

Works in Progress

Advocating for social justice since 1990

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Fighting to keep a roof over your head in a time of economic chaos

Bethany Weidner

Nearly 30,000 people in Thurston county applied for unemployment after businesses closed in response to the stay-home-stay-safe order. Thousands more were simply out of work and out of luck.

At first, rents were paid, here as in much of the rest of the country. Actions at the federal and state levels helped. Out-of-work people could use one-time stimulus checks, unemployment checks with a \$600 bump; credit card draws, maybe some savings. Others didn't get anything because programs were designed to exclude various kinds of work and various kinds of workers. They hang on by virtue of Governor Inslee's moratorium on evictions. It is scheduled to end on June 4.

Can't pay the rent

Government checks and the moratorium on evictions will end, but massive unemployment will not. The interventions only delayed the need to reckon with the consequences of the pandemic. Many businesses won't come back; whole industries will downsize or even disappear. Demand will decline and send ripples through the economy. People hit hard by closures during the shut-down will find themselves among the long-term unemployed. Without stable incomes, spending on consumption, on rent, on mortgages and everything else is in jeopardy.

COVID-19 produced conditions that were met with emergency measures to keep people in their homes. But the crisis in housing was only an extreme version of an existing problem. In Olympia, a majority of households rent, paying on average about \$1200 a month. A job paying \$15.00 an hour (above the Washington minimum of \$13.50) nets less than \$2400 a month. This is not a sustainable situation. Thurston Regional Planning calculates that 37% of households in the county are already "rent-burdened," meaning they pay more than 30% and up to half of their income on rent.

Won't pay the rent

As we move into the summer and emergency measures fade, what will forestall widespread evictions in the months ahead? Will we meet the "new normal" with new approaches to housing—or is everyone on their own?

Starbucks, noting the post-emergency "new reality" told landlords that they would not pay: "Effective June 1 and for at least a period of 12

consecutive months, Starbucks will require concessions to support modified operations and adjustments to lease terms and base rent structures."

Unlike Starbucks, tenants are fundamentally powerless when their economic situation changes for the worse. When they can't come up with rent, a landlord, or the officer of a management company, might consider some kind of rent adjustment. It's equally likely that they will pursue eviction. Even when tenants pay the rent, they are powerless when the landlord decides to raise the rent mid-lease, or to non-renew a lease in order to offer the property at a higher rate.

A recent editorial in *The Olympian* criticized Councilmember Renata Rollins for supporting an emerging rent strike movement. The editors offered "practical steps" for us instead. Things like contributing money for emergency housing; supporting subsidies for low income and density zoning—a favored scheme to boost investment in housing.

Market-oriented "replacements" like rental assistance and vouchers have failed spectacularly in recent years, with long waiting lists and no guarantee of stable rates.

The editors also said we should ask political candidates "what they will do to reform our housing market." What have they done so far? Modest attempts to change the law in tenants' favor don't stand a chance. Olympia City Council members were asked to support an ordinance that would allow renters to pay hefty "move-in" fees in installments. That disappeared without a trace.

This year, legislators introduced several bills favorable to tenants. They would have capped annual rent increases at inflation plus 5%; let tenants leave with no penalty when the landlord increases rent during a lease; limited evictions to "just cause;" required a landlord accept an emergency rent payment within 14 days. Typically, these were opposed by the real estate lobby. They all died.

Laws that ensure landlords will be paid do pass. For example, in 2018 our legislature passed the Landlord Mitigation Program in which the landlord agrees to stay an eviction in exchange for funds from the state equal to the amount owed by the tenant—if the tenant signs an agreement to repay the money to the state.

Rent isn't the main problem

The call for a national strike seeking rent and mortgage forgiveness is gaining ground because things are

not going to get better without new arrangements that acknowledge the failure of the current system to serve most people well.

In order to change things, those whose stability is most threatened, who see the prospect of homelessness bearing down on them, are looking for a way to improve their bargaining power. Calling their representative and giving testimony to the City Council isn't working. Renters hope that a movement to withhold monthly payments can put

economic pressure on landlords and on state and federal officials to begin working on real changes. Changes that could be the first step toward a housing policy designed around homes as places to live rather than investments.

A rent strike is not, finally, about cancelling rent. It's about taking this crisis as an opportunity to rewrite the rules; to open up a new world of social housing where a stable home is within reach of everyone. The pandemic revealed the many ways our system is broken, and the market that treats housing first as an investment and last as a home is one of them.

Bethany Weidner has been Editor of Works in Progress since 2017.



C2C *promotoras* surround the coffin they delivered to the Capitol to confront lawmakers with the cost of excluding farmworkers from essential worker protections. Photo by Edgar Franks

Caravan honors essential labor of farmworkers

This May Day, *El Comité*, along with WAISN (WA Immigrant Solidarity Network), Community to Community (C2C) and *Familias Unidas* organized a caravan to Olympia to honor the essential labor of farmworkers who work to produce the food we all eat. The arrival of this pandemic has revealed the already abysmal conditions under which farmworkers are made to labor and made them far more dangerous.

Farmworkers' housing, food, pay, and PPE all fail to meet basic standards owed any worker, much less those who have been designated "essential" by the government itself. Caravaners made a coffin and placed it in front of the legislature. The coffin serves as a vivid warning of the burden that

the government and all consumers must be willing to bear if they continue to demand farmworkers' labor while denying them protection, care and dignity.

En español: El Comité comenzó formalmente en abril de 2000 para defender los derechos y exponer las necesidades de las comunidades de inmigrantes en el estado de Washington. La mayoría de los miembros de El Comité son inmigrantes latinos y uno de los énfasis iniciales era de lograr una reforma migratoria integral que se centrara en proteger y garantizar los derechos laborales, civiles y humanos para todos los trabajadores inmigrantes y hacer cumplir el sueño de justicia social.

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

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

Editorial policy

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

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

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

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Linkages

Only some of us are in this together

The COVID-19 pandemic makes connections visible, like a three-dimensional holograph that includes space and time. So do certain traumatic images. The virus has managed to travel the world, demonstrating how our fate is connected to the fate of people in countries everywhere. The image of George Floyd on a street in Minneapolis, pinned there by a policeman's knee pressing his neck has traveled all over the world as well. It triggered a response from demonstrators who came out in frustration and protest in dozens of cities in the US—including Seattle.

FOOD FOR THOUGHT

We are experiencing historically unprecedented unemployment alongside lethal risks that are distributed throughout the population along the same lines of race and class as preexisting disparities. Washington State Department of Health study published in April reported that non-Hispanic whites represent 68% of the total WA state population, but only half of diagnosed COVID-19 cases. Hispanics represent 13% of the population, and 29% of confirmed cases. Non-Hispanic blacks represent 4% of the state population, and 7% of confirmed cases. The figures for the rest of the country demonstrate an even greater disparity.

This pandemic that consumes our present will inevitably shape our future, but no one knows yet exactly how. Today, in city after city we are hearing from a part of the population that was silent these past two months – and neither heard nor seen for generations before this. It is increasingly clear that lives are at stake—whether from climate catastrophe, COVID-19, or at the hands of the security forces.

Will it be a future that recognizes our shared humanity? Will it be a future where we strengthen our networks, nourish our existing links and build new ones in order to bring about a world not based on oppression but on our new understanding of what—and who—is essential?

Many stories in this issue are about the fact that solutions to our collective problems start with acting together to increase our collective strength. Some testify to the urgent need to redistribute power into the hands of the people performing the essential work that keeps our society functioning. Others emphasize the right to be safe and decently compensated for growing, harvesting and preparing our food; the right to live in a healthy community and raise a family without fearing that you'll lose your home; the importance of wresting housing policy from profit-driven investors and the politicians they support; that it's time to recognize and reward people who care for the children of those doing essential work. That idea also infused the neighbors who together assembled on Olympia's Fourth Avenue bridge to honor the nurses who have given their lives caring for those infected with the coronavirus. (See cover.)

Other stories are about acting together to resist and to protect. Mexican women march under the banner "together we are all" —"juntas somos todas," demonstrating their refusal to allow men to get away with murder. Three students at Olympia High School started with the idea of helping coronavirus victims and then found out they could organize students from five high schools for broader goals. In Grays Harbor, members of the community persist in their determination to resist the damage of development and protect their wetlands. Another story reminds

us that in a time when physical separation is required, we are responsible for connecting through authentic dialogue.

The need to keep the coronavirus from spreading has rewarded us for staying separate in public and isolating ourselves in private. That must not keep us from seeing one another and acting together. We hope you will write about the ways we can see one another and act together to bring about the better world that is still possible. We need all the help we can get. Lives are at stake.

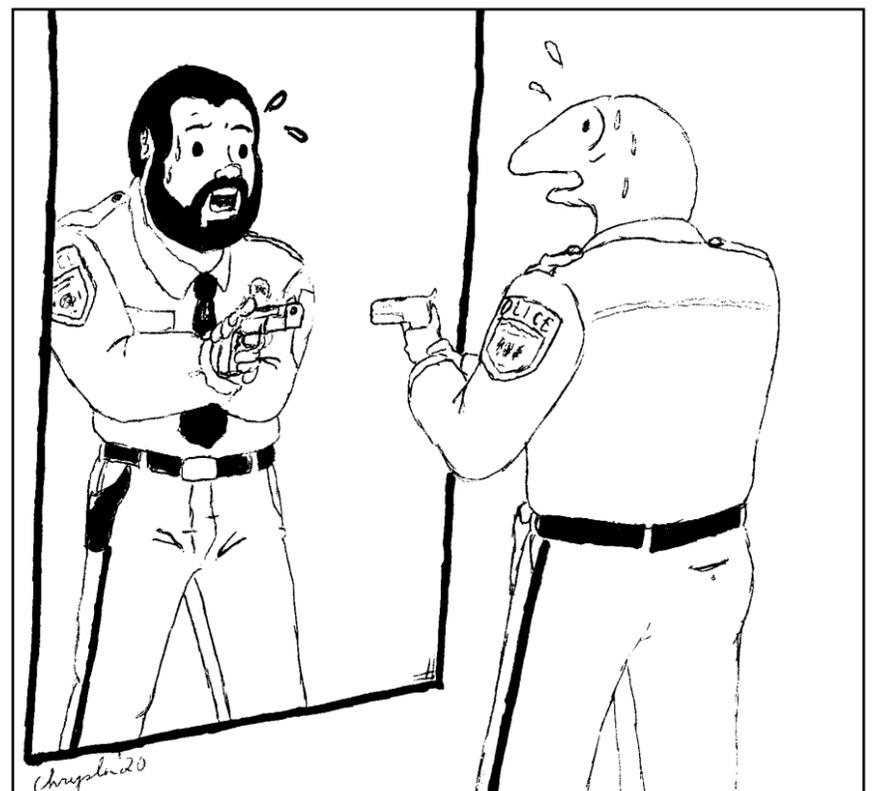
UPCOMING THEMES

Unintended consequences. *Deadline June 17.* We invite you to think about "unintended" consequences that could have been, should have been predicted. The explosion of protests in May, after years of second-class citizenship for black and brown people enforced by violent policing. Collateral damage in our wars. Or maybe even some positive outcomes from actions you didn't know would be so meaningful.

When money is the measure. *Deadline July 16.* If we "privatize" everything, everything will be

bought or sold. Everything will have its price. And then what? Do you think we've gone too far down that road?

Hoping, doping, coping and shopping. *Deadline August 16.* The signs are: the ever-widening chasm between the ultra-rich and everyone else. Mass protests. Political upheaval and social division. Breakdown of institutions. Betrayal of the social contract. So how do we function? By coping...hoping...doping...or...shopping. Which one works for you?



Fight or flight: the lizard brain will betray you every time.
Drawing by Logan Chrysler

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Confessions of a “mom and pop” landlord

Mrs. Hudson

I've owned two rental properties, one of them for over 30 years. I've been surprised in recent days by claims that portray landlords as concerned benefactors rather than someone looking to make money outside the waged economy.

Online you can find postings by landlords freaked out by the fact that someone in our state legislature dropped a bill to require them to give tenants 6 months' notice of their intention to raise the rent by 3% or more—and to allow the tenant to pay up at their current rent and move out with no penalty.

Or a woman who came up from California to buy 6 rental properties in Olympia “because of the lack of regulation” and then found to her horror that the City Council listened to a proposal to allow renters to make move-in fees in installments. “If they do anything that cuts profits for landlords, the result will be prices will go up. That's just how economics works,” she was quoted in *The Olympian*. Followed by the stated threat that such an option for tenants would “push landlords out of business.”

I wonder. I offered my rentals at rates somewhat below market, so they were always occupied. I raised the rent with each new tenant but never in the middle of a lease. Rent payments covered my

mortgage, property taxes, insurance and other fees, plus maintenance and repairs. Most years the rent yielded some money above that.

In a few of the 30 years I owned one property, I laid out some serious money for upkeep (a new roof, replacing HVAC, electrical work, new appliances etc). One year I

directly, and indirectly courtesy of the US tax code. I had purchased the house for \$80,000 with \$16,000 down and a 30-year mortgage.

After a few years, I owned the property free and clear courtesy of the renters who had covered my mortgage and property taxes.

I sold the house for over \$300,000. After real estate fees, recovered depreciation and capital gains, I came out with over \$200,000. I had spent \$16,000, reduced my tax bill by a few hundred dollars each year, and gotten a modest bump in my income most years. Easy money.

No renter benefited financially from their outlays. What did they get for paying the mortgage, interest, taxes, maintenance and repairs all those years? *Nada*. What did I get because I had \$16,000 for a down payment in 1990? Hundreds of thousands of dollars. What did I risk? Almost nothing. What did my tenant risk? That if they lost their job, they could lose their home, their credit rating and a stable future.

As landlords, we get income from ownership while renters rely on jobs—often low paid—for income. If we're all in this together, maybe we landlords can give up some income just like the workers who lost their jobs.

Mrs. Hudson was Sherlock Holmes' landlord and a favorite of the landlord making this confession.

When tax time came, I learned that the government favors landlords. I saved hundreds on my taxes simply because I owned rental property.

Yet there was more. When tax time came, I learned that the government favors landlords. I saved hundreds on my taxes simply because I owned rental property. I could deduct every expense I incurred for the properties—every outlay (and yes, I could easily attribute some expenses incurred for my own residence to the rental property). I could also deduct a “depreciation” amount tied to the purchase price of the property.

spent \$30,000. At tax time, the deduction wiped out any tax on the rental income and significantly reduced the tax I would have owed on my income from work. In addition, since the \$30,000 exceeded the maximum I could deduct, I was allowed to carry it over to the next year—reducing my tax bill that year as well.

For 30 years, my income was supplemented by my renters



Then this happened...

On curbside confessions...

Last month, WIP printed a photo (right) of Father Leahy offering “curbside confessions” in Olympia. Then this happened: others have followed Leahy's lead. Below is the letter he wrote to Rev Jose M. Alvarez

May 26, 2020

Reverend Jose M. Alvarez
Pastor, Holy Family
9622 20th Avenue SW
Seattle, Washington 98106

Dear Rev. Alvarez,

I live in Olympia, Washington. A neighbor of mine sent me the Seattle Times story on your parking lot confessions.

Although I only did four years at St. Edwards Seminary, “Way Back in the Day,” I decided to do “Curbside Confessions.” My only penitent so far was my next door neighbor, a UU member.

Nevertheless, when my photo appeared in our monthly newspaper, *Works in Progress*, I had lots of questions about when I was going to hold curbside confessions again!

Although my uncle, Lester Leahy, was pastor of Olympia's St. Michael's parish, I think I'm going to refer people to your service.

Hope all is well in this time of social solidarity with physical distancing.

Dan Leahy
Olympia, WA. 98502



Instead of stockpiling medical supplies in case of a pandemic, the world's nine nuclear-armed nations spent 72.9 billion on their 13,000+ nuclear weapons in 2019. Our elected officials lead the way accounting for almost half or \$35.4 billion. We also exited a major arms control treaty, and deployed a new tactical weapon. The information was compiled by the International Campaign to Abolish Nuclear Weapons, who wryly pointed out that these weapons have nothing to do with security while robust and universal health care programs do.

...Spending by powerful companies, trade groups and other clients spiked to near-record levels from January through March as the private sector rushed to seize the lion's share of \$2.2 trillion in taxpayer money intended to alleviate effects of the coronavirus.

\$903 million flowed from big business groups into Congressional hands in the first quarter of 2020. More than 1,500 lobbying clients specifically reported their efforts to influence the writing of the CARES Act, making it the second most-lobbied bill in the history of lobbying. www.opensecrets.org

Trump appointees blocked a Washington law that required fossil fuel companies to remove volatile components from oil shipped to the state. “A state cannot use safety as a pretext for inhibiting market growth or instituting a de facto ban on crude oil by rail within its borders,” wrote Paul Roberti, chief counsel of the Transportation Department's Pipeline and Hazardous Materials Safety Administration.

Go to your room!

President Trump on May 22:

I am ordering governors to open houses of worship – these are essential places that provide essential services. Governors need to do the right thing and allow these very important essential places of faith to open right now!

Jesus in Matthew 6: 5-6:

And when you pray, do not be like the hypocrites, for they love to pray standing in the synagogues and on the street corners to be seen by others. They have received their reward in full. But when you pray, go into your room, close the door and pray to your Father, who is unseen. Then your Father, who sees what is done in secret, will reward you.”

The role of real estate interests in the 22nd Legislative District race

Jeff Sowers

There is an important political battle unfolding in Washington's 22nd Legislative District race. On one side are the nascent revolutionary forces of bold progressivism. On the other side is the corporate establishment, protecting a status quo that puts maximizing investor and corporate profits over basic human rights like housing, medical care and a living wage.

Thurston County voters expressed their hopes for a fundamental reordering of the political and economic system when they chose Bernie Sanders in the primary. This legislative race offers two new faces who reflect the power of those hopes.

Vying to represent the side of bold progressivism are two candidates, Mary Ellen Biggerstaff and Glenda Breiler. Both Breiler and Biggerstaff are running as Democrats on bold progressive platforms; each has pledged to take no money from corporate PACs. They both support tighter regulation of the housing market through rent control and scaling up investment in affordable housing.

Three candidates

Breiler brought her Master's Degree in Social Work to the position of Director of the Longhouse at The Evergreen State College and has made environmental protection and education a cornerstone of her campaign. Breiler says she wants to attack "homelessness at its roots while reforming current social welfare practices around homelessness." She will "fight to protect the rights of tenants and tackle rising rent conditions, while investing in sustainable housing strategies."

Biggerstaff has a Master's Degree in Public Health as well as advanced nursing degrees. The experience she gained in 15 years as a nurse practitioner in Thurston County shows up in her commitment to single-payer health care and an awareness that a healthy community depends on a safety net that goes beyond insurance. Mary Ellen also believes that everyone should have a home and puts forth policies she would support to help achieve this. These are, allowing rent control and improving tenant protections, Investing in social housing, and requiring developers to provide 25% of new development for truly affordable housing (inclusionary zoning).

On the other side, there is Jessica Bateman, with substantial corporate funding already in place. Bateman, an Olympia City Council member with a Master's Degree in Public Administration from Evergreen, is also running as a Democrat. While all three candidates support reform of the state tax system, where they differ is in who is funding their campaigns and why.

According to PDC filings, in this and recent elections, Bateman has been supported by Puget Sound Energy, the Olympia Master Builders (local developer lobby group), the Washington Realtors Association, various local developers, corporate lobbyists and establishment Democrats like Denny Heck.

Why the Real Estate investor lobby is backing Jessica Bateman

Bateman has the backing of the real estate lobby, among the most powerful lobbies in the state, for good reason. As an Olympia City Council member, she has consistently voted to award tax breaks to builders of market-rate and luxury developments, along with impact fee subsidies.



"We're serious about our advocacy in Olympia, and anyone who sees the building will know that," said Bill Riley, describing the larger presence of the Washington Realtors' HQ in 2017.

Photo by Paul Peck

She has also been a strong advocate for the "Missing Middle" program, which was sold as an "affordable housing" measure but includes zero housing affordability requirements. Instead, it allows new development in older Olympia neighborhoods, relaxing onsite parking requirements and eliminating certain environmental protections to promote construction of multifamily units on lots that would otherwise be too small. Investors prize these policies because they open existing neighborhoods to new opportunities for profitable rentals.

Restricting participation from the community

When a group of local community activists appealed the new "Missing Middle" ordinance to the Growth Management Board on the basis that it failed to adhere to the law, the ordinance was overturned. In response, Bateman and her fellow Council members doubled down. They didn't revise the ordinance to meet the law, but turned to the state legislature to change the law. They were not disappointed.

The legislature enacted HB 1923, a sweeping statewide law mandating municipalities to pursue upzoning. Initially, HB 1923 included an important catalyst for affordable housing known as "inclusionary zoning." Thus, 25% of new housing capacity directed by the act was required to be affordable. However, with each iteration of the bill, this requirement was watered down—until in the final version it was simply eliminated. The law, which was billed as a way to increase housing capacity and affordability, limited environmental protections and restricted the right of citizens to challenge upzone actions. There were zero affordability requirements.

Bateman, along with all but one of the other 6 Olympia Council members, takes the position that housing policy has to incentivize private developers by offering tax breaks, subsidies, upzones, and weakened development regulations. They claim that this will result in new investment—a diversity of new housing types, including more, smaller, multi unit

dwelling. Advocates argue that as more high-end housing is built, affluent residents move into the newer units, freeing up older more affordable units for people lower on the income ladder: the "trickle-down" theory applied to housing. But developers don't build affordable housing. They build "market rate" and luxury housing—the kind of housing that maximizes profit and drives up prices in the housing market overall.

The lavish hand of the real estate investor lobby

The underlying problem is the power of the real estate investor lobby. The National Association of Realtors, operating through state and local affiliates like the Washington Association of Realtors, is among the most powerful of the special interests working to influence government and housing policy.

According to the Center for Responsive Politics, from 1998 and 2016, the National Association of Realtors was second only to the US Chamber of Commerce in total spending by any group from any industry, accounting for \$1.3 billion in campaign donations and lobbying at the federal level.

In Washington State, in 2019, the Washington Realtors PAC (WRPAC) ranked third in spending among all PACs in the State. They spent over \$1.5 million to influence local and state elections, with millions more spent on lobbying efforts. Not only do they give to local officials like Bateman, but also to Democrats and Republicans in the state house. This includes most of the House Democratic leadership—House Speaker Lauri Jenkins, Majority Leader Pat Sullivan, Democrat Caucus Chair Eric Pettigrew and Majority Whip Marcus Ricelli are among recipients. WRPAC also contributed to Environment and Energy Committee Chair Joe Fitzgibbon, where HB 1923 was first considered.

Real estate money pays for deregulation and incentives

With their pipeline of campaign cash and army of lobbyists, real estate interests have succeeded in getting our local and state governments to adopt measures that turn housing into a commodity to be traded by investors, driving up prices and driving out tenants. Our elected officials, flush with PAC dollars, embrace industry arguments that say deregulation, corporate subsidies and tax breaks will solve our housing woes—despite the fact that these same policies helped create the housing and homeless crisis in the first place.

According to a number of development experts and many housing advocacy groups, "trickle down" housing policies are themselves a major cause of the housing affordability and homelessness crisis. The new zoning creates incentives to tear down older, more affordable homes and duplexes and replace them with market rate and luxury complexes. Without robust provisions for affordable housing. Increasing density leads to gentrification and an overall loss of a loss of affordable homes.

Progressive solutions to securing the right to housing

The alternative to trickle-down housing policy is regulation of the housing market along with meaningful investment in public housing and housing co-ops. Effective and well established measures to achieve these goals include applying affordable housing impact fees to new development, inclusionary zoning, density (upzone) bonuses for affordable housing and ending tax breaks and subsidies for market rate development to free up needed revenues. Rent control, a head tax on large businesses (called AmazonTax in Seattle), and other regulatory and taxing mechanisms would generate needed revenue for social housing investments.

These measures are already at work in some places. Bellingham, Redmond and Paulsbo have all adopted a form of inclusionary zoning. Seattle recently adopted an affordable housing impact fee on new commercial development, along with inclusionary zoning. California and Oregon both passed statewide rent control bills.

Yet rather than pursue this more assertive regulatory and progressive taxation approach, our local and state governments, under the control of Democrats funded by corporate and investor interests, have signed on to the trickle down game plan: deregulating the housing market and subsidizing developers and the rich. It's Republican-style fiscal conservatism and deregulation policy hidden behind a well-crafted veneer of liberal incrementalism, with new programs like Olympia's Home Fund invariably funded by regressive property and sales taxes.

Fighting to tackle the harms of inequality

If we want a county and state with responsible regulation of the rental market and adequate investment in social housing—where the right to housing is secured—we need to elect local and state representatives who have the courage and commitment to stand up to, and whose campaigns are not funded by the real estate lobby and the corporate establishment. In the 22nd Legislative District, we have two candidates who will not be accepting corporate money, and who promise to tackle inequality, work for real rent control and support deeply affordable housing for those who can't wait for market-rate housing to "trickle down."

This election offers us two candidates who advocate changes to the direction of housing policy. Check out their websites if you're interested. To win, they need active support—contributors and volunteers.

Jeff Sowers is a high school math and science teacher and a Thurston County progressive activist currently servicing as chair of the 22nd Legislative District Democrats

We need a rent strike to bring transformative change

Renata Rollins

I ran for Olympia City Council in 2017 and was elected that November to a 7-member team charged with leading Washington's fastest-growing city amidst rising sea levels, rising housing costs, rising homelessness, rising inequality—and rising local and national movements for people and planet over profit.

I came on board with a background in peer counseling and street outreach through several nonprofit programs and community projects, and as a founding member of Just Housing, a local grassroots advocacy organization. As a case manager and a renter myself, I knew rising housing costs were putting more of our people on the streets and keeping them there like a one-way trapdoor into a parallel outside world.

Once elected, I jumped in to lift up community solutions that recognized everyone's humanity and treated homelessness as a public health and human rights emergency that impacts everyone, whether we run a storefront business or sleep in front of one.

We've made progress locally but remain fundamentally stymied by the larger ocean of our national wealth divide.

Now COVID-19 and the looming economic recession threaten to undo our progress and set us back further if we don't act on lessons learned. I'm speaking out on the precipice of what, without intervention, could become one of the largest mass evictions and ballooning of household debt for families in recent history.

We're living in unprecedented times with this global pandemic and impending market and political destabilization not seen in generations, yet with the all too familiar pattern of massive wealth transfer from regular people to the very upper echelons. Again.

So much is unknown right now. But I do know this: Prior to this pandemic, our community was already drowning in the unmet needs of our people from all walks of life. Needs not met by disintegrating systems, unsustainable economic structures, tattered social fabric and an untenable "normal."

Locally and globally, we've all been doing our best to survive in a house of cards. The arrival of COVID was an inevitable strong gust of wind in a storm that started a long time ago. We cannot abide even one more eviction or foreclosure over missing payments during this emergency, in our community or anywhere else.

We are seeing a rise in domestic violence, self-harm, drug and alcohol misuse, diseases of despair. We cannot allow families to come through this pandemic only to be carrying more debt on the other side. Gov. Jay Inslee's eviction moratorium, ban on rent increases and late fees, and requirement of a "reasonable" repayment plan (individualized but undefined) is important, and I am grateful. But we must go further.

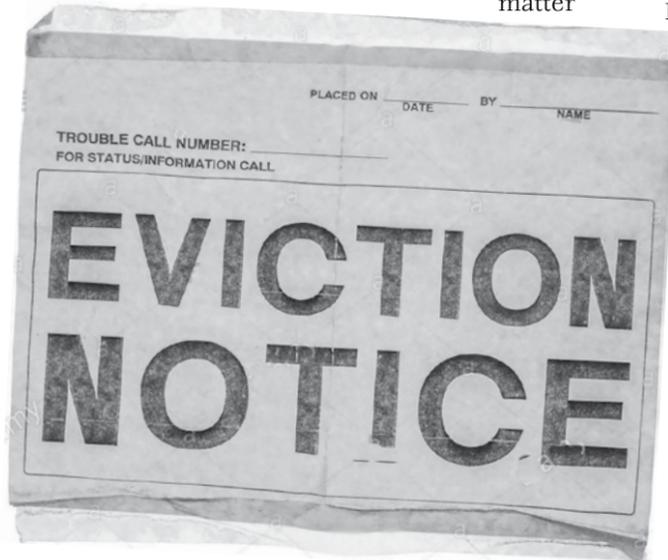
If we organize, transformative policies like a national safe homes guarantee, worker protections, Medicare for All and a Green New Deal start to become real. Rent and mortgage cancellation is the next step on the path to get us there. Rent and mortgage collection must be suspended at the national level immediately, with no accumulation of debt.

Rep. Ilhan Omar's Emergency Rent and Mortgage Cancellation Act of 2020 (H.R. 6515) does all this and creates a landlord fund for lost rental income. H.R. 6515 would provide immediate direct relief to people, lay a foundation for a just COVID recovery, and set our course toward a holistic sustainable economy for people and planet.

Following the direction of the national Homes Guarantee coalition and our local Washington Community Action Network organizer in Olympia, I will be contacting my representa-

tives in support of H.R. 6515 and urge you to do the same. More coalitions are listed later in this letter.

Transformative change is the kind that builds a stronger house, where all people belong, no matter



what we look like, where we're from, or what's in our wallet. By its nature, transformative change rubs against entrenched interests—relatively well-positioned individuals and industries out for themselves in a narrow and fragmented sense, whose M.O. is to distract and divide people to keep us infighting.

Gov. Inslee declared his statewide eviction moratorium in order to "help reduce economic hardship" for those "unable to pay rent as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic." The COVID storm has dramatically spiked our awareness of collective vulnerability. While I will always work and hope for the best, we must prepare for a deep economic recession and market destabilization, all while knowing that billionaires,

Throughout history, we can see how direct action helps a great ship chart a new course. That is why I've made the very personal decision to join the 2020 Rent and Mortgage Strike. It's often called "Rent Strike" for short, but impacted homeowners are involved as well. Some landlords in Olympia and elsewhere have preemptively suspended rent collection or worked out arrangements with their tenants. #RentStrike2020 turns an act of individual economic necessity into an opportunity for collective influence as we unite our stories in common cause to #CancelRent and #CancelMortgages.

In joining the strike I'm throwing my weight in with my fellow renters to help balance the scale. No one should feel ashamed, embarrassed or afraid of missing a rent or mortgage payment—ever—and especially not now. Together we will be keenly interested in what a "reasonable" repayment plan looks like in a state with 12 resident billionaires, including Amazon CEO Jeff Bezos—already \$24 billion wealthier from this pandemic.

Finally, as a matter of strategy, our housing payments are one of the few direct bargaining chips the majority of regular people have, especially now when more conventional forms of direct action and public demonstration are ill-advised or illegal, due to the pandemic and Stay at Home orders.

The system's flaws have never been more glaring, and we can no longer accept them. There is simply no room in the world we're building together. We owe it to future generations to rewrite the rules, working together through direct action and organized advocacy, so we come out of this COVID-19 trauma as people and communities changed for the better.

What you can do: #CancelRent! Sign on in support of HR 6515 in Congress. Follow and connect with organizations and campaigns working together on a transformative sustainable and #JustRecovery from COVID-19! (Some campaigns are Homes Guarantee, Beyond Recovery, Rising Majority, Homes for All, and the People's Bailout.)

If you are a landlord: Voluntarily and proactively suspend rent collection, forgive tenant rent debt, and encourage other landlords to do the same, in order to level the playing field. Open your books so current/prospective tenants and community stakeholders can understand your business model and investment strategy, if applicable.

If you are a policymaker: Do everything in your power to ensure immediate suspension of rent/mortgage debt collection. Support social housing development, universal healthcare, worker protections and a just climate transition bill such as the Green New Deal. Use your platform to boost campaigns and social movements, and tap your networks for creative strategies.

If you work in law enforcement or the courts system: Contact the elected Sheriff and encourage their office to refuse to enforce evictions for nonpayment during the course of this emergency.

If you rent or have a home mortgage: Learn about the rent and mortgage strike and find out how to support those who are participating. Engage your friends, family and neighbors in conversation about the strike and about rent and mortgage cancellation. For example, "Even though I'm not participating I respect people willing to take a personal risk to push for improvements for everyone." The things we talk about, and the ways we talk about them, matter!

Take care of yourself, wash your hands, wear a mask, join or create local mutual aid networks, and thank all the essential workers in your life today and every day. "We want a world where many worlds fit." —Subcomandante Marcos, Zapatista.

This is an abridged version of an open letter that Renata Rollins sent to the community on May 1, 2020. As well as a writer and in-home caregiver, Rollins is a first-term Olympia Council member serving on Squaxin Island ancestral lands (Steh-Chass), neighbor to Nisqually tribal territory.

12	(b) CREDIT FACILITY FOR RESIDENTIAL RENTAL
13	PROPERTY OWNERS.—
14	(1) IN GENERAL.—The Board of Governors of
15	the Federal Reserve System shall—
16	(A) establish a facility, using amounts
17	made available under section 4003(b)(4) of the
18	CARES Act (15 U.S.C. 9042(b)(4)), to make
19	long-term, low-cost loans to residential rental
20	property owners as to temporarily compensate
21	such owners for documented financial losses
22	caused by reductions in rent payments; and

big banks and other pandemic profiteers are poised to improve their relative position.

Those of us who aren't profiting off this crisis are going to need all the resources we can save in order to take care of ourselves, our loved ones and our communities.

These entrenched interests have the ear of Congress and the White House, so while advocating to our elected reps is a critical tactic, emails and phone calls only take us so far. As an activist, elected official and student of history, I know transformative change happens only when advocacy campaigns are complemented by organized direct action to shake up the status quo. Sit-ins, walk-outs, strikes and boycotts: all are forms of using our bodies and economic resources to interrupt and confront entrenched interests.

In an imbalanced system, it's the only true match against the power of institutional inertia. It's impossible to imagine the legendary transformative movements in this country without civil disobedience. Abolition, Civil Rights, the United Farmworkers, the Poor People's Campaign, the local Fish Wars of the 1960s-70s, Indigenous Water Protectors from Standing Rock to Salish Sea, and the Youth Climate Movement of today.

ANOTHER WORLD IS POSSIBLE

After the pandemic emergency

Overhaul the tax code to support free childcare

Gina Petry

[Ed note: Conservative leaders in Australia just decided to make childcare free to ensure everyone who is working can access care during the pandemic crisis. The policy is set for three months but expected to last six months. Australia already gave high rebates to offset fees for lower-income parents. The new policy has no means test.

Not having stable child care is a losing situation for families, communities and the nation. A lack of social investment in child care and early education limits future achievement for kids and opportunities for mothers. The coronavirus epidemic has dramatically changed the face of child care in Washington State, but also offers clues for repairing a steadily worsening system.

Access to childcare is essential to a viable economy

Child Care Aware Washington, a statewide referral agency, says COVID-19 has contributed to the closure of 1,303 child-care programs statewide. This is catastrophic for families and small businesses. Child-care venues that remain open are struggling to meet the need while helping children navigate the disruption.

Governor Inslee has eased pressures on providers by waiving several requirements for licensed child-care workers, including requiring federal fingerprint background checks before completing the licensing process.

The King County Council invested \$2.2 million to provide free child care for eligible families of essential workers—medical professionals and support staff, first responders, child-care providers themselves, and others such as grocery, pharmacy and transit workers.

The City of Seattle has earmarked \$1 million per month for child care that will serve over 700 kids of healthcare professionals, first responders and grocery store workers.

Early steps to mitigate lack of childcare are insufficient

These are important first steps, but they are not enough. All of these measures apply only to preschool and school age kids. What about the infants and toddlers of essential workers? What about the children of transit workers, taxi and rideshare drivers, and Instacart delivery personnel?

State officials are urging workers not deemed “essential” to keep their children at home. And for many parents laid off or telecommuting, this feels like the safest option. But what is wrong with this picture? Once again it assumes women will find a way to provide this essential labor free of charge as they always do – on top of working for 79% of men’s wages, plus cooking, shopping, cleaning, and caring for sick family members and elders.

Affordable, quality child care allows women to lead full and

productive lives, which is why my organization, Radical Women, is committed to gaining it. Mothers who cannot get child care are pushed out of the workforce, required to stay at home with no hope for economic independence



and no escape from violent situations.

Child care is a class issue

Over 60% of working-class and poor women work outside the home. There are many unions that have mostly women members and should take the lead in demanding that child care be a part of every contract. Families struggled to pay for child care even before the COVID-19 crisis blew up the economy. Ninety-seven percent of child-care workers are women, many of them people of color and immigrants. Their incredibly low wages illustrate the continued devaluing of “women’s work.”

Another world is possible

Hope is not lost. This crisis presents the opportunity for a better scenario, especially if we learn from the militant spirit of past struggles for childcare.

The fight for child care was a big part of the second wave of feminism. In Seattle, Radical Women helped take over a physics lab at the University of Washington that was turned into a childcare center. When the university administration forced the center out, it was moved to Radical Women’s organizing hall. Then the feminists created a community and student coalition to fight for university-funded childcare. Through this alliance’s tactics of sit-ins, pickets and negotiations, money was won to build a child care center near the campus.

Childcare is a public policy issue that needs a public solution

The ultimate solution needed now and going forward is a system of publicly funded, free, 24-7 child care

available to all families. Washington State must overhaul its regressive revenue structure to tax the rich and corporations to pay for it. Working-class and poor people lose the most in the current scenario.



Change the tax code

Nearly 60% of all wages and capital gains paid to Washingtonians go to only 20% of the people. In 2018, the Institute on Taxation and Economic Policy found that people in the bottom fifth of incomes in Washington State pay 17.8% of their income in taxes compared with the 3% paid by the richest Washingtonians.

With sales tax revenue down and state coffers depleted, now is the perfect time to push to change the state constitution to allow taxes on wealth—as all but 9 other states do.

Recognize childcare as valuable labor

Large employers should provide child care on site. Enacting a statewide policy of 30 hours work for 40 hours pay would also recognize the load on working parents and child-care providers.

In the current statewide emergency, child-care programs must be significantly expanded and opened to all workers and children of all ages. This means fully funded and expanded food and support services including for children with disabilities and those experiencing abuse. No more piecemeal measures with different requirements!

Extra funding should be offered to small child-care businesses struggling to stay open. Families who are providing free child care in their homes should receive state compensation and social support for each child now and permanently.

Childcare providers and parents know what is needed

Laid-off child-care providers should be hired as unionized public em-

ployees to staff programs. According to a report by Child Care Aware, only 1.1% of the state budget is currently allocated for early learning and child care. By asking the rich to pay their share, funds would be available to meet these needs.

Child-care workers are at great risk of infection and need the best safety precautions using the latest scientific practices and recommendations from the workers themselves. This includes plenty of cleaning supplies, protective equipment, adequate space to spread children out and enough staff to reduce staff-to-child ratios. Unionization is crucial to give workers a strong position to negotiate protections.

Take the first step

The failing Washington State child-care system can be fixed. As a first step, let’s put the pressure on Governor Inslee and Washington State legislators to change the tax structure to provide the funding for child-care and all necessary social services.

Times of crisis can produce immense changes. Such changes are critical for the future of children, families and workers.

Gina Petry is a Social Worker, Radical Women Organizer, former employee of Child Care Resources, and coordinator of the Sisters Organize for Survival child-care campaign. Go to www.olywip.org for a Spanish translation of the article and links for more information.

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PERSPECTIVE

Democracy caught the virus

Now more than ever, Thurston County needs a publicly-owned utility

Bruce Wilkinson

After incredible growth in the movement during February, the Thurston Public Power Initiative campaign came to a screeching halt. For some reason, the Washington State government can't figure out a strategy for gathering signatures online. People bank online, buy all kinds of things online, pay their taxes online—but to make democracy work? Don't two of the richest people in the world live in this state? Didn't they make their fortune in the technology sector? Why then did the Thurston Public Power Initiative have to fall victim to the effects of the coronavirus?

With a visit by Dennis Kucinich in February, the campaign to allow the Thurston PUD to provide electricity had the momentum and volunteers to get the 15,000 signatures needed to put the initiative on the ballot. Then came the coronavirus, shutting everything down. The campaigners faced denial, then anger, then depression, then bargaining, but finally we have reached acceptance. The Thurston Public Power Initiative 2020 is over... but the fight to replace Puget Power is not.



A fork in the power lines

Instead of our county initiative, we are gearing up to build the boldest most aggressive public power movement this country has seen since the Great Depression. We're reorganizing to go statewide. Our goal is ridding the state of PSE completely! If PSE is bad for Thurston County then it's bad for all counties. Every person deserves the security of cooperatively and democratically owning the means of power production and the distribution system. No one should be forced to pay to a foreign investment firm every time they flip a switch or set the thermometer in their own home.

As part of the reorganization, Thurston Public Power Initiative will focus its efforts locally, and Power to the Public will re-form as a statewide coalition. A new group, Utility Strike, is emerging as a direct action response to the pandemic-driven economic crisis.

The need for publicly-owned utilities will increase

#UtilityStrike is a reminder to the private utilities who often forget that they serve at the people's pleasure. Even before the crisis, as many as 31% of households reported that paying each month's energy bill was a challenge. As the crisis broadens with tens of millions of people

laid off and many businesses shuttered, utility bills loom as a bigger burden.

Results from the most recent federal survey of Residential Energy Consumption found that:

- about one in five households reported reducing or forgoing basic necessities like food and medicine to pay an energy bill. 14% received a disconnection notice. 11% of households reported keeping their home at an unhealthy or unsafe temperature to save money.
- That people forego basic necessities to pay energy bills, shows that our utilities are fundamentally flawed in how they operate. Utilities that already force low-income families to make these choices aren't going to improve the situation after the crisis. It's up to us to replace Puget Energy—whose first commitment is to profit and dividends—with community-owned public utilities driven by service to their communities.

The chance to build on hard work already accomplished

We owe a lot to those whose hard work on the initiative campaign brought us so far and set the stage for a renewed effort:

- We educated thousands of people about the raw deal with PSE.
- We showed the opportunities of a Thurston Public Utility District.
- We organized hundreds of volunteers for thousands of hours.
- We made alliances with workers and environmentalists.
- We stayed true to our values and made a lot of friends.
- We forced PSE to be more generous during this crisis as the price for their outrageous profits.

The long list of people to thank is best left unspecified with PSE watching, but it's everyone who volunteered time and collected signatures, all members of the steering committee, our generous donors and the businesses and political candidates who supported our campaign.

Thanks to Tom Nogler who passed away at the beginning of the campaign but whose spirit has carried us forward. And to Hali Panneton, a faithful and strong supporter, who died in March. We honor them by joining the fight as it continues in new forms. More information at: facebook.com/UtilityStrike.

Bruce Wilkinson is campaign manager for Power to the Public, a graduate of Evergreen, a local arborist and construction worker.

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Protecting an aquatic star: Eelgrass in Grays Harbor

Lee First

The Grays Harbor Shorebird Festival was all set to celebrate its 25th anniversary this year, complete with tours, special guests, and, of course, over 500,000 sandpipers, dowitchers, plovers, and dunlins. The festival was cancelled because of the coronavirus pandemic, but the Sandpiper Trail is open. We can use this time to reflect about why protecting the estuary is paramount and to understand how its history has affected the habitat that serves thousands of birds on their migratory journeys.

The Chehalis River discharges into the estuary now known as Grays Harbor. It is the homeland of the Quinault and Chehalis people, who have inhabited this area for thousands of years. But much has changed in the last 200 years, and this special area needs our help.

Why protecting eelgrass is so important now

Eelgrass is a critically important plant; it protects coastlines from erosion, mitigates climate change by absorbing carbon dioxide and methane, and provides food and habitat for invertebrates, fish, and birds. In order to protect the unique habitat of the Grays Harbor Estuary, we need to protect eelgrass from the effects of development, dredging, pollution and sea level rise. Approximately 30% of the world's eelgrass has vanished since the 1870s.

Two species of eelgrass offer similar ecosystem services but inhabit different elevations in the estuary. Japonica generally grows higher in the intertidal zone, and marina grows in deeper water. Because Japonica makes harvesting shellfish more difficult, the interactions of the two species are the subject of much scientific study. Growers were recently permitted to apply a herbicide to manage Japonica on commercial clam beds.

This article focuses on native eelgrass. Healthy marina eelgrass meadows are a food factory for migrating birds, as well as for many

aquatic species. Eelgrass is known to exist in several areas of Grays Harbor, including North Bay, Bottle Beach, and Bowerman Basin and efforts are underway to expand mapping.

The Port of Grays Harbor

Any ocean-going visitor traveling through Aberdeen can't help but notice the sign "Lumber Capital of the World" upon entering the estuary area. The first load of lumber was shipped out in 1880, but the ancient forest is long gone, as are the mighty salmon runs that at one time produced over a million fish annually.

The Port of Grays Harbor was formed in 1911. The mission of the Port is "to best utilize our resources to facilitate, enhance and stimulate international trade, economic development and tourism for the betterment of the region." Port tenants and others produce lumber, wood chips, paper, and other commodities. Port terminals facilitate shipping of soybeans, grains, lumber, wood chips, cars, trucks, methanol and biodiesel. Some of these arrive on trains and are shipped out in ocean tankers, or vice-versa.

The shipping channel requires copious dredging to allow passage of vessels. So much dredging, in fact, that between 1940 and 1975, 3,850 acres of wetlands along the

estuary's shores were filled with dredge spoils from the channel. In some years, up to 50 acres of wetlands were filled annually. In the recent past, the Port attempted (and failed due to public outcry) to build shipping terminals for coal and crude oil. Now the Commissioners hope to construct an export facility for potash in an area close to the Refuge.

Ways to protect eelgrass and the Grays Harbor Estuary

By taking steps to protect eelgrass, we can help to prevent the consequences of development and other threats to the estuary. Here are two options to raise awareness and help protect this estuary:

Establish an Aquatic Reserve (AR).

ARs are Department of Natural Resources-owned lands of special educational or scientific interest, or of special environmental importance. Establishing an AR within the Grays Harbor estuary would help to conserve and enhance this special area, and would help to promote stewardship of aquatic habitats and species.

Establish a National Estuarine Research Reserve (NERR).

There are 29 NERRs in designated coastal areas around the US. The goal of each NERR is to provide public education, monitoring, stewardship, research and training. The closest NERRs to Grays Harbor

are the Padilla Bay National Estuarine Research Reserve (Skagit County WA) and the South Slough National Estuarine Research Reserve (Coos Bay, Oregon).

Your Twin Harbors Waterkeeper team is exploring these possibilities and looking for community support and volunteers. To learn more, sign up for our e-news at the website below.

Lee First is a Twin Harbors Waterkeeper. She can be reached at 360.389.2979 or by visiting twinharborswaterkeeper.org.

Visit the Grays Harbor National Wildlife Refuge

In 1988, Congress authorized the establishment of the Grays Harbor National Wildlife Refuge. The refuge contains a variety of habitats, including open saltwater, mudflats, salt marsh, forested wetlands, and uplands. This mosaic of habitats offers abundant food resources for migrating birds, resident songbirds, and raptors. The Refuge is recognized as a Globally Important Bird Area and as a Western Hemisphere Shorebird Reserve Network Site.

The refuge is sandwiched between the City of Hoquiam's Wastewater Treatment Facility, the Port of Grays Harbor's "Jet-Capable Airport," and the site for the Port's proposed potash export facility. It includes about 1,500 acres of intertidal mudflats, salt marshes, and uplands, including the area now known as Bowerman Basin.

In 1986, the Grays Harbor Estuary Management Plan called for permanently filling in most of Bowerman Basin for industrial use. The plan was blocked and the Basin was saved, not because the agencies agreed that the wetlands or shorebirds should be saved, but because ornithologist Steve Herman of The Evergreen State College observed a peregrine falcon during a field trip to Bowerman in 1979. The Endangered Species Act brought the fill plan to a halt when federal agencies concluded that filling Bowerman Basin would jeopardize the existence of the endangered peregrine falcon.

Today, the Grays Harbor estuary contains 94 square miles of mudflats, salt marshes, and open water, providing critical habitat for fish and wildlife, including up to 500,000 shorebirds during spring migration. It is one of six major estuaries on the west coast. Because of the elevation of Bowerman Basin, it is the last area in the estuary to be flooded at high tide, and one of the first areas to be exposed at low tide. This creates the perfect area for migrating shorebirds to feed on invertebrates, small fish, and salt marsh plants.

The estuary's open mudflats provide great wildlife viewing opportunities for the public. The Refuge trail (called the Sandpiper Trail) is open everyday during the Coronavirus period from sunrise to sunset, with visitors expected to practice social distancing. https://www.fws.gov/refuge/grays_harbor.



Invite the beavers to come back home

Our forest correspondent

Maybe there should be a dam—or several dams—on the Chehalis River. It's just that these dams should not be built by the Army Corps of Engineers.

Instead, we can turn to nature's most industrious and inventive dam-builder—the beaver. Beaver are truly remarkable—their dams can very quickly transform parched and degraded watersheds into lush, wet meadows that act as sponges by holding water, reducing flood velocity, trapping sediment, raising the water table, keeping the water cool, and releasing it slowly throughout the year when and where it is needed most.

The *Beaver Believers* is an award-winning feature documentary telling the story of an unlikely cadre of activists who are working to restore the North American Beaver to the watersheds of the American West.

The Beaver Believers encourage us to embrace a new paradigm for managing our western lands, one that seeks to partner with the natural world rather than overpower it. As a keystone species, beaver enrich their ecosystems, creating the biodiversity, complexity, and resiliency our watersheds need to absorb the impacts of climate change.



The film was shot in eight western states, Mexico, and Canada, through desert drought, raging wildfires, forceful floods, and wetland tranquility. It can change the way we think about climate change—and change what we do to curb flooding without creating more unintended consequences.

Read more about the film and the work of the Beaver Believers at www.thebeaverbelievers.com.

Thanks to Sara Page for these insights.

Historical musings about The LINK

Citizen journalism in Olympia - A continuing goal

[Ed note: The quest for news meaningful to our local community started a long time ago. This article about one effort, "The LINK," existed from 1970-1973. Writing in Works in Progress in 2010, Emily Ray reflected on the politics of that time: very different from today. Note the amount of Group Health's monthly charge. She also covers the multiple sources of information that existed 10+ years ago -- all but WIP now gone.]

Emily Ray

They say "What goes around comes around." Forty years ago The Daily Olympian (as it was then named) did not serve our community well. The editor-in-chief turned a blind eye to local social and political issues. The newspaper was generally silent on problems and initiatives concerning race relations, gender, growth management, waste reduction, the environment. When the newspaper did glance at any of these issues, it was with a jaundiced eye. Legislative sessions right here in our capital city might have happened on another planet.

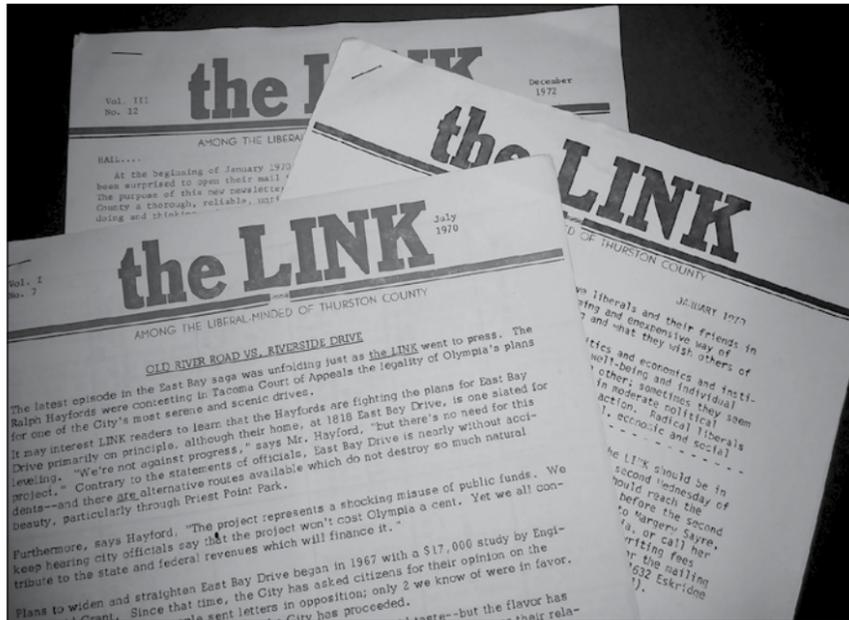
Electronic communication and the ubiquitous blogs of today were still in the distant future. Those of us with urgent causes felt cut off, marooned, unable to reach like-minded people.

One of the people who was angry about the newspaper was Margery Sayre. With her partner Jocelyn Dohm, owner of the Sherwood Press, she gathered some political

allies. The outcome of this meeting was The LINK newsletter, an early example of citizen journalism in Olympia.

Our first issue hit the post office in January 1970 and we published monthly until we disbanded three years later. Six to ten legal-sized pages each month jam-packed with local news, all for a modest subscription cost of \$2 a year! At its

A "Calendar of Events for the Action-Minded" was the core of The LINK. We advertised activities of organizations like the League of Women Voters, the ACLU and the Washington Democratic Council. We published appeals for volunteers to leaflet, march, serve on phone lines, campaign for candidates, boycott agricultural products, donate money.



Emily Ray kept an archive of nearly all issues of *the LINK* that were published in the three years of its existence.

peak circulation, The LINK served 900 households. A total of 70 people eventually helped produce it.

Our purpose, boldly stated in our inaugural issue, was "to give liberals and their friends in Thurston County a thorough, reliable, untimeconsuming and inexpensive

Our pages show the earliest stirrings of the Thurston Urban League, the Nisqually Delta Association, the Society of Friends, the Olympia Food Co-op, the KAOS radio station at The Evergreen State College, and the Olympia chapters of the Episcopal Peace Fellowship,

We publicized opportunities for draft counseling and peace activism, and followed Indian fishing and cultural survival efforts.

way of telling each other what they are doing and thinking and what they wish others of like persuasion would help them do."

We said we viewed liberals as persons who look at politics and economics and institutions from the standpoint of general social well-being and individual liberties.

the Sierra Club and the National Organization for Women. BLOSSOM (Basic Liberation of Smokers and Sympathizers of Marijuana) also sought support though our pages.

We advertised Group Health Cooperatives formative efforts here and the promise of full health care for a family of four for \$35

a month. Through The LINK, readers learned about environmentally safe detergents, where to recycle paper, bottles and cans, and where to get support for breastfeeding. During legislative session, they learned about bills of potential interest.

Today's young activists might see these topics as ho-hum, insignificant, but in the early 1970s they represented brave thrusts in new directions.

Two subjects remained uppermost: the Vietnam War and Native American issues.

We publicized opportunities for draft counseling and peace activism, and followed Indian fishing and cultural survival efforts. We publicized opportunities for draft counseling and peace activism, and followed Indian fishing and cultural survival efforts.

Jocelyn Dohm usually took care of the philosophical underpinnings. She was a printer in the Benjamin Franklin tradition, handsetting her own type. She had a unique ability to be clever and succinct and to express complex ideas persuasively.

Many people provided information for The LINK. We gave reporters a tip sheet for interviews, including questions to ask and what to say about the purpose of the newsletter.

The LINK was more than a newsletter--it became a mini-community. Every month volunteers gathered at the home of Hortense Allison to fold, staple and stamp. Hortense was our spiritual grandmother. Then in her upper 80s, she had lived on a commune and belonged to the Garment Workers' Union. She was still an active member of the American Communist Party, a connection she kept fairly private. Our folding parties were full of laughter and camaraderie and children were always welcome.

Our farewell issue stated: "With the passing of time and last month's national election in which we feel we helped to give "Americans a chance to choose modesty and peace instead of greed and war (a chance they blew), we bring The LINK to an end."

Today [2010], *The Olympian* is again a thin vestige of a newspaper. Its circulation peaked in 1998 and is now just 60 percent of that. It is handy for movie listings, obituaries and snippets of news. It goes to bed so early that important civic events get little or no coverage.

A variety of other sources of local information emerged over the years: Works in Progress, Green Pages, Olympia Power and Light, The Cooper Point Journal, The COUNTER Point Journal, The Sitting Duck (out of business), OlyBlog ("devoted to citizen journalism"), and Janine Gates' Little Hollywood blog. Video interviews on Everyday Olympia and TCTV also helped keep us linked.

TC Pro-Net is a weekly electronic calendar, now beginning its seventh year with over 800 subscribers including 200 paid supporters (\$20/year), according to publisher Sherri Goulet.

Emily Ray retired from a career in state environmental programs in 1997. The pandemic has curtailed many of her usual activities, but she still can be found gnashing her teeth over the news (print and otherwise).



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Sin mujeres, no hay revolución

[Without women, there will be no revolution]

I put a rose against the wall of the graveyard, besides hundreds of others on the altar. Candles illuminated countless names and crosses that spanned the entirety of the wall. Every flower represented a womxn who had either been murdered or was missing, all victims of gender-based violence. Behind me was the roar of thousands of women, *muxes*¹ and children, who had taken to the streets to protest the increasing number of sisters, daughters, and friends who have gone missing, the fear they feel every day to be next, and the indifference shown by the Mexican government. No men were allowed to participate in the march. The percussion of pots and pans banging and the echo of chants vibrated through the pavement. Almost everyone was shielded, with sunglasses, scarves and bandanas hiding

faces. A sea of womxn spanned as far as the eye could see.

As we moved through our *camino* with the force and power of a great storm, women in droves pulled out concealed spray paint and stencils to defile the walls of the city with denunciations and cries for awareness. Bank windows were smashed, government vehicles demolished, and every wall we passed was marked with the faces of local men—*los violadores*. The police dared not attempt to stop the masses. They stood and watched from a distance, some of them seemingly understanding the show of public rage.

Marching through the streets of Oaxaca, Mexico on March 8th for International Women's Day feels like a lifetime ago. Days before

global coronavirus shutdowns, the sweat and tears of others brushed past me in a wave of bodies that flooded the city. In that moment, womxn proved to the state that they hold immense power, and demanded that their pain no longer go unacknowledged. At the time of



the march, there had been 24 femicides in Oaxaca and a total of 267 in all of Mexico since the beginning of the year, just a little over two months. With mandatory stay-at-home orders implemented almost immediately following the protest, femicide cases have increased by over 200—bringing the number of women murdered in Mexico in the first quarter of the year to almost twice what it was five years ago.

It is important to note that domestic violence is deeply prevalent in the United States, as well. Long-standing patriarchal structures encourage misogyny in our society, our government and our homes. One in four women in the US suffers severe physical and/or sexual violence from an intimate partner, and countless others at the hands of bosses, family members or complete strangers.² Statistics concerning violence against indigenous womxn and the prevalence of impunity for perpetrators are especially disturbing.

In quarantine, women and girls suffering domestic violence have lost their autonomy and freedom of mobility. The support systems that helped them find strength and refuge—even just the ability

to talk with someone about their experiences—have all but eroded. Reported cases of domestic child abuse have decreased substantially, with children home from school across the nation. The walls of their homes do not represent safety and security, but a cage that locks them in with their abusers.

Governments around the world have attempted to combat the spread of Covid-19 with confinement and increased police violence, bringing other pandemics to the surface: domestic abuse, economic inequality, racial violence, to name a few. These pandemics of state-sanctioned violence have become so normalized that the spark of collective resistance seems dull.

Even though the candles lit on International Women's Day have long blown out, the flowers withered and the posters from the march painted over, the collective pain and hopes of thousands of women prevail. The message that *together we are all*, is as true as it's ever been. Our collective pain must allow us to stand in solidarity with one another, to fight for the justice and security we so badly need, as thousands of womxn did in Mexico.



Poem on next page by Amanda Zavala, photos by Lindsey Dalthorp, words a collaborative process.

Lindsey Dalthorp, a photographer and writer, splits her time between Olympia and Mexico City. Amanda Zavala, a writer and teacher, works on food security and liberation education. Both are students at The Evergreen State College.

¹ non gender-conforming people (Zapotec)

² National Coalition Against Domestic Violence data



A teacher to Latinx immigrants wonders who “we” is

Anne Fischel

Since the onset of COVID-19, the slogan “We are all in this together” has been heard everywhere. But who is the “we” that is meant? Who is included and who is ignored? Whose life, health and safety are prioritized? Who is allowed to sick-en and die? What are the implications of relying on an “essential” workforce that is excluded from even the most basic protections and supports? What does that say

about “us” as a people, as a nation?

It’s Wednesday night, and I am on-line. My co-teacher and I have a few minutes to finish planning for tonight’s ELL class. The class starts at 6:30, but students often filter in early. We are eager to see each other and check in. “How are you? (Como estás?)” How is your family? (Como está la familia?)” “Are you healthy? Are you working this week?” Although everyone is eager to learn English, we sometimes

¿qué estamos esperando?

esperar.

esperar means to hope
it also means to wait.

how odd,
that to hope and to wait
are the same verb in Spanish.
I suppose it makes sense,
for you cannot hope if you don’t have time
to wait for something more,
something better.

but does that mean
that to find that something
hope must always be on the horizon
always out of reach?

not something you can touch or hold or own?
that it will never be attained?
Is that what our lives are built on?
crafted with the fragile bricks of hope
that the foundation of our futures
is ever fluid and shifting
and that we can only wait for a better reality?

is it wrong that I am tired of waiting?
tired of watching our world rot
our people erode
and our hope dwindle.

* * * *

hacer.

it means to do
it also means to create
what does that mean, “to do?”
to act?
to move forward?
or to move at all?

is it taking the bricks of our foundation—our hope—
and propelling them through the air
crashing through the windows
of this broken home.

but what of creation?
to create,
to cease our waiting
and put our sweat and our blood to work
for the home we want to build together.

maybe I need to abandon my hope
maybe it is the only incentive I have
to start the work

because when the structure is rotting
and the roof is caving in
we cannot hope
it does not crush us on its way down.

* * * * *

Amanda Zavala

switch to Spanish—a pleasure for me, and a relief for them from the pressures of communicating in their new language.

My co-teacher and I are volunteers at CIELO, “Centro Integral Latino Educativo de Olympia” (Integrated Educational Center for immigrants in Olympia.) CIELO is a center and community where immigrants bring their hopes, challenges and diverse cultural experiences, and where they are respected and encouraged to take their first steps to learn a new land.

CIELO normally offers classes for adults in English Language Learning, computer skills, sewing and GED preparation, and a home-

been total. In communities around the nation, Latinx immigrants are getting sick at higher rates than most white and non-immigrant constituencies. (African-Americans are also seeing disproportionate impacts of COVID-19).

According to the Washington State Department of Health, Latinx people are 13% of the population of our state—but they make up 33% of those infected by the coronavirus. Immigrant workers and families are among the most vulnerable and impacted constituencies—the least likely to have health insurance, work in jobs with protections and benefits, or be eligible for support to help them weather the crisis.

We are eager to see each other and check in. “How are you? (¿Como estás?)” How is your family? (¿Como está la familia?)”

work club and tutoring for youth. CIELO’s centers in Olympia and Shelton offer mental health support and advocacy support services to survivors of domestic violence, sexual assault, and crime.

Two new languages: Zoom and English

After Covid-19 quarantining, the decision to teach on-line was made over several weeks as CIELO staff and volunteers struggled with the implications of being separated from our students. Today, a number of us who never used Zoom are working to become proficient at on-line teaching. Our students, many with only their phones to connect them to the outside world, are logging on twice a week, peering at their screens, determined not to lose the momentum they’ve gained.

I have a lot of empathy for my students. For me, learning to speak Spanish was like crossing a rope bridge over a canyon. My early experiences of schooling convinced me that I was incapable of learning a second language. What finally propelled me onto the bridge was my need to communicate with people who otherwise would have remained strangers.

We can understand each other

I had to overcome the embarrassment I felt at my slow and awkward attempts, and most of all, my fear of falling—of failure. Organized classes gave me tools—grammar, vocabulary, speaking and writing practice. But fundamentally it was the determination to communicate, regardless of mistakes, that drove me. I am not fluent, and my students know it. But we can understand each other and we can move between languages as needed to support their—and my—learning.

From my early struggles with language, I learned the importance of a classroom that is supportive and welcoming. I learned to honor that moment when a student decides to step onto the bridge. There is risk, but also the hope that the bridge will hold, that others will be there to support them and cheer them on. That shared sense of purpose has made the space of our classroom a celebratory and even a joyous one. We laugh a lot. I hope our students know how much my co-teacher and I respect their labor.

Latinx and immigrants are disproportionately affected by Covid-19

COVID-19 challenges all of us, but for our students, the impact has

Essential work without essential protections

In our state, immigrant workers do some of the most essential jobs: farm work, meat packing, construction—jobs that are demanding and dangerous at the best of times. They work in close quarters, often without protective gear. Often, they are not given sick days. If they are undocumented, they have only minimal access to medical care, no access to unemployment benefits and no eligibility for federal stimulus checks.

Continuing efforts to separate immigrants from the rest of us

Recently Georgetown University’s Institute for Constitutional Advocacy and Protection sued the Trump administration for denying emergency benefits to the US citizen children of “mixed status” families—families with one or more undocumented member. This is only one of the many strategies being deployed by our government to separate immigrants from the rest of the population and wall them off from support.

“We” should encompass those who have risked much to become part of us

Our students are workers and homemakers. Some are single parents, some are members of large and loving families. Some are the main support of parents, children, or siblings in El Salvador, Honduras, Nicaragua, Venezuela, Guatemala or Mexico. Some live in crowded apartments; others rent rooms in isolated trailers where their roommates are strangers and they must drive somewhere to find an internet “hot spot” for our class. Our students are hard workers who don’t complain. Like all of us in this time, they need contact and support. They need—and deserve—to be part of the “we” that they have risked so much to join.

Our students are cheerful; they love to laugh. They thank us for giving them homework, for gently nudging them to practice their hard-won English while they are living in quarantine. At the end of each class, we wave and smile at each other. “Thank you.” “See you next week.” “Be well.” “Be safe.”

Anne Fischel is a documentary filmmaker and an emeritus faculty at The Evergreen State College. She is an active member of Strengthening Sanctuary Alliance, and volunteers as a teacher at CIELO.

Miliband's practical model of socialism

My April column explained what socialism is and what it isn't. However, to effect actual change, we need something concrete to advocate for and organize around. Without a shared map of the territory, the idea of adopting socialist principles remains pie in the sky. The long censorship of the idea of socialism (to say nothing of communism) in the US has diminished the resources available for collectively imagining our future.

Fortunately, a concrete model has been worked out in great detail by the British intellectual Ralph Miliband in his book *Socialism for a Sceptical Age*. Other models based on socialism as laid out in the prior column may also be valid, but Miliband's model is the subject of this column and all citations are from his book.

LOOKING FORWARD Dave Jette

Miliband presents a model of a mixed economy as the goal of the society which socialists should strive for, rather than a society transitioning to a higher stage (e.g. "communism").

A socialized economy would consist of three distinct sectors. First, there would be a predominant and varied public sector. Secondly, there would exist a substantial and expanding cooperative sector. Thirdly, there would endure a sizable privately owned sector, mainly made up of small and medium firms, with an important part to play in the provision of goods, services, and amenities (p. 110).

The public sector in this model includes state ownership of the banking and financial system and of the immense corporations that today combine to control our political system for the benefit of the extremely wealthy ("the 1%"). State ownership ("nationalization") would be acquired not by outright confiscation, but through compensation by issuing government bonds

redeemable over an extended period of time; and a considerable degree of differentiation would also have to be made between small and large investors, with facilities for more rapid redemption available to small investors. (pp. 109-110).

The public sector would also include activities undertaken by regional and municipal authorities, particularly in the provision of services and amenities such as transportation, electricity, water and sewage, daycare centers, and community centers, to name but a few. Such economic activities are often already "owned" by the public, but under neoliberalism they are increasingly being privatized so that the wealthy can squeeze even more money out of the public.

Public enterprises would have a considerable degree of autonomy, unlike the bureaucratic Soviet system of rigid, top-down planning. Nonetheless, the government would be able to intervene in certain activities—sparingly applied—"to ensure compliance with its macroeconomic policies and objec-

tives, and with its concerns about health and safety, employment, and the rights of workers" (p. 110). There also must be

the greatest possible degree of participation in the determination of policy by everyone employed in the enterprise who wishes to be involved, and the attribution of real power to employees in regard to all issues which directly affect them—for instance, health and safety, the process of production, conditions of work, etc. (p. 111).

Miliband calls for the government actively to strengthen the cooperative sector of a socialist economy, in the field of production as well as distribution, and in the provision of services. He points out that such enterprises now play a very subsidiary role in capitalist economies.

Finally, a wide range of small and medium-size firms, individually owned and controlled, would comprise a sizable sector of the economy and their existence would be considered a permanent feature. According to Miliband, the inclusion of a private sector

introduces an additional element of competition in the provision of goods, services, and amenities. It gives the opportunity to individuals who are so inclined to try their hand at independent ventures, and to experiment with new products and services. A socialist regime would not only find this acceptable, but would actively encourage such individual initiatives. But it would at the same time see to it that the private sector remained a subsidiary part of the economy as a whole. (p. 113)

All of these economic enterprises would be subject to competition from one another. A critical proposition in this model is that the economy is regulated. As Miliband puts it, in our current system, market forces are the ultimate determiners of economic life. Government and the society that sustains it have handed responsibility for deciding what needs to be done for the common good and the achievements of social justice to these "market forces" and the private interests they represent. The mixed economy model described by Miliband makes a critical shift by subordinating the economy to the government and the society it represents.

This column only introduces some salient aspects of Miliband's model of socialism; to really understand it, one should read his book, especially its fourth chapter. But even in skeletal form, this provides a coherent conceptual model and a solid answer to what socialism could mean in real life, and how it could be politically practical to embark on a fundamental transformation of our current capitalist economy.

Dave Jette has been involved with Works in Progress since its beginnings, writing an early column and recently contributing occasional articles. He is the author of A Reformation of Dialectical Materialism, which incorporates feminist theory into a traditional Marxist framework (available at www.lulu.com).

The politics of void: survival is resistance

Carl Eugene Stroud

The pandemic and social distancing have turned cities into a void. At the few places where there is still human contact, at home and at modified workplaces for example, there is a void of norms. No one knows how to act. In front of us, in the absence of our old lives, a new normal is hastily being created.

Crisis isn't an opportunity in itself; it's precisely the opposite: a difficult time. Real, material responses aren't just ideal; they're required. In the void of the normal lives we lost, our current actions have special impact. Every phone call, every venture outside, everything that you touch with your hands is evidence of your direct relationship to the materials of this historical change.



When you communicate with friends/family/coworkers/neighbors, you are filling the void. Video conferences and homes must become places where personal differences take a backseat to the value of interacting with others on a human level.

For better or worse, everyone is part of creating this new world, not by theoretical aspirations for the future but through our undeniable and unavoidable presence in a society in flux. This is true on the smallest scale, in every interaction. "Being there" for someone is a political act of solidarity. In our immediate but restricted socializing, we can prioritize equality, responsibility and freedom. When making decisions, we can normalize respect, solidarity and conscientiousness.

At home, this means actively creating a space where people can share personal struggles related to the health or financial crisis, without shame or embarrassment. A global pandemic is hard enough

without adding personal feelings of guilt and inadequacy. In a crisis, survival is resistance because it intentionally fills the void.

Online, the bounds of conversations can be greatly expanded, personally and politically. Bringing up new subjects to friend groups or at family meetings is a radical tactic, not to indoctrinate or persuade but to insist on learning from each other and continuing to value engaged lives during the pandemic.

We can make an effort in our minimal interactions to genuinely ask what others think and to speak up ourselves with honesty. Authentic generosity can empower individuals to feel safe and confident participating in open conversations with others, and we can acclimate our families, our friends and ourselves to egalitarian norms of interacting.

This is not a recipe for a ready-built utopia after a return to public life. This void has historical context. For oppressed people, the word "unprecedented" is meaningless. Yes, this year is unique but the struggle is the same. Paying bills and getting healthcare, facing institutionalized patriarchy and racism, unequal access to technology - all still exist.

There is a way to fill unpredictable absences with substantial dialogue, however. Everyone has the power to create instances of this better world today, not as building blocks for the future but as immediate, revolutionary injections into this particular crisis.

We don't know what will come after this, yet we don't have the luxury of not responding. A person is not a void. In this moment, non-action has real effects. Still, the politics of void are not about being self-righteous or trying to be on the right side of history.

This moment demands authenticity, creativity, and participation from all of us. We need to practice what we preach for historical reasons because, in the absence of so many things we all took for granted, the things we do today will survive this crisis. What we do matters, in a material way, now more than ever.

Carl Eugene Stroud is an online language teacher, with a background in French existentialism and anarchist pedagogy. He can be reached at carleugenes@gmail.com.

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Community Spotlight



World BEYOND War's Divestment 101 offers online instruction for running a campaign to defund weapons manufacturers. In five videos covering the why, what, and how of divestment, the webinars focus on organizing a divestment campaign from initial steps to handling success. In the first session, David Swanson shares the success of how the city of Charlottesville divested from both weapons and fossil fuels.

World BEYOND War was started in 2014 and has chapters and affiliates around the world, including Veterans for Peace 109, an Olympia affiliate. Learn more at <https://worldbeyondwar.org>.

Learn more at www.worldbeyondwar.org

The Evergreen State College's Pandemic Academy is sharing class content online as a way to explore aspects of the pandemic crisis as a shared experience of world historical significance. The pandemic has simultaneously interrupted everyday habits, disrupted educational and cultural institutions, threatened the delivery of health care, challenged political systems, and depressed the world economy. When it's over, our world will be different. Some topics are community resilience, labor and food justice, the biology and epidemiology of public health, and the moral content of large-scale crises.

Watch lectures from the spring quarter for free on youtube: <https://www.youtube.com/playlist?list=PLwG0Bum5tfBgkevNLRfkMYQd9RY4v1oZl>.

Summer course, *Toward a Better Post-Pandemic World*: <https://www.evergreen.edu/catalog/offering/pandemic-academy-collaborative-ilcs-toward-better-post-pandemic-world-30046>.



The Chrysalis Project is a collaborative Art in Action project to create a positive vision for our future and call for strong climate action. This project uses things that we have in our homes, our creativity, and the power voices to call for climate justice. In this time of uncertainty, we come together to create a new vision of a climate friendly community, while raising our voices for our future. As we shelter-in-place or maintain limits during the phased opening of the community, we will work in solidarity with our neighbors to create art and call upon local governments to take strong climate action.

Materials and instructions for all kinds of activities are provided at: <https://thurstonclimateaction.org/the-chrysalis-project-transforming-together>

To learn more or host a workshop, contact Carrie@ThurstonClimateAction.org

Parallax Perspectives June theme, Boldly Creating the World We Want, first addresses serious problems in the world, nation and local communities. The second half of the program contains insights and encouragement that empower you to solve these problems.

TCTV Channel 22:

Mondays at 1:30, Wednesdays at 5:30, Thursdays at 9 pm

Program transcript with links to more information at: <http://parallaxperspectives.org/lets-boldly-create-the-future-we-really-want-3>.

See also "Organizing" and "Nonviolence" on Glen's blog, or contact him for additional resources, consultations and workshops about grassroots organizing at 360.491.9093 or at glenanderson@integra.net.

The Olympia Coalition to Abolish Nuclear Weapons meets monthly, via Zoom conference during the quarantine. Join our productive meetings on the 3rd Thursday of each month. This month's meeting is Thursday June 18 at 5 pm.

For link to Zoom meeting, contact Glen Anderson at 360.491.9093 or glenanderson@integra.net.



Enrollment is now open for The Hummingbird Solar Project, Thurston County's largest community solar project. The 100-kw solar array will be installed atop the Hands on Children's Museum in Olympia in November 2020.

The Hummingbird Project has 800 solar units available for purchase. Each unit costs \$300 and allows individuals, businesses, and organizations to own a piece of the solar project. You can purchase units for yourself, for a friend, or donate them to a non-profit. Each year Olympia Community Solar will send you the value of your unit's electricity production. Once you are paid back, the project will be donated to the museum.

Over the 40 year life of the project it will save the Museum more than five hundred thousand dollars in electricity cost and prevent more than five million pounds of CO2 emissions. The Museum plans to install a clean energy educational exhibit to teach children and their families about the benefits of solar energy. The name of the project, "Hummingbird" comes from a folk tale by Wangan Maathai, a Kenyan social, environmental and political activist. The moral of his story -- we each do what we can -- is the way we have structured the Hummingbird Project.

Olympia Community Solar is a 501(c)3 non-profit that is stewarding an equitable and accessible transition to clean energy through community solar education, policy, and project development.

Learn more at www.olycol.org, info@olycol.com or 360.481.4020.

Intercity Transit is looking for an AmeriCorps Volunteer to serve as the Education and Outreach Assistant for its Walk N Roll program in collaboration with local schools. The AmeriCorps member will teach kids and families about transportation options through a variety of hands-on education and outreach activities. Participants develop skills in bike and pedestrian safety, bike mechanics, and how to ride public transit. The Member will help participants learn skills that can prepare them for the possibility of choosing a car free future. For application information and a complete position description.

Information at <https://my.americorps.gov/mp/listing/viewListing.do?id=95537&fromSearch=>

Before

During

After

WIP wants your quarantine stories!

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