

WORKS IN PROGRESS

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SERVING THE OLYMPIA COMMUNITY AND THE CAUSE OF SOCIAL JUSTICE SINCE 1990.

FEBRUARY 2016

The role of truth telling in the quest toward social justice in the United States

Acknowledgment of the truth is essential for wholeness and healing

Rev. Lerone J. Wilder, M. Div.

After reading Desmond Tutu's *No Future Without Forgiveness*, I think about the state of our nation, particularly the events and decisions that led to its status today. For example, I contemplate on the desire of the Founding Fathers to leave a tyrannical country like Great Britain to create a nation where equality, justice, and freedom would prevail. More specifically, the freedom to practice one's religion while living out one's faith; that all persons would be treated justly; and that everyone is equal in the eyes of the law. However, these tenets have not upheld in its intent. The institution of slavery began a legacy of racial and economic exploitation. Jim Crow laws were implemented to reaffirm the fear and hostility that White people had for Black people. Furthermore, those actions streamed their way into the churches, where racism was justified biblically and theologically. Even though slavery and Jim Crow laws are nonexistent, injustice is prevalent. Therefore, in order for our country to move toward forgiveness, it is from Tutu's book that I found an important aspect that is required in the quest toward social justice, particularly in the United States: the role of truth telling.

It is important to note that Tutu agrees with the significance of truth telling in order for the process of forgiveness to begin. He contends that:

Those who were negotiating our future were aware that, unless the past was acknowledged and dealt with adequately, it could put paid to that future as a baneful blight on it. To accept national amnesia would be bad for another telling reason. It would in effect be to victimize the victims of apartheid a second time around.

In other words, sincere knowledge of the truth for a nation is essential toward wholeness and healing. It is also imperative for this step to take place so that a brighter future can loom, especially for the next generations. Yet, such an acknowledgment comes at a huge cost. The question is whether the United States is ready to pay the price for such admission. Is it ready to admit its guilt for citing and distorting religion and the Bible to support the status quo? Will the historians of our beloved country willingly re-write our

textbooks to state that our Founding Fathers, according to Rev. Martin Luther King, Jr., "were so enmeshed in the ethos of slavery and white [male] supremacy that not one ever emerged with a clear, unambiguous stand on Negro rights?" Moreover, will the churches of the dominant culture give up their false sense of superiority by ridding themselves of the disease that causes judgment based on one's skin color, acquirement of material goods at the expense of the greater good, and discrimination based on one's zip code? Hence, the failure for our nation to concede its mistakes in its past and begin the progression of healing will cause it to continue the habits of oppression, inequality, and disenfranchisement.

Tutu continues to argue that "to dehumanize another inexorably means

that one is dehumanized as well". His statement affirms the intersection of mutuality and community that, on the one hand, when one hurts, we all hurt. When one suffers, we all suffer. On the other hand, when one rejoices, we all rejoice. Unfortunately, since we live in a dominant, patriarchal, blaming society,

Admitting guilt would mean the redistribution of resources, the modification of societal behaviors, and the revision of biased and discriminatory interpretations of historical and biblical texts.

we are comfortable not correcting the problem. Reginald Davis, author of *The Black Church: Relevant or Irrelevant in the 21st Century*, cites Andrew Hacker, writer of the book *Two Nations Black and White*, who makes the case that White conservatives claim reverse discrimination:

This helps to explain why white conservatives so vehemently oppose programs like affirmative action. They simply do not want to admit to themselves that the value imputed to being white has injured people who are black. Nor is this reaction surprising. Most people do not like feeling guilty. It can be an unpleasant, even painful, sensation. Hence the tendency to turn, often angrily, on those who stir us in this way. Rather than do something substantial to help people who have been treated unfairly, we find ourselves saying that they brought their afflictions on themselves.

In other words, I restate my earlier inquiry as to whether the United States is ready to pay the price for the role it has played in incorporating racism in its daily practices. Admitting such guilt would mean the redistribution of resources, the relinquishment of its reputation as a world superpower, the modification of societal behaviors, and the

► **TRUTH TELLING** continued on page 11

Needless barriers to housing

Policy changes are necessary to address the situation of those homeless

Michaela Williams

January 28 was this year's annual Point in Time homeless census to track the number of people living unsheltered at the end of the coldest month of the year. This year's data have not yet been released, but numbers in Thurston County have been dropping over the last several years in a trend attributed to coordinated efforts by social service providers.

The downward trend is positive. But with 476 people sleeping in the January cold in 2015, our community had more people without shelter last year than in 2006, when the county established a ten-year goal to halve homelessness by 2015.

Social services providers as well as people experiencing homelessness are working hard to make the most of limited public funds and alleviate the crisis. While some people experiencing homelessness need intensive mental

health and substance counseling to enjoy stable, permanent housing, others are already waiting in line ready to move in. But people that have fallen on hard times face a litany of structural barriers keeping them from permanent housing, and advocates say policy changes are

Across the state, many are denied housing because of a rigorous screening process, which often roots out applicants on the basis of income, credit ratings, employment history, or a criminal record.

needed to address the situation.

Jeffrey's story

Jeffrey Williams is a client seeking permanent housing through the rapid rehousing organization SideWalk. A veteran, he encrypted submarine codes at a naval base in Australia during the Cold War. Right now he is staying with

a fellow veteran while he waits for a placement, but for the past ten months, he was living out of his car up and down the I-5 corridor. Jeffrey has suffered from untreated PTSD and bipolar disorder, as well as substance addiction, which together have led to his current situation.

He kicked the hard drugs over a year ago, and he has a reliable service benefit coming in every month to support himself, but basic housing stability continues to be out of reach.

Jeffrey's efforts to secure stable housing have been complicated by a felony conviction in 2003. In order to apply for housing, tenants need to pay \$30 or more for a background check. With the low vacancy rates in Thurston County as well as up and down the I-5 corridor, people with a criminal record are routinely denied housing. This problem is two-fold. In addition to leaving him homeless, he has had to put up cash for screening after screening only to be turned away at the door.

Another problem has been Jeffrey's limited income. He earns a veteran
► **NEEDLESS BARRIERS**, continued on page 11

WORKS IN PROGRESS

ESTABLISHED IN 1990 BY THE THURSTON COUNTY RAINBOW COALITION

Works In Progress is a free, all volunteer-operated progressive community publication 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 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

WORKERS IN PROGRESS

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Submission Deadline

Monday, February 22
olywip@gmail.com

Proofreading Meeting

Saturday ♦ February 27 ♦ 1 pm
Olympia Timberland Library
(around a table in the back)

ADVERTISING RATES

quarter page . . . \$135
2 column square . . . \$89
3" by 2 columns . . . \$57
business card . . . \$30
1 column square . . . \$25

*Special microbusiness deal!

4 months for the price of 3
Ask for nonprofit rates*

*Not available with alternative financing

On the front cover —

from the MLK Day March
photograph: Lennée Reid

Movie Review: THE BIG SHORT

Tom Barnat

The devastation of the Great Recession cost seven million working people their homes, almost nine million their jobs, and ushered in a new era in which poverty wages and job insecurity are the new normal.

Against that background, it is a strange choice to base a story about the housing crash on a sympathetic cinematic portrait of hedge fund whiz kid managers. Yet through its narrative of greedy mortgage bankers, Wall Street speculators, and bond agencies, The Big Short brings an understanding of the collapse to a mass audience, while exposing the underlying corruption of the financial system.

We follow Michael Burry, Mark Baum, and Ben Rickert (Christian Bale, Steve Carroll, and Brad Pitt) as they investigate the subprime loan bubble and the securitization of those loans which will eventually take the economy off a cliff. And as that happens, we see the role played by the big financial firms and commercial banks in this debacle.

In an interview about the film, Director Adam McKay, summed this up by saying, "...these banks put so much into portraying themselves as rock solid...project(ing) stability and cautious foresight, just to find out that they were selling products that were filled with garbage and ended up selling them to each other, and bringing each other all down, and then going to the taxpayers after preaching free markets and asking for a handout, and then taking the handout, and going back and acting like they are still kings of the world — it's ridiculous."

The movie, based on the book of the same name by Michael Lewis, of Liar's Poker fame, presents a story of people who made enormous sums of money by "shorting" (that is, gambling on a drop in value) of the subprime mortgage market in 2006-2008. A line from Brad Pitt may be the most honest assessment of these sharks, when he tells them, "You just bet against the American economy, and if you win, hardworking people will suffer, so try not to celebrate."

Mortgage speculation runs rampant

There are really two stories here. The first is the amazing orgy of speculation on real estate that replaced the tech and "dot com" sectors as the favorite place to make obscene amounts of money. This meant selling mortgages to buyers which the banks knew would be at considerable risk of defaulting on them, many of them working class and people of color. As the film explains, one widespread and cynical method by which this was done was through the infamous "adjustable rate mortgage" (ARM) which could double or triple payments after an initial period. Then as people began to fall behind on their payments, the same banks that had given them ridiculously easy terms at the

outset now swooped in and foreclosed on their homes.

The second story is in how by securitizing these mortgages, they made a bad problem much, much worse. Part of the drive to push as many mortgages as possible was so that they could be "bundled" into a "Mortgage-Backed Security" (MBS) and then sold on Wall Street as a bond. Once the banks started selling ARMs by the thousands to people they knew couldn't afford them, these bonds became a mix of a thin layer of good mortgages covering over these subprime mortgages. The result was

"As the story unfolds, the incompetence, corruption, and complacency is shown at every level all the way up to Ben Bernanke, Chairman of the US Federal Reserve."

the bonds became essentially worthless, as there would be no payoff. Although ratings agencies were supposed to assess these securities for the garbage they were, they essentially colluded with Wall St. to hide the actual state of affairs.

The big banks ignore the problem

The tension of the movie is sustained by the realization by hedge fund manager Michael Burry (Bale) and others that these securities are junk,



and that the second the housing market starts to slow down, the inability to pay investors will cause a complete collapse in the financial markets that handle them. Burry became obsessed with analyzing the minutiae of mortgage agreements. His analysis tips him off to the actual phony nature of the securities.

While trying to sound the alarm, the protagonists are repeatedly astonished and disgusted with the incompetence and venality of day traders, investment managers and ratings analysts at various Wall Street institutions. As the story unfolds, the incompetence, corruption, and complacency is shown at every level all the way up to Ben Bernanke, Chairman of the US Federal Reserve. Baum in particular grows disgusted against ordinary people.

Yet once Burry, Eisman, Baum and the other investment managers realize the catastrophe facing the subprime mortgage market, their actual role is finding a way to earn huge amounts of money off the collapse. The major device

they used, developed initially by Burry, is the credit default swap. In a credit default swap, the buyer of the swap pays the seller any payments due up to the bond's maturity date. In return, the seller agrees that if the bond defaults, the seller will pay the buyer its full value plus interest. Burry and friends use this method to buy up securities they know will default, and wait for the inevitable payoff.

Although we are clearly supposed to be sympathetic to these fund managers, they are in fact making a fortune, and for them the inevitable human suffering is essentially an afterthought. The film pays little attention to this, with just one wrenching sequence of families living out of their cars. Although supposedly anguished by the collapse they know is coming, the film shows the parties pocketing a handsome payoff.

The movie is at its best when portraying the complex financial instruments and their effect on the markets. It uses celebrities as "experts" who explain the situation while dropping the formal terminology in favor of layperson's language. Selena Gomez, sitting in a casino with an economics professor, is particularly effective in explaining "synthetic" swaps. As credit default swaps spread, even more arcane financial instruments, essentially bets place on bets placed on bets, become the norm.

The movie is entertaining and yet appalling given its subject matter, and it's likely to draw a mass audience, especially those who want to understand how this series of events happened. There is a level of critique, however, that the film really does not achieve. Sure, plenty of people were greedy, blind, benefitting from the financial casino Wall St. had become. But there is something else, and that is a core element of capitalism itself: the constant drive for more profit at any cost. If that is achieved by ignoring

risk and turning people's hard-earned mortgages into commodities and then foreclosures, so be it.

In one of the final scenes, the narrator spins a fantasy montage of banks being broken up, Wall Street execs going to jail, and regulation being put in place to prevent further crashes, only to say at the end, "just kidding." That's not just a case of politicians being bought by bankers. The profit imperative of capitalism itself drive both Wall St. and the government to keep the financial casino open for business.

As the film hints, nothing has really changed today, as unsustainable debt levels, mortgage backed securities and too big to fail banks are still in place, showing the complete inability of capitalism to regulate itself.

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Centralia Square Antique Mall

Antiques ▪ Restaurant ▪ Hotel

Directions from Olympia
South on Interstate 5
Off at Exit 82 (Factory Outlets)
East on Harrison
Right on Pearl
201 S Pearl & Locust

Open 7 days
10AM - 5PM



Olympia alternative education options abound

Teresa Eckstein

Olympia is an alternative hub—home to the Procession of the Species, The Evergreen State College, and an amazing alternative music scene—so it makes sense the community would house over 20 alternative public and private schools. These schools share many values such as multi-age classes, hands-on learning, celebrating each child’s unique qualities, outdoor and nature experiences, collaboration, field trips, and differentiated curriculum.

Kids are encouraged to provide input regarding their education and are helped to understand how they best learn. An alternative education fosters creativity and inclusiveness. The schools also encourage parent participation, who often volunteer in ways that support their values.

Though all the schools share many of the same principles, they each are unique in how that plays out. Here are a few examples:

Lincoln Options, a public elementary school, offers project-based learning with themes. For example, a class that is studying ancient civilizations does not only read about the topic, it may also learn math skills necessary to calculate the immensity of the pyramids. Students may conduct scientific experiments that test different materials for papermaking, learn to read world maps, and participate in ancient crafts. The class might publish or demonstrate their learning in a report, a model or a play. Each year, all-school

themes are selected to further integrate curriculum and develop community.

Olympia Community School (OCS), which hosts the fair, is an independent progressive elementary school. Students at OCS are each provided the opportunity to learn at their own levels. The school’s low teacher to student ratio of 1:14 fosters deeper connections and allows teachers to meet the learning needs of each student. Teachers assist students in identifying

individualized learning goals and these goals are routinely revisited. They also integrate instructional strategies and techniques from multiple educational philosophies, rather than adhering strictly to one

specified learning approach.

The ALKI Program at Reeves Middle School is a public alternative program. Middle school is a tough time in most kids’ lives and ALKI focuses on community and belonging, providing a learning community based on collaboration and inclusiveness. At the beginning of the school year, students participate in a two-night trip during which they build friendships and community that will support them through the year as they work on projects as groups such as presentations and frequent field trips.

The Olympia Waldorf School is an alternative kindergarten through eighth-grade private school. Throughout its grades, students encounter a stimulating depth of experience through the arts. This includes movement, foreign language, handwork (knitting, crochet, and sewing), painting, beeswax or clay modeling, music, drawing, games and drama. The arts

PARTICIPATING SCHOOLS

- Alki Alternative Program
- Avanti HS
- Bird Song Children’s Garden
- Dancing Rainbows Preschool
- Eastside Cooperative Preschool
- Hands On Children’s Museum Preschool
- Heartlight Preschool
- Lacey Coop Preschool
- Lincoln Options Elementary
- Marshall CSI Alternative Program
- Nature Nurtures School
- NOVA School
- Olympia Community School
- Olympia Waldorf School
- Phoenix Rising School
- Roots and Wings
- Sequoia’s Treehouse
- Steamboat Island Preschool (and more to come!)

are integrated into the entire academic curriculum, including math and science.

These schools, and many others listed, will be at the Olympia Area Alternative Education and Pre-school Fair to share their stories with the local alternative family community. The fair is free with kid activities at each table. This is an excellent opportunity to learn about all of the alternative school options in one place and to find the right school for your family.

For more info: 360-866-8047 or Olympiacommunityschool.org or olyalternativeschools@gmail.com or you can find us on Facebook.

Teresa Eckstein is mom to Owen & Jacob who have been raised in alternative education.

Book review

Gaia Conspiracy: The Last Days of Homo Rapiens

J. Glenn Evans

2010 / 377 pages

With any press exposure to thinking people, Don Richardson’s *Gaia Conspiracy—The Last Days of Homo Rapiens* should be a bestseller. Exposure to non-thinking people will make them thinkers. Though this is a work of fiction, the facts, discussions and enlightenments brought out make this an especially valuable book that all of our citizens should read. Our nation, and the whole world, are in dire peril. Political corruption of our governments, destruction of our environment, pollution of the land, sea and air and economic inequality brought about by the greed of the 1% through their corporations are leading us to total destruction. Most scientists and thinking Americans realize and acknowledge the forces of climate change are putting human life and the planet at grave risk. Business and government leaders ignore the facts and continue on their quest for wealth and power. They do not give a thought to the perils faced by humankind all over the globe.

The book

A group of Americans of varying backgrounds and education embark on a canoe trip in Alaska. It is their desire to experience its beauty and wilderness before global warming brings about its destruction. Their guide is a sincere and knowledgeable American who dominates the narrative on climate change.

Richardson introduces each of those who have applied for the trip by way of an interview. In this manner he can decide

the merits of each applicant and their affinity for group cohesion. The author’s use of the interview is an effective way of giving the reader insight into each of the characters.

The guide is sincere in his belief that climate change presents a real threat to all life. He provides narrative on the subject while the group takes a rest break each day and in the evenings when they stop for the night. The group members add their own opinions and feelings to the narrative. These narratives are written in a direct style, which are easily understood and initiate further discussion.

The author’s examination of the events of 9/11 and the causes of global warming are right on and demand some kind of response. As the days pass, the group members develop close relationships and they begin to feel that something must be done about climate change.

The decisions they eventually make will not be what the reader might expect. Although this is a work of fiction, one may be disturbed by the group’s actions. I expect readers will undergo some soul searching on the ethical implications.

Richardson’s characters decide they want to share their lives with each other. Other decisions they make carry a huge risk to their lives. The tension mounts as they decide on who and what. Their actions come like a bolt out of the blue rejecting a logical or an expected development. But in the context of the story and of our times, the measures taken carry entirely different

associations. The seemingly ghastly events disturb the balance of emotions and thought.

Through the discussions by the characters in this book one becomes aware of the total disaster with which we are confronted. They create a wake-up call for all responsible people in the world in order to bring attention to the late hour. They set out, at great personal risk, to make selected abusers pay a personal

price for their crimes against humanity and Mother Earth and to serve as a warning to others. Change their ways or they will no longer need the great wealth that they have accumulated.

The book is excellent entertainment as well as waking people up to the problems we face. Talking and petitions can no longer be depended upon to bring results fast enough. This is a book that all concerned citizens should read. We all need to take personal responsibility to do what we can to bring corrective change, even if it is just to wake people up. We can no longer wait for Joe to do it. We must take action, too, even if what we do is not quite as dramatic.

J. Glenn Evans is a founder of PoetsWest and Activists for a Better World, hosts PoetsWest at KSER 90.7FM, a nationally syndicated weekly radio show, and is author of four books of poetry: Deadly Mistress, Window in the Sky, Seattle Poems and Buffalo Tracks, author of three novels, with The Last Lumber Baron as a works in process. Evans has been a resident of Olympia since December 2014.

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Special Events

The Market With a Heart (MMJ Farmers Market)
Every Sunday 11-5
528 Devoe St. NE, Olympia

Meet growers and processors and get medicine at patient-friendly prices. Watch the Seahawks! Be there for the 4:20 raffle! Must have ID and MMJ authorization. 21+

Weekly Clinic Defense Demonstrations
Every Friday, 10 AM
Planned Parenthood
402 Legion Way, Olympia

Hosted by OlyAct.

TSTSCA Annual Rummage Sale
Saturday, February 6, 9 AM - 2 PM
Lincoln Elementary School
213 21st Ave SE, Olympia

Fantastic Annual Rummage Sale – Saturday, February 6th: Beat the Winter Blues!

The Thurston-Santo Tomas Sister County Association will raise funds for college scholarship recipients, the small library and a children’s free lunch prgram, in our sister town of Santo Tomas, Nicaragua.

Food Justice & Racism
Saturday, February 6, 6 PM - 8 PM
WWU Academic West Building 204T

This event is meant to unite the farm-worker unions from the Bellingham, WA and San Quentin, Mexico. To educate a broader community to on the exploitation of farmworkers and to support the Boycott on Driscolls berries. We are hoping that students and community members will become aware of the food system and be informed to make more sustainable choices when they are purchasing food.

Stories of Gratitude featuring the Thunders
February 13, 2015
Traditions Café – 300 5th Ave

Background Information about Playback Theatre: Playback Theatre is a spontaneous collaboration between performers and audience. People tell moments from their lives, then watch them re-created with movement, music and dialogue.

This month we are featuring the Thunders. They are mysterious, to be noticed, awakening, strong, dramatic, courageous flashes of light the darkness & virtuous.

Cost: Suggested Donation \$7.00-\$12.00 (No one is turned away)

No Methanol Refinery!
Tuesday, February 16, 4:30 PM
Meeker Middle School
4402 Nassau Avenue NE Tacoma

Lock arms together to denounce this reckless proposal to build a methanol refinery in Commencement Bay and on the shores of the Puget Sound.

Unsoeld Seminar 2016: Prof. Deepa Kumar
Thursday, February 25, 6:30 – 8:00pm
The Evergreen State College
COM 107, Recital Hall

Deepa Kumar, professor of Media Studies and Middle East Studies at Rutgers University, author of Islamophobia and the Politics of Empire, will speak on gender and solidarity in international contexts.

Jamaica Kincaid: Winter 2016 Artist & Lecture Series
Feb. 25, 2016, 7:30 p.m.

SPSCC is pleased to bring writer, novelist, and professor Jamaica Kincaid, who tempers the boundary between poetry and prose. The American Book Award winner will present “Landscapes and Memory.”

Tickets for Jamaica Kincaid are \$10 for general admission, and will be available online at OlyTix.org or by calling The Washington Center Performing Arts box office at 360-753-8586. (SPSCC students, faculty and staff get in fre.)

Views from without and within

Two vignettes and the totalitarian rhetoric of Donald Trump

Enrique Quintero

Vignette # 1: Bad eating habits

A few decades ago in Latin America, depending on considerations of class and culture, it would have been Chinese, Indian, or African kids who served as the ethnic group chosen by parents to be the signifier of distant commiseration, the psychological instrument used to persuade their kids—through guilt—to finish the food served at the table. At my grandmother’s house, kids were similarly the chosen demographic signifier, but not just any young member of a stereotypical “third world country” would do. No, she was always precise, my grandmother, creating a map in my mind of the specific distant nation where injustices occurred, and which, in some way, in spite of geographical distance, had immediate localized consequences in my life. “Eat all your food,” she would say, in a pleasant voice the tone of which was dissonant with the ominous message that followed, “because in the United States there are hundreds of thousands of starving kids!”

I don’t remember whether my grandmother’s gastro-social announcements caused the expected effect on me, and whether—in a precocious act of Pharisaism—I ended up eating all the food on my plate as expected. I do remember, though, having an intransigent position against certain colors in foods (green mostly) that gave my grandmother plenty of opportunities for exhorting me to think of the distant children in the U.S., and just as many opportunities for me to listen to her epicurean dictum. Back then, as a child, food wasn’t necessarily a source of pleasure; rather, it had the flavor of a somewhat forced and remote solidarity mixed with compulsory labor, a feeling that well meaning American food servers sometimes evoke in me in restaurants when they ask, gesturing to my plate, “are you still working on that?” as if the act of eating itself was marked by toil and effort, inverting the reality of the situation, in which I pay to be served food and am allowed—even expected—to overlook for a minute the real work incorporated into my meal, beginning with the food production process, the labor of farmers and pickers and processors and transport drivers, to its arrival at the restaurant, and the labor of cooks and dishwashers, and indeed the very labor of the server her or himself.

I don’t remember reflecting on the validity of my grandmother’s statement about the United States. The image I had in my mind of the U.S. had been created by watching cowboy movies in the cinema across the street from my parent’s house, and browsing the toy section in the Sears Catalog, which certainly showed no “niños” starving to death on its pages. All these “niños” seemed to be white, happy, well fed, and surrounded by wonderful possessions. Nonetheless, regardless of the contrast between my image of children in the U.S. and my grandmother’s, as it is still,

food encaged politics as a skull encages ideas, and this happened independently of my age, my annoying palate, and my age appropriate political ignorance about how the world’s wealth and food supply was created and distributed.

Later in life—and this I regret—I never asked my grandmother why she focused on the United States as the place where young kids experienced hunger. I knew her politics were not

“Eat all your food,” she would say in a pleasant voice, “because in the United States there are hundreds of thousands of starving kids!”

particularly radical—she was a Catholic and she was a conservative, although not a reactionary. She liked the United States, and overall she was democratic in something close to the Greek sense of the word, but I doubt whether she had time to follow closely the politics and social statistics of either Eisenhower or Kennedy’s administrations. She wanted me to finish my food and she appropriated the name of one country with that purpose. I’ll never know her real reason for choosing the U.S. Was it ideology? Did she secretly like the Soviet Union? Was it a mischievous linguistic game? Was it just a normative motivated utterance in which she was trying to alter my bad eating habits, with no ulterior motives whatsoever? I’ll never know for sure, but it turns out that she was basically right.

In the U.S., there are serious limitations on kids access to food. In their 2014 report, “Income and poverty in the United States”, the U.S. Census Bureau states that 15.5 million or approximately 21 percent of children in the U.S. live in poverty. In their 2015 book *Household Food Security in the United States*, Coleman-Jensen, Rabbit,

uncertain access to food. According to various reports from UNICEF, it is now a well-known fact that the U.S. record on child poverty is one of the worst in the developed world.

Vignette #2: A caustic post on Facebook

It was with certain surprise and disbelief that I read a comment written by my mother on Facebook, in response to a post of mine urging *MoveOn.Org* to endorse Bernie Sanders instead of Hillary Clinton. Given the generational and geographical differences between us (she lives in South America), I must admit I did not expect—wrongly so, as it turns out—this level of social media participation on her part, nor had I anticipated the caustic tone of her words:

“The United States... without political future, without good candidates, one worse than the other. It is a pity that this continues to be the way it is, a vicious circle of shameful administrations ... and the people do

Trump is building what he expects to be a winning electoral representation of the future of *his* country, a “Strong America” with him at the center as “The Strong Man”.

not protest”.

This political indictment of the United States, made by a Latin American woman in her mid-eighties, broke some tacit (and slightly embarrassing) image I held of the maternal octogenarian who is my mother. Her post represents an understanding of politics both as a mean of communication in the traditional way (using Facebook in this case), and simultaneously as the

expression of collective will, in the form of protest and open discontent. My aim here is not to scrutinize the accuracy of my mother’s indictment nor the exactitude of her representation of the United States, but rather the intentionality behind the message, broadly speaking, which contains the same pessimism about the U.S. as was expressed by her mother (my grandmother) decades ago around the dining room table.

Donald Trump’s representation of America

Given that these are, after all, electoral times, I think it’s relevant to examine and contrast my grandmother and mother’s representations of America with the one being developed by Donald Trump’s campaign for presidency. Needless to say, the Republican candidate was born and has spent practically all of his life in the U.S. My two ancestors were born overseas, and one of them—my grandmother—never visited the United States. While Trump is constructing a representation of his nation of origin, my maternal forebearers were and are constructing a representation of the nation of “the other.” As we know, Trump is building what he expects to be a winning electoral representation of the future of *his* country, a “Strong America” with him at the center as “The Strong Man”. This political picture is expected to buy him new real estate in DC, and also help him project a different image of the United States internationally.

Different though they might be, Trump’s representation and those of created by my relatives are also similar in that any representation must suggest some kind of meaning and significance. By examining the meaning and implications of the complex agglutination of symbols that are being manipulated and sold to the American people, we can discern the true political content of Donald Trump’s electoral campaign.

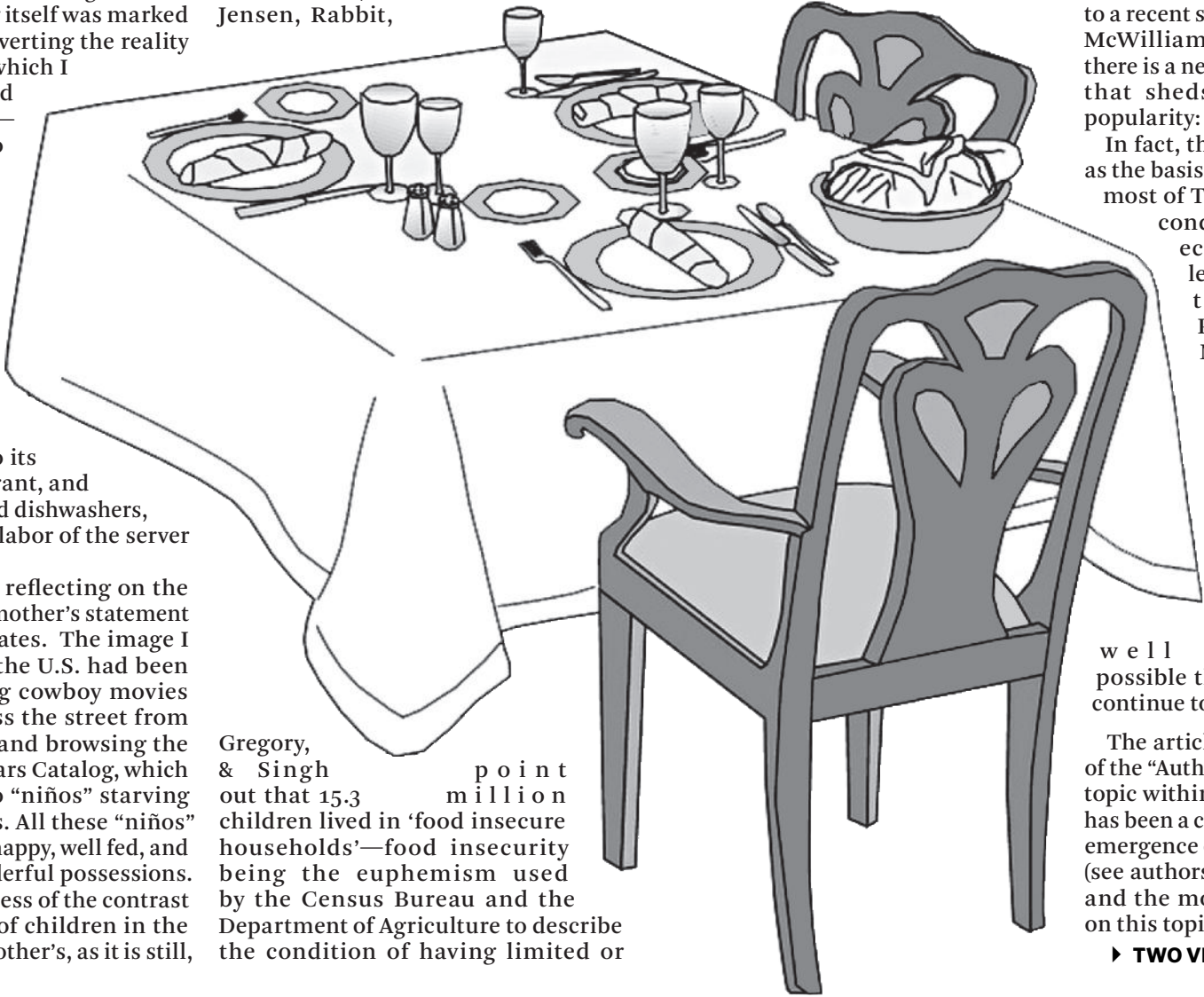
Most political analysts have pointed out three main characteristics of Trump’s so far successful political style: his cavalier relationship with facts (from domestic to international politics); his anti-immigrant stands (mainly against Muslims and Mexicans); and his ability to agglutinate discontent particularly among white, economically poor, and not well educated segments of the electorate. However, according to a recent study conducted by Matthew McWilliams for “Politico Magazine”, there is a new, more significant variable that sheds light on Mr. Trump’s popularity: Authoritarianism.

In fact, the national poll that served as the basis for the article suggests that most of Trump’s supporters are not conditioned by issues of race, economics, or educational level, but by their attraction to an “Authoritarian Personality.” According to McWilliams:

“Trump’s electoral strength and his “staying power” have been buoyed, above all, by Americans with authoritarian inclinations. And because of the prevalence of authoritarians in the American electorate, among Democrats as well as Republicans, it’s very possible that Trump’s fan base will continue to grow”

The article points out that the study of the “Authoritarian Mind” is not a new topic within political theory; in fact, it has been a constant theme related to the emergence of fascism in Nazi Germany (see authors such as Theodore Adorno, and the most recent, Bob Altemeyer, on this topic). But what has immediate

► TWO VIGNETTES, continued on page 5.



Gregory, & Singh point out that 15.3 million children lived in ‘food insecure households’—food insecurity being the euphemism used by the Census Bureau and the Department of Agriculture to describe the condition of having limited or

From constitutional rights to human rights

The King I wish I had known

Emily Lardner

The representation of Martin Luther King Jr. that I grew up with, being only 10 years old when he was murdered, was very similar to the image portrayed in the powerful film, “Selma”, and like most people I know, I grew up reading and discussing the famous “I Have a Dream” speech.

But what happened after Selma, after the 1965 Voting Rights Act passed? How far-reaching were King’s dreams?

Turns out, King’s analysis of what needed to happen next has yet to be fulfilled. As we march through an election season, listening to candidates pitch their visions of the future to the electorate, I strongly recommend that readers pick up the collection of his essays called “Where Do We Go From Here: Chaos or Community?” The clarity of King’s vision usefully illuminates the issues before us today.

In his introduction to the essays, Vincent Harding suggests that in these later pieces, King was attempting to speak to white allies whose support had begun to diminish as the campaign shifted from working on constitutional rights (like the right to vote) towards fundamental human rights (like the right to adequate housing and income). For instance, in his essay “Where Do We Go From Here” King put it like this: “So far, we have had constitutional backing for most of our demands for change, and this has made our work easier, since we could be sure of legal support from the federal courts. Now we are approaching areas where the voice of the Constitution

is not clear. We have left the realm of constitutional rights and we are entering the realm of human rights”

Continuing in a vein that will resonate with readers today, King wrote:

“The Constitution assured the right to vote, but there is no such assurance of the right to adequate housing, or the right to an adequate income. And yet, in a nation which has a gross national product of \$750 billion a year, it is morally right to insist that every person have a decent house, an adequate education and enough money to provide basic necessities for one’s family. Achievement of these goals will be a lot more difficult and require much more discipline, understanding, organization and sacrifice.”

Ending “economic strangulation” for all who are poverty-stricken

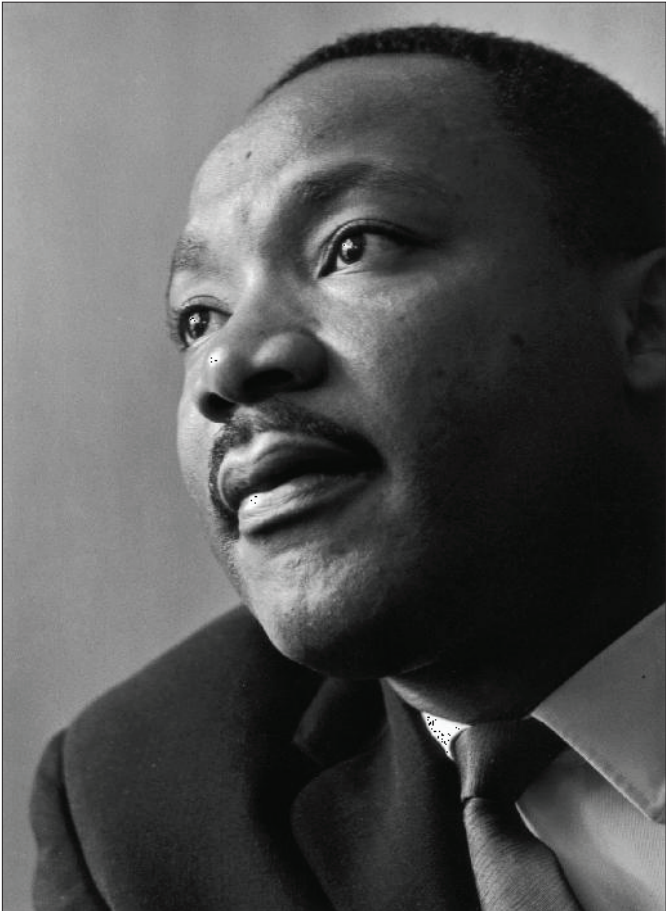
Just as mass nonviolent action led to constitutional changes, so too, King argued, was mass nonviolent action necessary to move the human rights agenda forward. King acknowledged that many, especially in the North, believed that demonstrations and overt and visible protests could be replaced by the use of legislation along with welfare and anti-poverty programs. King disagreed, arguing that change would only come through mass-action movement. He also argued that the movement for human rights needed to be grounded not only in ending the “economic strangulation” of the Negro, but of other poor people as well:

As we work to get rid of the economic strangulation that we face as a result of poverty, we must not overlook the fact that millions of Puerto Ricans, Mexican

Americans, Indians and Appalachian whites are also poverty-stricken. Any serious war on poverty must of necessity include them. As we work to end the educational stagnation that we face as a result of inadequate segregated schools, we must not be unmindful of the fact, as Dr. James Conant has said, the the whole public school system is using nineteenth-century educational methods in conditions of twentieth century urbanization, and that quality education must be enlarged for all children.

To get where we need to, King argued, we need a “radical restructuring of the architecture of American society.” Such a restructuring depends on overcoming the evils of racism, poverty and militarism, King wrote, and in their place, he wrote, “our economy must become more person-centered than property- and profit-centered.”

How we become responsive to the needs of the poor



human rights has yet to become the dominant voice in the Democratic party.

King also argued that we need to seek radical change, not minor reforms. As he put it, let us “not think of our movement as one that seeks to integrate the Negro into all the existing values of American society. Let us be those creative dissenters who will call our beloved nation to a higher destiny, to a new plateau of compassion, to a more noble expression of humaneness.” The “revolution” proposed by the Republican candidates

does not lead to a more noble expression of our humaneness, and in fact, as many have pointed out, it does just the opposite. That leaves the Democrats, and in the last debate, in and out of the tussles over policy proposals, and questions about what the candidates said about each other, there was a call for a revolution, a reframing of the questions we are asking. And at the heart of that revolution lies the need for campaign finance reform. The need for it would likely not have surprised Dr. King, given earlier efforts to limit people’s participation in elections, nor would the ferocity of the Supreme Court’s protection for wealthy elites in the Citizens United decision.

We need a revolution that begins in the place King landed, where racism must be addressed by making our economy person-centered, rather than profit- or property-centered.

Emily Lardner lives and works in Olympia, Washington.

► **Two vignettes**, continued from page 4.

relevance for the future of this nation is to notice the following: First, authoritarians rally to and embrace submission to strong leaders; second, they express high levels of aggression against outsiders or minorities; and finally, the are inclined to embrace the values endorsed by the followed leader.

The previous panorama is not necessarily good news for those who believe that democracy and authoritarianism are somehow antagonistic values. As McWilliams indicates:

“So what does this mean for the election? It doesn’t just help us understand what motivates Trump’s backers—it suggests that his support isn’t capped. In a statistical analysis of the polling results, I found that Trump has already captured 43 percent of Republican primary voters who are strong authoritarians, and 37 percent of Republican authoritarians overall. And in a general election, Trump’s

strongman rhetoric will surely appeal to some of the 39 percent of independents in my poll who identify as authoritarians and the 17 percent of self-identified Democrats who are strong authoritarians.”

The Trump phenomenon has altered traditional primary expectations within both political parties, and others have pointed this out. What’s emerging now, and perhaps my mother was picking up on this from afar, is that its authoritarian content is also altering the potential images and political representations available to us to describe America, its body politic, and the form of life we choose to live under.

Enrique Quintero, a political activist in Latin America during the 70’s, taught ESL and Second Language Acquisition in the Anchorage School District, and Spanish at the University of Alaska Anchorage. He currently lives and writes in Olympia.

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The truth must be told

The in-custody death of Raymond Eacret

Lisa Ganser
Idriss Stelley Foundation

Raymond Eacret, 34 years old and a proud Yurok Tribal Member from Trinidad Rancheria, of Eureka, CA, died “in custody” in the Humboldt County Correctional Center on Friday, June 26, 2015. Raymond was held on a misdemeanor charge and was due to be released that evening. Then something went horribly wrong. Just hours earlier his mother, Sheila Eacret, received a message telling her ‘not to worry and charges were dropped,’ her son would be released around dinner time, 4pm, that very day. Relief would soon turn into deep sorrow, grief and outrage. The next time Sheila would see her son would be after his death, framed as a “suicide” by Humboldt County officials, his lifeless body bludgeoned.

“I was refused to see my son until after the autopsy which was against all Native rights,” Sheila Eacret said, “I had every right to prepare him spiritually due to his being Native American with a roll number. Denied that right, I was angry and confused.”

A number of conflicting reports have surfaced, including the police narrative, which was amplified via most news outlets. Humboldt County Sheriff Mike Downey said in a press release that Raymond was found by an unnamed Humboldt County Sheriff’s Office (HCSO) correctional deputy “hanging from a makeshift noose that was wrapped around his neck” in the medical section of the Humboldt County Jail. There is also a conflicting report in which another officer is stated to have said Raymond was laying in his bed when he was discovered dead.

Another person, who was in the medical department at the time Raymond was brought there, told Sheila Eacret there is “no way someone could take their own life in medical.” This person also said that when Raymond was brought to medical he had been horribly beaten and that he was unconscious. The Sheriff’s press release states “life saving efforts were immediately initiated...This incident is currently under joint investigation by the HCSO and the Humboldt County District Attorney’s Office (HCDAO).” Or, in other words, Humboldt County is investigating itself on this matter.

When Sheila Eacret was finally able to see her son Raymond, she was horrified. Raymond was covered in bruises--he had two black eyes and his nose was broken. His torso also appeared to had been kicked multiple times. Raymond’s back was broken. Sheila described ribs that stuck out with swellings around the wounds the “size of watermelons.” There was a cut about three inches deep in Raymond’s neck and whatever was used to caused this deep cut was also used to strangle him. It did not go all the way around his neck. One of Raymond’s ears was bleeding and bruised. Clearly, he was the victim of a horrible, violent assault.

“Our Humboldt County Sheriff’s

Department, the County Jail and Coroner’s office are one in the same, they run all three, they are in it together,” said Shelia Eacret. “To get any kind of justice or truth you have to get at least one (entity) away from here.”

Sheila took pictures of her son’s injuries and demanded an independent autopsy and secured a lawyer. She is fighting for justice so that no other mother has to go through what she is experiencing. She doesn’t believe the Humboldt County system should be investigating itself.

“My son wasn’t the first young Native American to mysteriously be hung in this jail and die, there was a 25-year-old Native American from Hoopa that was also killed in there on a misdemeanor and was going to get out. Our system is flawed and allows authorities and deputies to kill anyone in that jail and get away with it. I think officers should have to obey the same laws they are

Raymond was covered in bruises--he had two black eyes and his nose was broken. His torso also appeared to had been kicked multiple times. Raymond’s back was broken. Clearly, he was the victim of a horrible, violent assault.

suppose to uphold and should be held accountable for murder like anyone else. A badge and key does not give them the right to take someone’s life. They will be held accountable for this crime.”

That 25-year-old Native brother from Hoopa is a Yurok man named James “Hans” Peters, who was brought into the Humboldt County Jail in late June 2007. According to the Sheriff’s Office, in August 2007, James Hans Peters was being held in a solitary cell after he had “assaulted a correctional officer” and was waiting to be transferred to Napa State Hospital for a court ordered psych eval. It was on August 29, 2007 that James Hans Peters was said to have “hung himself with torn bed sheets” from a vent in the ceiling. Officers did not inform Hans’ family (he was called Hans by those close to him) of his death.

After hearing the news from an anonymous hospital employee, the family went to the Humboldt County Jail in search of their son and demanding answers. The Sheriff’s Office responded sternly and threatened to have the family arrested. Hans’ mother and relatives were not allowed to see Hans’ body for over 20 hours. James “Hans” Peters was killed/died in custody in Humboldt County Jail within three months of two other victims, Peter Stewart and Martin Cotton. All three men were disabled, all three had been diagnosed with mental illnesses.

Raymond Eacret is one of many Loved Ones to die violently while in police custody in the United States.

On July 13, 2015 a 24-year-old pregnant Lakota Woman and mother of two, Sarah Lee Circle Bear, was being held in Brown County Jail in Aberdeen, South Dakota. She was complaining of excruciating pain. She was denied medical care, told to “quit faking,” and

was dragged to a holding cell so officers and other inmates would not hear her screams. She died shortly after.

In November 2015 it was reported that in that year there have been at least 550 in-custody deaths in Texas alone so far. Five hundred and fifty human beings, just in the state of Texas.

One of those 550 people managed to make it to the forefront of national media. Just one, and she was a woman. She died the same day as Sarah Lee Circle Bear, on July 13, 2015. And she was Black. Her name is Sandra Bland.

Raymond Eacret’s violent death also happens within a greater context of in-custody deaths caused by law enforcement in the state of California. Deaths like 23 year old Victoria Arellano, an HIV-positive Transgender woman and migrant from Mexico, who had been detained at a mens’ Immigration & Customs Enforcement (ICE) detention center in May of 2007 in South Los Angeles. Victoria started showing signs of illness and pleaded (along with other male detainees) that she receive medical care. Her request for medical care was denied and Victoria died on July 20, 2007. There’s also the recent mysterious in-custody deaths of Kristen Hamilton, 51, of Antioch who died in West County Jail in April 2015 and Elizabeth Gaunt, 56, of Santa Rosa who died at Lake County Jail in August of 2015.

Almost every single victim of in-custody deaths in California—and nationwide—have at least one of these things in common: being Indigenous, Black, Disabled and/or Poor. Recently, the Idriss Stelley Foundation (ISF) has organized an action called #IdidDIEinSanFranciscoCustody, which includes formal demands for the treatment of Disabled detainees

and transparency regarding recent in-custody deaths at the San Francisco County Jail. One demand being *no more in-custody deaths*. In the past two years, the ISF has advocated for the families of those killed in-custody and investigated the violent wrongful in custody deaths of five men: Alvin Hayes, Alberto Petrolino, Antolin Marengo, Brette Robinson, and Darnell Benson. All five were Disabled, and each are Indigenous, Black and or Poor. These violent deaths are far from isolated, and they are all related.

Since the death of her son Raymond Eacret, Sheila Eacret has been grieving. She has also taken a stand. She is demanding justice so that no other Mother has to experience what she is going through. In being vocal in a rural area, Sheila is being harassed and terrorized by members of law enforcement in and around Eureka, CA. She is being profiled, singled out, and threatened for fighting for justice for her son. The press and police are in it together, vilifying her family. One of the officers acknowledged knowing her son, Raymond, as a scare tactic.

Raymond’s Mother, Sheila Eacret, who is grieving the loss of her son, does not feel safe. She fears for her life.

Lisa Ganser is a white Disabled genderqueer artist from the Mission District of San Francisco recently transplanted to Olympia, WA. They are the daughter of a momma named Sam and this is their first story as a writer for POOR Magazine.

This article was originally in *POOR Magazine*, based in Oakland, CA. The organization is a poor people led/indigenous people led non-profit, grass-roots, arts organization dedicated to providing revolutionary media access, arts, education and solutions from youth, adults and elders in poverty across Pachamama (Mother Earth).

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In memory of the great Rosa Luxemburg

Rosa Luxemburg [1871-1919], the Polish-born revolutionary and writer, was one of the most original theoretical minds of the early twentieth century. Her work stands as a testament to the great social upheavals of the time and a life lived in struggle for a better world.

She ultimately suffered for her convictions, spending time in jail between 1904 and 1906 and again for three and a half years for opposing the First World War, before her brutal and untimely death in 1919 at the hands of the proto-fascistic Freikorps.

[Below is] an extract from *The Letters of Rosa Luxemburg* that shows her characteristic mix of astute political and social analysis and incredible compassion for her fellow creatures.

The letter, written around Christmas 1917 from her prison cell in Breslau to fellow SPD-member Sophie Liebknecht, relates an incident in the prison courtyard between a guard and a buffalo carrying piles of torn and bloodied clothes sent from the frontlines. --John Merrick / 15 January 2016

The letter

Oh, Sonyichka,

I've lived through something sharply, terribly painful here. Into the courtyard where I take my walks there often come military supply wagons, filled with sacks or old army coats and shirts, often with bloodstains on them ... They're unloaded here [in the courtyard] and distributed to the prison cells, [where they are] patched or mended, then loaded up and turned over to the military again.

Recently one of these wagons arrived with water buffaloes harnessed to it instead of horses. This was the first time I had seen these animals up close. They have a stronger, broader build than our cattle, with flat heads and horns that curve back flatly, the shape of the head being similar to that of our sheep, [and they're] completely black, with large, soft, black eyes. They come from Romania, the spoils of war. ...

The soldiers who serve as drivers of

these supply wagons tell the story that it was a lot of trouble to catch these wild animals and even more difficult to put them to work as draft animals, because they were accustomed to their freedom. They had to be beaten terribly before they grasped the concept that they had lost the war and that the motto now applying to them was "woe unto the vanquished" [vae victis]...

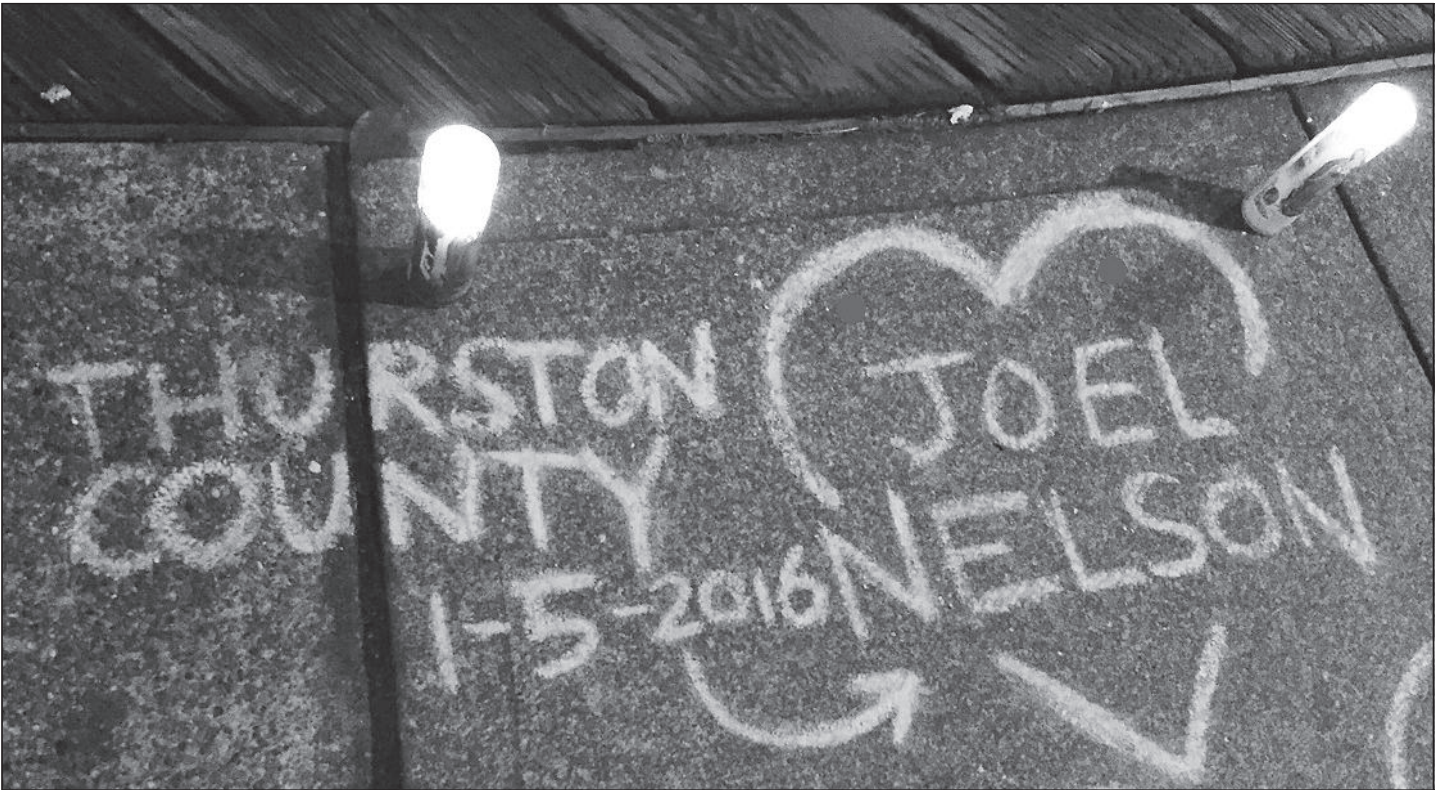
There are said to be as many as a hundred of these animals in Breslau alone, and on top of that these creatures, who lived in the verdant fields of Romania, are given meager and wretched feed. They are ruthlessly exploited, forced to haul every possible kind of wagonload, and they quickly perish in the process.

And so, a few days ago, a wagon like this arrived at the courtyard [where I take my walks]. The load was piled so high that the buffaloes couldn't pull the wagon over the threshold at the entrance gate.

Joel Nelson, a graduate of North Thurston High School and school athletic, was a son, brother, and lover. His life struggles were brought to a sudden end January 5, 2016. He is one more victim of the War

on Drugs, which has fueled the ongoing militarization of local police departments across the nation and is focused on punishment rather than providing mental health services for those in need.

A gofundme page was created in memory of Joel Anthony Nelson and all proceeds will be donated to little league baseball. Our heart-felt condolences to his family and to his friends. —WIP staff



From the vigil for Joel Nelson. Photo: Lisa Ganser

The soldier accompanying the wagon, a brutal fellow, began flailing at the animals so fiercely with the blunt end of his whip handle that the attendant on duty indignantly took him to task, asking him: Had he no pity for the animals?

"No one has pity for us



humans," he answered with an evil smile, and started in again, beating them harder than ever.

The animals finally started to pull again and got over the hump, but one of them was bleeding... Sonyichka, the hide of a buffalo is proverbial for its toughness and thickness, but this tough skin had been broken.

During the unloading, all the animals stood there, quite still, exhausted, and the one that was bleeding kept staring into the empty space in front of him with an expression on his black face and in his soft, black eyes like an abused child. It was precisely the expression of a child that has been punished

and doesn't know why or what for, doesn't know how to get away from this torment and raw violence. ...

I stood before it, and the beast looked at me; tears were running down my face—they were his tears. No one can flinch more painfully on behalf of a beloved brother than I flinched in my helplessness over this mute suffering.

How far away, how irretrievably lost were the beautiful, free, tender-green fields of Romania! How differently the sun used to shine and the wind blow there, how different was the lovely song of the birds that could be heard there, or the melodious call of the herdsman. And here—this strange, ugly city, the gloomy stall, the nauseating, stale hay, mixed with rotten straw, and the strange, frightening humans—the beating, the blood running from the fresh wound. ... Oh, my poor buffalo, my poor, beloved brother!

We both stand here so powerless and mute, and are as one in our pain, impotence, and yearning. —All this time the prisoners had hurriedly busied themselves around the wagon, unloading the heavy sacks and dragging them off into the building; but the soldier stuck both hands in his trouser pockets, paced around the courtyard with long strides, and kept smiling and softly whistling some popular tune to himself. And the entire marvelous panorama of the war passed before my eyes.

Write soon. I embrace you, Sonyichka. Your R.

Sonyichka, dearest, in spite of everything be calm and cheerful. Life is like that, one must take it as it is, [and remain] brave, undaunted, and smiling—in spite of everything. Happy Christmas. ... R.

Letter and introduction courtesy of Verso Books, a left wing publishing house in the UK, and the graphic is provided courtesy of FCIT.

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2015 Income Tax Preparation

Free tax assistance in Thurston County

In partnership with the AARP, the Thurston Asset Building Coalition is offering free tax preparation services throughout Thurston County during this tax season, with a focus on claiming the Earned Income Tax Credit (EITC) and the Childcare Tax Credit. In 2015, 2,168 people of all ages used our 6 sites. We helped those people receive back nearly \$450,000 in EITC and more than \$200,000 in Childcare Tax Credits.

In 2012, we ran a pilot project offering tax assistance at the Thurston County Food Bank—furthering our efforts to connect low-income people to services that help them build assets. The Earned Income Tax Credit (EITC) is one of the nation’s largest and most effective anti-poverty programs. Together the EITC and Childcare Tax Credits have been proven to help move low-income persons and families out of poverty.

This year, low- to moderate- income households could be eligible for up to \$6,000 or more in tax refunds when

claiming the Earned Income Tax Credit and Child Tax Credit.

Here is the Free Tax Prep Schedule for 2016.

Locations

Free tax preparation runs from February 1 through April 18, 2016.

- **Lacey Timberland Library**, Saturdays: 11:00 a.m. – 4:00 p.m.
- **Lacey Senior Center**, Tuesdays and Thursdays: 12:00 p.m. – 4:00 p.m.
- **The Olympia Center**, Tuesdays and Thursdays: 12:00 p.m. – 4:00 p.m.
- **Panorama**, Mondays and Wednesdays: 1:00 p.m. – 5:00 p.m.
- **Tumwater Timberland Library**, Mondays and Wednesdays: 1:00 p.m. – 5:00 p.m.
- **Yelm Adult Community Center**, Fridays: 2:00 p.m. – 6:00 p.m.

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What to Bring:

- Your valid driver’s license or other photo ID card.
- Social Security cards or a Social Security number (SSN) verification letter for all persons listed on the return.
- Birth dates for all persons listed on return.
- A copy of last year’s federal & state return if you have it.
- All income statements: Forms W-2 and 1099, Social Security, unemployment, and other statements, such as pensions, stocks, interest and any documents showing taxes withheld. If self-employed or your own or run a business, bring records of all your income.
- All records of expenses, such as tuition, mortgage interest, or real estate taxes. If self-employed or you

own or run a business, bring records of all your expenses.

- Bank routing numbers and account numbers to direct deposit any refund.
- Dependent child care information: name and address of who you paid and either the caretaker’s SSN or other tax identification number.
- Both spouses to sign forms to e-file your joint tax return.

For questions about eligibility or what to bring, contact District Coordinator Kirsten Klien at 360.269.5771

For outreach materials contact Mindie Reule at 360.529.5281 or mindie@thurstonabc.org

—Thurston Asset Building Coalition

More than 80,000 urged EPA to ban dangerous pesticide

Recent appeals court decisions has forced the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) to take meaningful action on a 2007 legal petition to ban the neurotoxic pesticide chlorpyrifos on food crops—15 years after the agency banned it for residential use.

The public comment period ended January 5 with more than 80,000 people urging the agency to ban the dangerous, widely-used pesticide chlorpyrifos from use on all crops.

“A total ban on chlorpyrifos is what farmworkers, agricultural communities and all consumers deserve,” said Patti Goldman, the Earthjustice attorney handling the case. “EPA’s and other independent findings show that chlorpyrifos causes brain damage to children and poisons workers and bystanders. It is imperative that EPA move quickly to protect workers and children by issuing a final and total ban to this widely-used pesticide.”

A coalition of farmworker, environmental health and labor groups submitted comments on behalf of legal experts, scientists and the general public. Earthjustice and Farmworker Justice submitted technical comments on behalf of a coalition of groups, including Pesticide Action Network (PAN), Natural Resources Defense Council and United Farm Workers.

“Given the incredibly strong science on the health harms of chlorpyrifos, it’s absurd that EPA has taken so long to act,” said Dr. Margaret Reeves, senior scientist at PAN. “Kids, farmworkers and families in rural areas are getting an extra dose of this brain harming chemical as it drifts from nearby agricultural fields.”

In December 2014, EPA found that drinking water contaminated with the pesticide is particularly harmful to infants, and highlighted the serious risks to workers from handling chlorpyrifos or entering fields after spraying. —UFW

THURSTON ASSET BUILDING COALITION

MISSION & VISION

Our mission is to connect partners and community resources to promote opportunities for people with limited incomes to become more resilient and prosperous.

We envision a Thurston County wherein all individuals and families are able to live, work, meet basic needs, and prosper.

WHO WE ARE

The Thurston Asset Building Coalition is a network of social service providers, healthcare agencies, financial institutions, community and economic developers, educators, workforce developers, faith communities, businesses, government agencies, coalitions, and individuals. These partners participate in the Coalition to share information and build relationships in order to improve the system(s) that help people meet basic needs and build assets.

We define asset building as the strategies and supports that broaden and stabilize an individual or family’s resources – whether it is income, savings, housing, healthcare, education, or food – so that they may lead healthy, productive, and satisfying lives.

WHAT WE DO

Share Information: We share information about news, events, and resources in the community for people with limited incomes to our email list of more than 300. We host Quarterly Shared Learnings where we inform providers, businesses, and community leaders about available resources and opportunities. When service providers and community leaders have the best, most up-to-date information they can better help their clients gain access to services.

Build Relationships: We connect partners at our network meetings

and other events. We bring coalition members together to discuss gaps in our current services and network and to work together on solutions. We believe that building relationships and making connections is a critical to creating the conditions for improved coordination and collaboration.

Support Collaborations: We support partnerships or collaborations that emerge from the Asset Building Coalition network. Thurston ABC can serve as the convener, facilitator, grant writer, and coordinator for partnerships and collaborations. Sometimes we help a new partnership effort get started and sometimes we become the coordinating entity for a collaborative effort. We have supported a variety of collaborations among our network partners. Over the years our support to collaborations has included coordinated advocacy efforts, joint grant applications, one-time training or event support, and long-term program management.

STRUCTURE

Our current structure includes a Steering Committee and four Hubs: Economic Advancement, Food, Health and Housing. Each Hub meets monthly or every two months. Hub participants work with partner organizations to build relationships, maintain current information and contacts, improve referrals, identify and fill service gaps when possible, and to reduce duplication of services.

LEADERSHIP

Michael Cade, Thurston Economic Development Council

Christina Daniels, Puget Sound Capital

Winfried Danke, CHOICE Regional Health Network

Sandy DiBernardo, Olympia Federal Savings

Danny Kadden, Interfaith Works

Paul Knox, United Way of Thurston County

Lisa Smith, Enterprise for Equity

Schelli Slaughter, Family Support Center of South Sound (Chair)

Lee Wojnar, O Bee Credit Union

MOVING BEYOND POVERTY

On Tuesday, November 17, Thurston ABC partnered with the United Way of Thurston County and the Community Foundation of South Puget Sound to host “Moving Beyond Poverty,” an event that attracted more than 375 people—attendees included business leaders, local elected officials, social service staff, nonprofit board members, state government workers, and interested community members.

Our goals for “Moving Beyond Poverty” were to increase awareness of the economic challenges that individuals and families face in our region and to help bring about greater understanding of why economic security can be so difficult to attain. We wanted people to walk away from the event with a better understanding of why so many people—including working families—still struggle to make ends meet. And we wanted people to understand that improving conditions for working families is the responsibility of our whole community and one of those issues that no single organization can solve by themselves. Our three organizations—Thurston ABC, United Way, and the Community Foundation—intend this event to be the first in a series of events that address this topic. We plan to host another event in the Spring, but first we will seek feedback from community partners on what next steps should be before shaping that event.

In the meantime, to get involved in the Coalition you can attend any of our Hub meetings or upcoming events or join our mailing list. Visit thurstonabc.org for more information.

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Activists pull out of Chicago LGBTQ conference over Israel pinkwashing

Jimmy Johnson

Black Lives Matter Chicago has added its voice to protests over the National LGBTQ Task Force’s inclusion of an Israel lobby group in its Creating Change conference in Chicago this weekend.

Tarab-NYC, an LGBTQ and gender nonconforming group organizing in Middle Eastern and North African communities, launched the #cancepinkwashing campaign in response to the inclusion of A Wider Bridge.

A Wider Bridge describes itself as a “pro-Israel organization that builds bridges between Israelis and LGBTQ North Americans and allies.” Among its major donors is the Jewish Federation of Metropolitan Chicago, which has taken a lead in efforts to combat the Palestinian-led boycott, divestment and sanctions movement.

The #cancepinkwashing campaign’s Facebook page notes that A Wider Bridge partners with the Israeli consulate and the right-wing Israel advocacy organization StandWithUs to put on pinkwashing events that aim to “normalize the occupation of Palestinian land by distracting from the violent, inhumane actions of the Israeli settler state.”

Pinkwashing is a public relations strategy that deploys Israel’s supposed enlightenment toward LGBTQ issues to deflect criticism from its human rights abuses and war crimes and as a means to build up support for Israel among Western liberals and progressives.

On Tuesday, Rea Carey, executive director of the National LGBTQ Task Force, reversed an earlier decision to exclude A Wider Bridge, citing a need for “constructive dialogue.”

On Friday evening, Jewish Voice for Peace Chicago and the Coalition for a Just Peace in Israel-Palestine will host “a Queer, anti-Zionist Shabbat that resists

the pinkwashing of Israeli oppression taking place at Creating Change.”

“Divest from violence”

In an online statement, Black Lives Matter Chicago says it endorses Tarab-NYC’s demand that the National LGBTQ Task Force “divest from the violence, ignorance and false ‘inclusion’ of settler-colonial pinkwashing in the name of a ‘wider’ bridge.”

“As They/We all struggle to achieve healing, safety and autonomy in our own lives, families and communities, let us commit to mobilize ourselves and honor the self-determined struggles of Palestine so as to divest from the violence of the occupation,” the statement concludes. “Black and Palestinian Lives depend on it.”

Shortly after that statement was released, the Chicago organization Brown People for Black Power cancelled its scheduled workshop at Creating Change.

It cited both its opposition to pinkwashing and a prior decision to invite the government agency Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) to present at Creating Change.

“There is no ‘constructive dialogue’ to be had about the deliberate genocide of Palestinians, or the detainment of queer and trans people of color,” the group said. “There is nothing good that can come out of the ‘inclusion’ of those who occupy, those who kidnap, those who incarcerate and those who terrorize.”

Joint struggle

Kristian Davis Bailey, co-organizer of the ongoing Black for Palestine effort, told me by email that the Black Lives Matter Chicago statement builds on the joint struggle between segments of Black and Palestinian liberation movements.

Davis Bailey noted that the term “They/We” was designed to emphasize “that we

can recognize commonalities between our struggles and support each other’s struggles without saying they’re the same.”

This is a point, Bailey said, that is made in the recent Black-Palestinian solidarity video, “When I See Them, I See Us.”

Jason Tompkins, an organizer with Black Lives Matter Chicago, told me that Palestinians and Black people are increasingly subject to similar kinds of state violence.

as noted by Kristian Davis Bailey, also acknowledges differences.

“We know that Africana people are part of Palestinian civil society, and have contributed greatly to the struggle against the occupation,” Tompkins stated. “Afro-Palestinians are of course also across the Palestinian diaspora, displaced across the globe.”

“As we deepen the relationship between Black Liberation and Palestinian solidarity work, it is crucial to center Black Palestinian voices, perspectives and experiences,” Tompkins argued.

Tompkins also elaborated on how Palestinian liberation, including LGBTQ and Afro-Palestinian liberation, can play a role in Black liberation.

“The hope is that we can show up for each other as co-resisters and accomplices, and less so under a symbolic ally position,” Tompkins said.

Black Lives Matter Chicago endorses Tarab-NYC’s demand that the National LGBTQ Task Force “divest from the violence, ignorance and false ‘inclusion’ of settler-colonial pinkwashing in the name of a ‘wider’ bridge.”

“We see so much evidence of the same military surveillance technologies and weaponry being deployed against Palestinian civil society, that are now showing up in police departments across the US to wage war against Black communities,” Tompkins said.

Tompkins described Combined Systems and Motorola Solutions as examples of companies that “routinely profit from our death and containment.”

Tompkins also pointed to the millions of tax dollars that US authorities are spending on police body cameras: “Is this going to actually deliver transparency and safety to us?”

Co-resisters

The Black Lives Matter Chicago statement recognizes parallels between Black and Palestinian struggles, but

This includes making solidarity statements and honoring calls for support, “but it also requires building collective knowledge about our histories and current struggles.”

“We need to take the hard questions seriously, and continue to build movements that don’t dispose of ‘inconvenient’ people, or leave the most vulnerable constituents of our communities behind,” Tompkins said.

“We already have a stake in each other’s fights, because abolishing anti-Blackness, settler-colonialism, patriarchy and trans-misogyny— everywhere—benefits us all.”

Jimmy Johnson is an organizer in Detroit, Turtle Island.

This article was originally published in the *Electric Intifada*.

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We are a group of concerned citizens who have heard and seen news reports from across the United States. Since Olympia is part of the United States, and our police are part of the greater brotherhood of police departments and officers, we have every reason to believe that the police in our community operate with the same attitudes. Especially so because there is no official civilian oversight of the Olympia Police Department.

We will collect stories in oral, written or video formats and use these to compile an on-going document of interactions between the officers of the OPD and the public whom they are charged to serve and protect.



Cop Watch citizens are available

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FDA bans three toxic chemicals from food wrapping—too little, too late

WASHINGTON – Under pressure from Environmental Working Group (EWG) and other environmental and health groups, the U.S. Food and Drug Administration is banning three grease-resistant chemical substances linked to cancer and birth defects from use in pizza boxes, microwave popcorn bags, sandwich wrappers and other food packaging.

The FDA’s belated action comes more than a decade after EWG and other advocates sounded alarms and five years after U.S. chemical companies stopped making the chemicals. It does nothing to prevent food processors and packagers from using almost 100 related chemicals that may also be hazardous.

“Industrial chemicals that pollute people’s blood clearly have no place in food packaging,” said EWG President Ken Cook. “But it’s taken the FDA more than 10 years to figure that out, and it’s banning only three chemicals that aren’t even made any more.

“This is another egregious example of how, all too often, regulatory actions under the nation’s broken chemical laws are too little and too late to protect Americans’ health. Congress needs to ensure that chemicals that make their way into food, either as deliberate additives or as contaminants from packaging and other outside sources, are thoroughly investigated.”

The packaging substances banned by FDA, in an order that takes effect immediately, are perfluorinated compounds or PFCs, a class that includes the chemicals used to make DuPont’s Teflon and 3M’s Scotchgard. Through their use in thousands of consumer products, PFCs have polluted the blood of virtually all Americans. They can be passed through the umbilical cord to the fetus. They contaminate drinking water for more than 6.5 million people in 27 states, according to water tests conducted by the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency.

In 2005, former DuPont engineer Glen Evers revealed that for decades, DuPont had hidden its use of a PFC-based coating in paper food packaging, despite evidence that PFCs were harmful to human health. Following Evers’ disclosures, EWG wrote to the leaders of numerous fast-food companies, asking them to disclose whether their companies used PFCs in food wrappers. Burger King and some other companies said they would stop using wrappers with certain PFCs. In 2008, the California Legislature approved an EWG-backed bill to ban some PFCs in food packaging, but it was vetoed by then-Gov. Arnold Schwarzenegger.

Meanwhile, in 2005, the EPA made voluntary agreements with DuPont, 3M and other chemical companies to phase out production and use of some PFCs. But because the EPA regulates chemicals in consumer products while the FDA has authority over chemicals in food, the EPA phaseout did not remove the compounds from the FDA’s list of substances approved for contact with food.

Although the three chemicals were no longer made in the U.S. as of 2011, the possibility remained that food packaging with those chemicals made in other countries could be imported to America. In October 2014, EWG and eight other groups petitioned the FDA to bar them from its list of approved food-contact materials.

Over the past decade, chemical companies have introduced dozens of chemicals similar to those phased

out under the EPA-led deal. The FDA has approved almost 100 other PFC compounds for use in food packaging.

In 2008, EWG investigated FDA safety assessments and approvals for those next-generation PFCs and concluded that the agency failed to give adequate attention to the long-term health consequences of exposure to those substances. Since then, FDA has approved 20 more PFC chemicals for use in food wrappers. Public information on the safety of these substances is largely non-existent.

“We know very little about the safety of these next-generation PFCs in food wrappers,” said EWG Senior Scientist David Andrews, who analyzed the more recent FDA approvals. “But their chemical structure is very similar to the ones that have been phased out, and the very limited safety testing that has been done suggests they may have some of the same health hazards. To protect Americans’ health, the FDA and EPA should require that chemicals be proved safe before they are allowed on the marketplace.”

—Environmental Working Group

Friedrichs v. California Teachers Association is before the US Supreme Court

On Monday, January 11, the Supreme Court heard arguments on Friedrichs v. California Teachers Association, which could have far-reaching consequences for public sector unions. Economic Policy Institute research has shown that strengthening collective bargaining will raise wages and improve the standard of living for all workers. At a time when workers’ bargaining power in the labor market has been severely eroded, policymakers should not look to ways of further weakening collective bargaining rights.

Wages are lower in right-to-work states

- Accounting for cost-of-living and demographic differences, wages are 3.1 percent lower in right-to-work states than non-right-to-work states.
- Under federal law, no one can be forced to join a union as a condition of employment, and the Supreme Court has made clear that workers cannot be forced to pay dues used for political purposes.
- Unions raise wages of unionized workers by roughly 20 percent and raise compensation, including both wages and benefits, by about 28 percent. The impact of unions on total nonunion wages is almost as large as the impact on total union wages.

Collective bargaining levels the playing field between public- and private-sector workers

- In states with full collective bargain-

ing, public sector workers make as much as their private-sector peers. In states with partial collective bargaining rights, public-sector employees earn 1 percent less than their private-sector counterparts. In right-to-work states, the penalty is 10 percent.

- This may impede state and local governments from recruiting and retaining highly skilled employees for their many professional and public safety occupations.

Fair share fees strengthen collective bargaining and cut down on free riders

- The share of public-sector workers in a union is nearly three times higher in non-right-to-work states than in right-to-work states.
- 80 percent of public sector union members are located in the 24 states that allow for full public-sector collective bargaining and agency fees, which is evidence of the ability of agency fees to strengthen worker voices and collective bargaining.
- In right-to-work states, 20.3 percent of public-employee union members are free riders—meaning they enjoy the benefits of collective bargaining, without paying their fair share to support the union’s ability to negotiate on their behalf. In non-right-to-work states, only 6.8 percent of the bargaining units are nonunion members, though they still pay agency fees equivalent to about 85 percent of dues.
- Union membership declined by 7 percent, and free-riding more than doubled, after Michigan enacted a public-sector right-to-work law and prohibited school districts from collecting union dues by payroll deduction in 2012.

Public-sector collective bargaining has not led to massive wage increases or threatened public safety

- The share of public-sector employees with the right to bargain grew from 2 percent to 63 percent from 1960 to 2010. This growth did not cause excessive or distorted public employee compensation.
- Employees covered by the right to strike earn only about 2 percent to 5 percent more than those without it.
- The right to strike has not had catastrophic results in terms of threats to public safety or welfare. Public safety employees are covered by interest arbitration, which prevents strikes by requiring management and the union to submit conflicts to an outside arbitrator in the event of negotiations that do not produce a settlement. This has prevented strikes and has resulted in no effect on wages for these employees when compared to other forms of dispute resolution.

—Economic Policy Institute

SAVE THIS DATE

Saturday, March 26

If you want your vote to count.

This year is a Presidential Election year and the Primary season will probably have begun by the time you read this. In our state the first votes are cast Saturday, March 26, at the Washington State Democratic Precinct Caucuses. If you want your favored candidate to be on the November ballot, you must attend (with a few exceptions*) in the caucus in the neighborhood where you are registered to vote.

The Democratic Party nominee for President (for which Bernie Sanders is running) is decided through the caucus process, that includes a state convention. *It is not decided through our State Presidential Primary election.* The precinct caucus is the *only* time, as average citizens, that we can cast a ‘vote’ that counts because, oddly enough, votes cast in the Presidential Primary in Washington State (May 24) are not even considered in the state’s selection of our Democratic nominee for President. So, put March 26 on your calendar *now*, and *be there by* 10 am because the doors shut and the voting begins at 10:30 am.

If you are not registered to vote, you can do so and participate in your caucus on the same day. And *if* you will turn 18-years-old by November 8, 2016, you also will be allowed to participate and vote at the caucus.

If you cannot attend your caucus because of illness, military, employment, disability, or religious reason, you can file a “surrogate affidavit *by* Friday, March 18.

Those forms will be available to download at www.wa-dems.org later this winter, as will the locations for caucuses by precinct.

A county map of precincts can be at the County Auditor’s website at www.co.thurston.wa.us/auditor

Thurstondemocrats.org also has individual precinct maps by number. Click PCOs/current

There is also a tutorial on the caucus process and precinct ID at www.bernadvisory.org. (This is much clearer and more user friendly and is associated with Bernie’s campaign.)

Provided by Sandia Slaby, a local eldercare provider and activist in Olympia. For info on precinct organizing, you may contact Sandia at sandia@fertileground.org

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West Central Park
(@ Harrison and Division)
Vic’s Pizzeria on Division
Spud’s Produce on Capitol
Olympia Greyhound Station
Thurston County Courthouse

GREEN BOXES

4th Avenue across from Cafe Vita
Capitol next to Starbuck’s
Olympia Transit Center

WIPs are also available at:

Traditions Fair Trade Café
Olympia Timberland Regional Library
Lacey Timberland Regional Library
Westside Olympia Food Co-op
Eastside Olympia Food Co-op
Evergreen State College
South Puget Sound Community College



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

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WORKS IN PROGRESS

► **Needless barriers**, cont. from page 1.
service benefit of \$651 per month, but many landlords require a tenant’s income to be twice the rent or more, leaving Jeffrey and others like him out of the cold.

Across the state, many people like Jeffrey are denied housing because of this rigorous screening process, which often roots out applicants on the basis of income requirements, credit ratings, employment history, or a criminal record.

Source of income discrimination

Some landlords refuse to rent to someone because they’re receiving housing subsidies or other public benefits. Source of income discrimination, as advocates call it, is a substantial problem in Thurston County.

Meg Martin, who runs the Interfaith Works Emergency Overnight Shelter, sees this frequently in her work. She attributes the prevalence of the discrimination right now to the low vacancy rates in Thurston County, which have resulted in competition over a small number of apartments.

Chris Lowell, Executive Director of the Housing Authority of Thurston County (HATC) which oversees the Section 8 voucher program, has also seen this practice in her work.

“Don’t get me wrong—we in this

community have a great deal of wonderful landlords that we work with,” Lowell said, referring to the 1200 landlords HATC works with to house their approximately 2200 clients. “It is not an everyday occurrence, but it does happen.”

The full extent of the problem is difficult to measure in light of the compounding variables in the screening process, but cases of outright animosity toward Section 8 and the people who depend on it are clear.

HATC has gotten angry calls from landlords merely for proposing to build a housing facility near their property, because the landlords don’t want clients living in the vicinity.

Lowell has seen landlords not only refuse to rent to new applicants receiving the subsidy, but also force out current residents who became eligible for the voucher during their tenancy. This destabilization has far-reaching implications for households with children, who often need to change schools when their families relocate.

“We’re trying to *avoid* them moving two or three times a year as they’ve done in the past being homeless,” Lowell said. “So to have a source of income problem on top of the screening criteria is very difficult.”

This type of discrimination is one of

the reasons the Section 8 waiting list is so long. HATC brings in approximately \$15.4 million annually from HUD to cover subsidies for beneficiary households, but the hard part is

Lowell has seen landlords not only refuse to rent to new applicants receiving the subsidy, but also force out current residents who became eligible for the voucher during their tenancy.

finding landlords willing to rent to their clients. The rigorous screening criteria coupled with the high cost of rent and low vacancy rate in Thurston County all factor in, but the fact that many landlords simply refuse to rent to beneficiaries exacerbates the problem.

A policy fix

The City of Tumwater already has an Unfair Housing Practices ordinance on the books banning source of income discrimination, but other cities in Thurston County have yet to follow suit.

State legislation introduced last year would prohibit this practice across the state, but rental associations have pushed back. In a public hearing, lobbyist Chester Baldwin testified on behalf of the Washington Rental Owners Association that many landlords choose not to take Section 8 because of the hassles associated with the home health and safety inspections that are required as part of the housing subsidy.

Michele Thomas, Director of Policy and Advocacy at the Washington Low Income Housing Alliance, sees this rhetoric as a cover for deep-seated stereotypes about households that benefit from public assistance. It can also be a proxy for other kinds of discrimination, allowing landlords to sidestep fair housing laws. People with Section 8 are disproportionately people of color, seniors, or single parents. Additionally, eighty-three percent

of Section 8 clients have a disability, rendering them more likely to require accommodations to make their home accessible.

Thomas does not see that as an acceptable reason for turning someone away. “If you’re in the business of something as precious as putting a roof over someone’s head, you should be asked to make accommodations,” she said.

Last year, source of income discrimination legislation failed to make it out of committee.

This year, advocates are trying to sweeten the deal. Two provisos in the Governor’s budget would help soften resistance from landlords and support local efforts to end the practice. The Rapid Housing Improvement Program would invest \$1.5 million to support landlords in making health and safety upgrades required by HUD inspections if the landlord commits to renting to tenants on Section 8. It would also reserve \$125,000 to mitigate landlords in the event that a voucher-holder caused damage beyond their deposit. Landlords would only be eligible for the second fund in jurisdictions prohibiting source of income discrimination, a factor that could encourage more communities to address the issue at the municipal level or to move forward with the statewide ban.

These proposals would not solve the broader issues of housing affordability and barriers to rehousing, but advocates say they would address an important part of the situation. One way or another, they are determined to move the conversation forward.

“If we’re going to rely on the private market to provide the vast majority of [housing],” Thomas said, “then we need to make sure that the private market is accessible and affordable to the whole range of people who need it.”

Michaela Williams is a former legislative staffer. She lives in Olympia.

Oh Citizens United has divided us

Ken Dammand

Oh Citizens United has divided us

Into those with voices and those who cannot speak

And it looks like corruption, like democracy disruption

And the end of it is what the people seek

Five justices with blood upon their hands

Have cast a curse upon our sacred land

They’ve killed our democracy, made of it a mockery

And fixing it is what we now demand

I guess the constitution isn’t clear enough

It’s people that the government should serve

Not banks and corporations, not legal abominations

Real people with skin and bones and nerves

Oh Citizens United has divided us

And put us back together don’t you see

For the effort to divide us, has lit the fire inside us

To stand up and defend democracy

Ken Dammand is the president of Fix Democracy First.

► **Truth telling**, cont. from page 1.
revision of biased and discriminatory interpretations of historical and biblical texts. Again, in order for forgiveness to become a diet we adopt, truth telling is necessary.

Without it, *ubuntu* cannot live, which Tutu describes as the following:

A person with ubuntu is open and available to others, affirming of others, does not feel threatened that others are able and good, for he or she has a proper self-assurance that comes from knowing that he or she belongs in a greater whole and is diminished when others are humiliated or diminished, when others are tortured, or oppressed, or treated as if they were less than who they are.

He continues to elaborate:

In the spirit of ubuntu, the central concern is the healing of breaches, redressing of imbalances, the restoration of broken relationships, a seeking to rehabilitate both the victim and the perpetrator, who should be given the opportunity to be reintegrated into the community he has injured by his offense..

It is from this meaning of communal and sacrificial love for all of humankind that Tutu proposes the following recommendation to the minority in power:

And then I said that Afrikaners imagined that they had only two options in South Africa’s political, social, and community life—either to be top dog, domineering, or to be underdog, subservient, the doormat of others. I said there was an exciting third option, that of embracing the new dispensation enthusiastically and using their enormous resources in money, skills, and experience to help make the new ordering of society succeed for everyone’s sake.

As South Africa had a choice to steer

its horrific past into a positive future, the United States has that same choice to make today. It can become honest and make a public apology to all who were (and are still) subjugated under its rule. It can also prepare to offer meaningful remedies from such pain (i.e.: reparations). Finally, the United States can slowly change its mindset and actions in how it addresses other people, other nations, other cultures and religions by intently becoming open-minded and open-hearted to endorse inclusion, not assimilation (supporting the qualities of all instead of dismissing some while encouraging other qualities for the benefit of the American Dream).

It is from these arguments that truth telling is required for the United States to move toward a just, liberating, and forgiving nation. It is true that, historically and presently, racism plagues our land. So if we do not address racism, how will we expect to confront other issues? Regardless of the reality that women make up the majority of our population, pay inequity still exists, unfair body and beauty images dominate the media, tensions of becoming ordained continue in many of our denominations, and more. In addition, the never-ending struggle persists for our brothers and sisters who do not have access to clean air and water, safe neighborhoods, high-quality schools and affordable health care to become recognized as human rights problems in our society. Based on these conditions, we have much more work and dialogue to do to heal the world around us.

Reverend Lerone J. Wilder is a minister-educator-scholar from Greenville, SC and a doctoral learner at Union Institute & University in Cincinnati, OH.

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www.olympiacomunityschool.org