



# WORKS IN PROGRESS

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## How Thurston County lost its power

As part of a private equity company, Puget stock is no longer publicly traded

Diane Frank

For over 100 years, the company we know today as Puget Sound Energy (PSE) and its previous incarnations were publicly owned corporations who traded publicly, were regulated by the Securities and Exchange Commission, and paid a steady dividend to their shareholders. Utility stocks are known as good, sound investments for retirees and pension funds because, in part, people pay their utilities (electric, gas, phone) even when they are unable to pay their mortgage or rent, so the dividend checks keep coming.

PSE ceased to be a public corporation on December 31, 2008, when they were sold to an Australian private equity company, The Macquarie Group. This sale was approved by the three Governor-appointed and Senate-confirmed members of the Washington State Utility & Transportation Commission (WUTC or UTC) over the strenuous objections of PSE’s ratepayers.

Allowing an off-shore leveraged buyout firm (now politely known as investment capital firms) to purchase the only option we have to supply our electricity was both wrong and short-sighted. The privatization of what locals have for decades called “Puget” eliminated the safeguards inherent in public ownership of utilities.

How was this safeguard eliminated? Let’s follow the money...

The proposed purchase was announced Oct. 26, 2007, and approved by shareholders and the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission in April 2008. It was then passed on to the WUTC, which held a series of “hearings” before approving the transaction.

Puget Energy, WUTC staff, the Macquarie-led investment consortium and other interveners reached a settlement, filed July 23, 2008 with the WUTC.

On August 5, 2008, Simon Fitch of the Public Counsel Section of the Washington State Attorney General’s Office stated, “Puget customers and Washington’s economy are better off with what they have now—a publicly-traded, investment-grade utility with improving financial health and low business risk. Puget Sound Energy has not shown that it makes sense to burden this company with a dramatic increase in debt and financial risk,” he continued, “es-

pecially at a time when national and international economic conditions are so shaky.” Less than six weeks later, the financial markets crashed and sent the US economy into a steep dive.

The UTC held hearings Aug. 25–27 in Olympia to hear expert witnesses for and against the settlement and examined the testimony and evidence pre-

The privatization of what locals have for decades called “Puget” eliminated the safeguards inherent in public ownership of utilities.

sented by Public Counsel and other parties. Olympian Sherri Goulet was there on August 26<sup>th</sup>:

*“This event was attended by ratepayers from all over Western Washington to ensure that we were 100% against the sale of PSE to foreign owners. The hearing was held to allow citizen input. The room was packed and they shut the doors leaving*

*hundreds of people in hallway. The only ‘supporters’ that were there were paid by PSE. Citizen input was ‘please do not sell PSE to a foreign corporation’. Public comment online was also in complete opposition to foreign ownership.*

*“... the UTC allowed their own agenda despite public protest. One of the attendees asked, ‘Do we need to get together as peasants with pitchforks?’ I was at the hearing and witnessed the UTC’s performance. PSE may be monitored by UTC for operation, but not for purchase. There was no democratic process. The UTC followed their own rules, which did not include majority input.”*

On December 30, 2008, the WUTC voted two to one in favor of the sale. Governor Gregoire appointees Patrick Oshie, a Yakima Attorney specializing in Federal Indian Law, and Mark Sidran, former Seattle City attorney voted “Yes” while the lone “No” vote was by Commissioner Philip Jones, a Republican who also recorded a scathing minority dissent.

The WUTC report states: “Commissioner Philip Jones opposed approval of the sale, and filed a separate dissent. Jones said, “The settlement agreement in its current form *creates*

*too much risk, and potential harm, for ratepayers and stakeholders.* I believe the settlement has been overtaken by market conditions that require further exploration on a full record that carefully analyzes critical aspects of the proposal under the reality of extremely adverse financial conditions that exist today. The proposed agreement sets forth a capital structure with excessive debt for Puget Energy and PSE, and *creates a privately-held investor consortium that lacks sufficient transparency compared to the status quo.* I believe this increased incremental debt load creates undue risk for ratepayers by requiring PSE to create sufficient cash flow to service the substantial amounts of new debt to be issued by the holding company and *it will place great pressure on the commission to approve the necessary large and frequent rate increases on a consistent basis...* I reserve the opportunity to supplement this dissent upon reviewing the majority opinion in the form published in the order.” (emphasis added)

Also within this report: Puget Holdings (aka Macquarie Group), founded in 2007, is a Delaware LLC with its principal offices in N.Y.,

► **POWER**, continued on page 5

## A message from Olympia Occupiers to future activists

Matson Boyd & Carole Willey

Occupy Wall Street has been instrumental in changing the national debate to encompass huge issues such as inequality and the dominance of Wall Street. The encampments, on the other hand, are more of a mixed story—Occupy activists have struggled to create functional protest communities, with the blame often falling on paralysis in communication and decision making.

We set out to gather knowledge from those who lived and breathed Occupy Olympia, to get their story in print. We want activists of future encampments to know what worked for us, what didn’t work, and what we would do differently next time. Three Occupy activists, Alex Daye, Jeff Thomas, and Dana Walker, shared their views.

Alex Daye

*Describe yourself and what you did last year during Occupy, and what you are do-*

*ing nowadays.*

I’m 32 years old. I have two sons, 4 and 8 years old. I am a student of philosophy, a holistic health practitioner, and I teach martial arts professionally.

Last year, during Occupy, I put my energy into the establishment of a first-aid tent in Sylvester Park, which later became a full service medical clinic in Heritage Park. During the day, in addition to my medical duties, I staffed the supply tent and organized volunteers. In the course of two months, we made hundreds of patient contacts and distributed vast amounts of donated gear: sweaters, blankets, sleeping bags, socks, tents, shoes, soap, toothbrushes, tampons, batteries, hand warmers, etc. EGYHOP distributed ex-

As an organizer, it is critical that you are aware of your role in oppression. If you have time to be an organizer, then you have more privilege than someone struggling for survival.

cess supplies throughout the greater Olympia area, and Long Hair David told me at the time that the effect we were having had reached the distant hills. People in houses tend to take a lot for granted, but a new tarp or a pair of dry

socks can make an unimaginable difference to a person experiencing homelessness. At night I slept in the first-aid tent and responded to nocturnal emergencies (I’ll spare you the details). I also organized and served on the Peace & Safety committee, outfitting volunteers with flashlights, whistles, radios, and reflective vests for their dusk till dawn patrols.

In the past year, since Occupy, I have given hundreds of hours to homeless

► **OCCUPY**, continued on page 10



## WORKS IN PROGRESS

ESTABLISHED IN 1990 BY THE THURSTON COUNTY RAINBOW COALITION

*Works In Progress* is a free, all volunteer-operated progressive community newspaper based in Olympia, Washington. Opinions expressed do not necessarily reflect those of *Works In Progress* and are solely those of the authors.

### Submissions

Please send text as Word attachments. Artwork and photos can be sent electronically or we can scan them for you as camera-ready/black & white.

*Works In Progress* is committed to stories misrepresented or ignored by the mainstream media. We value local, well-researched news stories, accounts of personal experience and reflections by local authors. Opinion pieces, also valued, are often best supported by facts, examples, and sources, and we encourage writers to include these elements to submissions. We're also looking for graphics, poetry, cartoons, and articles that push the boundaries of conventional journalism.

WIP reserves the right to publish in whole or part all submissions. For editing purposes, please enclose your phone number. Articles may be reprinted. Please cite sources.

*If your issue isn't being covered in Works In Progress, it's because you aren't writing about it! (Or haven't found someone else to cover it!)*

Send submissions to [olywip@gmail.com](mailto:olywip@gmail.com) or mail to Works In Progress, PO Box 295, Olympia, WA 98507-0295.

### Governing Tool

The following statement is part of the Editorial Policy and is the governing tool for the Anti-Discrimination Clause:

*WIP will make every effort to work with the contributor of material considered by WIP to be offensive in order to reach a mutually agreed upon resolution, but WIP reserves the right as a last resort to edit or not print submitted material.*

### Mission Statement

"Our aim is to confront injustice and encourage a participatory democracy based on economic, social, and environmental justice. *Works In Progress* is dedicated to providing a voice for those most affected by the exclusionary and unfair practices that seek to silence the oppressed."

### Anti-Discrimination Clause

We will collectively endeavor to be sensitive and respectful to all those oppressed in this society and their issues. However, if and when we should make a mistake in this regard, we expect to acknowledge it and to express regret for injury or insult given.

### Back Issues

WIP is archived on microfilm by the University of Washington Library. Some issues are held in the Timberland Library system. The last five years are online at [www.olywip.org](http://www.olywip.org)

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### On the front cover —

*Jill Stein speaking at Evergreen*

Photographer: WIP News Service

### Submission Deadline:

**November 16**

[olywip@gmail.com](mailto:olywip@gmail.com)

#### Proofreading:

November 24 ♦ Noon

**Lacey Timberland Library in the Group Study Area**

*(Be there for the first read!)*

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# LETTERS TO WORKS IN PROGRESS



### Vote 'yes' on Proposition One

The vote on public power (Thurston County Proposition One) is quite simple, really.

All registered voters in Thurston County get to vote on this measure. There is much confusion I'm hearing from people. Puget Sound Energy (PSE) has bombarded citizens with their deceptive, fear-mongering PR campaign, doing the residents of Thurston County no good service in the process. (The Alliance to Protect Thurston Power is a astro-turf organization, and is nearly fully funded by PSE to the tune of over \$600K to date!)

I want to explain, after working for the last six months on the campaign to get Proposition One passed, that the only thing this vote *actually* does is give/or not give our existing Public Utility District the *option* of starting up an electricity business. A 'yes' vote will *not* mandate the PUD Commissioners to build and/or acquire electric facilities, it just grants them the authority to proceed in that direction, if they choose, further evaluating how, when, where, and even *if* public electrical power is in the best interest of Thurston County residents. (So far studies show it certainly is—see that on the website: [thurstonpublicpower.org](http://thurstonpublicpower.org).)

Getting our permission through a county-wide vote is the way any county PUD in Washington gets to pursue electrifying—that is the state law. It's through a 'yes' vote that the PUD can get our (the people's) foot in the door for the public power option in Thurston County. Our PUD could then break PSE's monopoly, which seems clearly to be in our best interest, especially over time. If they choose to create a public power entity here, it will not happen quickly, and it will not happen in the whole county at one time. This transition will reasonably unfold with the PUD Commissioners' leadership, and community involvement and input, as PUDs' are accountable to residents, and their business must be open to the public. All the other counties in Western Washington already have publicly provided electricity. They voted on this years ago and took their utility business back from private, corporate, for-profit companies; and those residents are served quite effectively and charged significantly less, and in some cases tremendously less right now than we are by PSE. Let's give our PUD the chance to make that happen here. Let's have more say about how and what our own electrical utility operates. Toward this new energy future, I sug-

gest you vote 'yes' on Thurston County Propostion One on your General Election Ballot before November 6th.

For more info go to [thurstonpublicpower.org](http://thurstonpublicpower.org)

Sandia Slaby, Olympia

### PSE not truthful

PSE's campaign to protect their monopoly has been filled with misinformation. Puget Sound Energy asserts that the area has been well served. Well, the fact is that Puget charges the highest rates in the State of Washington. Period. And, PSE has one of the worst reliability ratings. Paying the highest rates for some of the worst service is outrageous and unacceptable, and if it weren't for the Puget PR machine, people would be up in arms.

We have paid the highest electrical rates, in part, to satisfy million dollar executive salaries. In 2006 the CEO took \$3.2 million a year. Now we are not even told how much they take. It's an outrage!

Claims have been made that were Prop One to pass the county electrical service would suddenly be thrust onto the Public Utility District. These claims are patently and blatantly false. It is painful to have to respond to such misinformation, and to know that the PSE Goliath has more money than they can stuff into their britches to spend on peddling this and other misinformation.

After passage of Prop One, and what would be a cautious and gradual entry into the electrical business, funding for schools, roads, police, and fire departments would not be at risk. PUDs and other municipal entities make payments in lieu of taxes in order to support services that society has come to depend on.

Jefferson County was persuaded by PSE to settle out of court. They decided to pay a larger amount to avoid litigation, and because, as a rural county, they were able to secure a lower interest rate for borrowing. Thurston County PUD would mount an assertive and vigorous campaign to protect the interests of rate-payers here—we can't afford to pay more than the system is worth because we don't get the lower interest borrowing available to the rural district.

It is frustrating to have to respond to these attacks.

Don't believe PSE. And don't let PSE scare or misinform you about Proposition 1. They're just trying to protect their monopoly profit system.

Public power is not risky, does not cost too much, and does not put us in dangerous storm response scenarios.



Follow Eric J Garcia at [@garclaink](https://twitter.com/garclaink) or friend Eric J Garcia on Facebook.

There are not too many questions.

PSE is an aggressive profit making company—and yet keeps an appearance as a “good corporate citizen,” despite real problems with their business model. PSE says that their property is worth as much as \$1billion. But their tax assessment is listed at 13% of that, at \$131.2 million. Washington law requires utility property to be assessed at “true and fair value.” (RCW 84.12.270)

PSE likes to tout its credentials as a provider of green energy. What they fail to mention is that they use fossil fuels to provide over 50% of their fuel mix. Green energy? or Green washing?

Public power is about having local control. Three or four years ago, Puget Sound Energy was sold to an overseas Investment Bank (Macquarie Group, Australia.) Citizens made overwhelming objections at the Washington State Utilities and Transportation Commission, which is the group responsible for regulating PSE. The WA UTC was unresponsive to their concerns, and allowed the sale despite overwhelming citizen opposition. Rather than hoping appointed commissioners will respond to the will and needs of the people, the Public Utility District electrical would allow the local PUD to respond, and enhance accountability through the electoral process.

Public power is in the best common interest of rate-payers. For labor and environment, lower rates, reliability, jobs, service, infrastructure, stewardship... Vote Yes on County Proposition No. 1. “Your neighbors thank you. For more information, please visit: [www.thurstonpublicpower.org](http://www.thurstonpublicpower.org) and the PUD also has information, at: [www.thurstonpud.org/pud-electric.htm](http://www.thurstonpud.org/pud-electric.htm) The Initiative also has a facebook page: [www.facebook.com/thurstonpublicpower](https://www.facebook.com/thurstonpublicpower)

All told PSE has probably spent over a million dollars to oppose proposition one, why can't they increase their annual maintenance budget by as much to keep our system up to par? How much will PSE spend to protect their profits, while failing to provide reliable service? Thurston County deserves better.

Please join me to vote Yes on County Proposition No. 1.

Robert Whitlock, Olympia

## Working in WIP

Works In Progress depends on its community and its volunteer members. From articles written and advertisement bought to the final copy printed and delivered, it can't be done without you.

**WRITERS' GROUP:** WIP's new group meets once or twice a month to discuss ideas for articles, to ensure that crucial issues are being covered, and to collaborate and provide mutual support.

**WEBSITE MANAGER:** WIP is looking for someone or someones to maintain the new website. Experience is desired but not necessary. We are willing to train. Commitment of 2-3 hours after WIP is published each month.

**LAYOUT:** Looking for computer literate individuals with basic skills in InDesign. Commitment is during the week before the last Monday of the month. Take on as little or as much as you like.

**PROOFREADING:** Relax in the Lacey Timberland Library (Group Study Area) while you read the latest issue of WIP. This is an important role that only requires a two-hour monthly commitment. Proofreading occurs at noon on the Saturday before the last Monday of the month.

**GRAPHICS/PHOTOGRAPH:** WIP can always use one more photo/graphic. Please consider submitting your work.

**PHOTO WRANGLER:** WIP is looking for someone to collect photos and prepare them for publication.

For those interested, please contact us at [olywip@gmail.com](mailto:olywip@gmail.com).





photo: Robert Whitlock



photo: Janine Unsoeld

## Yeah, the OPD cops still ♥ to be bullies, but (finally) there’s some reason for hope!

### Scott Yoos Support Committee

Unlike its preceding month, October did see some action in the courtroom regarding our long-fought battle for justice! For those readers who are raw newbies, wholly unfamiliar with the traumatic, year-and-a-half old case brought by the Olympia Police against our friend and fellow WIPworker, Scott Yoos (in which they tackled him to the ground for using “possibly-assaultive” sign language, then brutally bloodied and arrested him...bogusly charging him with: “Trespassing”, “Obstruction of Justice”, and finally, a “Felony Assault” after he disposed some damp paper napkins in an open dumpster!), we would refer you to: <http://www.scottsupport.blogspot.com> and also: [scottooslegaldefense](#) on Facebook, for (occasional) updates and further gory details about this absurd waste of Thurston County’s tax dollars.

The first hearing of the month (10/3) wasn’t much to report on, because of the Attorney’s absence due to illness.

A continuance was granted, and two weeks later (10/17) Scott Yoos and a healthy cadre of supporters returned to the County Courthouse (this time *with* the assistance of Scott’s much-valued Attorney, Larry Hildes who, with his wife/legal assistant, Karen, travels three plus hours from Bellingham!) Prior to this latest hearing, Attorney Hildes had submitted a well-reasoned “Motion to Dismiss” to the Court and he came prepared to argue for an official dismissal of the charges against Scott. The (Prosecuting/)Prosecuting Attorney, Andrew Toynbee requested more time to examine this first motion, so a new hearing date was set for the Motion Hearing, November 26 (the Monday after Thanks-

giving). The time has yet-to-be-set, but presumably, the hearing will begin at 9 am, (again at the Thurston County Courthouse). Watch the blogspot for updates, but, barring unanticipated changes, there will be another pre-Hearing Support Vigil (with signs and such) starting at around 8:15 am. (Please come well-dressed for the weather!) On the current schedule, we’re now anticipating another pre-trial hearing on 12/12, and the trial itself should begin in February, 2013. (It will last perhaps a week or more.)

Excitingly, Attorney Hildes let Scott and his supporters know he is now in conversation with the Federal Department of Justice regarding this case and they have expressed a keen interest in possibly pursuing it further. Larry has also suggested that “Letters” to ‘those other papers’ (yes, even The Daily Zero and other print media!) may prove beneficial in nudging this case towards a just, positive outcome.

Letters to the elected County Prosecutor (Andrew Toynbee) and to Scott’s Prosecuting Attorney (Jon Tunheim) could also be worthwhile. Both of these gents are reachable at: 2000 Lakeridge Dr. SW, Building 2, Olympia, WA 98502. (Hokey as it may seem to some, Scott still remains fairly-convinced that prayers and good wishes make a difference, too!)

Again, we’ll look forward to seeing as many of y’all as can make it to the next Motion Hearing, on Monday, November 26 at 8:15 or 9 am!

At the close of our recent meeting, Scott repeated his heartfelt thanks for the community’s continued love and support.

*We shall overcome (someday!)*  
—Ahimsa.

## National day of protest against police brutality in Olympia

### Janine Unsoeld

A dozen South Sound community members gathered in Sylvester Park in downtown Olympia to participate in a national day of protest against police brutality, just one of over 30 planned events held across the country, including Seattle.

Olympia’s event was sponsored by the Green Party of South Puget Sound, a group that has begun a study into Olympia police department incidents in which excessive or deadly force has taken place. Walking to the actual locations in the downtown area and taking turns reading an account of the incident that occurred there, the group honored those traumatized by and commemorated those killed by Olympia police officers in recent years.

Recognized incidents included those involving community members David “Long Hair David” Fawver, Steven Edwards, Maggie Belknap, Joseph Burkett, Jose Ramirez-Jimenez, Bradden Ferber, and Scott Yoos.

Janet Jordan, chair of the local Green Party, said that several of the victims were punished for simply not following

orders fast enough. Others were over-come in struggles when they were suspected of breaking the law. While those present asked numerous, specific questions about individual cases, she said, in all cases, human lives were devastated, and in several cases, lives were lost.

Jordan later said videos are useful to citizens in conflict with the police, and many activists do take on the role of recording what happens during an incident. Although video cameras on Olympia police department vehicles are useful, lapel cameras on officer’s uniforms may be even more effective.

“We are hoping to break the pattern where Olympia police demand for instant and total obedience from citizens... and bring the police back to the status of human beings among other human beings, whom they have a responsibility to protect,” said Jordan.

As the group moved to each incident location with their placards, they often received supportive 5:00 pm rush-hour honks and thumbs up from passing drivers.

*Janine Unsoeld is the managing editor of Green Pages and writes the Janine’s Little Hollywood blog.*

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Book Review

Transforming Terror: Remembering the Soul of the World

Joli Sandoz

Review of *Transforming Terror: Remembering the Soul of the World*, eds. Susan Griffin and Karen Loftus Carrington (University of California Press, 2011)

Essayist, poet, and playwright Susan Griffin and co-editor Karen Loftus Carrington were in Seattle recently to read from their anthology, *Transforming Terror*. The book is a response to the events of September 11, 2001, and to the US government's subsequent actions.

Terror both creates and results from terrorism. So terrorism—which Griffin described as acts of violence against unarmed civilians—cannot be stopped by creating more fear. Instead, the solution must arise from thinking unlike the thinking that originally created the problem. Acknowledging and interrupting the cycle of terror, terrorist violence, and then yet more terror, is the point of the book.

“Art embodies things, makes them concrete, makes them sensuously vivid so you can experience them,” Griffin said. “One of the things that allows peo-

ple to kill each other is abstraction; the killer cannot imagine the suffering he or she is causing.” But when we engage our imaginations, Carrington added, “we begin to scan for connection rather than difference, [and] then the heart begins to open.”

As an introduction and guide to relevant writings—and to thinking about terrorism from the perspective of its aftermath, terror—*Transforming Terror* is well worth reading. The search for new and healing perspectives led Griffin and Carrington to choose writing from a wide range of cultures and sources. Contributors range from well-known activists—Martin Luther King Jr, Vandana Shiva, and Desmond Tutu, among others—to such poets as Carolyn Forché, Nellie Sachs, Theodore Roethke and William Stafford. Some unexpected names appear, including those of St. Thomas Aquinas and Herman Melville of *Moby Dick* fame, to go with those of more contemporary thinkers and writers (among them Susan Sontag, whose piece as excerpted here begins and ends with Olympia's Rachel Corrie; and including Joan Didion, Leila Ahmed, Fritjof Capra, Wendell Berry, Mahmoud Darwish, and Václav Havel.) Sources appear in the Credits section for readers who want to pursue selections in their original context, or to read excerpted selections in their entirety.

I found the compendium of short sections taken from Rebecca Solnit's book *Hope in the Dark* to be particularly bracing. Solnit explores several ways in which hope can follow on despair. “Threats and atrocities” call out



resistance, and new organizations and movements are born. People educate, organize, take chances and together prevent a watershed's destruction or the spraying of deadly poison; as they plan the first action, no one involved knows what eventually will happen. The abolitionist movements started by Quak-



US federal elections; Susan B. Anthony and Elizabeth Cady Stanton did not live to celebrate the result of the risks they took. “Activism is not a journey to the corner store,” Solnit writes, “it is a plunge into the dark.” To take that plunge, we need only the imagination to see things differently than they are at present.

The experiences of others, when attended to with care, can ignite that imagination. In addition to overview observations provided by Solnit and others, *Transform-*

*ing Terror* presents stories of survivors and observers. Greek activist and poet Yannis Ritsos, in a poem entitled “Afternoon,” describes a day passed grieving for those killed as being “a difficult color made up of old footsteps halted in mid-stride.” In a piece first published in 1892,

► **TRANSFORMING** continued on page 5

*A Chorus of Stones*

Susan Griffin's *A Chorus of Stones: The Private Life of War* (Anchor Books, 1993) is a bold leap into the mostly-unknown—the subjective lives of a number of historical figures caught up in war or in the development of nuclear weapons. The book made the short list for the Pulitzer Prize for General Nonfiction in 1993, and it's easy to understand why: Griffin's writing is powerful, often poetic, even generally prophetic.

How do history and individual lives shape each other? This should matter to everyone, though each of us might describe our present historical moment—the times we share—differently. Griffin's approach, which she calls “social autobiography,” allows her to explore this issue (here and in two additional volumes, *What Her Body Thought* and *Wrestling with the Angel of Democracy*). “I do not see my life as separate from history,” she tells us. “In my mind my family secrets mingle with the secrets of statesmen and bombers.”

Accordingly, in *Chorus* a number of historical figures ranging from Gandhi to Heinrich Himmler are vividly imagined. Griffin's choice of a structure that juxtaposes personal experience with public history anchors her meaning not in a single story readers can trace from the book's beginning to its end, but instead in “the private life of war” (the book's subtitle) and on the role denial plays in history as it causes—and perpetuates—emotional and physical damage. While some of the comparisons Griffin makes between private and public realms may seem to be straining for authentic connection, for me this concern is far outweighed by the importance of her insistence on the necessity of struggle to move past denial, and into real relationship.

As in *Transforming Terror*, part of Griffin's concern in *A Chorus of Stones* is to engage the reader's imagination. Griffin's willingness, for example, to consider whether and in what ways she and Himmler, the architect of Nazi atrocities against Jews and others before and during World War II, had similar backgrounds takes us a step beyond our habitual denial. We are encouraged, in a necessary way, to think of our lives as unfolding within a larger story. How can we shape that story, even as it shapes us? —Joli Sandoz

One thing that allows people to kill each other is abstraction; the killer cannot imagine the suffering he is causing. But when we engage our imaginations we begin to scan for connection rather than difference.

## Is the Olympia Free Skool too free?

Ava Arvest

There are lots of Free Skools around the country offering classes like “Yoga 4 the people”, “Crazy Quilts”, “Capoeira Basic Aerobics”, “feminism is for Everybody,” and “Community Cinema”. The Free Skool movement offers free classes to all people. Anyone can address their needs affordably and find solutions to their everyday problems from members of their community.

There are Free Skools in Ithica, Tampa, Portland, Santa Cruz, Ann Arbor, and more! And there have also been several incarnation of a Free Skool in Olympia.

As people migrate in and out of Olympia, our Free Skool has held several forms, evolving like many things do. The current Free Skool operates under the radical assertion that information should be regulated by people, not money. Even this mission statement may evolve as there becomes a need for it.

Who does Free Skool answer to? Does Free Skool answer to money? No, it doesn't. However, does free skool assert the impossible? Is it too difficult to spare four hours of time in a culture that runs strictly off of economic exchange? The concept of Free Skool is widely supported, left and right, up

and down the board, however the successful installation of this idea into our communities seems to be met with all sorts of extraordinary obstacles.

Our friends are really busy investing in their livelihoods, and trying to pay off their hospital bills or court fees. Seems like we're too busy working our under-

Is it possible to have a system, reliable within our community, that is not held at gun point by our economic system or do we truly need the dollars to back our words?

paid positions, or remembering to mail out 7.6% of our earning to the IRS. We are trying to raise children in healthy environments and provide enough food for the winter, and make sure that they're not being exposed to the wrong political views in the classroom. Is there a Free Skool class for paying your taxes on time? Is there a Free Skool class for winterizing your windows? Is there a Free Skool class for planting your fall crops, or covering your tomatoes on the first frost? These could all be classes! Though the truth most of us experience

is we already have our hands full. How do people manage to step away from their industrial livelihoods and remember to watch the sunset, much less teach a Free Skool class like Fertility Awareness and Contraceptive Concerns? This is being done in Ann Arbor and it seems a worthy cause.

So how are we to do this? Like any organization there needs to be a foundation, something that supports the weight it intends to carry. Something reliable. Reviews of other Free Skools, report the unpredictability of the organization is one of the

more undesirable factors. No one wants to show up to a class that doesn't exist, doesn't have a facilitator, or has been scheduled improperly. Most of us have calculated our time to some earned revenue, which equates every lost hour to lost money. Now free skool is no longer free, but is costing us our precious time at the exchange of unstable promises of knowledge. This is risky business.

Is it possible to have a system, reliable within our community, that is not held at gun point by our economic system? Or do we truly need the dollars to back our words? It's not something to be taken lightly that we truly are propped upon this system of economic exchange. Currently we use paper money as a representative of resources and time. We have utilized money with the intentions of delivering these promises of resources and time.

But monetary promises are just one form of promise we invest in. Seeds are also promises, compost is a promise, soil is a promise, and Free Skool is a promise. These are things that don't do very much for us out of context. They

► **FREE SKOOL**, continued on page 5

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► **Transforming**, cont. from page 4  
US journalist Ida B. Wells documents the fact that reporters of her time did not always record even the names of African Americans hung by lynch mobs, let alone bother to investigate the crime; I found myself thinking about the ways our times are different—and the same. Radical feminist thinker Robin Morgan describes the subjective effects of seeing every surface “plastered with homemade photocopied posters, a racial/ethnic rainbow of faces and names” as she walked near the World Trade Center after 9/11, a horror that awakens my own memories of newscast and Internet images during those days.

Stories told from the heart allow others, in Griffin’s words, to “face the full catastrophe of grief, fear, and rage.” When listeners’ responses are compassionate, people are brought together through the bond of shared humanity. Communities must acknowledge and witness publicly, Griffin noted, embracing and understanding the shared quality of tragedy and suffering, because individual healing is tied to the healing of a community and even an entire society. Recognition that others suffer, and how, is a start. “Social change including political change,” as Griffin said, “comes when people change.”

*Previous WIP articles by Joli Sandoz won two Washington Press Association awards. She buys books from as many independent bookstores as possible, and urges you to join her.*

► **Free Skool**, cont. from page 4  
are things that can provide greatly but need to be cultivated, incubated, remembered, and checked upon. On one end of the spectrum ideas are merely fantastical blue prints, and on the other end of the spectrum extraordinary fantasies are at the core of all great inventions. What is it that gives promises weight? That makes money talk? That makes forecasts reliable, and almanacs a future telling resource? Is it trust?

If we work, we are rewarded with prophetic pieces of paper, endowed with promises of resources and time. We sell our time, to accumulate time. We trust the dollar, but are we now reliant upon the dollar to tell us what we can trust? We are finding that value is becoming harder and harder to identify if it is not backed by currency, and in fact our policy makers make their decisions based upon what can be backed by these numerals, and what can be shown and measured to have quantitative benefits for our rapidly changing society. It might be wise to remember that these are merely representatives, and they speak for what cannot speak for itself, and that the system was enacted to serve the value of our very precious world, not replace it.

This has everything to do with Free Skool, and the distribution of education, and knowledge as we know it. This is the middle man of our current society, standing between us and everything beautiful, telling us what is worthy of doing, eating or enjoying. Free Skool asserts that we can share these things

► **Power** cont. from page 1  
privately held by a group of investment companies and fund managers, all of which maintain portfolios of infrastructure investments in the US, Australia, Canada and several other nations. The investment companies and fund managers represent primarily government and private company pension funds [in many countries].

“Puget Holdings will buy all the outstanding common stock of Puget Energy for \$30 per share. Puget Energy common stock will no longer be publicly traded...

The transaction is funded with \$3.4 billion in cash, \$2.6 billion of assumed debt held by PSE and \$1.45 billion of newly issued debt, approximately \$600 million of which is used to replace or refinance existing debt held by PSE and \$850 million of which is net new debt held by Puget Energy (from which PSE ratepayers are

under our own conditions and exchange knowledge as we see fit, rather than through economic filtration. This cannot be an easy task as we have been operating off of the economic structure for many years, though it appears a worthwhile endeavor.

Free Skool may not immediately solve all of these cyclical and systematic issues we’re living amongst, however it addresses the issue, relentlessly. Free Skool would only be a lesser evil to take the glory of the throne, or throw itself in front of patriarchy as the ideal solution to our problems, merely replacing one dictator with some other power-loving mistress. The solution is not in the name of the structures we adhere but will be found within our ability to create structure that can serve us, without replacing our love for society with a need to control society, or replacing our love for each other with a need to conquer each other for profit.

If you would like to talk more about what Free Skool could do for us, what classes you’d like to go to, or what kind of mission statement you’d like to see, we’re going to have a larger conversation about Free Skools, and Free Skool Olympia this month at Media Island. We’ll be preparing hors d’oeuvres and snacks to sustain us through this from 5-6 pm and followed by conversation on Saturday November 17.

Media Island is a local non-profit in Olympia that has been around since 1984 and its goals are focused around social justice, economic democracy, ecological sustainability, and peace. Media Island seeks to address these things through their radical approach to media by gathering evaluating, and distributing underpublished information on critical issues at strategic times. They’re located accross from the library at 816 Adams St. SE, and they also have a radio station!

Feel free to email the current Free Skool with your hopes for classes and fresh ideas, they’d love to hear from you [Freeskoololy@gmail.com](mailto:Freeskoololy@gmail.com). Free Skool Olympia also has a website that you can check out and will link you to the current calendar at [www.freeskoololy.com](http://www.freeskoololy.com).

*Ava Arvest is a resident of Olympia.*

shielded by commitments in the transaction).” UTC 12-30-2008

On December 19, 2008, UTC Commissioner Mark Sidran resigned. He had a history of stirring the muddy waters to suit the upper echelon, and his resignation just prior to the formal announcement of the sale of PSE went virtually

...this increased incremental debt load creates undue risk for ratepayers and it will place great pressure on the commission to approve the necessary large and frequent rate increases on a consistent basis.

unnoticed. The press release announcing his resignation went unpublished in the larger, more locally recognized media streams and could only be located in two small, non-local news sources. His quiet self-removal from the scene left many of PSE’s customers feeling sold out and suspicious.

The general consensus of over 1 million customers was probably best reflected by a comment made by David Goldstein (aka Goldy), in Seattle’s “The Stranger”:

“...why on earth would the state approve a highly leveraged buyout four cents on the dollar that delivers nothing to rate payers but a monopoly utility company with billions of dollars in new debt? Over the next few decades PSE could use its profits to invest in its existing infrastructure, to, for example, prepare itself to respond more quickly to mass outages like the one that knocked some of its customers off the grid for weeks following the 2006 windstorm. Or, it could invest its profits in building green generating capacity, like solar and wind farms.

“But instead, under the proposed deal, PSE will need to squeeze every penny it can out of ratepayers just to service its enormous debt. Rejecting this deal is

just common sense.”

Macquarie Group borrowed over \$4.2 billion to make the purchase. This will, of course, be repaid by PSE ratepayers over time. The Macquarie Group used Canadian pension money to buy the company, so the hundreds of millions in profits Puget Sound Energy pull out of our monthly rate payments are now going to Canada and Australia instead of to US shareholders and pensioners.

Why the UTC would go along with the deal and allow the sale of our local and most-needed commodity (after water and food) to be sold to absentee owners? We were set up from the get-go.

To be continued...in the next issue we’ll following the money on an adventure which will make your head spin. Mergers, acquisitions, SEC scandals and more are ahead on the gluttonous trail of truth and the environmental sludge it leaves behind...

*Diane Frank is an independent publisher in Thurston County. Having grown up in a political household where both her grandparents discussed their work as union organizers with IBEW and UAW starting in the 1930’s, she learned to question the motivations of ‘leaders’ by following the money and power.*

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# The defeated 7-Eleven project

## What happened in a nutshell and why it's important

Bethany Widener

*Ed. note: This article is a summary of a report by the author. To view the entire report, please go to [olywip.com](#).*

In April 2012 Superior Court Judge Lisa Sutton reversed the City of Olympia's approval of a project proposed for the southeast corner of Harrison Avenue and Division Street (1919 Harrison) in West Olympia. The proposal offered access from Harrison, Division and 4th Avenue to two one-story buildings—a 7-Eleven and a building whose use was unspecified."

The intersection links three established residential neighborhoods and is heavily used by pedestrians, including school children; by bicyclists; by vehicles including logging trucks and by four bus routes as part of Intercity Transit's major 'trunk route' collector service. West Olympia has led in generating the majority of traffic growth in Olympia every year since the passage of the Growth Management Act in 1990. At peak times, 2800 vehicles per hour pass through the intersection.

Judge Sutton reversed the approval on grounds that the City had erroneously interpreted and misapplied the law in three areas: 1) widening an existing street does not qualify as a "new street development" allowing abandonment of standards that otherwise apply; 2) when the Olympia Municipal Code states that new buildings in an HDC-3 zone must be multiple stories, it means they cannot be single-story; and 3) a Traffic Impact Analysis must be conducted for the specific development and use on review and as a prerequisite for approving more than one access to the site. This decision corroborated over a year of work by members of the Westside community to show that the project would worsen a dangerous intersection; would conflict

with the City's plans for a dense, urban, and pedestrian-oriented streetscape; and violated specific provisions of the City's municipal code and standards.

To support the contention that the approval of the 7-Eleven Project would defeat the Comprehensive Plan directives for developing this area, we researched the City's land-use review activities; the particulars of the 7-Eleven proposal; the circumstances of the 1919 parcel and the condition of the intersection. We found the legal discrepancies that led to defeat of the proposal.

We also discovered that, in addition to their failure to correctly interpret and apply provisions of the Code, the City's review of the 7-Eleven Project was characterized by omissions, inconsistencies, factual mistakes, and contradictory explanations.

Our case-study of this land-use decision reveals much that is otherwise hidden from the public and its City Council representatives. This report details instances in which the staff: 1) made careless errors; 2) did not know the law or policy; 3) misapplied the law; 4) made contradictory statements; 5) was unprepared; 6) ignored evidence; and 7) failed to verify unsupported claims of the developer. This raises the question as to whether the staff's actions are in

fact informed by the rules: Comprehensive Plan, the Municipal Code, the Engineering Design, and Development Standards.

The level of detail is necessary because it is difficult to see flaws without

### We discovered that the City's review of the 7-Eleven Project was characterized by omissions, inconsistencies, factual mistakes, and contradictory explanations.

knowledge of the City's land-use review process. The detail provides an opportunity to compare what was said and done by City staff to what specific provisions of the Code say should be said and done; and allows comparison to past statements and actions of City staff. Our purpose is to show convincingly the need to reform the City's approach to planning: it must be defined and enforced by the City's leaders, not left to the uncoordinated discretion of staff.

Our recommendations will only lead to improvement if the City Council demands that City Manager Steve Hall create a transparent process that holds Department Directors accountable for ensuring that their staffs know and apply the rules that govern growth and development in Olympia. There must also

be a system for measuring performance consistent with these rules—contained in the Comprehensive Plan, Municipal Code, Engineering Design and Development Standards, and other legal requirements.

Failure to remedy the kind of performance shown in the review of the 7-Eleven will perpetuate the same unplanned growth that the state Growth Management Act was designed to arrest:

substandard developments that, over time, perpetuate sprawl, keep people in their cars, degrade public facilities, discourage productive investment and erode trust in government.

The report is divided into four parts. Part I is an annotated chronology beginning

with a conference between the staff and the developer, and ending with Judge Sutton's decision. Part II details the issues raised by staff performance. Part III offers recommendations to remedy the problems identified. Part IV is an appendix containing documents referred to in the report.

Our conclusions are based on documents and information obtained from the City. Many documents are referenced in footnotes or included in the Appendix. In many cases, we've copied the staff's statements into the footnotes—we encourage you to read them for yourselves.

*Bethany Weidner has lived on Olympia's Westside for over 25 years and raised two sons here. She was the president of the West Olympia Neighborhood Assn. and more recently, of the Southwest Olympia Neighborhood Assn. (SWONA). She has been working with neighbors on Westside transportation issues since the mid-90's. She served as a Legislative Assistant to US Senator James Abourezk in Washington DC and then, after her return to Olympia in 1984, as Director of the Office of Policy Planning and Research at The Washington Utilities and Transportation Commission and later as a Deputy Insurance Commissioner for the State of Washington.*



## Recommendations for the Olympia City Council to improve planning process

### 1. Public Participation

Require the Community Planning and Development Department (CP&D) to comply with the law that defines "party of record" as someone who has submitted substantive comments on a proposal prior to the decision on that proposal.

Require CP&D to maintain a record of public comments, accessible by members of the public. Require the City to video tape public meetings in order to make the process meaningful and to capture public input.

Require CP&D to prepare a response to substantive comments by the public, including answers to specific questions. For example, Mr. Divers asked on April 26, 2011 for confirmation that the original agreement relating to relocation of the alley was still in place "with all terms and conditions enforced." There was no answer to this request, nor did Mr. Divers receive a notice of the Site Plan Review Committee (SPRC) decision.

Provide for an appeal from the SPRC decision to the City Council when a development proposal is located in a transitional zone or on land zoned commercial and abutting residentially zoned areas, similar to the appeal status of planned urban development.

Include in public notices relating to proposed developments 1) whether the appeal is to the City Council or 2) the Hearing Examiner. If the latter, specify that this is the only means to alter an approval, include the cost of appealing the City's decision (\$1000) and make clear that the Hearing Examiner is employed by the City. Provide for a refund if the work of citizens results in improvements to or overturns the SPRC decision.

Make available to those proposing to

appeal a fact sheet that gives information and cost of requesting reconsideration, including the hourly charge by the Hearing Examiner. Require an estimate of costs attributable to defending a contested land use approval (LUA) before the City decides whether to go to court. Clarify whether the City Attorney's client is the City Council or the staff of the City Departments.

Limit the term of contract with the Hearing Examiner to three years, followed by an audit of decisions, including those that were overturned as a result of challenges.

### II. Site Plan Review Council

Require the SPRC to draft rules of procedure that include appointment of a chairperson for each meeting where there is a decision on a land use approval; and to keep minutes. Require that the chairperson review the notice of land use approval before it is disseminated. (The Site Plan Review Council (SPRC) rules of procedures are insufficient to ensure fair and lawful decisions per 80.60.080B. The SPRC does not keep minutes of its decision meetings. The SPRC consists in many cases of the same line staff charged with reviewing a proposal; there is no second look, oversight, or opportunity to verify.)

Require the SPRC to include agencies in decision meetings where their recommendations will affect the outcome. E.g., include Intercity Transit in SPRC meetings where the decision will affect the use of buses or the location of bus stops.

### III. Development Review Process

Rewrite OMC 15.20.060 "Concurrency" to distinguish between the concurrency test designed to determine whether

a level of service will be affected by a development; and elements of a traffic impact analysis designed to test compliance with specific Engineering Design & Development Standards (EDDS); to evaluate safety issues for pedestrians, bicyclists and transit users in the immediate vicinity of the project; and to determine whether the traffic impacts of a development are consistent with the City's documented transportation goals. Clarify that traffic impacts will be analyzed according to the Traffic Impact Analysis (TIA) guidelines for all projects contributing more than 20 average daily trips at the peak hour. (This threshold is already in the EDDS for certain decisions.) Eliminate the blanket exemption for projects below 8000 square feet that is provided by incorporating the State Environmental Policy Act (SEPA) exemption into the concurrency provisions.

Rewrite the TIA Guidelines and clarify their use as the key tool for the city to evaluate impacts on transportation configurations, long and short term.

Define the Comp Plan terms "intensive" and "high-density" commercial development as contrasted with "low intensity" commercial patterns.

### IV. Training

Require that staff of the CP&D Department be able to reference provisions of the Comprehensive Plan that relates to projects they work on. Require attendance at an annual workshop covering interface between Comp Plan and Olympia Municipal Code. Designate go-to staff members in the CP&D Dept. who are to become experts in specific areas of the Comp Plan:

Implement a practice of CP&D staff and others involved in the permitting

process to submit a memorandum listing contradictions, ambiguities, missing pieces and impediments to achieving policy goals that they encounter, subsequent to each review—as between specific provisions of the EDDS, Municipal Code and the Comprehensive Plan.

### V. Priorities

Spend less time and money on "visioning" processes that never get translated into actual development decisions, and more time and money establishing an accountable, timely, and transparent system for amending the EDDS and the Municipal Code to implement and follow the development direction enshrined in the Comprehensive Plan.

Clarify the OMC and EDDS by replacing language requiring "consistency" with the Comprehensive Plan with "compliance." The Hearing Examiner argued that in cases where zoning and other regulations state that a development must "comply" with or "meet" a Comprehensive Plan, the development must meet requirements of both the zoning code and the plan. If the Olympia Municipal Code simply requires that the developer's proposal be "consistent with" the Comp Plan, and the Comp Plan abounds in undefined terms, all bets are off. (HEX Decision in 11-0025, p. 23)

The mayor and City Council members need to develop the capacity to imagine that what citizens are telling them may be correct. For 17 months, citizens said the staff was not enforcing the code. The Mayor and Council for 17 months said the problem was not enforcement, but alignment of the Code (and EDDS) with the Comprehensive Plan.

—Bethany Widener



# Celebrating the anniversary of Occupy, but not the war against Afghanistan

Peter Bohmer

*Ed. note: The following is a speech given by Peter Bohmer on October 7 at the Localization not Globalization event held in Sylvester Park in downtown Olympia.*

### The wars

I remember one year ago being at Sylvester Park on a Friday evening, October 7, 2011. It was the beginning of Occupy Olympia, 20 days after the beginning of Occupy Wall Street.. There was an open mike and I mentioned that the war against the Afghani people had begun 10 years ago and that we should continue to oppose it as part of Occupy Olympia and our activism. There was little reaction to my comment.

This war, the so-called war on terror led by the United States, continues to kill and injure many, many people in Afghanistan and Pakistan, Yemen, Somalia, Iraq, Bahrain, and US soldiers.

The war in Iraq is supposedly over but there is no peace or justice there.

The human and economic costs of the war to the people of the US are also astronomical. Among those costs is the growing racism and repression against Arab and Muslim people in the United States. Let us resist that as part of our anti-war movement and in our daily lives.

Over 2 million US soldiers have been stationed in Iraq and Afghanistan over the last 11 years. Besides the 7,000 soldiers that have died in these wars, how many more were wounded psychologically and physically, how many more have committed suicide?

What kind of society do the US soldiers come back to? One that you would not know about if you watched the first Obama- Romney Presidential debate on October 4; one where over 100 million people are poor or near-poor, and where almost half of all Black and Latino children are below the official poverty line. Where more than 50 million people don't have any health insurance, over 2 million people are in prison—half of whom are African-American—and millions have lost their homes.

Most soldiers are from working class families, many who enlisted had the alternative of unemployment, and then face unemployment when they leave the military.

There was no mention of poverty or poor or working class people by Obama or Romney in their debate; it was as if all of the US is middle class and all who pay income taxes own small businesses.

I said at a talk a few years ago outside of Ft. Lewis that the best way to support US troops and their families is to end the US wars and occupations, and to build a society where there is quality health care for all, full employment and living wage jobs, strong labor unions, free education thorough college, a healthy environment, free childcare, and more generally economic and social justice. Most troops become civilians and this would help them a lot more than waving the US flag and increasing the military budget.

Economically these changes are feasible and possible. The challenge of course is creating the political power and strength to win these changes. Joseph Stiglitz and other economists have estimated the direct and indirect costs of the US wars since October 7, 2001 at over 3 trillion dollars—that's 12 zeros.

There is a Federal grand jury that is now meeting in Seattle—a direct attack on the Occupy Movement and all of us...If the federal government gets away with this, repression will continue to grow.

The military budget is over \$720 billion dollars a year. If we took five months of that, about \$300 billion, the US would still be spending \$420 billion per year on the military, as much as the next nine countries together. That \$300 billion reduction in the military, which is five months of military spending could finance free tuition for all post-secondary education—technical school, community college, and four year college through PhD. It could include five million more people in college who might go if there was free tuition. So it is clear that money is there. We need to organize to use it to fund human needs not war, present and future.

In thinking ahead, let us not allow a war against Iran to happen. The propaganda against Iran is building just like the lies did against Iraq 10-12 years ago up to and including the attack on Iraq in March, 2003. Supposedly Iran is creating materials that could be used in the future to build an atomic bomb. Israel is threatening to attack Iran and is asking for US military support for this aggression.

I don't know whether Iran is building an atomic bomb, but notice the total hypocrisy and double standard of the United States and Israel. Israel has at least 200 atomic bombs and probably more; the US has thousands of atomic and hydrogen bombs enough to destroy the world many times over. Our so-called liberal president says he will bomb Iran if they are actually building a bomb, that he will not allow it. So Iran does not have the same right as Israel or the United States.

Who is the only country that has ever used atomic weapons? Iran and many other countries have proposed a nuclear weapon free Middle East. But that is not considered even a possibility by the masters of war in Washington, DC. Israel cannot attack Iran without US support or permission. Let us strongly oppose the lies about Iran and the ongoing US aggression and work against an escalation to a full-scale war and not wait until the bombing starts.

So economic justice and equality at home; opposing US present and future wars and supporting those who were or are in the military are all tied together. Let us connect them better than we are doing.

In rebuilding the Occupy Movement let us oppose US aggression and wars abroad. For example, the growing use

of drones in Pakistan and other countries where the Obama administration is judge, jury, and executioner, and lies about the number of civilians killed. This is a war crime. We need to make this war by drones more public, and make it clear that the issue is about more than just US deaths—that all deaths are equal, that the lives of Pakistanis are as valuable as ours. I want to thank and salute the brave people including some from Olympia and other peace activists who are right now going to the border between Afghanistan and Pakistan to put their bodies on the line to oppose these murderous drone attacks.

### Occupy anniversary

Occupy Wall Street and Occupy Olympia are both a year old. We have brought forward and made more visible the obscene and growing inequality of income and wealth in this country. Today, the top 1% have incomes that average more than 40 times the income of the bottom 90%. Thirty years ago—though still unacceptable—the top 1% had 14 rather than 42 times the income of 90% of the population.

The Occupy Movement has been somewhat quiet the last few months although consciousness about Wall Street and the 1% and economic injustice have been awakened. Movements ebb and flow; let us help make this one flow more strongly.

### Elections

Many of who were active in Occupy Wall Street and the many who heard us and our message feel powerless—others are focusing instead on the elections. With regards to the elections—Presidential, Governor, US Senate and House, Washington State representatives, etc—in general the Democrats are not quite as reactionary as the Republicans. There are some differences. But what I would like to stress is that politics is about a lot more than voting and electing the lesser of two evils. It is about building power from below, through protesting, organizing, creating organizations and movements where we can connect the issues, develop principled unity, fight the power, educate each other, and struggle to revolutionize and transform this society. If we build this power from below, we can win short run reforms from those in power while understanding these reforms will always be limited in a capitalist society. So I would suggest voting in Washington State for gay and lesbian marriage, for marriage equality; for legalizing marijuana, against Charter Schools, for Proposition 1 that will create municipal power and end the privatization of electricity and gas heating in Thurston County; and for allowing a majority vote of the legislature to raise taxes. All of this matters but what matters more is building ongoing organizations and institutions and infrastructure so that the Occupy and similar movements can grow in vision, numbers, power, organizational capacity, and become more welcoming and inclusive. Occupy is not over. Voting is but a small part of a real democracy.

### Daily challenge

As people and movements committed to liberation and economic and social justice, it is a necessity that we remember our history and support political prisoners and challenge repression as part of our daily lives and movements. Today, in Seattle, there is a march for Indigenous People's Day. The land we are on right now was stolen from Native people of the Pacific Northwest. The

march in Seattle commemorates this ongoing struggle for self-determination and dignity of Native people. It also calls for the freedom of Leonard Peltier, an inspiring leader of the American Indian Movement, who has been in prison for over 36 years for protecting Lakota people against the FBI and the multinational corporations who want their land and resources.

### Federal grand jury resisters

There is a Federal grand jury that is now meeting in Seattle—a direct attack on the Occupy Movement and all of us. Already there are two Olympia residents being held in a Federal Prison in Seatac, Matt Duran and Katie O. This Federal grand jury is criminalizing people for being anarchists.

The way it works is that people are subpoenaed and when they refuse to testify against others, they are considered in contempt of court and sentenced to prison, without trial. They can be imprisoned for the length of the grand jury. These courageous grand jury resisters are in there for all of us. Let us be out here for them.

If the federal government gets away with this, repression will continue to grow. Similar grand jury attacks on activists have been going on in Chicago and Minneapolis. Support the grand jury resisters by writing letters to newspapers publicizing what is going on. Attend rallies and benefits on their behalf. Demand their release.

### Amnesty for immigrants

Also close to home is the Northwest Detention Center in Tacoma where over 1500 immigrants are being held, most of whom will be deported to Mexico and Central America. The crime for most is coming to the United states to work after leaving their countries because global capitalism or US supported wars and intervention in their country have created conditions they could not survive. Let us push for amnesty for immigrants. Let us close this monstrosity of a private prison run by the Geo Corporation that makes millions off the suffering of undocumented immigrants.

### Call to action

In closing, we are living in an economy where over 20 million people are unemployed and this is likely to continue, and where climate change endangers this planet and its people, particularly in the Global South. We can say or feel that we cannot do anything about this crisis and related injustices. This cynicism and feeling of powerlessness are conscious tools of those in power.

Let us instead act in our daily lives in ways small and big to connect the movements and the people and the issues to each other. Let us see ourselves as long distance runners for creating a humane society without racism and sexism and homophobia—not a society based on profit and exploitation—so we can live in harmony with each other and the natural environment.

Act in solidarity with those globally struggling for justice. Let us educate each other and build ongoing institutions that do not fall part. Persistence pays off! So does being bold and courageous and taking risks. Rebuild Occupy and other movements; fight US aggression at home and abroad; overthrow capitalism and create a new society. Our humanity and future is at stake.

Tell no lies, claim no easy victories. Power to the people!

*Peter Bohmer has been active since 1967 in movements in solidarity with revolutionary struggles around the world and in anti-racist and economic justice movements in the United States. Since 1987, he has taught economics and political economy at the Evergreen State College.*

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# Why Chavez won: an inside view

Lisa Sullivan

A few days before the elections, a friend from the states wrote me: “Hi Lisa, all the main stream media down here has Chavez losing and ready to die. Can you give me a more accurate update on the elections?”

My inbox began to fill up with similar inquiries, many from people who I had met when leading delegations here to Venezuela, my home of 27 years. They were confused, wondering why Chavez was going to lose, die, or steal the elections, or all of the above. Those were, after all, the only stories to be found, countered by that of the great white hope in the form of a young, skinny opponent (the adjectives repeated ad nauseam by the media to describe opposition candidate Capriles).

Where, my friends asked, was all that enthusiasm and spirit they had seen here, the one that had transformed this nation into the least unequal spot in all of Latin America, where free university education, health care and cheap food led to Venezuelans rating themselves as the happiest people on the continent? Had Venezuelans suddenly dropped the most significant political project in Latin America of the past 50 years to suddenly opt for skinniness and youth?

Even National Public Radio set the stage for Venezuelan elections to a backdrop of doom and gloom, as friends notified me in a rush, listening to the Diane Rehm show. For busy and exhausted US citizens just trying to survive via the longest work hours on the planet, they only had time for small sound bites about Venezuela, or any global issue. And these sound bites painted a picture of Venezuela in shades of grey, kind of like those last tottering days of the Soviet empire. Into this scene, rides—or jogs—the youthful skinny Mr. Good to finally chase out the old (age 58) and solidly built Mr. Bad, according to Ms. Rehm and company.

How then to explain the street scenes of October 7? The ones showing colorfully attired and jubilant Venezuelans standing patiently in huge lines at polling centers, sharing laughs and empanadas with fellow line-mates, indifferent of political loyalties. On the cameras, everyone looked so happy in those long lines, certainly that must mean that they were all voting against Chavez, that evil cancer-ridden old chunky socialist dictator.

But even worse, how to explain the *results*? How to explain how this cruel “strongman” had won robustly with more than 54% of the vote, 10% more than his opponent. Or, that there was a record 81% voter turnout? Well, it must be...fraud. That was the other scenario the mainstream media had constantly dangled. But wait, in a few minutes the opposition candidate was on television himself, accepting defeat, acknowledging the decision of the Venezuelan people and absolute legitimacy of the electoral system. Wasn't it only Jimmy Carter who was allowed an occasional sound bite that spoke positively about the Venezuelan electoral system (the very best of the dozens his Carter Center has monitored). Wait, this just isn't going as planned.

So, why? Well, without delving into the messy deep part of that question (think: Iraq and weapons of mass destruction), maybe let's just touch on some of the easier reasons. In spite of the fact that there were 12,000 journalists in Venezuela covering the elections last night, only a handful of them seemed to venture far from their five-star hotels to take a look around the barrios and small rural towns where most Venezuelans actually live—like I do. Perhaps if they poked around there for a half hour or so, they might discover

what's behind all this love for this madman.

How about, for a start, free health care, and right in your local community? Well, if you don't believe those red-shirted socialist Venezuelans occasionally shown on TV pumping their fists at rallies, try listening to a gringa. A few weeks ago, I returned to Venezuela after a long set of travels interspersed with minor surgery. By the time my flight touched ground at the Maiquetia airport, my head was pounding and my vision blurring.

The next morning my companero Ledys took me to the local government health post, or CDI, similar to those found in almost every Venezuelan community. As I stumbled in, the waters parted and soon I was on a gurney with young Cuban and Venezuelan doctors patiently asking me many questions and examining me. Realizing I was having a reaction to the pain medication that I took for the first time on the plane, I was sent home with new meds and a smile, never interchanging a single ID or form of any payment. Within a few hours I was helping friends dig a vegetable garden. What a contrast to the series of medical appointments I had just undergone in the US, where the first words at a doctor's office were never “good morning” but, “your insurance card and ID”.

But the next day Ledys and I were back at the CDI, albeit in opposite roles. This time it was he with the pain, a raging one, in his lower right abdomen. Ledys was certain that the “socialist” arepas [a dish made of ground corn dough or cooked flour] we had eaten the previous day had laid havoc to his gut, as he gulped several down, taking advantage of their rock bottom price. The doctors thought otherwise, especially after doing emergency lab work. The next thing I knew, the same social worker who had helped us the previous day was strolling him by wheelchair into an ambulance and sending me off with a kiss and assurance that we were in capable hands. Within minutes, we arrived at a four-story brand new building in the heart of Petare, one of the most populous and poorest sectors of the country, but I felt that I was back in Washington, in a state-of-the-art hospital.

But no, this was definitely Venezuela, as I discerned when no ID was requested, the only information requested being name and age of patient. By late evening, orderlies called me to the hospital ward where I found Ledys looking happy and pain free after three hours of surgery to rid him of his appendix and hernia (they threw in the second surgery since he was already opened up.) Two days later we were sent home, with meds and follow up instruction. Total bill: \$0.

If free health care isn't enough reason to explain Venezuela's election results, maybe you can look to the faces of the young people who were jumping up and down last night in front of the presidential palace. For some odd reason, they just didn't buy the charm of that young skinny candidate, in spite of the fact that he even wore his lucky shoes yesterday (the press just loved that touch). Maybe the reason for their unadulterated joy was the lack of two words in their vocabulary: student loans.

I found that out when recently I hosted a dialogue between university students from the US and Venezuela at a cultural center that Ledys and I started in the sprawling barrios of Barquisimeto. When I saw the quizzical look on the faces of the Venezuelans as I attempted to translate the term student loans—which the US students were explaining were their main stumbling block to a hopeful future—I realized it wasn't a

question of translation, but of opposing realities. When we began to build this center twenty years ago, we only had two young at the center who had made it to college. Now, among this group of 15 Venezuelan musicians, all between ages 17-20, and all hailing from these barrios, every single one of them was studying at the university. Tuition was free and some even had scholarships to cover food and transportation. Student loans?

As Ledys and I anxiously awaited the result on election night, I was receiving text messages from my comadre Erika, a young mother of six, and my neighbor. Erika treats every recent election (and

It was utterly electric. Seas of red-shirted Venezuelans had been waiting for hours for results, and now the moment was theirs as Chavez stepped out onto “the balcony of the people.”

there have been many of them, over 10 in the past decade or so) as a matter of life and death, waiting anxiously with heart-in-hand outside the one polling station in our little town of Palo Verde, the one school building there. When I arrived in this community 15 years ago, the school was just a grade school. In the past ten years, it has doubled in size, and now also functions as a high school by day, on weekends as a free government university, and evenings, as one of the tens of thousands of “mission” schools, run by the government.

Erika grew up having to pick coffee instead of going to school. Three years ago she got her grade school degree from the mission school, and is now well on her way to a high school degree. She is thinking of what to study at the university level, maybe social work. She often repeats to me: “comadre, notice how Chavez always says, *we the poor*. He is one of us.”

Erika lives in a hand-fashioned home of bahereque (waddle and daub) like mine, snuggled in a small community at the end of the town. More than half of the thirty or so homes in our neighborhood are brand new, sporting the before unheard-of indoor bathrooms and kitchens, all tiled in a lovely sea green. Erika was part of the community council that helped with the census that determined which families most needed the new homes (mostly, those that squished several nuclear families together under one roof). Others had more need as she acknowledged, so she helped with the process, but remained with her old home.

Funds for 16 homes were dispersed by the government, but the community council managed the funds well enough to build 17 homes. The instant that the election results were announced Erika called me with joy and tears in her voice: “comadre, we won!”

I confess, I also felt tears stream down my face. I was holding my computer to the television screen so that my daughter back in Virginia could see the results via skype at the moment they were announced. Her tears joined mine. She remembers all too well growing up in the pre-Bolivarian Venezuela. The one where her friends in the barrio could barely scrape enough to eat, where some had parents who died of lack of health care, where none ever dreamed of going to college. That's the Venezuela before, the one that the mainstream press never bothers to mention, the Venezuela that led Latin America for the deepest plunge into pov-

erty in the 15 years preceding Chavez. The Venezuela directed by the IMF and World Bank, two of the main buddies the lucky-shoed candidate promised to usher in again.

After the results, the television screens turned to the scene outside the presidential palace. Did the US mainstream press bother to show that scene? It was utterly electric. Seas of red-shirted Venezuelans had been waiting for hours for results, and now the moment was theirs as Chavez stepped out onto “the balcony of the people”. As crowd and president intoned the national anthem together the look of sheer joy on the faces of so many Venezuelans, a nation that saw my children grow and flourish and learn to become caring people in love with justice, I let my own tears flow.

“Chavez is the people” is the phrase heard over and over here. To those back in the States, how could you possibly understand, there is no real coverage of what happens in Venezuela in the mainstream media. But to watch that scene, that utter connection, you would also sense that each of these people felt that who they

are was being uplifted at that moment : their absolutely dignity, their unalienable right to healthcare, education, housing, food, and, above all, a sense that they have the power to determine the direction of their own country All of this was lifted as high as the stars last night.

The electricity built as Chavez held high above the crowd the sword of Simon Bolivar. The one mismatch for me and Chavez has always been his military persona, and as a life-time peace activist, the image of a sword isn't exactly what does it for me, even one gleaming like this in gold and diamonds. But the chant of the crowd as he raised the sword is one that I have heard over and over again in my recent travels to the length and breadth of this Latin America, a continent that I have lived in and loved for the past 35 years: “alerta, alerta, alerta que camina, la espada de Bolivar por America Latina” (Alert: The sword of Bolivar is walking throughout Latin America.)

As Chavez held up the sword, he and the crowd swayed as they spoke and cheered that real independence was finally coming to Latin America, a continent increasingly configuring itself as one: Union of South American Nations (UNASUR), Bolivarian Alliance for the Peoples of Our America (ALBA), Community of Latin American & Caribbean States (CELAC), all variations of Bolivar's dream. The independence that Bolivar won from Spain, via a sword, was now being won again, from a colonizer that took over no sooner than Spaniards had departed: my country.

But this time the sword was indicative of a new form of battle: democracy. The massive enthusiastic and peaceful turnout at Venezuelan polls yesterday is the real story of Venezuelan elections. The fact that deep social change is happening in Venezuela and throughout Latin America, via a ballot box and not bullets, is what I celebrate.

In my travels as Latin America coordinator for the School of the Americas Watch, I have heard too many stories of atrocities, murders, rapes, disappearances, torture at the hands of dictators that we in the US trained and supported. And I don't just mean in the 60's and

► CHAVEZ WON, continued on page 10



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Justin Raimondo

*Ed. note: This article was originally published in Anti-war.com and is reprinted with their permission.*

It's no wonder the Israeli Foreign Ministry initially held back from releasing a transcript of Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu's speech to the UN General Assembly: Bibi's wackiness doesn't bear close scrutiny. Perhaps "wacky" isn't quite the right word for his 40-minute peroration, during which he pulled out a bomb "diagram" and a red marker to illustrate where he would draw a "red line" defining the outer limits of Iran's nuclear program. Cartoonish is more like it. The cartoonish quality of the bomb drawing underscored the content and tone of the speech, which was the jeremiad of a radical ideologue rather than anything one would expect from a statesman:

"Today a great battle is being waged between the modern and the medieval. Israel stands proudly with the forces of modernity. We protect the rights of all our citizens, men and women, Jews and Arabs, Muslims and Christians, all are equal before the law."

Israel, which privileges its priestly caste, has a state religion, and bases its national mythology on a "promise" from G-d, is as medieval as any of its neighbors. Aside from being a lie, however, this statement is interesting because it evokes the very same supremacist spirit that animates the controversial pro-Israel public relations campaign launched by the Jewish state's extremist American supporters. Posters in the public transport system, from New York to San Francisco, proclaim:

"In any war between the civilized man and the savage, support the civilized man. Support Israel. Defeat jihad."

No wonder the Israeli consulates in New York and San Francisco won't disavow those vile subway posters: Pamela Geller is the new public face of Israel.

Yes, Israel protects the rights of all citizens—unless they're Palestinians who happen to own property coveted by the "settlers," in which case it doesn't. And the key word here is citizens; of course, the Palestinians in the occupied territories are not citizens, but helots, with no rights, and no protection from fanatical Jewish fundamentalists who have launched hundreds of attacks on their

# Bibi's crazy UN speech

## Medievalist poses as champion of "modernity"

homes, and sought to displace them at every opportunity with the active complicity of the Israeli government.

This idea that Israel represents "modernity" is rich, considering that every day Israeli society is sinking lower into the morass of religious and cultural fundamentalism, a regression that has not gone unnoticed in the West. Bibi opened his speech with biblical references, describing Jerusalem as the "eternal capital" of Israel and declaring that "the Jewish state will live forever." Yet as we secularists know, nothing lives "forever," and the idea of a city being the "eternal" capital of anything is a metaphor, at best, at worst a dangerous delusion. If this is the "modern" then one wonders how much it differs from the "medieval." But let's not linger too long over the obvious. Bibi rants on:

"Militant Islam has many branches, from the rulers of Iran with their revolutionary guards to al-Qaeda...but they're all rooted in the same soil. It's not whether this fanaticism will be defeated, but how many lives will be lost before it's defeated. Nothing could imperil my country more than arming Iran with nuclear weapons. To imagine what the world would be like with a nuclear Iran, imagine what the world would be like with a nuclear al-Qaeda. There's no difference."

The Israeli Prime Minister may have been addressing the UN General Assembly, but he was really talking to the Americans, whose fear and loathing of the perpetrators of the 9/11 attacks can always be counted on to raise them to new levels of hysteria. Outside that context, however, equating the Iranians with Al Qaeda makes about as much sense as likening the late unlamented Saddam Hussein to Osama bin Laden—and, hey wait, didn't we hear that equation made endlessly in the run-up to the invasion of Iraq? Yet this was not a time for subtlety from the Israeli Prime Minister—the cartoon "bomb" ended all hope of that—but for the crudest sort of propaganda, which is, of course, war propaganda.

Imagine if Palestinian leader Mahmoud Abbas, who addressed the UN that day minutes before Netanyahu took the stage, had said: "Militant Judaism has many branches, from the Washington offices of AIPAC to the center of Jewish power in Tel Aviv—but they're all rooted in the same soil" of intolerance? Picture him conjuring images of violent Jewish "fanaticism"—not a hard task, given what is happening in Israel today. If he had done so, Abbas would have been denounced in every Western capital as the 21st century incarnation of Hitler.

Netanyahu went on to cite the non-existent "record of Iranian aggres-

sion without nuclear weapons"—an odd claim, since Iran hasn't attacked a single one of its neighbors since the Battle of Thermopylae. The country did fight one war in modern times, when it was attacked by Iraq, which was being backed by the United States. However, it's necessary to remember that war propaganda has no need of facts: only emotionally-charged evocations of rage—and fear:

"Given this record of Iranian aggression without nuclear weapons, just imagine an Iran with nuclear weapons. Who among you would feel safe in the Middle East? Who'd be safe in Europe? Who'd be safe in America? Who'd be safe anywhere?"

That this alleged champion of "mo-

**Netanyahu may have been addressing the UN General Assembly, but he was really talking to the Americans, whose fear and loathing of the perpetrators of the 9/11 can always be counted on to raise them to new levels of hysteria.**

derernity" should base his case on fear-mongering should come as no surprise: hasn't fear been the leitmotif of all the "modern" ideologies of aggressive nationalism? Fear of the Other, of the barbarian at the gates—the "savage" who, at the first opportunity, will tear your throat out with his bare teeth—is what keeps ideologues like Netanyahu and his American co-thinkers in business.

Those Eye-ranians, says Bibi, aren't like the rest of us, which is why deterrence won't work. "Iran's apocalyptic leaders" are awaiting the return of the Mahdi, a holy man, whose reappearance is supposed to occur after a devastating war:

"Militant jihadists are not secular Marxists. Militant jihadists behave very differently. There were no Soviet suicide bombers."

Correct me if I'm wrong, but aren't the Israelis also awaiting the return of Someone Special, a Messiah who will lead them out of the wilderness and establish the Kingdom of Jerusalem as His earthly domain? Militant jihadists may not be secular Marxists - but then again, militant Zionists aren't, either. I would no more trust nuclear bombs in Bibi's hands than I would in Ahmadinejad's - the difference being that the former is actually in possession of such weapons.

Which brings us to the absurdity of this lecture by the leader of the only nuclear-armed country in the region: here is a nation which refuses to even admit it acquired nukes long ago, and which disdains the Nonproliferation Treaty (NPT), making the case for war against a neighbor that has indeed signed the NPT and is abiding by its requirements.

That treaty gives Tehran the right to develop nuclear power. Furthermore, there is zero evidence Iran is embarked on a nuclear weapons program: our own

intelligence community tells us they gave that up in 2003 and show no signs of resuming it. Their own religious and political leaders have denounced the possession of nuclear weapons as sinful: the Israelis, on the other hand, haven't bothered reassuring us they would never use the nuke they won't admit they have.

In a rational world, Israel would be in the dock, answering for its unwillingness to come out of the nuclear closet and admit what the whole world knows by now. Indeed, Bibi could give us some insight into exactly how Israel stole acquired the materials to build its formidable nuclear arsenal—since, according to recently declassified documents, he was directly involved.

In the world in which we are living, however, in which the innocent are put on trial and the guilty sit in judgement, the situation is quite different. In that world, the leader of a tiny nation entirely dependent on US largesse takes to the UN podium to issue his marching orders to Washington. Here is my "red line," says Bibi - daring not only the Iranians but also the Americans to cross it.

Think of Netanyahu's UN oration as just another Romney campaign speech, in which the GOP presidential candidate says Tehran must not be allowed to get "one turn of the screwdriver away" from joining the nuclear club. According to Netanyahu, Iran is nearly at that point today, and will have a nuclear weapon in less than a year if the US fails to act.

This is technical nonsense, but then again the truth has nothing to do with war propaganda: to the average American, the mere possession of weapons-grade uranium means all the Iranians have to do is plug it in and hurl it, slingshot style, in the general direction of Israel. This is an impression Israeli propagandists would dearly love to inculcate in the American public, and they have the great advantage of relying on general ignorance of the technical details. Good luck explaining to Mr. Average American why it would take a good four years after they've weaponized their nuclear material for the Iranians to create a useable nuke.

The ticking-bomb theme, which has been used to justify everything from torture to the invasion of Iraq, permeates Israeli propaganda in the US and was a central theme of Bibi's speech. His message was clear: "the hour is getting late." We must act without giving too much thought to the possible consequences. Don't delay, don't think, act now—before the fraud is exposed, and we discover that—as in the case of the Iraqis—those "weapons of mass destruction" were just a figment of our easily manipulated collective imagination.

Justin Raimondo is the editorial director of Antiwar.com, and a senior fellow at the Randolph Bourne Institute. He is a contributing editor at The American Conservative, and writes a monthly column for Chronicles. He is the author of

*Reclaiming the American Right: The Lost Legacy of the Conservative Movement* [Center for Libertarian Studies, 1993; *Intercollegiate Studies Institute*, 2000], and *An Enemy of the State: The Life of Murray N. Rothbard* [Prometheus Books, 2000].

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► **Occupy**, cont. from page 1

advocacy. Besides volunteer service, I organized and executed a direct action in which a group of us built a free medical clinic on vacant state-owned property in downtown Olympia; the State came with guns and tore it down on the third day. I also organized and executed a survey of students at the Evergreen State College: 11% of student respondents reported that they were experiencing homelessness at the time of the survey. The results are published in the 2012 Thurston County Homeless Census Report (available online and by request from the City of Olympia). I am currently stockpiling cold weather gear for distribution this winter.

*What do you think have been Occupy Wall Street's successes? And were there any surprise positives for you personally?*

I grew more as a person in those two months than I would have thought possible. It was a paradigm shifting experience, unprecedented in my lifetime. The greatest success of this movement is the conversation that it began. The fact that you are even asking these questions now is evidence of the ongoing success of our campaign.

*What can be done to make protest communities work better in the future?*

Prioritize the basic needs of marginalized people on all agendas. Immediately draft and adopt an anti-oppression policy, post it, and enforce it. Promote a matriarchal society. Reject coercive authority as illegitimate; might does not make right. Be compassionate, and be of service. Stand on the side of truth and defend it tooth and nail.

*How should decision-making and governance be determined?*

Whenever possible, decisions should be made through a formal consensus process. Better still would be an executive council of mothers and grandmothers, appointed by the community through consensus.

*Is there anything else that you want future organizers to know?*

Check your privilege. Google it—you'll be glad you did. Really, be honest with yourself; it will make you so much more effective, and your alliances will increase considerably. It is a cold hard fact that many women and people of color were alienated from the Occupy Olympia encampment by the oppressive behavior of cis-gendered straight white men—like me. As an organizer, it is critical that you are aware of your role in oppression. If you have time to be an organizer, then you have more privilege than someone struggling for survival. If they had what you have, then they could do what you do too. The only difference between you is a degree of privilege. Be proud of your service to others, but not of your privilege.

Jeff Thomas

*Describe yourself and what you did last year during Occupy, and what you are doing nowadays.*

I was with Occupy from the first meeting at Sylvester Park until the eviction. I did a little bit of a whole bunch, from securing tents, staying up with people who needed help, organizing, facilitating, and marching, with a mixed bag of effectiveness. What I mostly did was learn about others and myself, which has largely shaped my life since Occupy. I've shifted from my painting business to community service, learning to live with less dollars and improving our built environment.

Much of my time is spent sprucing up houses and lawns, including The Commons@Fertile Ground where I serve as a member of the board. A mobile community kitchen is in the works, which will be available for free for community uses - work-parties, political events, feeding people for the sake of feeding people. Also planned is a natural materials depot for DIY urban beautification projects (think intersection painting).



photo: Robert Whitlock

We're hosting classes on communication skills and other "Village Skills." I also study for my MBA and do natural plaster work.

*What do you think have been Occupy Wall Street's successes?*

Escalation. Our nation faces serious corruption problems with serious consequences and politicians who address the corruption and systemic inequities have been considered conspiratorial extremists. The OWS movement has added an extreme, angry voice into debate, which has allowed current debates to touch more on fundamental problems like the wealth gap and campaign financing without seeming extreme, like what Batman did for Harvey Dent in *The Dark Night*.

Solidarity with poverty. A lot of us learned the difference between solidarity and charity. Occupy relied on charity, but also provided the opportunity for many to start to empathize with poverty.

*And were there any surprise positives for you personally?*

Yes! I didn't realize how many people I've known for years would become politically aware! I've had friends who have ignored politics for their entire lives who now are deeply concerned about

*What can be done to make protest communities work better in the future?*

Recognize the difficulty. It's ridiculously hard to organize and implement a tent city of a couple hundred people who don't know each other, in cold rain with 40 mph gusts of wind, with no budget. Outsiders say we did poorly—who cares? Convincing people we know how to build a free resort town in downtown Oly wasn't in the goals.

Practice and prepare. A "mobile kitchen" is in the works, which will improve upon designs and processes used

in OO's kitchen, hopefully followed by a mobile med tent. They'll be used for various events and demonstrations, allowing skills and resources to build. I'm looking forward to limited-duration Occupations, like three-day protest camps.

Focus on tangible actions—washing dishes, making signs, posting to Facebook, singing protest songs—instead of trying to manage and govern the camp.

How should decision-making and governance be determined?

Sparingly. Create a list of value-based basics—is destruction of property officially off the table? What are the two-three main goals? Will people be asked to leave and for what? Keep it short. Post these basics before the Occupation starts and limit governance to that. Then stop talking about decision-making and governance. Encourage others to follow the basic principles, post the basics on signs, but keep it positive and don't get too distracted when people don't agree—it's more important to focus on supporting each other emotionally and physically than to have everyone agree on theoretical rules.

Dana Walker

*What was your experience with Occupy?*

I was part of an organization that was already planning to occupy Sylvester Park before Occupy Olympia even started; when Occupy Olympia sprouted up we combined our efforts with Occupy. I was there at the beginning, I participated throughout, and I was there when the encampment was shut down.

The Occupy Movement changed the entire narrative for the entire country and we correctly identified the villains—something the press completely failed to do. We pressured the Wall Street banks and we greatly raised awareness of the scams to which the American people had been victimized.

This was pure grassroots at its best.

► **Chavez won**

70's. I mean in the 2010's, like in Honduras, where human rights leaders, peasants and journalists are being murdered right now, today, because of our support for an illegal coup to unseat a president who dared to invite his population to dream the dreams of dignity that flowed in the streets last night, the dreams of Morazan, Central America's Bolivar.

One final note. There are actually lots of journalists who do take the time to seek out and write about the real story. They are not to be found in the mainstream press, but they can be found in organizations such as Center for Economic and Policy Research (CEPR), the Real News, Venezuelanalysis, the Americas Program, Upside Down World, and many many more. My saludos to them this morning, how we need you and thank you for rolling up your sleeves, with meager or no budgets, and working late into the night to report the truth. From Venezuela, from the heart of the Bolivarian dream for Latin America, gracias!

Abrazos, Lisa

*Lisa Sullivan is the director and staff person for School of the Americas Watch for all of Latin America. She has lived in Venezuela for 25 years and is active in community organizing in the city of Barquisimeto and in rural organizing in Palo Verde, both in the state of Lara.*

Occupy Olympia eventually split into semi-warring factions and I personally found the GA structure to be almost useless as far as actually getting anything done was concerned. Since I am action-oriented I eventually stopped attending the GA's and we began organizing actions on our own without endlessly talking in circles for a week before failing to take any action.

As is usual in such actions a small handful of people did all the work. When these folks started thinking they should have say in Occupy policy, the anti-authoritarian authoritarians objected saying they could do anything they wanted and that the reign of privileged white males was over. There was also a lot of friction between the anarchists and the people who wanted to negotiate with the state and between the people who wanted to participate in direct action and those that wanted to talk for days without ever actually doing anything.

When the Machine finally shut down the Occupy camp there was no resistance—except from some kids who seized a building next to the encampment. This move was highly criticized by some who complained that this action was not sanctioned by the GA, but such an action required secrecy—and at least they did something.

In the future I would suggest a 'working groups' model for getting things done and using GA's only for overall strategic discussions and/or issues that affect the entire group.

*Matson Boyd is a long-time Evergreen student who is still trying to get into economics graduate school. He can be reached at matsonboyd@gmail.com*

*Carole Willey, BSW, is a local community organizer and strategist with legislative and capitol campus expertise.*

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# Who are these BBB people?

## Is their purpose to protect the consumer—or their bottom line?

Diane Frank

I was interested in the Better Business Bureau (BBB) rating for our monopolistic, highest per kilowatt rate in the country electric company who silently tyrannizes people, Puget Sound Energy (PSE). Their rating was A-plus.

What the ???  
The BBB states that this rating is based upon the number of complaints as compared to the size of the business and length of time in business.

OK. BBB states that PSE's file looks like this:  
BBB file opened: 01/01/1956

Business started: 01/01/1873  
Business started locally: 01/01/1997  
Here's what it really is: In 2009 Puget Sound Energy was sold to foreign investors, Macquarie Group, in a leveraged private equity buyout. Puget Holdings, the US title of this group of longterm infrastructure investors, merged with Puget Energy, PSE's parent company to form the current business structure. BBB also states..."BBB has sufficient background information on this business."

So I begin to wonder, "who are these BBB people? Do they not know of the massive number of lawsuits which have been lodged against PSE's coal steam plant "Colstrip" in Montana? Do they not concern themselves that PSE is a monopoly and that "filing a complaint" is worthless? Are they also not aware that their metering system is so tyrannically dysfunctional that they still have yet to fix this massive issue since being warned by the Washington Utilities and Transportation Commission (another unreined entity, do your homework!) in 2008? Ironically, that's right about the time the business changed hands, what a coincidence. But then, the BBB knows of this change of ownership, they said so themselves.

(<http://blog.seattlepi.com/boomerconsumer/2011/page/3/>)  
Anyway, back to the BBB.

It turns out that the BBB is trademarked by the CBBB, Council of Better Business Partners. Now who are they? Their board consists of members of very large corporations. The National Partner Directors Board includes; Verizon, Proctor & Gamble, Visa, Coca-Cola, Hershey. Their outside directors are Citibank, Zocal, and Google.

Let's stop here. I thought the general idea was supposed to be that the "consumer" was protected by ethical people with integrity. Since when have major corporations led the way with their eth-

ics when profit is always a driving motive? I didn't notice that Ralph Nader was on the board!

And I began to think again about PSE. A-plus? Whom, from PSE, could possibly be on that board?

So I begin a little background search on PSE. Turns out that PSE is currently

story later...

Let's get back to the BBB and its affiliation with PSE or rather, Macquarie. Ever heard of ALEC?

ALEC is the American Legislative Exchange Council which is a corporation funded by other corporations to write "model" bills for elected officials and lobbyists who have been "married" to corporations. They have brought you such delicious bills as the Voter ID Act and Stand Your Ground, both considered very inhumane by human standards. Members pay for a seat on ALEC's task force. Members include; Coca Cola, Macquarie Group, Verizon,

Visa...must I go on? Are you getting the picture yet? This isn't *Consumer Reports*, it isn't *60 Minutes*, it's not even fair, accurate, or transparent.

The BBB is made up of corporations protecting one another. Therefore, it seems, they are able to keep track of smaller baby corporations and small business, branding them if they choose

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owned by a conglomerate of corporations based in Australia called Macquarie Group. Macquarie is an investment bank, holding company without any real shareholders but who still tacks 10% off the top in profit, no matter what the condition of the company is in. Macquarie acquired PSE in 2008/09. That's when things really started to go awry. But that

(by not branding them) while simultaneously keeping their mischief and those who are members of the "clubs" protected. Now can you see why PSE is rated A-plus?

Skip the BBB and the WUTC if you have a complaint. You'd do better to run a seance and return Nikola Tesla to the real humans on this planet. We need him...yesterday! Now, if someone does conjure him up, the trick is *not* to let him assume he will make a profit off his inventions. This is what got him into hot water last time. He must be quiet. You must be quiet too! Don't try to make a buck, don't even go to the monied interests, they have become so very greedy that knocking you off for your toy won't stop them!

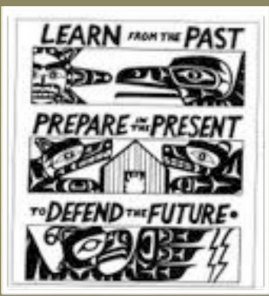
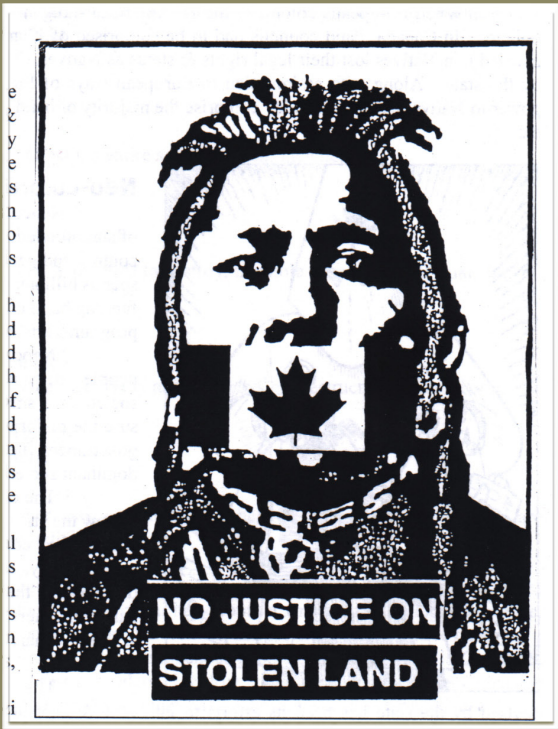
*Diane Frank, an independent publisher, grew up in a political household where her grandparents discussed their work as union organizers with IBEW and UAW starting in the 1930's. She learned to question the motivations of leaders by following the money and power.*

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## GORD HILL SPEAKS: NOV 16

### INDIGENOUS RESISTANCE IN THE 21ST CENTURY 6:00 PM

@ THE EVERGREEN LONGHOUSE

The Native Student Alliance Proudly Presents: An Evening with Gord Hill

Gord Hill is a member of the Kwakwaka'wakw nation from Northern Vancouver Island, B.C. As a writer, artist, and militant, he has been involved in Indigenous resistance, anti-colonial and anti-capitalist movements for many years. We welcome everyone to this public event to hear directly from Gord on the work that he has been involved in. **This event is made possible by: The Evergreen State College, Student Activities, Evergreen Longhouse, Olympia Food Co-Op, Works In Progress, Last Word Books, Dumpster Values and Insanity Shack Design Studio.** Tehoovet'a xaa!

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# Standing with sisters who stand up to the Vatican

Monica Hill

Since we're talking Catholic Church here, let's begin with a confession. I was raised and educated a Catholic. But I long ago concluded that religious institutions, of whatever make or model, are not too helpful in building a better world. I am a Marxist feminist, immersed in organizing and writing about the human struggle for liberation against oppressive forces.

So naturally I was thrilled at US nuns' defiance of the "infallible" Vatican. And at the instant uproar and mobilizing this resistance sparked last April.

The Vatican had scathingly reprimanded LCWR, the Leadership Conference of Women Religious, which represents 80 percent of US nuns. It accused the nuns of "radical feminist" ideas. Of spending too much time with the afflicted and dispossessed. Of not teaching the church's rabid doctrines against birth control and same-sex marriage.

LCWR was formally censured and ordered to submit to an investigation, headed by three reactionary North American bishops. These worthies are empowered to change LCWR's constitution, oversee its conference speakers and agendas, block development plans, etc. Said one nun, "If this were the corporate world, I think we would call it a 'hostile takeover.'"

The story went viral. Columnists and commentators excoriated the arrogance of church big shots. Talk shows swelled with outspoken nuns defending their life's work. Blogs surged with heartfelt denunciations from progressive rank-and-file Catholics.

Lay-organized vigils continue to take place across the country. Men and women march with picket signs asserting, "We Stand with the Sisters!" Nuns on the Bus, in direct opposition to US bishops, have taken to the road to defend government spending on social services and health-care programs, including abortion. Tens of thousands of supporters have signed a petition to the Vatican to withdraw its sexist dictates.

Senior power is a noteworthy aspect of this drama. The average age of US nuns is 74. They were schooled in the progressive, ecumenical politics of Vatican II in the 1960s. They are strongly supported by lay Catholics and by other baby boomers educated during the militancy of the '60s. They are fighters, not victims.

You can never predict exactly what will start an insurrection, but it can turn into serious rebellion, then revolution. In my

opinion, this couldn't happen to a more deserving target than the Catholic Church.

This 2,000-year-old religious institution preaches generosity, social conscience, and renunciation of worldly goods. But its practices have made it one of the wealthiest entities on Earth, with an estimated annual income of \$170 billion—tax-exempt—in the US alone. From bleeding peasants dry in the Middle Ages to investments all over the world today, the history of the church is one of material accumulation through conniving, atrocity, and abuse.

Given the huge amount of money the church is now paying out to defend and pay penalties for its pedophile priests, could the hierarchy be going after the sisters in part to get its hands on their assets? I'd say yes. Does the church elite hope to distract public attention away from the infamy of enabling, lying about, and covering up decades of sexual assault on children? Very likely. Do the pope and his cardinals and bishops really think they have any credibility with most peoples of the world, Catholic or not? Hard to believe, but probably.

Whatever's going on in those high-placed brains, the sisters of LCWR have made it perfectly clear that they are not intimidated. In August, outgoing President Pat Farrell opened the group's annual as-

sembly in St. Louis by telling members that the church's offensive should not be accepted "with the passivity of the victim.

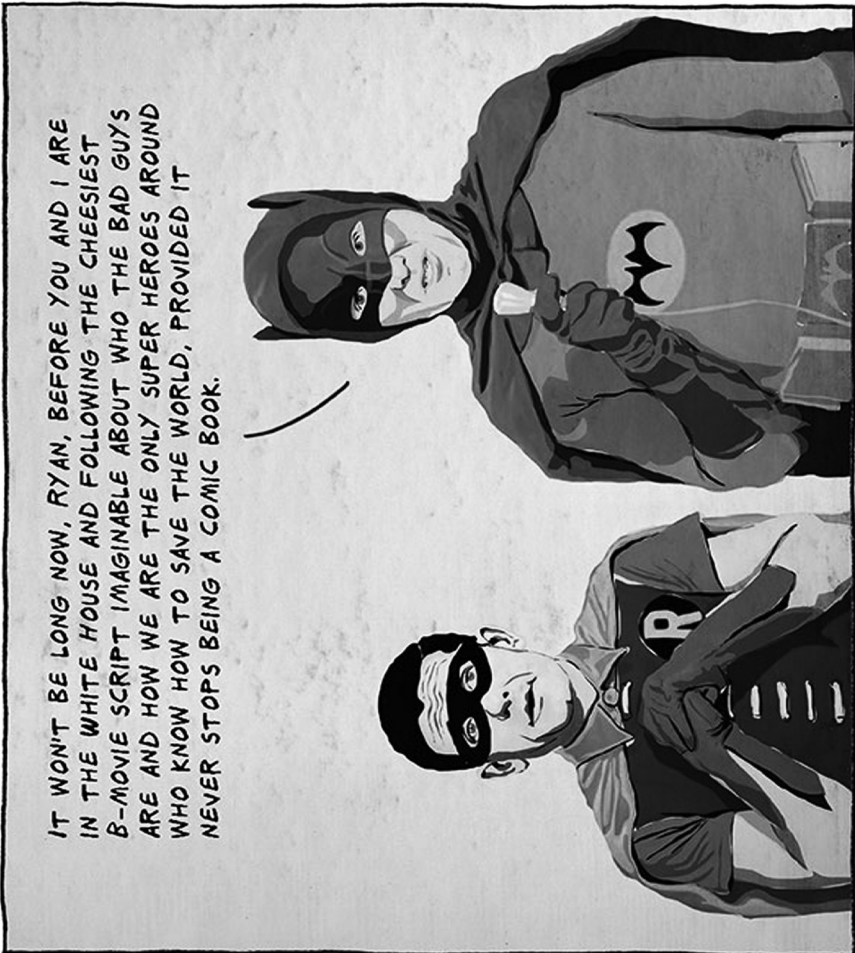
It entails resisting rather than colluding with abusive power." Amen to that!

At the end of that conference, its 900 participants informed the public and the Vatican that LCWR would continue talks with the Vatican, but not at the expense of the work they do. The nuns are sticking up for their right to live in the 21st century assisting people whose own rights are often denied—prisoners, the homeless, women, immigrants, LGBT people, the sick, and those with physical and mental disabilities.

This amazing conflict within the church encompasses profound and familiar issues—money and power, equality, democracy, class struggle, left-right political antagonism. It expresses a new level of tension between those who do the work of the church and those who guard its patriarchal wealth and position. It is full of promise for liberation from the deadening reach of medievalism in our time.

Monica Hill, a confirmed activist for abortion and immigrant rights, may be reached at [fsnews@mindspring.com](mailto:fsnews@mindspring.com).

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