangered Species Act consultation.

For some projects, such as repair or replacement of residential bulkheads or docks, it is unclear if NMFS mitigation requirements will be economically feasible for many property owners.

This new Opinion will likely shape nearshore project engineering and planning in the Puget Sound for



years to come and make new near-shore development in Puget Sound increasingly difficult. Mitigation requirements for new development are significantly greater than those for repair and maintenance projects.

Puget Sound Chinook have been listed as threatened since 1999 and show no signs of improvement. The fragility of salmon and SRKW populations in the region creates a

The opinion, and the new mitigation framework created by NMFS, has the potential to significantly increase the cost of new projects

highly sensitive ecosystem where NMFS has concluded drastic action is needed to preserve the species. The expectation is that resident orca that depend on Puget Sound Chinook will benefit along with forage fish, shellfish and other species.

Information for this article came from *The National Law Review* (Feb. 27, 2021) and a story by Lorraine Loomis in *Whatcom Watch*. Loomis is chair of the Northwest Indian Fisheries Commission.

## MOVIE REVIEW

# Kiss the Ground—optimism for the climate

## Christine Browning

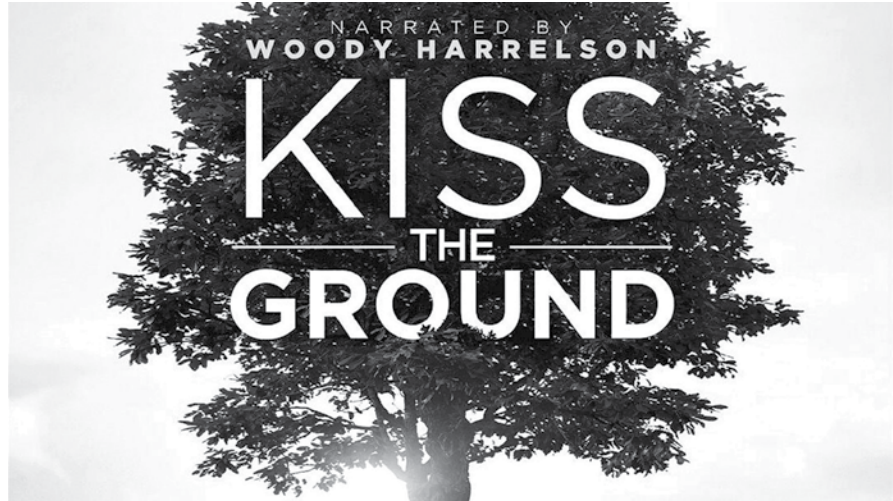
*Kiss the Ground*, a documentary, now screening on Netflix, is a breath of fresh air among the constant bad news about climate change. Not only is it highly informative and educational, it also reveals a plausible solution to the global warming crisis. While the film does not recognize capitalism as the culprit that has brought our planet to its perilous state, it does offer a hopeful and practical means of gradually drawing down carbon dioxide (CO2) from the atmosphere within twenty years through soil regeneration.

Narrated by and featuring Woody Harrelson, *Kiss the Ground* describes how we can regenerate “the world’s soils to completely and rapidly stabilize Earth’s climate, restore lost ecosystems and create abundant food supplies.” The film’s narration and animation present sound evidence for this with reports by scientists, organic farmers, educators and longtime environmental advocates.

## Killing the ground

The documentary points to centuries of adverse farming methods that have depleted soil viability, leaving vast areas non-productive and literally turning into deserts. These methods include: tilling of the soil with the subsequent loss of top soils, over-grazing, monocrop agriculture, depletion of plant diversity, and the use of chemical fertilizers, pesticides and herbicides. The chemicals were poisons developed by Nazis during WWII and subsequently brought to the U.S. by corporations for very profitable agricultural use.

These processes literally kill all forms of life in the soil. Long-term tilling of farm lands created the 1930s great Dust Bowl in the American and Canadian prairies, when over 200 million square miles were damaged with immense loss of top soil. This type of damage has now spread to over two-thirds of the globe.



These methods release carbon dioxide from the soil and root systems into the atmosphere, resulting in increased tropospheric temperatures, extreme weather events, desertification, and the melting of glaciers and polar ice. Moreover, they destroy the essential soil microbial life that is part of the cycle and sustainability of nature.

*Kiss the Ground* touches on several other causes of global warming and inordinate amounts of CO2 in the atmosphere — the long-term burning of coal, gas and oil as energy sources, deforestation, and degradation caused by imperialist wars. However, it does not expose the profit motive that drives the continuation of all this destruction, which further enriches the 1% while causing great hardships for the workers

and peasants of the world.

Instead, the film advocates for a market-based approach, saying that farmers will make more money using regenerative methods. So it underestimates the power of the inevitable resistance to change from Big Agribusiness and chemical producers.

## Natural connections

The movie beautifully illustrates the interconnection of our atmosphere and planetary life. The exchange of oxygen and carbon dioxide is part of what sustains humans and the planet. Our atmospheric oxygen comes primarily from tiny marine plants called plankton. As well as, of course, trees and plants, which absorb CO2, use it for photosynthetic growth, and emit oxygen. The CO2 is channeled into the plants’ root systems, where 40% of it sequesters and provides energy for the soil microbial life and nutrients for the plants, and also retain water.

Therein lies the key to *Kiss the Ground*’s premise of carbon sequestration and the means of reversing global warming by regenerating

degraded soils around the world. This is done using no-till organic farming, growing cover crops, reforestation of trees and perennials, composting, and free-grazing of animals. The film provides evidence of the workability of this system. One example given is the regeneration of the Loess Plateau in China, a once barren area of 22,000 square miles that was re-established as productive farmland in approximately 13 years.

There is much more to learn from this film than can be described here. Check out [kisstheground.com](http://kisstheground.com) — it’s more than a documentary.

With ecosocialism we can address the climate crisis with the urgency that it deserves. A socialist government would rapidly develop strategies and deploy resources to reverse ecological destruction. *Kiss the Ground* describes some useful tools for getting the job started.

Christine Browning is an ecosocialist and Native American rights supporter. Her review is reprinted from *Freedom Socialist*, Vol. 42, No. 1, Feb-Mar 2021, [www.socialism.com](http://www.socialism.com)

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# West Bay Yards

From page 1

One community group, Olympia Coalition for Ecosystem Preservation (OCEP) stepped in last December, with an appeal of the CP&D staff determination that there would be “no significant environmental impact” (DNS) associated with the approval of the Development Agreement. OCEP argued that the State Environmental Policy Act requires that an environmental review must start as early as possible in the process of considering a prospective development.

They asked the City's Hearing Examiner for a summary judgment invalidating the DNS and ordering a full environmental impact review. There was more than enough information about the development of the Hardel property to trigger review under SEPA before going further with the Development Agreement.

## SEPA requires environmental review of a project as soon as reasonable detail is known

OCEP asked for summary judgment because the law is clear: as soon as a project is sufficiently well defined to allow some meaningful review, SEPA commands that an environmental review start. It does not matter that more review can or will be done later. When, as in this case, the project's principal elements were known, the City violated the law when it issued a Determination of Non-Significance and deferred any environmental review until after the Development Agreement was approved.

In its motion, OCEP described the many principal features of the proposal that could reasonably be identified: including 478 housing units; five mixed-use buildings; 20,500 feet of commercial retail, restaurant, and recreation space; a shoreline trail; shoreline fill and restoration; frontage improvements; utilities; and various other elements. The project had already been presented to the CP&D staff at a “presubmission conference” in May 2020.

The proposed Agreement even commits the City to a specific plan for filling in tidelands behind the ordinary highwater mark and commits large swaths of the shoreline to impervious surfaces, contrary to the intent of the state Shoreline Management Act and the City's own Shoreline Master Plan.

David Bricklin, attorney for OCEP, pointed out that environmental review is required before a development agreement is drafted because, as one court said, it “begs reason” to think that approving a development agreement will not result in a project with significant environmental impacts.

## The City avoids addressing how much is known about the WBY project

In its response to OCEP's summary judgement motion, the City and developer failed to acknowledge let alone address the substance of the Coalition's argument, namely, whether the West Bay Yards project facilitated by the Development Agreement is sufficiently well defined to enable environmental review now.

Instead, City attorney Jeff Myers focused on the idea that the staff issued its DNS because the Development Agreement Application is “the proposal” that does nothing more than set out the procedural framework and rules under which consideration of the project will be made. He argued that the project, the 478 living units, the five buildings, etc., is not “the proposal” so that the Development Agreement and the project must be considered “independent and sequential,” which would not require SEPA review at this time.

## The City argues a development agreement offers certainty only if it precedes a project

To insist on environmental review at this stage, Myers said, would contradict the meaning of the Development Agreement. He followed with this rhetorical nonsequiter: Who is going to invest millions in redeveloping old plywood mills on brownfields that are eyesores and harm local communities if they aren't given certainty that the regulations will not change?

In fact, environmental review of the project proposal would incorporate the mitigations and other “standards and provisions” into a development agreement that would promise certainty for the investors. Deferring review until after a

Development Agreement is signed is a recipe for unexpected consequences – for the developer and/or the city, especially since the current property owner, Hardel Plywood, would no longer be responsible for any cleanup once the deal is made.

Before the City ties its hands, it should complete its initial environmental review. Indeed,



This rendering of the apartment buildings in the West Bay Yards project is one of several perspectives submitted to the City's Site Plan Review Committee on May 13, 2020.

per SEPA, it must by law complete that review before making any commitments. The City and developer argue that the proposed development agreement involves no legally binding commitments by the City so it should not trigger environmental review, but then acknowledge that the City is committed to applying only existing land use regulations for 15 years -- on a shoreline subject to as yet unforeseen consequences of sea level rise, among others.

## WBY attorney argues that the development will occur with or without an agreement

Heather Burgess, attorney for the Applicant, offered an even less relevant argument. Burgess claimed that the time for a SEPA review was 6 years ago when the zoning for the site was addressed in the Comprehensive Plan update – that also resulted in a DNS.

West Bay Yards, she declared, “is destined for development with or without a development agreement” a statement contradicting Myers' claim that no one would invest in the site without a development agreement. Also, according to Burgess, for a developer to answer environmental questions would require a substantial investment, while during the “eternity” it would take, the city could change the rules or put a moratorium on development.

## A toxic development site

Ms. Burgess is right to worry about undertaking an environmental review now. Signs at West Bay Park south of the site warn people not to touch the water or sediments. The Hardel property is one of the most contaminated industrial sites in the South Sound. It's directly west of the old Cascade Pole site and subject to the tides washing contaminants between the two shores. It is full of polyaromatic hydrocarbons (PAH) that disperse into the air, and dioxins, some of the deadliest poisons on the planet.

Regardless of the change in zoning and the Comprehensive Plan, the City cannot legally reclassify land use from industrial to residential without an Environmental Impact Statement. A SEPA review would require that alternatives to the proposed project be considered and determine if proposed actions comply with state and federal laws. A moratorium could be enacted if the site was determined to be unsuitable for healthy human habitation. Like the Sundberg Gravel Pit site which has been put on Ecology's list of contaminated sites under the Model Toxics Control Act, both are former toxic industrial sites on which the City now proposes to build housing.

## The Hearing Examiner rules in favor of staff

The Hearing Examiner, deciding for the developer and staff, found that for purposes of SEPA review the “proposal” (always in quotes) was the Development Agreement, “not the project itself,” even though the West Bay Yards project is described in detail in Section 1 of the Agreement. The Development Agreement also states it will have “no further force and effect if the Developer does not construct the Project substantially as described in this Agreement...”

Curiously, Scheibmeir observed in his decision that if the City's West Bay Restoration Assessment incorporated Into the Agreement served

as an assurance that this would be the maximum the developer was required to do, his decision would have been different. The Agreement would have required fuller environmental review.

We are left with a ruling that states no environmental review is needed prior to a binding Development Agreement because the Develop-

## Is there a conflict of interest?

Consider the following. The Development Agreement includes City and Port properties that are part of the West Bay Environmental Restoration Assessment. Therefore, this project is partly a City project that should be reviewed by an impartial person, not the City's own Hearing Examiner or others who represent the City.

Ms. Burgess is the attorney for West Bay Yards. She is also the attorney for the Chamber of Commerce, representing the City of Olympia through its Shared Legislative Agenda partnership with other local jurisdictions. In this role she advocates for specific regional projects to Thurston County legislators in the 2nd, 20th, 22nd and 35th districts.

She is also attorney for the Port of Olympia, and President of the Economic Development Council, a private advocate that receives funds from the City of Olympia. Her firm represents developers regularly in need of approval from the city, including the Sundberg Gravel Pit/ Green Cove Park project in West Olympia and Views on Fifth.

Mr. Scheibmeir's law firm is a member of the Lewis County Chamber of Commerce, as is Ms. Burgess through the Phillips Burgess law firm. Mr. Scheibmeir's practice areas include business and real property law, but nothing touching on environmental law.

*Esther Kronenberg and Jerry Dierker are allies and residents of the Green Cove Watershed.*

# The power of the Hearing Examiner

Some time ago, Olympia adopted a policy of putting decisions about development projects into the hands of staff and the Hearing Examiner (HEX). Under the Olympia Municipal code, the Hearing Examiner also has the authority to consider constitutional issues—unlike any other city in the state. This curtails public participation and shields the City Council from any responsibility to make land use decisions that are unpopular.

Since he was hired by the City Council in 2013, the current Hearing Examiner, Mark Scheibmeir, has never ruled against city staff. Some of his recent decisions involving citizen-opposed projects include ruling for the staff in the Westman Mills project on Port property, Views on 5th, the Parkside on Cooper Point Rd. and the marine fueling dock at the Port. He continued his streak with his ruling for the City on the Olympia Coalition appeal.



# Senator Mullet guts bill to end racist element of insurance rates

## Legislative WIPwatcher

Last summer George Floyd, many others, and the BLM movement reminded us that we haven't made much progress against racism worldwide or locally over the last several hundred years, or maybe forever.

Corporations rushed to cloak themselves in noble statements about their support of Black Lives Matter and the value of racial justice. Others committed to work toward dismantling systemic racism and racial injustice.

Last July, Washington State Insurance Commissioner Mike Kreidler sent a letter to insurance executives offering them a chance to match their public statements with action. He wanted their support for legislation to end the use of credit scores to set insurance rates. Someone with a lower credit score is charged a higher premium. It turns out that although credit scores have no relation to driving records they are a proxy for race: black Americans on average have lower credit scores.

### Widespread public support for SB5010

In January the Senate Business and Finance Committee held hearings on SB5010, a bill to prohibit use of credit scores. It was originally sponsored by Senator Mona Das (Kent), co-sponsored by the most progressive members of the Senate including Senator Joe Nguyen (West Seattle), Senator Bob Hasegawa (Beacon Hill), and Senator Marko Liias (Mukilteo), and enthusiastically backed by Governor Inslee and of course Kreidler.

Reporters from Medium, Crosscut and even Jesse Jones Consumer Advocate from Kiro 7 News covered the legislation, reporting on the potential positive impacts for racial justice and general fairness. The reporters pointed out that this legislation did more than rectify inequities in insurance rate differentials across varying races. It also would address gender differentials (hint: women in the same circumstances pay more than men) and end a burden on seniors whose credit scores fall when they've paid off their mortgages and no longer use credit in ways they did previously

SB5010 would protect all community members from having their insurance rates raised based on results from the pandemic, which are no fault of their own. We have learned that in the time of COVID-19, people of color disproportionately experience the most severe negative health and financial impacts. SB5010 would help address those racial inequities. With such strong evidence, widespread public support, and social momentum, the legislation seemed destined to succeed.

### Similar legislation wildly effective in CA

Data from states that have implemented similar reforms shows that ending credit scoring lowers insurance rates. In 1988, California voters passed Proposition 103, similar to the original SB5010. A 2019 report by the Consumer Federation of America found that "since 1989, the average expenditure on auto insurance by Californians increased by only 12.5%, while the average increase across the country reached five times that: 61.1%.

As to the cost of liability coverage which is mandated by states, Californians paid 5.7% less in 2015 than they paid in 1989, compared to the nationwide average increase of 58.5%, according to the report. It goes on to say that

"over the past 30 years, no set of state rules has been as beneficial to its resident drivers as the consumer protections put in place by California voters in November 1988 through Auto Insurance Regulation... if every state market in the nation had been strengthened by California-style consumer protection, *American drivers would have saved \$60 billion in 2015 and nearly a trillion dollars over the past 30 years.*"

### Insurance lobbyists mount an attack

Insurance company lobbyists in our state are fighting SB5010 with the fervor you expect from hired guns. They challenge the evidence and the arguments and back their attacks with threats of rising insurance premiums for everyone. Soon, presuming they are operating by their usual playbook, they will be trumpeting the potential loss of jobs.

### An unexpected and highly influential ally

Senator Mark Mullet (Issaquah) chairs the Senate Financial Institutions, Economic Development, & Trade Committee which oversees insurance legislation. He handed SB5010 to the lobbyists to change it from a bill that protected consumers into one that protects insurance companies.

In February, Insurance Commissioner Kreidler recommended that legislators vote against the bill, fearing it is beyond being possible to fix. "They took a bill that was there to help consumers, certainly addressed the issues of equity in our society, and essentially gutted it to the point where it protects the interests of the insurance industry at the expense of consumers," said Kreidler.

### Two-for-one? Paying back corporate donors, pay-back for opponents

Mullet is unpopular within his own party, mostly because of his stance against attempts to make our regressive state tax system even slightly more progressive. Inslee and many others endorsed his Democratic opponent labor-backed nurse Ingrid Anderson, who beat Mullet in the 2020 primary.

If not for a massive influx of corporate cash to his campaign (including maximum donations from national insurance carriers and insurance industry trade groups), Mullet would not have been reelected. Even with all that corporate cash, Mullet won by only 58 votes in the general election last November.

Presumably, that close election got Mullet's attention. Now, by allowing the insurance industry to rewrite the legislation, he can repay some political debts—and pay back Governor Inslee's defection. Never mind that Mullet's commitment to the insurers maintains a racist practice in insurance rating, the elimination of which would serve all of us. Time to register the rest of those Issaquah voters.

*WIPwatchers are volunteers who from time to time report on political activity.*

*Sources for this article and more about the benefits of eliminating credit scoring in insurance rating in the online version of this article at [www.olywip.org](http://www.olywip.org)*

# Calling all changemakers

## Community Sustaining Fund announces Spring grant round

### Sustaining Fund volunteers

The Community Sustaining Fund (CSF) provides grants to support progressive, community-oriented projects across Thurston County. Their goal is to empower individuals and organizations that advance social justice, environmental health, and community activism. For over 30 years, the CSF grants have supported local innovation and creative collaboration potential.

### Thousands of dollars from the community to the community

CSF holds a Spring and a Fall grant round each year and has awarded more than \$125,000 to 200+ groups and individuals. CSF is made up of volunteer community organizers who raise funds and directly sow that capital back into our communities for the benefit of all. One hundred percent of CSF donations and contributions are returned in the form of financial support to community-based projects. You can directly contribute to local projects by rounding up your purchases at the Olympia Food Co-Op cash register, and online or by mail.

### Standing on the threshold

The 2021 Spring CSF grant round will prioritize funding to projects that address emergent community needs. Our recent past and current reality is a time of unprecedented challenges. We are standing on the threshold of the next chapter: a historical opportunity for healing and rebuilding. The CSF's highest goal at this time is to support the work of restoration and hope in our communities.

### Work that will mitigate, repair, sustain

Priority needs might look like recovery efforts for individuals impacted by COVID-19, equity work that mitigates or addresses suffering caused by racism or xenophobia, or work that seeks to honor, repair, and sustain our Earth, among other community efforts.

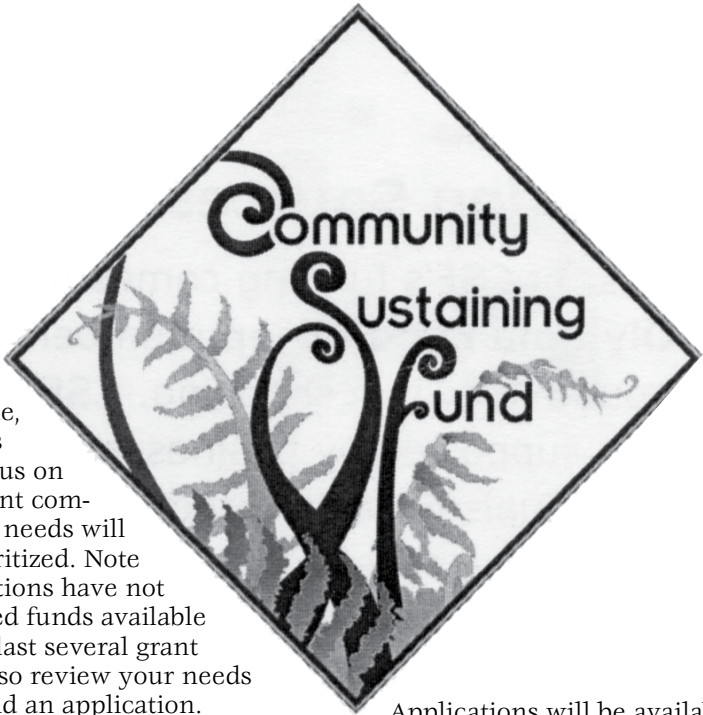
### Encouraging submission of projects

CSF welcomes projects that meet our traditional grant criteria. If the number of applicants and their requests exceed the funding

available, projects that focus on emergent community needs will be prioritized. Note applications have not exceeded funds available for the last several grant cycles, so review your needs and send an application.

### The Sue Lundy fund has its own criteria

The CSF is also honored to administer the Sue Lundy Fund as a separate source of grant dollars for community projects that embody Sue's passion. Sue was a community activist and volunteer at the Olympia Kiwanis Food Bank Garden. She devoted boundless energy to educating, mentoring, and teaching the value of being good stewards of the land and of raising vegetables for those in need. Applications for Sue Lundy funds have their own criteria, also available online through the CSF website.



Applications will be available April 1 with a deadline for submission of April 30, 2021. Grant details, criteria, and application are provided on the CSF webpage [www.oly-wa.us/csf/index.php](http://www.oly-wa.us/csf/index.php)

### Thanks to a unique community

The people who make up the Community Sustaining Fund of Thurston County sincerely thank community members for their support and meaningful work - and for the innovation and passion that make this community unique. Please give CSF some love on Facebook and reach out to them with any questions or interests. [www.facebook.com/Community-Sustaining-Fund](https://www.facebook.com/Community-Sustaining-Fund)



# An Anti-Right front?

Trump is out and Biden is in. Where do we go from here, in combating the cancer of Trumpism and working to transform our society in a socialist direction? A very important essay on strategy for the coming years has recently been written by Calvin Cheung-Miaw and published by Organizing Upgrade: “The Pivot of US Politics: Racial Justice and Democracy, [www.organizingupgrade.com](http://www.organizingupgrade.com)

This essay stresses how intertwined the struggles for racial justice and democracy necessarily are:

“Because the predominant GOP strategy—uniting both Trumpists and the tepid old-guard conservatives of the party—is one of preserving its power through white minority rule, the struggle for racial justice is at the heart of the struggle for democracy. While those of us who were taught in the U.S. school system that U.S. democracy was the foundation of aspirations for racial equality, we should reverse this relationship. Historically and today, it is struggles for racial equality that have eroded the White Republic and produced what democracy we have in the US”

The ongoing danger of Trumpism cannot be underestimated. Since Election Day, Trump has continued his claim that the election was rigged, that he actually won “hands down.” A poll taken in November found that 77% of Republicans agree with him that the election was fraudulent: people who follow der führer wherever he may lead them in safeguarding White Supremacy. Unfortunately including a very substantial portion of the white working class!

## Looking Forward Dave Jette

Perhaps 30% of the electorate are hard-right followers of Trump, constituting a reserve force for the capitalists to be used as society further crumbles under neoliberalism. How possible is a transition to an outright authoritarian political system, or even to fascism?

Let us look at the example of Hitler's rise to power in Germany in 1933, as outlined in this column published last August ([www.bcm-socialism.org/historical-fascism/](http://www.bcm-socialism.org/historical-fascism/)). In contrast to the US, the various factions of the bourgeoisie had lost most mass support in the parliament.

“The only really strong political parties in the early 1930s were the fascist NSDAP (the National Socialist German Workers Party of Hitler, based most strongly in the ‘middle class’) and the Social Democratic Party of Germany (with some help from the German Communist Party,...). So the capitalists tried to use the NSDAP

as a junior partner in parliament, as a substitute for their lack of mass following. But Hitler refused any deal other than one making him Chancellor, and the capitalists finally capitulated, especially since the NSDAP in the most recent election appeared to be in decline and there was the danger that it would fade away.”

And so ended (bourgeois) democracy in Germany.

Recognizing that we might face this danger, Cheung-Miaw's essay proposes the creation of an Anti-Right Front. This would include not only progressives and socialists, but also moderate Democrats and even moderate Republicans willing to risk their political careers to combat the slide to Trumpism.

The essay acknowledges that since racial justice issues tend to divide an anti-right front, “it will require some finesse to keep an anti-right front together under a Biden administration, but backing away from racial justice struggles will only weaken our long-term capacity to fight the forces pushing white minority rule.” Thus the essay is advocating a sea-change in the way that socialists view the two-party system. Many socialists hold the view that we should have nothing to do with the Democratic Party (for very good reasons) but this is obsolete and counterproductive.

But an Anti-Right “Front”? This is a tall order, and socialists can hardly expect to pull it off themselves. For the time being it must be informal, but fostered by participation in struggles for racial justice and democracy, linking them together (ideologically) as much as possible. It may eventually be useful to form an organization—at first basically a listserv for exchange of information and strategy—of progressives and socialists who are committed to this long-term project. It would reflect construction of an anti-right front as expounded here, with emphasis on the struggle for racial justice essential to achieving democratic functioning.

It is critical that progressives and socialists who do agree with the anti-right front strategy start interacting more with each other, strategize together, and put aside differences in proportion to the urgency of stopping fascism. We already had the example of the Democratic Socialists of America, the largest socialist group in the country today, refusing to endorse Biden. Socialists will have to give up their rigorous antipathy toward the Democratic Party, if we are to survive.

*Dave Jette writes this bi-monthly column and has been involved with Works in Progress since its beginnings. He is the author of A Reformation of Dialectical Materialism, which incorporates feminist theory into a traditional Marxist framework (available at [www.lulu.com](http://www.lulu.com)).*

# BOOK REVIEW Homewreckers

## How a Gang of Wall Street Kingpins, Hedge Fund Magnates, Crooked Banks, and Vulture Capitalists Suckered Millions Out of Their Homes and Demolished the American Dream, by Aaron Glantz

Ilana Smith

Growing up with tales of the American Dream pouring out of books, TV, and radio so steadily that the psyches of many young Americans are imbued with the belief that if you worked hard, you would grow-up to be a successful adult—owning a home and having a spouse, 2.5 children, and a dog—or a close variation.

However, life doesn't always match your dreams. The fabled home and family lifestyle of yore is growing ever more inaccessible. Author Aaron Glantz lays out how real estate robber barons—“homewreckers” as he calls them—have destroyed the American Dream by hoarding affordable houses, fleecing the government, and increasing the wealth gap exponentially.

If you have noticed the startling lack of affordable homes for sale to first-time buyers on the market today, you are not alone. Glantz carefully examines the shift from people owning homes, to Limited Liability Companies (LLCs) amassing thousands upon thousands of low-priced homes and hoarding them as rentals.

The reader follows the journey of a federal whistleblower from the time of her father's death through her mother's tragic demise due to Alzheimer's. Her experience frames the battle that ensues, tracking her fight against the homewreckers on behalf of masses of swindled Americans.

We learn of the backroom deals that created the ultra-wealthy heads of hedge funds familiar today. We know their names: Steve Mnuchin, Tom Barrack, George Soros, J.C. Flowers, B. Wayne Hughes, Steve Schwarzman, Peter G. Peterson, John Paulson, Jamie Dimon, Joseph Otting, John Thain, Wilbur Ross, Jared Kushner, and of course Fred and Donald Trump.

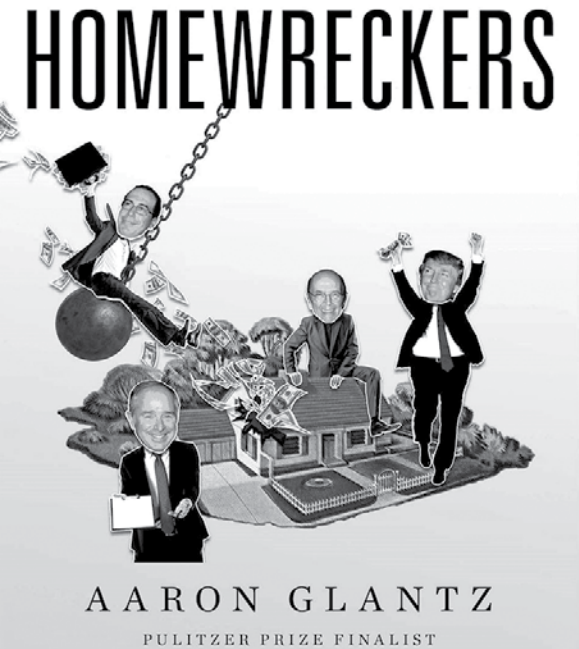
Until I read this book, the interconnectedness of their tactical maneuvers was hidden in the swamp. In a true piece of jaw-dropping investigative journalism with well documented sources, Glantz masterfully lays bare this ingenious scheme.

Glantz exposes how these homes were swindled away from their owners through real estate-based financial schemes. He delves into the devastating and misleading reverse mortgage fiasco, designed to siphon the wealth individual families have built through home ownership over decades, then moves to the home loan crisis that allowed the same actors to manipulate the market in their favor. Glantz shows how even if investors made a bad business deal, they would still

win. These homewreckers “...took advantage of a rigged system, buying so low that they risked comparatively little, especially when we, the taxpayer, agreed to pick-up their losses.”

To truly understand the depths of the disparity our country now faces, we must go back past the current pandemic and the mass of foreclosures that led to the bank bailout in 2008 and past the savings and loan scandal of the 1980s. We have to go all the way back to the causes of the Great Depression and what was done to heal the country from amoral backroom deals that bankers made during the administration of President Franklin D. Roosevelt.

Glantz takes readers along the path of deregulation and opportunistic



practices that led to the present-day massive wealth gap. He uncovers the racist practices inherent to the governance of our country and the systematic withholding of wealth from certain portions of our population.

Glantz shows how few repercussions there are for those who engage in elder abuse, racist and predatory lending practices, misuse of government subsidies, dismantling of regulations and market manipulation. Instead, greed is rewarded. This helps explain the support for Trump by those who were positioned to extort money at levels previously thought unimaginable with him at the helm.

This book is an eye-opening read that's worth every moment spent exploring its pages. It makes you wonder what else might be buried in a COVID relief bill or the military budget that will allow these “homewreckers” to steal more from the American people.

*Aaron Glantz is a Pulitzer Prize finalist and a two-time winner of the Peabody Award. As an investigative journalist, Glantz diligently follows every lead to understand how current events came to be.*

*Ilana Smith is an avid reader and traveler who has laid down roots in Lacey, WA.*

## Good reading!

*Against the Great Forgetting*, and *Follow-up*, by Michael Podhorzer via Action Network. Mike Podhorzer is the assistant to the president for strategic research for the AFL-CIO. He advocates a significant change in course for the AFL-CIO to establish independence from the political parties and emphasize investment in labor's own structure, rather than party structures <http://bit.ly/MichaelPodhorzer>





# Healthcare

Continued from page 1

## Growing cash and compensation for those who control the work

A May 2020 *New York Times* article describes Providence as a “multibillion-dollar institution in the Seattle area [that] invests in hedge funds, runs a pair of ven-

Pierce and Thurston Counties had had enough. They went on a two-day strike to demand safer working conditions. They had won recognition as part of the Union of American Physicians and Dentists (UAPD) in 2018 after a two-year fight, but MultiCare continues to prevent them from obtaining their first contract.

UAPD President Dr. Stuart Bussey explained why the Indigo Urgent Care practitioners went on strike:

more work. It seems like a slap in the face during the crisis we are facing with COVID.”

MultiCare received at least \$73 million in federal COVID stimulus grants so far. Compensation for CEO Bill Robertson was at \$1.9 million in 2016, the most recent year there is data for. In January 2021 they helped Yakima’s Astria Health avoid bankruptcy with a \$75-million loan.

pressure on remaining staff.”

If MultiCare provided adequate PPE and reasonable workdays, and didn’t try to off-load workers to “staffing firms” to build their bottom line, maybe they wouldn’t be so thin-staffed. It is apparent that caring for employees, and therefore patients, is not their priority. Evidence that it ever was is hard to find, with news stories covering their brutish treatment of employees reaching back to 2016.

## Nonprofits containing for-profits

In an interview with *Seattle Business Magazine*, MultiCare’s Robertson reflected on the future of the hospital sector in the context of a joint venture of Amazon, Berkshire Hathaway, and JPMorgan Chase known as Haven. “There’s a lot of venture capital lining up to see how that capital can create returns for investors in interesting ways,” he said.

In that vein, Providence has announced a new private venture with about a dozen other health-care systems across the country to sell patients’ data to pharmaceutical companies and researchers. They say the data will be “fully de-identified” and are working out how to inform patients of the scheme. They haven’t indicated that patients will be allowed to opt out.

## How to extricate ourselves from this system

Choosing not to support Wal-Mart and Amazon is easy for those of us who live near a shopping center, but going elsewhere for health care is prohibitively time-consuming or dangerous, or both. In Olympia, and increasingly across the state, we are stuck with two profit-driven “nonprofits” who exploit workers and patients to enhance revenue and protect executives’ outsized compensation.

Perhaps this is another way a transition to Medicare for All could transform our medical industrial complex into a system that provides actual health care.

*Eleanor Steinhagen is a communications specialist and 15-year resident of Olympia.*

*As of this writing, MultiCare workers are considering whether to go on strike again. For updates and info on supporting Providence workers, go to [ufcw21.org](http://ufcw21.org). For updates and info on supporting MultiCare workers, go to [uapd.com](http://uapd.com). Learn more by contacting Olympia DSA at [info@olydsa.org](mailto:info@olydsa.org).*



Photo by Jose Veliz, Union Organizer with UFCW Local 21

ture capital funds and works with elite private equity firms like the Carlyle Group.”

According to the article, Providence was sitting on nearly \$12 billion in cash at the time of writing, which it invests “Wall Street-style,” generating more than \$1 billion in profits in a good year.

CEO Rod Hochman is one of the highest-paid men in the industry, with a total annual compensation of \$11.5 million per year. In all, Providence’s 15 executive employees receive more than \$37 million in compensation annually. As a nonprofit, the organization is exempt from paying state and federal taxes on its hospital business.

## Years-long neglect of worker health and safety

MultiCare Health System is another “non profit” healthcare system that has been looking to maximize revenue by reducing compensation (for workers, not execs) and increasing workloads in ways certain to harm both workers and patients. MultiCare employs 20,000 people throughout Washington and is the largest tax-exempt health-care organization in the state. With their recent purchase of Olympia’s Capital Medical Center, more of our community’s healthcare workers can expect to feel this squeeze.

## Long hours, inadequate masks, too many patients

Last November, 120 MultiCare Indigo Urgent Care physicians, physician assistants, and advanced registered nurse practitioners in

working 12-hour plus shifts and sometimes seeing more than 70 patients without a break. MultiCare also refused to allow use of N95 masks even if providers purchased their own. All of it means exhaustion for providers and unacceptable risks for patients.

## Pursuing profit via “retail health”

Negotiators for the union felt they were close to getting some demands met, then MultiCare introduced new regressive language related to their “no closing” policy that requires doctors to see anyone who walks through the door before official closing time. With more people relying on urgent care during the pandemic, this forces people to work regular 15-hour shifts.

“No closing” is one element of a trend toward “retail health.” Another is replacing hospital employees with staffing companies. MultiCare announced on January 6 they are going to contract out the hospitalists and accompanying physician assistants at hospitals in Tacoma and Covington to Sound Physicians, a for-profit staffing firm. (Hospitalists are medical specialists certified in hospital medicine, overseeing inpatient care.) The workers will be terminated by MultiCare and have until April 5 to apply to Sound Physicians for their jobs.

UAPD Regional Administrator Joe Crane said in an interview with *The News Tribune*, “The physicians at all these hospitals are being told they are being let go and they have to apply for their jobs with an outside contractor for less pay and

## Opposing improvements for frontline medical workers

A new bill in the Washington legislature, Health Emergency Labor Standards Act, SB 5115, would require employers to provide PPE and give lower-paid frontline employees emergency pay increases during a public health emergency. It would also require employers with 50 or more employees to provide childcare leave under that declaration. Employers would get a new B&O tax credit for wages paid due to the benefit.

MultiCare CEO Robertson testified against the bill in his position as chair of the WA State Hospital Association, arguing that the bill’s emergency leave and childcare provisions would hurt workers because “the workforce is already depleted.” He protested that if hospitals were responsible when employees contracted COVID-19 at work, they might be subject to “abusive” lawsuits.

Patients and staff have been sickened by COVID outbreaks at a minimum of three MultiCare locations so far; it’s not surprising Robertson is trying to use the legislature to protect himself and other healthcare behemoths from frontline workers rising up in self-defense.

MultiCare’s senior vice president and chief quality, safety and nursing officer repeated Robertson’s complaint. She observed that nurses “are a scarce human resource and a critical element of hospital care,” so giving them the right to emergency leave would “just put

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# Positive policing bills in the state legislature

[Ed note: The OlyDSA DefundOPD committee has been researching and organizing around cutting the police budget, reinvesting in community and increasing accountability. They reviewed 19 bills related to policing in the legislative session, and identified this annotated list of bills to support.]



**HB1499** seeks to decriminalize all personal drug use in Washington State, similar to the legislation that just passed in Oregon. It also seeks to better fund substance abuse treatment, rather than sending folks to prison. There is a wealth of evidence that responding to drug use with criminalization widens social inequities, as Black, Indigenous, People of Color, and poor people are more likely to be targeted by enforcement of anti-drug laws. Status: Passed committee, referred to Appropriations.



**HB1090:** Bans for-profit detention centers in Washington State. This would include the Northwest Detention Center in Tacoma, a

location the local organization La Resistencia has been working for years to shut down. We should not allow companies to profit from incarcerating humans. Status: Passed committee, 2nd reading in Rules.



**HB1054:** Bans tear gas, unleashed police dogs, chokeholds, no-knock warrants, among other tactics. In sum, this bill seeks to limit the ways in which police can respond violently to their public. Status: Substitute bill passed, in 2nd reading in Rules.



**HB1267:** Requires the state to create an independent, state-wide agency to investigate and catalogue police misconduct. Status: Passed committee, in Appropriations.



**HB1202:** Makes it easier for those on the receiving end of police violence, along with their families, to sue for misconduct. It also eliminates qualified immunity as an available defense in cases where police brutality victims are seeking to hold officers accountable for their actions.

Status: After exec session House Committee on Appropriations—so, might hear more about status soon.



**HB1203:** Requires communities across the state to have community oversight boards in place to review police activity. Status: Passed committee, in Appropriations.

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Vic's Pizza (both locations)  
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Ramirez Mexican store on  
Capitol Blvd.  
South Puget Sound  
Community College  
Lacey Transit Center  
Lacey Library  
Steamboat Island Grocery (box)  
Shelton Post Office  
Shelton Library



# Our unemployment insurance system’s failings are by design

Martin Hart-Landsberg

Our unemployment insurance system has failed the country at a moment of great need. With tens of millions of workers struggling just to pay rent and buy food, Congress is now forced to consider a third emergency spending bill, providing stimulus payments, special weekly unemployment insurance, and temporary unemployment benefits to those not covered by the system.

The system’s shortcomings have been obvious for some time, but little effort has been made to improve it. In fact, those shortcomings were baked into the system at the beginning, as President Roosevelt wanted. While we must continue to organize to ensure working people are able to survive the pandemic, we must also start the long process of building popular support for a radical transformation of our unemployment insurance system.

### Performance

Our unemployment insurance system was designed during the Great Depression. It was supposed to shield workers and their families from the punishing costs of unemployment, thereby also helping to promote both political and economic stability. Unfortunately, as Eduardo Porter and Karl Russell reveal in a New York Times article, that system has largely failed working people.

The share of unemployed workers receiving benefits and the replacement value of those benefits has fallen. Benefits now replace less than one-third of prior wages, some 8% below the level in the 1940s. Benefits aside, it is hard to celebrate a system that covers fewer than 30 percent of those struggling with unemployment.

### A faulty system

Although every state has an unemployment insurance system, they all operate independently. There is no national system. Each state generates the funds it needs to provide benefits. Each is largely free, subject to some basic federal standards, to set the conditions under which an unemployed worker becomes eligible to receive benefits, the waiting period for benefits, the length of time benefits will be paid, the benefit amount and requirements to continue receiving benefits.

Payroll taxes paid by firms generate the funds used to pay unemployment benefits. The size of the taxes to be paid depends on the value of employee taxable earnings (base wage) and the tax rate. States can set both as they want, subject to a federally mandated base wage floor of \$7000 established in the 1970s. Not surprisingly, in the interest of supporting business profitability, states have generally sought to keep both base wage and tax rate low.

While such a policy might help business, lowering the tax rate means that states have less money in their trust funds to pay unemployment benefits. Thus, when times are hard, and unemployment claims rise, many states find themselves hard pressed to meet obligations.

In fact, as Porter and Russell explain, “Washington has been repeatedly called on to provide additional relief, including emergency patches to unemployment insurance after the Great Recession hit in 2008. Indeed, it has intervened in response to every recession since the 1950s.”

This is a problem for states forced to borrow, since the money has to be paid back with interest by imposing higher future payroll taxes on employers. Thus, growing numbers of states have tried to minimize the likelihood of this happening by raising eligibility standards, reducing benefits, and shortening time of coverage, all of which they hope will reduce the number of people drawing unemployment benefits as well as the amount and length of time they will receive them.

Growing stagnation in the US economy has led to more precarity of employment which makes this strategy ever more fiscally “intelligent.” For example, a growing percentage of the unemployed are remaining jobless for a longer time. Such a trend, absent state actions to restrict access to benefits, would mean financial trouble for state officials.

Adding to the system’s structural shortcomings is that fact that growing numbers of workers, for example the many workers who have been reclassified as independent contractors, are not covered. In addition, since eligibility for benefits requires satisfying a minimum earnings and hours of work requirement over a base year, the growth in irregular low wage work means that many of those in most need of support during periods of unemployment find themselves declared ineligible for benefits.

### By design, not by mistake

Our current unemployment insurance system and its patchwork set of state standards and benefits dates back to the Depression. While President Roosevelt gets credit for establishing the system as part of the New Deal, the fact is he deliberately sidelined a far stronger program. This program would have put working people today in a far more secure position.

The Communist Party (CP) began pushing an unemployment and social insurance bill in the summer of 1930. Along with the numerous Unemployed Councils that existed in cities throughout the country, the CP worked hard to promote it over the following years. On March 4, 1933, the day of Roosevelt’s inauguration, they organized demonstrations stressing the need for action on unemployment insurance.

### A better program

Undeterred by Roosevelt’s lack of action, a CP-authored “Workers Unemployment and Social Insurance Bill” was introduced in Congress in February 1934 by Representative Ernest Lundeen of the Farmer-Labor Party. Broadly, the bill mandated payment of unemployment insurance to all unemployed workers and farmers equal to average local full-time wages, with a guaranteed minimum of \$10 per week plus \$3 for each dependent.

Those forced into part-time employment would receive the difference between their earnings

and the average local full-time wage. The bill also created a social insurance program that would provide payments to the sick and elderly, and maternity benefits to be paid eight weeks before and eight weeks after birth. All these benefits were to be financed by unappropriated funds in the Treasury and taxes on inheritances, gifts, and individual and corporate incomes above \$5,000 a year.

The bill enjoyed strong support among workers—employed and unemployed—and it was soon endorsed by 5 international unions, 35 central labor bodies, and more than 3000 local unions. Rank and file worker committees formed across the country to pressure members of Congress to pass it.

When Congress refused to act on the bill, Lundeen reintroduced it in January 1935. Because of public pressure, the bill became the first social insurance plan to be recommended by a congressional committee, in this case the House Labor Committee. However, it was soon voted down in the full House of Representatives, 204 to 52.

### Opposition from the President

Roosevelt strongly opposed the Lundeen bill. It was to provide a counter that he pushed to create an alternative, one that offered benefits far short of what the Workers Unemployment and Social Insurance Bill offered, and was strongly opposed by many workers and all organizations of the unemployed. Roosevelt appointed a Committee on Economic Security in July 1934 with the charge to develop a social security bill that he could present to Congress in January 1935 that would include provisions for both unemployment insurance and old-age security. An administration approved bill was introduced right on schedule in January and Roosevelt called for quick congressional action.

Roosevelt’s bill was revised in April by a House committee and given a new name, “The Social Security Act.” After additional revisions the Social Security Act was signed into law on August 14, 1935. The Social Security Act was a complex piece of legislation. It included what we now call Social Security, a federal old-age benefit program, a program of unemployment insurance administered by the states, and a program of federal grants to states to fund benefits for the needy elderly and aid to dependent children.

### Weak protections for workers

The unemployment system established by the Social Security Act was structured in ways unfavorable to workers (as was the federal old-age benefit program). Rather than a progressively funded, comprehensive national system of unemployment insurance that paid benefits commensurate with worker wages, the act established a federal-state cooperative system that gave states wide latitude in determining standards.

More specifically, the act levied a uniform national payroll tax of 1 percent in 1936, 2 percent in 1937, and 3 percent in 1938, on covered employers. The Act defined those as employers with eight or more employees for at least twenty weeks, not including government

employers and employers in agriculture. Only workers employed by a covered employer could receive benefits.

The act left it to the states to decide whether to enact their own plans, and if so, to determine eligibility conditions, the waiting period to receive benefits, benefit amounts, minimum and maximum benefit levels, duration of benefits, disqualifications, and other administrative matters. It was not until 1937 that programs were established in every state as well as the then-territories of Alaska and Hawaii. And it was not until 1938 that most began paying benefits.

In the early years, most states required eligible workers to wait 2 to 4 weeks before drawing benefits, which were commonly set at half recent earnings (subject to weekly maximums) for a period ranging from 12 to 16 weeks. Ten state laws called for employee contributions as well as employer contributions; three still do today.

### Modest improvements, but...

Over the following years the unemployment insurance system has been improved in a number of positive ways, including by broadening coverage and boosting benefits. However, its basic structure remains largely intact, a structure that is overly complex, with a patchwork set of state eligibility requirements and miserly benefits. And we are paying the cost today.

This history makes clear that nothing will be given to us. We need and deserve a better unemployment insurance system. And to get it, we are going to have to fight for it, and not be distracted by the temporary, although needed, band-aids Congress is willing to provide. The principles shaping the Workers Unemployment and Social Insurance Bill can provide a useful starting point for current efforts.

*Martin Hart-Landsberg is Professor Emeritus of Economics at Lewis & Clark College, Portland. His areas of teaching and research include political economy, economic development, international economics, and the political economy of East Asia. He is the author of many books.*

*This is adapted slightly from Landsberg’s article in Reports from the Economic Front, Jan 23, 2021 <https://portside.org/2021-01-31/failings-our-unemployment-insurance-system-are-there-design>*

## Write for WIP

Do you have a story to tell? An injustice to be brought to light? An idea for how to do things better? If your work aligns with our mission statement, Works in Progress wants to hear from you!

Check our submission guidelines on page 2 or learn more at [olywip.org](https://olywip.org).



Independent voices are the backbone of Works in Progress! Let us hear from you!





## Take the Safe Rides Community Survey

Safe Rides is a mutual aid rides program started within Olympia SURJ. In order to assess need and potentially make improvements, they are asking community members to participate in a survey. The service began with a direct ask from Indigenous femme and non-binary community members experiencing heightened violence after the 2016 election. Safe Rides is available to anyone feeling unsafe in the community, but is centered on the safety of QTBI-POC [Queer, Trans, Black, Indigenous and People of Color]. SURJ has offered the service at various times over the last 4 years, experimenting both with offering it in moments of emergency, as well as providing it as an ongoing service. Fill out the survey at <http://tinyurl.com/SafeRidesCommunitySurvey>. Questions? Contact [olysaferides@gmail.com](mailto:olysaferides@gmail.com).



## Crazy Love Ministries new overnight winter shelter

### Mason County Warming Center

February saw the opening of a new overnight shelter in Shelton. Crazy Love Ministries has been conducting street outreach since 2017 and in March of last year began to provide services at the Mason County Warming Center to low income families and unhoused individuals. They hand out sack lunches, family food boxes, clothing, toiletries, and camping supplies. A sleeping bag exchange program, laundry facility, courtesy computer, phone, church services, and support groups are available.

Crazy Love is looking for volunteers and financial donations to expand into a seriously needed larger space and install a shower. To donate to this 501(c)3: Crazy Love Ministries, PO Box 2042, Shelton, WA 98584 or [www.crazyloveministries.org](http://www.crazyloveministries.org). To volunteer contact Wendy Petty or Dan Bryan 360-358-3355 or [crazyloveshelton@gmail.com](mailto:crazyloveshelton@gmail.com)



## Olympia Indivisible Fix our Democracy

Saturday, March 6, 6 - 7:15 pm

Olympia Indivisible is hosting a virtual presentation about how we can make progress to fix our democracy. Join with other progressives as we support federal and state legislation to protect healthcare, voting rights, the environment, racial justice, and fairness in government. Together we will take steps to protect these democratic values in Thurston County and at the Port of Olympia. Register at <http://bit.ly/3jNchyA>

Find out about Olympia Indivisible: [www.olympiaindivisible.org](http://www.olympiaindivisible.org)



**Contribute to WIP**  
Send Community PSAs. [Olywip.org](http://Olywip.org)

## Women rise up globally against femicide

Saturday, March 13, 4 pm

Celebrate International Women's Day with activists from many different nations speaking about the resistance to gender-based killings. Panelists at the zoom event will bring views from the Confederated Colville Tribes, and other parts of the US as well as from Australia and Mexico. Register in advance at [bit.ly/IWD-RW](http://bit.ly/IWD-RW). Organized by Radical Women US and Australia. Information: 206-985-4621. Contact [RadicalWomenUS@gmail.com](mailto:RadicalWomenUS@gmail.com) or visit [RadicalWomen.org](http://RadicalWomen.org).

## The Estuarium is open again!

Weekends from 11 am to 4 pm

The Estuarium gives all of us a way to experience the way that freshwater and salt water meet in our community. In addition to all sorts of programs to get people out into the watery byways of Puget Sound, the facility at 309 State Ave. NE in Olympia has 5 tanks with an amazing collection of animals - sea stars, anemone, shellfish - and that's not the half of it. After a period of closure, the Estuarium is open to the public with limited capacity. To find out about reservations, walk-ins and activities you can participate in go to [www.pugetsoundestuarium.org](http://www.pugetsoundestuarium.org)



## Elections at Thurston Conservation District

Thurston Conservation District needs good board members and a good candidate is running for the open board seat this month. Read an article about the District and its work at [olywip.org/returning-the-thurston-conservation-district-to-its-purposes](http://olywip.org/returning-the-thurston-conservation-district-to-its-purposes). All county residents are eligible to vote, but you have to request a ballot. Do that by March 11 by calling 360-754-3588 or emailing [ballotrequest@thurstoncd..](mailto:ballotrequest@thurstoncd..) The election will be by mail and ballots must be postmarked by March 16, 2021. Helen Wheatley, is an experienced teacher of environmental history and human geography, who was previously appointed to the Board. She will be an asset to the Board.



## Dispute Resolution Center: Peacemaker Award

Nominations open for the 2021 Evan Ferber Peacemaker Leadership Award

The DRC encourages members of the community to submit nominations for this award established in honor of founding Executive Director Evan Ferber. The award recognizes individuals who have demonstrated extraordinary leadership in promoting peaceful resolution of disputes and civility in our community. Please provide as much information as possible for whoever you nominate, on their community involvement as it relates to the award. For the nomination form click here. Submit completed forms to: DRC, Attn: Joe Sanders, P.O. Box 6184, Olympia, WA 98507 or email [jsanders@mediatethurston.org](mailto:jsanders@mediatethurston.org). Deadline to submit nominations is April 10, 2021.



## Thurston - Santo Tomás Sister County Association

Seeking shoots, roots and leaves. TSTSCA is ready for local gardeners to divide and deliver cool clumps of perennial plants for their 10th annual plant sale. The sale raises funds for 16 university scholarships in our sister town in Nicaragua. They need volunteer planters to prep pots - and maybe some folks willing to seed out veggies and tomatoes/peppers. Help pot every weekend til the beginning of May on the Westside. Call Jean at (360) 943-8642 (no texts, leave voicemail) for details and to volunteer. TSTSCA thanks you one and all.

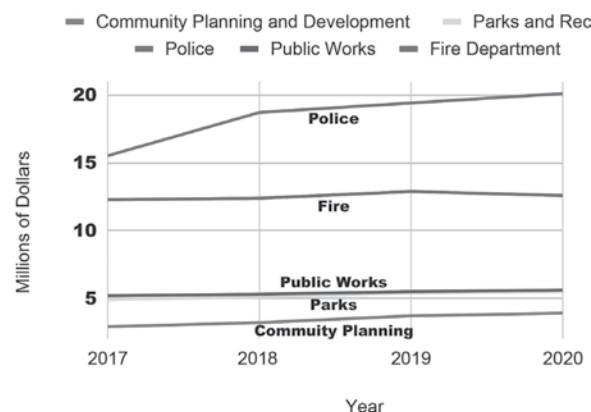


## Defund OPD's new website

Meetings - Thursdays 6:30 - 8 pm. By zoom.

They are conducting research and are working with a blueprint to increase police accountability and cut funds from policing in order to invest them in community. Since 2011, the Olympia PD's budget has increased by 67%, while calls have increased by only 7%. See their blueprint and find out more about the project at [www.olydsa.org/committees/defund-opd](http://www.olydsa.org/committees/defund-opd). Contact them at [info@olydsa.org](mailto:info@olydsa.org).

### City of Olympia: General Fund Spending by Department



## Bad weather, a short window, a big loss

This news from our own Olympia Seafood: The F/V Terry F, a crabber out of Westport sank February 15. The vessel ran into trouble and began sinking in the first hours of the 73-hour opening for Dungeness crab. Coast Guard rescue instructed the crew to enter the water one at a time to meet a rescue swimmer. All three were wearing survival suits and communication gear. The fishing vessel was the home and livelihood of Terry F, and it is a total loss. To read more and offer help if you like, find the donation page here: [www.gofund.me/9319199f](http://www.gofund.me/9319199f)

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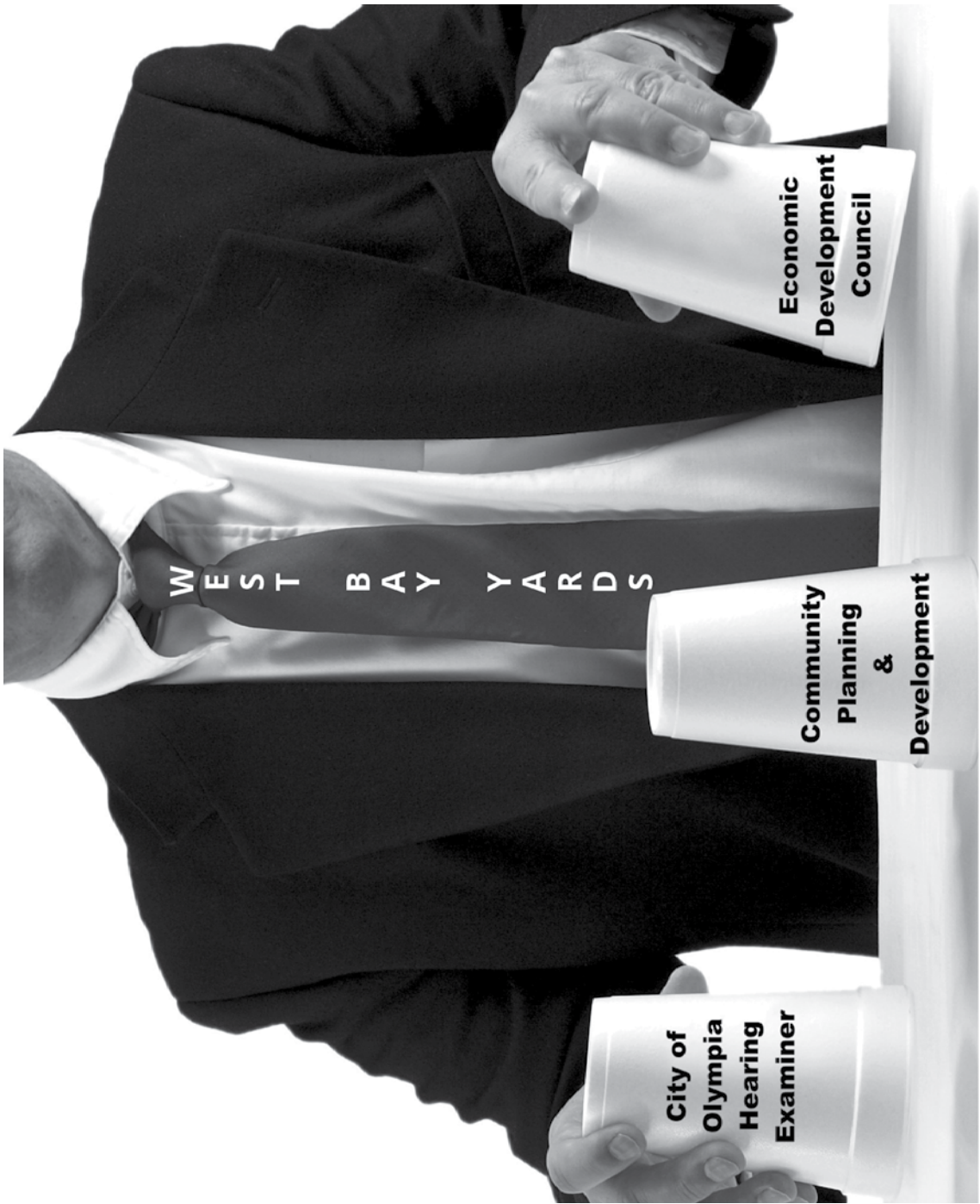
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## INSIDE

- West Bay Yards: the project that isn't/is
- A new sense of urgency for worker health
- Multicare + Providence squeeze essential workers

# The Trump pandemic death tracker:

Americans killed by inaction, neglect, incompetence and corruption

# 513,091\*

(out of 28,605,669 current cases)

*“If we have between 100,000 and 200,000 we’ve all together done a very good job.”*

—Donald Trump, March 29, 2020

Vietnam War 1964-1975	Korean War 1950-1953	WW2 1939-1945	Spanish Flu 1918-1919	WW1 1914-1918
American military	American military	American military	American citizens	American military
58,000	37,000	413,000	675,000	117,000

Mortality rates not equal:  
*American Indian/AlaskaNative: 2.4x higher | Black/African American: 1.9x higher | Hispanic/Latino: 2.3x higher*

\* as of 1 March, 2021

*From David Cay Johnson’s DC Report (dcreport.org)*