Solar energy comes into its own
Community Solar creates economic, social and environmental justice

Charlotte Persons

Frustrated by the lack of local, state, and federal action to address the climate emergency in 2019, a group of local activists set out to create tangible change. The team included an environmental organizer, a marine corps veteran, a bartender, a solar installer, and a water protector from oil pipeline resistance. They shared a belief that clean energy must be accessible to everyone. Where solar energy is concerned, significant barriers exist for people who live in multifamily buildings, for building owners who cannot (or assume they cannot) afford the up-front cost, and for building owners with unsuitable roofs due to shade, orientation or the need for repairs.

The team incorporated as a non-profit organization, Olympia Community Solar, to address these barriers through community solar projects, group purchasing campaigns, and public policy. As president of OCS, Mason Rolph, notes, solar power should be accessible and equitable, “Solar is not only a climate solution, it’s also a vehicle for social and economic justice.” Since their inception, OCS has completed four major projects. Since then, Thurston organizes individual and group purchase of solar installations. Two community solar projects—the Hummingbird Project at the Hands On Children’s Museum and the Sunflower Project at the Olympia Farmers’ Market—allow people to share in the benefits of a solar array generated electricity elsewhere on their building.

Solarize Thurston reduces the cost to individuals

Last spring OCS launched a solar group-purchasing program, seeking to reduce the costs by turning the normally individual choice of installing solar into a community effort. A solar installer offered a group discount and a credit union provided discounted financing—if fifty household members signed up. The volume-purchasing discount, combined with federal tax credits, made solar panels accessible for many Thurston County families. The program exceeded expectations and contracted 139 solar installations, representing more than $2.7 million dollars of investment.

“Our team was not sure what response we would receive from the community,” Rolph said. “That wasn’t a concern after we passed our campaign goal in less than a month. Participants say that they are shocked by how easy and inexpensive generating your own energy is.”

OCS is expanding the program in 2022 with a goal of 200 participants spanning Thurston, Mason, Lewis, and Pierce counties. The program supported homeowers with sunny roofs, but how can others access solar?

Community solar spreads benefits broadly

The answer is community solar. Community solar allows people to own and benefit from a single solar array. Similar to how a community garden provides farming plots for people who may not have their own garden, a community solar array expands solar access to everyone.

An individual or group buys one or more units of a project. The energy community members could choose to subscribe to a unit (about half of a solar panel) or to donate a unit to a participating nonprofit. When the payback period is over, the installation will be donated to the Hands On Children’s Museum.

Community solar will supply all Oly Farmers’ Market energy needs

Over the summer, OCS worked with the Farmers Market and local solar installer South Sound Solar to design an installation that will provide 100% of the markets’ energy needs. This makes it the first net-zero farmers market in Washington. [See “Bring clean energy to the Farmers’ Market,” WIP, Aug. 2021]

The truly unique thing about the Hummingbird Project is that it has 97 owners. Participants include 83 individuals and 14 non-profits. Combined with federal tax credits, the technology is impressive—300 solar panels and commercial inverters, and a public online monitoring system.

Over the summer more than 100 community members purchased units for themselves or donated units of the project to twelve participating nonprofits. Organizations such as GRuB, the Thurston County Food Bank, Salmon Defense, the Dispute Resolution Center, Homes First and several more participated.

When community members donate solar units they not only help build a solar project, they benefit the community at large by providing long-term support to a nonprofit.

A third community solar project will be available in 2022.

Public support for shifting energy markets away from fossil fuels

In 2021, OCS began working on legislation to fund solar projects for low-income homes and to require utility companies to allow community solar projects to access bill-crediting systems that distribute participants’ energy credits.

The change would allow for a competitive community solar market that provides customers with tangible savings on their electric bills. Rolph estimates that this bill will expand Washington’s addressable solar market five times over and create many new jobs.

If the bill is passed, solar providers will be able to apply to the Washington State University Extension Energy Program for project funding. The fund could pay up to 100% of the solar project costs that benefit low-income customers and would reimburse some of the provider’s development expenses. Governor Jay Inslee announced in December that he was proposing a one hundred-million-dollar grant program.
THOUGHTS ON THE THEME

Beg, borrow or steal, but... Take back the light in 2022

“There is light in darkness, you just have to find it.” — bell hooks

After the year we just had, asking readers what they find light means to them in the form of sound like a madding and unanswerable Zen koan. And honestly, given our species’ epic capacity for self-delusion and antipathy, abandoning a trope as shopworn as darkness giving way to light seems justifiable. Yet we return again and again to the idea of seeking light because light—and its first cousin, hope—are not empty ideals. They are cellular imperatives.

We received many thoughtful submissions this month that suggest the answer to where and how we find light is through connection to others. “What’s in your water?” makes a case for opening our hearts and hearths to each other as the most direct path to lighting our way. “Fire” takes the theme to its most elemental level, reminding us of that most ancient of ways to bond.

Our feature on page one talks about the kind of light that shines when a diverse group of activists and visionaries pool their talents to become a force for change in the community. Olympia Community Solar’s efforts to bring renewable energy to people of all income levels reframes our understanding of the power of light.

The needed opinion piece by “Cassandra” shines a light on our diminishing freedoms at the hands of officials who are bending laws to accommodate questionable—and unlegislated—agendas. Considerable inner fortitude has always been required to defend the rights of those we oppose but such is the responsibility of those who champion liberty.

For sheer fun, don’t miss Dave Harris’ reminiscence on the energy and excitement surrounding the music scene in Olympia in the 90s and why the area provided such fertile soil for bands like Sleater-Kinney and labels like K Records. The only question is whether the same conditions that made such a nexus possible, like youth-friendly venues and affordable housing, will reappear. Matt Crichton’s interview with psychologist Pete Sanderson reminds us that kids have it pretty tough these days and that helping them build a healthy self-image is a slow but sacred task.

As the new year begins, we are mindful of the devastating fire that claimed so many small businesses downtown on November 15, 2021. Their losses are staggering and, in some cases, irretrievable—equipment, hardware, customer records, memorabilia. Some are facing the possibility of shutting their doors permanently. Still, as some of the business owners told WIP, the support they are receiving from the community in the form of $5 and $10 donations—is keeping the lights on, if only virtually and psychologically, for the moment. We invite you to give oxygen to their re-kindling efforts on page 15.

The losses of 2021 are undeniable: social isolation, illness, reduced income and an increased distrust of each other via a media machine that delights in darkness. Bishop Desmond Tutu, Steven Sondheim, bell hooks, E. O. Wilson, Hank Aaron, Cicely Tyson, Beverly Cleary, Betty White and so many other light bearers left the planet last year. How do we embrace the uncertainty of what lies ahead? The great soul who bore much darkness in his life, Bishop Desmond Tutu, said “Hope is being able to see that there is light despite all the darkness.”

Happy 2022. Keep the home fires burning.

—LL

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February: Grifters, Moochers & Lovers. Dark players don’t take a holiday on Valentine’s Day but lots of regular folk keep their love light burning all year long. Is anyone watching out for us or are we always being played? Where does love fit when so many messages tell us just to look out for number one? Deadline January 17.

March: What lies beneath. What might be hidden from our view just below the surface of things? Does decay fester under a veil of chipper platitudes or can we trust that dormant seeds of life are about to burst forth to nourish us? If you scratch the surface of a cynic, is there an idealist underneath? Deadline February 14.
Then this happened

Media Island’s low-power ra-
dio station KOWA is no more. No turning the dial to 106.5 and getting an earful of great PacificaOperators, or finding unusual programming. A gesture that is still in effect today.

The Chicago school is also where Glenn Loury, a Black American, won the Nobel Prize in Economics. (He was immediately branded as a ‘radical’ by the media.)

France brought the woman we stereotype as a bunny dancer, to rest among its heroes in the Pantheon. Yolanda D. Nii, a U.S. citizen of Ghanaian descent, is a French intellectual. She has published several books and articles on African history, politics, and culture. Her work has been widely recognized and has contributed significantly to our understanding of Africa.

Venezuela and Chile didn’t vote for right-wing candidates. The US-backed right-wing opposition participated in Venezuela’s regional election and were crushed. The socialist alliance won 20 of 23 states and the capital Caracas. Chil-
can elections, which are procedural.

Scotland attends at climate
talks. It’s hard to believe that the US will “lead by example” to tackle global warming. Four days later his administration announced the largest ever auction of oil and gas drilling leases in the Gulf of Mexico. He didn’t say which direction he would lead.

Everybody freaked out about $4.00/gal gas prices. In the year 1980, the average retail price of gas was $1.19. $1.19 is equivalent to $5.00/gal today.

We the Corporations. How American Businesses Won Their Civil Rights, Adam Winkler. Businessmen worked steadily to get the upper hand. beginning 100 years ago! Good read for history buffs.

Rise of the Warrior Cop, Radley Balko. What came of telling cops we’re in a “War” on drugs, crime, terrorism etc. and giving them military equipment to wage that war.

Readers’ Alert—Review a book! Get $50! WIP still has funds from our “Read-
ers Review” grant. Each month we publish a list of books (see right column). If you’d like to be considered to review one of them, email us and put BOOK REVIEW in the subject line. We will buy the book (or reimburse you if you buy it) and pay $50 if the review is accepted. If any of the books looks interesting, let us know. Or propose a book yourself.

What Orwell Didn’t Know: Propa-
ganda and the New Face of American Politics, Andras Szanto, ed. Uses our graph, in which most governments with Milton Friedman at the helm, guarantees universal social rights. (another beacon of Nazi ideology) with Milton Friedman at the helm, had then-president Salvador Al-

Hannah Arendt in her book, The New Jim Crow, by Michelle Alexander. Year 501: The Conquest Continues, Noam Chomsky. A People’s History of the United States. Jette does note that German authored another book about the FBI’s civil rights abuses after 9/11. But those tactics, foundational to the FBI, may only have come to light after 9/11 because that is when such abuses started to come to light. Looming threats, indigenous and people of color have been the subject of such harassment since the inception of the FBI. —Ed.
The Center's Eviction Response Program provided the necessary legal assistance for tenants to comply with the Eviction process. The landlord must inform the tenant within 14 days, and during that time, the tenant has the right to counsel in write explanations. The first consists of anticipatory actions by the State Superior Court and various Superior Courts. Second is the legislature's passage of Senate Bill 5160, which became effective April 22, 2022. The third possibility is the landlord Mitigation Program available through the Department of Commerce.

An Eviction Response Program includes mediation and rental assistance
In September 2020, the Washington State Superior Court, in anticipation of a large number of evictions, enabled Superior Courts to take preemptive action. In November 2020, Thurston County Superior Court issued an order stating that after expiration of the moratorium, a landlord seeking a residential eviction for non-payment must first comply with the Eviction Response Program administered by the Dispute Resolution Center (DRC) of Thurston and Mason Counties.

The Center's Eviction Response Program (ERP) offers the possibility of resolution of mediation and for back due rent outside of the Court process. The landlord must inform the DRC that they have sent a 14 day notice to the tenant. If the DRC is able to contact the tenant, they let the tenant know there are funds available through the Community Action Council to pay back rent and possibly allow them to remain in their home.

Since the program became mandatory on November 1, the DRC has been involved in 361 ERP notices as of December 14. 126 were resolved and seven required formal mediation. If the DRC cannot contact the tenant within 14 days, they issue a “Dispute Resolution Certificate” which the landlord must have to proceed with a legal eviction. Thus far, the DRC has issued 38 such certificates.

Where's the deluge?
There are at least three possible explanations:

1. The third possibility is the DRC is able to contact the tenant, who is less than the number of cases filed in October when the moratorium was in effect. The Court expected a deluge of unlawful detainee filings, the legal term for evictions.

- Senate Bill 5160 which became effective April 22, 2022, gave additional protections to tenants. This bill focused on tenants who were unable to pay their rent between March 1, 2020, and December 30, 2021.

- Besides other tenant protections, the bill mandates that landlords offer a “reasonable schedule for repayment of unpaid rent” before asking the Court to evict. “Reasonable” means one-third of the tenant’s rent. For example, if the tenant’s rent was $1500/month, a repayment plan could be no more than $500/month.

- Another provision of the bill might help to explain the lack of formal evictions. The bill created “the nation's first appointed counsel program for tenants in eviction proceedings,” according to Jim Bamberger, Director of the state’s Office of Civil Legal Aid (OCLA).

- New indigent individuals not only have the right to counsel in criminal matters, but also when facing eviction. OCLA had to set up an entirely new system of legal defense, engaging 13 legal aid providers, training 65 attorneys and hiring the NW Justice Project to establish a statewide point of contact for indigent tenants.

- The Council would rather tour sites designed as US refugees and sends in its police forces. The police will enforce the eviction. With all this in place, it seems possible that legal evictions, a leading cause of homelessness, will remain low for the immediate future.

- For over two years an estimated average of eighty individuals lived in an encampment on the Deschutes Parkway. The owners of the nine parcels are Sean Threatt, Jean Holbrook and Richard Marcellenas. According to the City’s press release, these property owners requested that the City enforce trespass laws and remove the people living there.

- The City did just that on Wednesday, December 8. The City did that while at the same time stating “it does not have the resources to provide alternative shelter options.” Whether the City will continue this practice and remove homeless people from other encampments remains to be seen.

- Nevertheless, it seems that as long as tenants participate in the new mandatory DRC process, there will be no flood of legal evictions for non-payment. Of course, the DRC process must be adequately staffed to deal with the volume of requests, the County’s funds need to continue to flow and the Community Action Council’s capacity must be sufficient to distribute the needed funds. With all this in place, it seems possible that legal evictions, a leading cause of homelessness, will remain low for the immediate future.

- Dan Leahy lives on Olympia’s Westside and has been writing housing-related articles for Works In Progress over the past several years.

- Eviction Day
Waiting through homelessness.
Can you imagine a lengthy stay?
Mired in mud and damp
I did it just one day.

I was with refugees in Lesvos
Fleeing US wars.
Their camps were no where close to these homegrown sores.

Homegrown refugees,
beneath official contempt,
private property points its finger
Cleanse the vermin’s tent!

Can you imagine a lengthy stay?
Mired in mud and damp
I did it just one day.

This deluge?

Court actions and other safeguards may keep renters from eviction

Dan Leahy
One month after Governor Inslee lifted the Eviction Moratorium on October 31, 2021, only 12 cases were filed in Thurston Superior Court. This is less than the number of cases filed in October when the moratorium was in effect. The Court expected a deluge of unlawful detainee filings, the legal term for evictions.

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- The third possibility is the DRC is able to contact the tenant, who is less than the number of cases filed in October when the moratorium was in effect. The Court expected a deluge of unlawful detainee filings, the legal term for evictions.

The Center’s Eviction Response Program can distribute came initially through T-RAp funds. Thurston County received approximately $37.7 million in T-RAp funds either from the Consolidated Appropriations Act of February 2021 or the American Rescue Plan Act of March 2021. The County had distributed $14.8 million in rental assistance to 2006 households by the end of September. Thurston County is 81.5% white, most households receiving assistance are white (62.9%). Non-white households are also receiving assistance.

In the future, it appears these rental assistance funds will come from Washington State’s Department of Commerce. There are actually four providers, training 65 attorneys and hiring the NW Justice Project to establish a statewide point of contact for indigent tenants.

New law provides unprecedented legal representation and options for reduced rent
Senate Bill 5160 which became effective April 22, 2022, gave additional protections to tenants. This bill focused on tenants who were unable to pay their rent between March 1, 2020, and December 30, 2021.

Besides other tenant protections, the bill mandates that landlords offer a “reasonable schedule for repayment of unpaid rent” before asking the Court to evict. “Reasonable” means one-third of the tenant’s rent. For example, if the tenant’s rent was $1500/month, a repayment plan could be no more than $500/month.

Another provision of the bill might help to explain the lack of formal evictions. The bill created “the nation’s first appointed counsel program for tenants in eviction proceedings,” according to Jim Bamberger, Director of the state’s Office of Civil Legal Aid (OCLA).

Now indigent individuals not only have the right to counsel in criminal matters, but also when facing eviction. OCLA had to set up an entirely new system of legal defense, engaging 13 legal aid providers, training 65 attorneys and hiring the NW Justice Project to establish a statewide point of contact for indigent tenants.

Landlords can be reimbursed for some claims
The third reason for fewer than expected evictions could be the Landlord Mitigation Program at the Washington Department of Commerce. There are actually four separate landlord funds administered by the Housing Assistance Unit of Commerce. The largest one by far is the Landlord Covid Relief Fund.

OCRA had to set up an entirely new system of legal defense, engaging 13 legal aid providers, training 65 attorneys and hiring the NW Justice Project to establish a statewide point of contact for indigent tenants.

This fund allows landlords to be reimbursed up to $15,000 for any unpaid rent accrued between March 1, 2020, and December 31, 2021 if the tenant leaves his home voluntarily. If the landlord gets reimbursed, the landlords can’t take legal action against the tenant for unpaid rent or for damages.

At the end of November 2021, there were 10,024 landlord claims statewide in the amount of $48.3 million. Of that amount, $23.7 million has been distributed to landlords. In Thurston County, landlords have submitted 160 requests for reimbursement.

Evictions of unsheltered people continue in Thurston County
There are, of course, “evictions” that take place outside the Superior Court. Governor Inslee lifted the moratorium at the end of October. People living on land without the owner's permission were left unprotected. Olympians saw this winter what can happen next.
Green Cove has friends at City Hall

The continuing quest by local attorney Burgess and City staffers to turn a toxic waste site into a housing development

Esther Kronenberg

This summer, the President of the Economic Development Council, the legal counsel for the Thurston Chamber of Commerce’s public policy advocacy arm, the former Port of Olympia attorney and the attorney representing developer Jerry Mahan, sent an email to the City of Olympia asking it to consent to a “quiet title” action.

The well-connected attorneys listed above are one person - Heather Burgess. Burgess’s goal was to get the City to agree to vacate public rights-of-way in favor of Mahan’s controversial Green Cove Park development.

In putting forth the request, Ms. Burgess claimed “There is no evidence that the portion of the Unopened Area sought to be vacated.

The City ignored the law in one further area. Mahan’s project is on the Department of Ecology’s Confirmed and Suspected Contaminated Site list, making it subject to cleanup under the Model Toxics Control Act. The staff used City resources in taking the quiet title process ask the Court to remedy this miscarriage of justice.

Esther Kronenberg has followed progress of the Green Cove proposal for years.

REFLECTION

Fire

Peter Brown

Fire has been central to our existence as humans since the time before time. Fire helped to bind us to each other. This is where I find light.

In Latin, the word focus meant fireplace, and it came to be used for itself. It may have been used metaphorically for the notion of the hearth, symbolizing the center of the home, the center of our attention and intention. Humans have always had fire as their center. Fire gave us our humanness. Fire is seen as residing in the heart.

Fire was, and still is for many, central to the homes that people inhabit, whether it be a cave, a tipi or a house made from wood or earth. The hearth was the place where the family gathered for cooking, meals, socializing, warmth and light. It was our opportunity to commune with each other, to see each other’s light, their fire. Some say that fire as the gathering place for our ancestors helped to promote language and exchange.

Over the years this has shifted, and now we regulate the fire that warms us to a closet, a garage, a tv set or a phone/computer screen.

An example is the Huichol people of Sierra Madres in Mexico. Fire is core to their lives. Fire is their light, their warmth, their energy, their light. Fire is the original shaman. A God that is central in their daily lives and who they receive guidance from. Their ceremonial house, a Tuki, has in the center a fire pit. Fire is at the center and connects life for the Huichol.

So how do I bring light into my life? How do I bring warmth, connection and movement into my life during these times of polarizing influences and the traditional time of darkness, cold and going within, I sit with the fire and invite others to come and talk and share.

Winters is a time, traditionally, when generations gather around the light and warmth of the fire and listen to stories from their elders and learn about their ways and the way to live a good life, a proper life in community. An opportunity to slow down and be embraced by what binds us as a people, to renew our values, beliefs and experiences.

Sitting with the fire, the rugged individual, or at least individualism that is perpetuated in America, becomes something of a bond that we each have, our humanity, our light is rekindled.

Come sit with the fire.

Peter Brown lives in Olympia. Peter and his wife host fires. To learn more, contact him at pj2410@yahoo.com.

Haunting at City Hall

Eleven ghostly souls braved the elements on December 4 to underscore the city’s lethargy in implementing the Thurston Climate Mitigation Plan. Adopted in all jurisdictions of Thurston County last year, the plan lists over 70 action items that must be completed within the next decade to maximize adaptation and preparation for the impacts of climate change.

Citing the fact that only one item on the list has been addressed so far, members of the Thurston Climate Action Team used Charles Dickens’ A Christmas Carol as inspiration for their December action in front of City Hall.

Dressed as “Ghosts of Holidays Future,” protestors planted cardboard cutouts of Sierra Madres in Mexico. Fire is core to their lives. Fire is their light, their warmth, their energy, their light. Fire is the original shaman. A God that is central in their daily lives and who they receive guidance from. Their ceremonial house, a Tuki, has in the center a fire pit. Fire is at the center and connects life for the Huichol.

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I'm fully vaccinated—two Moderna shots this summer. I've had lots of vaccinations in my life, as a kid I had them all. For global travel I had them all. I can't recall any adverse reactions from those vaccinations. But as the COVID vaccines rolled out early this year, many of my friends got sick from them—some really sick. I began to hear reports of heart problems after some COVID vaccinations. After hearing of these problems, I got my two Moderna vaccinations mostly because my government employer mandated it. COVID vaccinations or perpetual weekly testing—or get fired from my job. This surprised me. Never before had any employer required vaccinations not for the flu nor measles. Since all my pre-COVID vaccinations had gone OK and I'm pretty fit, I thought, “No problem.” But within four hours of the second Moderna shot, I was sick, and for about a week thereafter. For two days I was really sick and in bed. We were told in 2020 that vaccination was the gateway out of COVID lockdowns. When even countries like heavily-vaccinated Israel had lots of new COVID cases, I began to get worried. Several friends and their family members got sick from COVID despite having been fully vaccinated. Today nobody is promising the vaccine will prevent COVID—and everyone is talking about booster shots. Will I have to get sick with a new vaccination every few months as a condition of my employment, as each new variant of COVID emerges, perhaps for the rest of my life? Can my employer force me to do that, or fire me if I refuse—even if the vaccine is not very effective? Never in my life have I heard of mandates so absolute that there was no reasonable way to opt-out. My own vaccine-created illness didn't seem to matter. My devout Catholic friend says her request for an exemption based on religious objections was denied—and she was fired. My devout Jewish friend has already lost his job. All appeals appear to have been denied. There is a huge personal and social cost for these terminations. Lose your job, done, no recourse. Are we going to summarily terminate a worker, perhaps an important, experienced worker and friend in the community? What ripple effects will their termination have as their blameless children lose healthcare? What will our community do as we lose the investment in their experience, knowledge—and friendship? My union didn't bother to ask our membership when they signed agreements binding me to vaccination or termination. Actually, I could have chosen to get tested weekly—at my personal cost—possibly in perpetuity. Both my employer and my union agreed that my COVID vaccination data and any test results would be submitted to a company called “Qualtrics.” Their website motto as of a few days ago was: “Find Out What Your Employees and Customers Aren’t Telling You.” Pretty chilling stuff, that in my world is equivalent to calling me a liar. We are considered “Unvaccinated” until Qualtrics decides we’re OK. I don’t know what becomes of my personal and confidential medical data. It has become the property of the corporation—not me. Since these companies sell data or get hacked every day, will my personal medical data get backed or sold? The privacy of my personal health data is important to me. In a disturbing shift, we are no longer focused on the disease but on vaccinations— injections that we dearly hope are good for us. I see the people of Olympia, my hometown, hardening in their attitudes and it scares me. I see “Vaccinated Only” signs downtown that remind me of “Whites Only” signs. Are we really going to create a “COVID Jim Crow” population in Olympia? Unvaccinated does not mean that a person is diseased. If you are unvaccinated, I personally welcome you.

Since I was forced to get an injection, and the abortion debate is back, I thought about a woman’s choice. Her right to terminate her pregnancy is good. “Her body, her choice.” Period. This has been a mantra for progressive-left voters for decades. But mandatory COVID injections—that’s OK? I began to wonder, where was all the power coming from, that the COVID mandate could be dropped on me and my fellow union members?

The COVID emergency has lasted a long time—more than 20 months. Executive branch government officials at the county, state and national levels have had extraordinary powers over this period to mandate working conditions, impose requirements and set penalties using emergency declarations. Legislatures have been very quiet. Emergency powers in government are usually limited in time and in scope. Legislatures may cede power for 90 to 180 days. In such situations, the legislative branch of government gives away some of the powers of democracy to the executive branch. That’s great for a hurricane or an earthquake. What about an emergency that lasts 600+ days? When does the emergency end and normal democracy return? Do emergency powers last forever?

There are many nuances in life. Do you work at home? With colleagues or alone? How much interaction do you have with the public? Are you an EMT or an accountant? One of the most important parts of democracy is the listening to the voices and experiences of others. Might there be ways forward that keep people safe, short of an absolute mandate?

I ask that we consider a thing called a ‘Reasonable Accommodation’ standard. It says, in effect, that we must make some accommodations for the needs of others who may be at risk. The balancing of appropriate risks is something legislatures—democracy itself—are supposed to figure out. Consider where we are right now. Without being asked, without voting, you can now be fired for not getting vaccinated or tested—with no democratic process involved. The mandate is absolute and without appeal. Your adherence will be subject to surveillance. Facilities are now segregated. This is the first time this has been done—but this situation could last forever.

If you are not OK with that, then we have to solve this democratically. And soon.

The writer is a resident of Olympia who has borrowed the name of Cassandra, a priestess who could foresee the truth—but was cursed never to be believed.
REFLECTION

What’s in your wallet?

Social capital is the real currency

When the Capital One credit card campaign was launched in 2001, we were besieged with the phrase “what’s in your wallet?” I was really annoyed by this question and horrified by such offensive messaging. I was annoyed because I haven’t had a credit card in 30 years and my life is vastly improved by having been out of that vicious cycle. I was horrified because we know consumption does not lead to happiness. The constant harangue to buy more (not to mention the co-option of the public airwaves to push this dangerous impulse) is threatening life on this planet. Fundamentalistically, it struck me as a life-threatening message based on a lie.

What might be an antidote to the poison of such unhealthy and irresponsible messaging? Let’s consider asking ourselves what’s in our wallet. The word wallet (origin of the word walet) is defined as “connections among individuals, relationships and resources.” Multiple studies have shown the dangers of maintaining business departments or societal systems in “silos” where innovative ideas die and communication consistently fails. This effect describes organizations typical in today’s world (despite its disadvantages) and also describes individual citizens who want connection but end up marginalized, with their talents overlooked, their potential contributions to solving problems lost. This disconnection and detachment make it hard, if not impossible, to envision a common future and work towards it together. What we evidently need in our walet is social capital.

The term social capital refers to “connections among individuals, social networks with the norms of reciprocity and trustworthiness that arise from them.” The importance of generating social capital at this time cannot be overstated. The erosion of social bonds and connectedness is the first requirement for mass opinion formation underlying the development of governments that discourage individual freedom of thought and action.

Two examples are totalitarianism, which attempts to assert total control over the lives of its citizens, and authoritarianism, which directs the unquestioning submission of its citizens to authority. How can we work collectively to mitigate the erosion of social capital, the first condition necessary for the formation of repressive systems?

One of my favorite ways to generate social capital is through the extension of hospitality and affection. Not only is this eminently practical, fun and rewarding, it’s congruent with universal wisdom practice “to love your neighbor.” When I’ve initiated this practice, I have reaped benefits greater than I could possibly have imagined.

Here is an example from my graduate school days at The Evergreen State College when I had a colleague living in Longview who traveled several times a week to and from Olympia to attend classes. Otherwise, she had to stay overnight in a motel to avoid the 150-mile round-trip the following day. She was not someone I particularly wanted to get to know, but I was committed to building social capital and so extended hospitality to her. Getting to know her as she spent multiple nights on my futon couch and shared a tiny bathroom with me, were circumstances that bonded us together, leading to the development of a deep and precious friendship.

This would not have happened in the absence of this exchange and surprisingly, this friend turns out to be one of the most hospitable folks I know, an inspiration to me to continue the practice of extending hospitality.

I recommend this practice because when I turn toward someone, rather than away, I have consistently experienced the best in them, and in me. One way for me to experience the light has been by simply turning it on so a guest can see their way to my front door and bless me with social capital. Happily, this ensures I also have a place to land when needed, and that my walet is plump with provisions!

L.D. lives in Olympia and has a Masters in Public Administration from The Evergreen State College.

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RETHINKING EVERYTHING #14

The educational vs the custodial function of school

I was a teacher at the pioneering Small School in Devon [England] which opened in 1982 and closed in 2017. Pupils ranging from eleven to sixteen were offered a broad, balanced program of academic, creative and practical activities. Qualified teachers and skilled people from the community collaborated: pottery was taught by the local potter, wood-working by the local carpenter, art by a local artist. The older children went for work experience in local businesses and on farms. We used the village playing fields for games, we bought vegetables in the village for lunch (and also grew our own), which the children took turns to cook.

The school was permeable to the community: it provided rehearsal space for local music and drama groups, adults were allowed to join in lessons; staff and pupils worked on restoring woodland and footpaths. Several old students returned to teach classes. The staff and students were on first-name terms; no uniforms, of course; one school inspector congratulated us on creating “an informal yet orderly community.”

...it is possible to imagine things being done differently. Perhaps the disruption of the pandemic will force us to reevaluate the custodial versus the educational functions of schools and come up with something better suited to the future patterns of work and learning that may emerge.

—Caroline Walker in a letter to the London Review of Books, March 2021

January 2022 www.olywip.org 7
Bullying, shaming and stigmatizing mental illness

More counselors needed to meet increasing demand for mental health support

Peter Sanderson is a licensed marriage and family therapist who practices in Thurston County. He participates among other things in 3 of the state’s five Medicaid Managed Care plans. He was interviewed by Matt Crutchfield for Works in Progress in December 2021.

Matt (MC): How did you get into counseling?

Peter (PS): It was a pretty circu-

rous journey. When I was in high school, people said “you might be a good psychologist someday.” A few decades ago I enrolled in an undergraduate program for psy-

chology, but I kind of dropped out. I was a construction worker for 15 years. Just after age 40, I went back to school as a construction worker for 15 years. Just after age 40, I went back to school and school work and years. When school was mostly online.

Being trolled online is really huge. I encounter are largely coming from school and school work and years. Just after age 40, I went back to school as an undergraduate and then went on to get a Masters Degree in psychology, couple, child and family therapy.

MC: Give us a general sense of what is happening locally with the mental status of adults? Of youth?

PS: I hear stories about how the need for mental health services has hugely increased over the past two years. But then, in the past, people I encounter are largely coming to me for the same reasons they came before. People are anxious, depressed, dealing with the effects of trauma, things like that. Covid is just one more stressor.

In contrast, in 2020, people would respond to me asking, “why are you here?” by putting on their intake form, “I’m really scared of covid…I don’t know how to deal with covid… I work in a medical environment and covid is heavily impacting my work and making me scared to go to work!” We live in a very stressful environment, and it’s just one more stressor to add to the mix that people deal with.

MC: What things do you hear from the youth in our area?

PS: I work with about 2/3 adults and 1/3 teenagers. Not many of my teenage clients have expressed a lot of stress about covid, unless it’s directly impacted a family member...someone has gotten sick or died. The top anxiety teenagers are being bullied or shamed. Being trolled online is really huge. Also school and school work and how to deal with that. Most of my teenage clients didn’t do very well when school was mostly online. That actually surprised some of them. They thought it would be their wildest dream—not have to go to school and just learn online. Then they discovered it wasn’t much fun and they missed human contact. This school year, some have stressed out over having to relearn how to interact with other human beings.

MC: What have you found is a good way to engage with youth?

PS: Building trust. Many younger adolescents are dragged into counseling by a parent who wants something for them to fit in. It’s pretty understandable. Suddenly, your kid is acting differently. Their grades have gone down, and it seems like a mental health issue—and it may or may not be. Some- body, a parent, will schedule an appointment for their kid—often without telling them.

For instance, anxiety may arise from a response to a perceived threat in the environment. It’s your brain’s survival mechanism (limbic system) kicking in, going “warning warning you need to go into action!” People generate physi-

ological symptoms as a result of a perceived threat, when there really might not be a threat in the envi-

ronment. All of a sudden, the way they are thinking and acting is out of sync with their environment, which makes them look crazy.

MC: Society tends to stigmatize those with mental illness. What would you say to someone who may not know much about mental illness and sees a person on the street acting “differently?”

PS: Part of that goes back to people perceiving threat. We’re all wired to notice things that might hurt us. We pick out difference. If some-

one is acting in a way that seems strange, maybe they are acting that way because that person is dangerous.” The fact that they’re acting weirdly or speaking weirdly doesn’t necessar-

ily make them dangerous. It could mean a lot of things. A person who has a manic episode and doesn’t sleep for five days can hallucinate and walk around talking to people who don’t appear to be there. That can be scary to somebody encour-

aging them.

MC: What do you think about people who feel they’re hooked on social media and worry that it’s causing them harm?

PS: That’s something I work with on an individual basis. Most of my teenage clients who work with social media as a stressor. But at the same time, social media provides a lot of protective things for those same clients.

MC: Are there general similarities or differences in Mason County vs Thurston County clients?

PS: I see some clients in Mason County who are pretty poor, and some who have good jobs. The people who are pretty poor often have survival-related stressors in addition to issues experienced also by my clients who have good jobs. There’s more seasonal employ-

ment in Mason County; there’s a forest products industry that pro-

duces Christmas type stuff. People go to work and that’s their only potential regular job for the year. Other than that, the stressors are pretty similar…people worry about and get depressed about the same things.

MC: Can you talk about major misconceptions of people with mental illness?

PS: People think about mental ill-

ness like it’s abnormal; like there’s something wrong with me.” Most people get counseling at some point. It’s not an abnormal thing. So part of it is deciding to take the first step.

How do you take that first step? There are multiple ways people look for therapists—like doing an internet search. It partly depends on whether people have insurance or not. People who are on Medic-

aid can use Community Mental Health Services in Thurston, Mason, and Community Youth Services will provide counseling to some people depending on their income level. People with insurance can access lists of therapists through their insurer.

MC: Can you explain different kinds of counseling or mental health services?

PS: People who haven’t had coun-

selling don’t really know who to go to. Who counsels you? People think it’s a psychologist or psychiatrist or someone like that but for the most part, they’re not the ones who do counseling. In this state, counseling is done mostly by masters level practitioners who are licensed either as mental health counselors, marriage and family therapists or counselors by a certain income level. There are also peer counselors. Some psychologists do counseling, although they also do other things like specialized testing and court testimony. Psychiatrists write pre-

scriptions for medications and only rarely do anything like counseling.

MC: How could Thurston and Mason County improve how we deal with mental illness?

PS: Find a way to create more therapists and provide better reimbursements. People below a certain income level can qualify for Apple Health (AH). Reimburse-

ment levels for AH are really bad and the result is that not enough providers see clients with AH plans. A lot of people spend months searching for a therapist, sometimes calling 40 or 50 places. Even regular insurance plans, for the most part, don’t reimburse at a decent level. Some therapists don’t even take insurance because of the amount of billing and the level of reimburse-

ment. But most people pay for counseling out of insurance, so that shrinks the pool.

There aren’t enough people do-

ing counseling. The demand is greater than the supply, and that reimbursement that would enable

Mental health, continued on next page
BOOK REVIEW

The Constitution of Knowledge: A Defense of Truth
by Jonathan Rauch

Margaret Thomas

Because I’m a librarian, a journalist and a college faculty member, you may think it wasn’t much of a lift for author Jonathan Rauch to sell me on his Constitution of Knowledge, a framework for harnessing truth in an age of mistrust and uncertainty.

Rauch reminds readers repeatedly that truth isn’t what I think, or what you think. Truth is what we think, a fragile consensus based on current evidence and always subject to revision. Nonetheless, on any given day, the time-tested network of truth-seeking institutions still serves as a footing in reality. What a relief.

In our search for truth, Rauch urges us not to be disoriented by the right’s disinformation campaigns or cowed by the left’s cancel-culture left’s cancel culture insistence on thought conformity. Instead, he proposes two simple rules.

Seeded by Socrates and flouring in the 18th century, fallibilism is the principle that we must accept as knowledge even that which can’t be proven. After all, it is impossible to prove much of anything. Therefore, the truth-seeking community accepts a prevailing hypothesis only until a better one comes along. Rule No. 1: No final say.

Rauch traces the rapid progress that followed adoption of the fallibilist system, which would have been impossible without Rule No. 2: No personal authority.

According to Rauch’s constitution, anyone can present their ideas, no matter how whacky, without fear of persecution. Not the professor, nor the president, nor the pope deems what is true. But neither are members of any historically persecuted group automatically granted the final word. Everyone must defend their truths from a gauntlet of critics and nay-sayers. This is a messy, mercurial business, but it is the necessary business of democratically sifting a sandstorm to capture a few grains of truth.

The Constitution of Knowledge: A Defense of Truth

Jonathan Rauch

So which of society’s beleaguered institutions make up the truth-seeking network? Judges, journalists, teachers, scientists and elected government officials are (or should be) collectively committed to an objective search for truth. “Figures,” you might quibble: same old cast of despised, often-discredited elites and intellectuals.

Rauch argues that this system is the only one that is, in theory, open to all. It enshrines each citizen’s right to posit and defend their thoughts, possibly even claim the contested high ground of knowledge.

It is an imperfect system, rife with human failings, but the Constitution of Knowledge establishes rules of civility, checks and balances and connections to other truth-seeking institutions. It harnesses the brilliance of self-serving ambition of individuals to propel society’s understanding forward.

Rauch’s latest book won’t be much help to those who, for whatever reason, want to pin his constitution to one political camp or another. He is a senior fellow in governance studies at the Brookings Institute, which published his latest book this year.

According to Wikipedia (an esteemed part of the truth-seeking network, according to Rauch), Brookings has been described by various media organizations as “liberal” or “left leaning.” The book’s acknowledgements section thanks contributors including the libertarian Charles Koch Foundation, the liberal William and Flora Hewlett Foundation, and the conservative American Enterprise Institute.

Rauch honored his powers of persuasion as an outspoken warrior in the fight for gay rights and same-sex marriage. Still, his current romp from ancient philosophy through the 2020 presidential election might sound like as much fun as skipping across hot coals. But Rauch’s long experience as a journalist and author makes his thoroughly researched, often witty, writing not only thought-provoking and accessible—but ultimately reassuring.

Margaret Thomas is a librarian and journalism instructor at South Puget Sound Community College.


Hey! Want to review a book for WIP readers?

On Page 3 we list books to review and the opportunity to earn $50.

Replace cheap meat with new policies that respect the people and animals

Set a livable minimum wage across the economy, and make real food more accessible. Hungry people who work hard and long are the ones who must buy fast food, cheap meat and junk food. Lift the prosperity of working-class Americans while supplying the market with affordable and healthy alternatives instead of inventing more “choice.”

Provide a swift path to citizenship for immigrants, and eliminate the tipped wage. Undocumented labor powers the meat and restaurant industries and allows corporations to pocket the profits on denied benefits, taxes and fees.

Phase out medium and large CAFOs. Cory Booker has introduced a bill that would get it done. We don’t need these animal-raising facilities any more than we need coal plants. Even easier: Enforce existing regulations. One other thing that would cut meat consumption with almost no work? Full transparency in the form of publicly available webcam broadcasts of factory farms and slaughterhouses.

Ramp up collective bargaining, accountability, and inspection in the meatpacking industry. Injuries happen in meatpackaging plants because bosses are constantly trying to speed up the chain that moves carcasses by minimizing the inspections required — they even want their own employees to do it. Slow them down, provide union representation to stand up for workers and make workers’ jobs safer.

Start talking about land reform. Returning land to Indigenous people, and making black people, other people of color, and women equal partners in land ownership and farming will improve food sovereignty and provide us with a collective right to determine what we eat. We don’t have that now. Our diet is determined in corporate boardrooms based on what’s most profitable.

The uncomfortable reality is that stopping meat production means stopping meat production, not producing something else that reminds us of meat. The latest report from the meat-substitute industry says that if all goes according to plan, these tech meats will be 22 percent of the global market by 2035, and that’s hardly enough, especially while the OECD predicts a 12 percent expansion in meat production by the end of this decade. We ought to confront agribusiness, and the myths that preserve their power, head-on.

Excerpted from How to Replace Meat by Mark Bitman (www.thetimbersproject.com).
Who’s in charge of fertile women’s bodies?  
The light of principle and decency still shines, though it may not prevail

Katie Watson

(The Roe v Wade decision) said that there is no possible way that the framers in the 16 uses of the word “person” in the Constitution could have been thinking about embryos or fetuses. What is not in dispute is that women are people under the Constitution. So it said that women have a constitutional right to continue or end a pregnancy as they see fit until this medical moment called viability. The court used general phrasing to explain what that is. So think of cruel and un-unusual punishment or other constitutional standards that use words instead of specifics and numbers. They said that viability was a reasonable chance at a meaningful life. And they left it to the medical profession to decide what that was and when that happened.

There’s no problem with the viability standard because it moves with medicine. The significant thing about the viability standard is that it is the only “principled standard,” to use the term of Julie Rikelman who argued the case, and I’ve argued this in my book, because it is the only gestational or developmental standard that accounts for the pregnant person. It is the only one that acknowledges the person in whom that embryo or fetus lives and is dependent on. So what the court did in Roe very wisely is to say essentially the biological goal of pregnancy is to deliver an independent person, a baby, and so at the point of development when at least theoretically that fetus could live separately with medical support from the person in whom it lives, that is when the state can assert an interest in potential life. Fundamental rights are not something you’re supposed to have to beg for at the polls at every election cycle. So when (Kavanaugh) says the Constitution is neutral on abortion, what he is hiding is that the Constitution is not neutral on the personhood of women. So to claim this false neutrality is to throw all American women under the bus.

This is excerpted from the transcript of an interview with Katie Watson, bioethics professor at Northwestern University Feinberg School of Medicine, lawyer and the author of Scarlet A: The Ethics, Law and Politics of Ordinary Abortion. The interview was conducted by Amy Goodman on Democracy Now on the day after the Supreme Court Justices offered their views on a Mississippi State law that would prohibit women from legally terminating a pregnancy 15 weeks from conception.

Theresa Mosqueda of Olympia was one of three sponsors of a Seattle City Council program that awarded up to $835 per childcare worker to over 3,300 childcare providers in Seattle. In her regular news to residents of the city where she serves, Mosqueda said that the money is “an important small step toward recognizing the underpayment and economic instability in this sector.” Based on provider reports, the city estimates that almost 70% of the awardees are BIPOC workers, providing care to over 28,000 children throughout Seattle. It’s well-known that COVID-19 exacerbated problems related to childcare: punishingly expensive for parents, woefully low-paid for providers, lacking reasonable access to capital for facilities. How long it will take to replace the losses and closures experienced during the pandemic, even with this modest help, remains a question.

Real money goes to actual childcare providers in Seattle

Birdseye Medical Clinic

Covid Testing, Mon-Fri, 9:00 am - 4:00 pm.

Next to the old Greyhound bus station, 7th and Capitol Way S. in downtown Olympia Rapid Testing is available for walk-ins with a 15 minute turnaround for $34 with debit or credit card. The clinic offers PCR testing in conjunction with the Univ. of Washington with a 24-72 hour turnaround time and the cost charged to your insurance. PCR stands for polymerase chain reaction, a diagnostic test that determines if you are infected by analyzing a sample on a nose swab to see if it contains genetic material from the virus. This is the most accurate test and the best choice for individuals with symptoms. Visit “testingbem.com” for more details. Weather conditions might delay some results.

Real money goes to actual childcare providers in Seattle

Gas prices & gas prices adjusted for inflation (1978-2020)

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Gas prices ($) Inflation adjusted ($)
Facing the facts about gun violence in the US

Laura Finley

A day after yet another tragic school shooting, I just finished teaching a criminology class about gun violence and how to reduce it in the US. I found that my students have many misconceptions about the scope and nature of the problem. I believe they are not alone, and that these misconceptions that many others may hold work against the development of thoughtful and effective policy. Although whole volumes can and have been written about this, I share here just a few observations.

First, many have no idea how many people are injured or killed by gun violence in the US annually. According to the CDC, more than 45,000 people were killed by gun violence in the US in 2020, an increase in recent decades. This is an average of more than 120 gun-related deaths per day. It includes a 30 percent increase in homicides from the previous year. Between 2015 and 2019 there were 2,606 gun deaths by law enforcement alone. These numbers should be shocking, with US gun-related homicide rates 25 times greater than other wealthy nations.

Second, most are unaware that the biggest percentage of gun-related fatalities come from suicide. Nearly two-thirds of deaths by gun are suicides, an average of approximately 64 per day. Likewise, accidental injuries and deaths are far more frequent in the US than in other wealthy countries. A study by researchers from the University of Pennsylvania and Columbia University found that between 2009 and 2017, there was an annual average of 85,700 ER visits for non-fatal gun injuries. ABC News developed a Gun Violence Tracker and found that for the week of November 19 to 25, 2021, there were 345 deaths and 623 injuries due to firearms in the US.

Third, the cost of gun violence is astronomical. The US spends nearly one billion dollars annually on immediate healthcare costs alone, according to the US General Accountability Office. The costs are far greater when you factor in long-term physical and mental health care, as well as criminal justice and other costs.

Let the sunshine in!

Oil vs solar subsidies

(From page 1)

You could tell the independent oil men by their pinkie rings. The Big Oil guys were expensive brown suits and conservative ties.

Both groups were visiting the US Senate for the same thing: to push for tax breaks and public money that guaranteed growth in the fossil fuel industry. Life in the oil patch is easy and rewarding and they want it to stay that way.

Each year, the US pours an estimated $20.5 billion into fossil fuels, including about $14.7 billion in federal subsidies and $5.8 billion in state-level incentives. Most of these are in the form of tax deductions, exemptions—“obscure tax loopholes and accounting tricks” permanently embedded in the tax code.

Solar energy seems barely a glimmer of such support. A federal tax credit for purchasers was offered in 2005 and is to be extended another year and set to decline yearly even then. It’s now slated to end in 2024. Our state gives solar a tiny boost by eliminating sales tax for solar purchases. (There will be better support if the legislature adopts proposals outlined in the page 1 article.)

Despite these minuscule amounts, a coal industry publication griped that far too much money has been spent on renewable resources. From their initial adoption in 1979 through 2018, wind and solar “received subsidies amounting to more than $100 billion.” They demanded an end to any subsidy: “the wind and solar industries are mature and able to compete with other electricity generators on an equal footing.”

Over the same years, subsidies to the oil/gas/coal sector amounted to $640 billion—but who’s counting? No one, apparently. The guys in the suit and pinkie rings are sure to do some ultimately political power that enables them to repel each effort to reduce or eliminate the subsidies.

Tasting just the 2015-16 election cycle, in the two years before the election, oil, gas and coal companies spent $334 million in campaign contributions and lobbying. Their reward was $298.4 billion in federal subsidies for those two years—a 8.200% return on investment.

US tax policy and other subsidies have privileged the fossil fuel industry and distorted markets, stifling innovation and contributing to the destruction of the planet.

At current oil prices, estimates are that if not for public subsidies, almost half of new oil fields getting drilled would have been left in the ground. If produced, that oil would generate the equivalent of 5.5 billion tons of CO2.

Time to cut off the flow of money to the fossils with their hands out. —BW


US Gun Deaths

Data courtesy Pew Research Center, 2017

Fourth, while mass shootings typically dominate the conversation about gun control, they represent less than three percent of annual gun-related deaths. Further, the primary reason for mass shootings in the US is domestic violence. Similarly, much attention has been paid to active shooter situations, with some potentially problematic policy implications, yet these represent just one percent of gun deaths.

Fifth, while many emphasize gun deaths in big cities like Chicago, approximately half of homicides by gun occur in suburban and rural areas. In addition, gun injuries are widespread and not exclusive to big cities. While Black males are disproportionately victims of intentional shootings, White males in rural communities are overrepresented in suicide by gun.

This is not an exhaustive list of misconceptions, nor does it offer solutions. My hope in teaching and writing about this is that, if we all discuss real data, perhaps then we can identify more appropriate policies and practices, which might include gun control, educational programs, mental health assistance and more.

Laura Finley, Ph.D., syndicated by PeaceVoice, teaches in the Barry University Department of Sociology & Criminology and is the author of several academic texts in her discipline.
Lin Nelson

In the first two weeks of December, around 300 worker health advocates made their way to the 10th annual COSHCON—Council on Occupational Safety and Health Conference.

The fully bilingual conference was built on the long struggle—going back centuries—for the right to work without sacrificing life and limb. As the old song goes “we just come to work here, we don’t come to die.”

Over the course of six days, a broad range of workers and their allies shared stories about the conditions that make going to work to risk a scary affair. Despite the short flurry of support (it seems so long ago) for health care workers and others on the frontlines of the COVID-calamity, many of the folks who have built our health care system together feel abandoned and used up.

On the climate crisis front, many workers and their advocates highlighted the need to reframe the fight for a green and fire—in the words of one worker—from the ground up. As Estaban Wood from We Rise put it “a green and fire—harvest the food for our families, for the fight to end the crisis the West faces a ground-up energy transition. There’s no need to have the same old twin track of fossil fuel and gas. We can do it differently.

Joining the COSH gathering can be an antidote to the isolation that accompanies workplace risk and the vulnerability of speaking out on behalf of other workers. As one man said after having been actively involved in discussions with allies, “we don’t feel alone.”

Linking experience, legal strategies, science and movement building COSH is a network of unions, public health providers, health researchers, legal rights advocates and members of movements for justice around race, class, gender, climate, COVID and economic rights.

Sponsors and participants in the conference included major unions along with groups like the Coalition of Black Trade Unions, the National Day Laborers Organizing Network and the Mississippi Workers Center for Human Rights. Environmental activists such as Public Citizen and the Union of Concerned Scientists are also strategic partners.

These groups are increasingly joined by emergent worker centers. These are labor/community organizations that support workers who are not yet in a union, and whose organizing efforts as a whole strengthen the mainstream labor movement.

Protecting workers has never been just about building legislation and administrative structures. It’s about working in real-time, with clear and present dangers that require creative, bold measures. It’s about connecting with scientists and health care providers who are democratic and in their collaboration with workers. Discussions about building safety and health committees, contract negotiations, getting the attention of local and national media—these are key building blocks for protecting lives. Conference members had a promising online meeting with OSHA officials—some of whom are considered strong friends of labor.

The worker safety and health zone is complicated, with a complex mix of legal and unwritten features to figure out—whether you’re in a state OSH system, or your work is covered by OSHA. Whether or not you’re in a union and even then, depending on your contract, workplace safety is in the cross-hairs to the right.

The core principles of safety and health organizing were listed by Estaban Wood from We Rise and direction of the Mississippi Worker Center for Human Rights.

- stay engaged
- show appreciation of those who suffer the most
- be respectful of workers’ time
- supporters shouldn’t take up the space
- sustain a strong critical stance against corporate power
- make this basic commitment: “We can’t let our systems paralysis us. We must let trauma mobilize us.”

Campaigns and goals at the national and local level At COSHCON 2021, heat/climate was a major thread. We might be in the chill-blast of winter now, but we remember the summer’s heat, from fires in British Columbia to evacuated towns in Arizona. At the center of it in terms of risk: outdoor workers, from firefighters to farmworkers. A “Heat 101” workshop examined people’s experience with heat-stress (feeling “head-bumped,” “bear-caught,” experiencing fainting, heat rashes, cramps, and full-scale heat stroke). Exposed workers urgently need information on how to look out for how to care for each other and how to organize for protection—water, shade, rest, sick leave and diagnostic monitoring. Mapping protections across state lines can feel like a crazy-quilt of solutions, proposed regulations or no regulations.

Another workshop, “Heat: Policy & Worker Campaigns” explored what is already on behalf of high-risk workers. Although OSHA was launched in 1970, there is to this day no “heat rule.” The movement for nationally enforced and effective protections resulted in a proposal by Public Citizen for a bind-

If you are facing an immediate danger at work CALL 1-800-321-OSHA

A call for persistent action and the need to act: A year from now there will be another COSHCON—to help lead the way. But way before that, our role is to hold our leaders accountable for resources that can be activated and deployed now.

Go to the COSH network to learn more about what’s going on, to build bridges between labor and related movements for environmental justice.

We don’t have a lot of time.

Lin Nelson is a retired Evergreen teacher and part of the COSH Advancers network, in support of workplace health education and organizing.

Sise pueblo

A worker health activist from Central California talked about what’s it’s like to support farmworkers who are the life-force of the food economy. They’re facing a heat/calamity, but they face reprimand or firing if they speak up about uncomfortable work conditions. High heat in the West created worker sacrifice-zones, as they farmworkers return to the fields again and again to pull in the harvest. In many of California’s agricultural areas, close to 80% of the workers speak Mixtec, with Spanish their second language. “Language justice” has become central to health justice as workers grapple with urgent but inaccessible health alerts about temperature, air quality, signs of heat stress and fire risk.

Farmworkers are on the front lines of risk, especially if they are undocumented.

Resources

National movement-

https://www.nationalcosh.org/ (resources, right-to-know, films, organizations)

https://www.citizen.org/news/10a-plus-worker-safety-and-health-groups-activists-unions-call-on-bisdes-administra-

https://nationalcosh.salsalabs.org/2022nhsa_heat_standard_comments/index.html

Regional worker support:
connections and actions

https://www.nwprca.org/ region/nc/503/Western-States-

https://olywip.org/in-an-over-

Letters to the editor in sup-

Showing up for regional events and legislative battles

Solidarity actions, guided by labor/farmworker groups
A commercial fire in Olympia on December 15 took three hours to extinguish. A small two-story building that housed several unique small businesses and an apartment had water damage in addition to structural damage. No one was injured, but everyone must find a new place to live and work, and then try to replace the treasures and essentials that were destroyed.

A gofundme page for each entity was live in December, but now it’s best to use the business name for updates and to find out how to help. As you can deduce from the brief self-descriptions below, you’ll be introduced to some out-of-the-ordinary “businesses” (and one resident). These are the kinds of places that give Olympia its distinct character and we need them downtown now more than ever.

Devon Woollett
Devon is a third generation Olympia resident who has been employed at Espresso Parts LLC for 21 years. He lived in the building in an apartment with his two children.

Revival Motors & Coffee
A unique venture consisting of a working motorcycle garage & coffee bar serving espresso and road snacks made in the PNW.

The Ton
Is a Pacific Northwest motorcycle and lifestyle magazine created by motorcycle, tattoo, and rock and roll enthusiasts huddled in the rainiest drenched stretch- es of highways in the world.

Window Seat Media
This extraordinary nonprofit uses story-telling as a catalyst for connection, conversation and social change. They teach storytelling and oral history workshops among many other community engagement projects.

Sa Voix Salon
Sa Voix is an inclusive salon space where beautiful hair is considered a form of self expression and empowerment.

A commercial fire in Olympia on December 15 took three hours to extinguish. A small two-story building that housed several unique small businesses and an apartment had water damage in addition to structural damage. No one was injured, but everyone must find a new place to live and work, and then try to replace the treasures and essentials that were destroyed.

Devon Woollett
Devon is a third generation Olympia resident who has been employed at Espresso Parts LLC for 21 years. He lived in the building in an apartment with his two children.

Revival Motors & Coffee
A unique venture consisting of a working motorcycle garage & coffee bar serving espresso and road snacks made in the PNW.

The Ton
Is a Pacific Northwest motorcycle and lifestyle magazine created by motorcycle, tattoo, and rock and roll enthusiasts huddled in the rainiest drenched stretches of highways in the world.

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Tree Action Group of Thurston Climate Action Team

5 pm, January 12
The Tree Action Group works to strengthen local ordinances to protect trees, promoting and participating in the planting of more trees as a carbon sink, and educating the public why trees are part of the climate solution. For more information contact Lynn Fitz-Hugh at lynn@thurstonclimateaction.org.

Plant a chestnut tree—or two!

Pick up dates: Jan 15, Feb 13, May 19 Apr 10
Receive free chestnut trees to plant in your yard, farm, school etc. Chestnut trees provide healthy local food, biodiveristy, clean water, carbon sequestration and shade in a climate-changed world. 9-month old bare root seedlings will grow 40-80 feet tall at maturity! Chestnuts receive free chestnut trees to plant in your yard, farm, school etc. Chestnut trees provide healthy local food, biodiveristy, clean water, carbon sequestration and shade in a climate-changed world. 9-month old bare root seedlings will grow 40-80 feet tall at maturity! Chestnuts

Second Saturday, March 5
Free chestnut trees to plant in your yard, farm, school etc. Chestnut trees provide healthy local food, biodiversity, clean water, carbon sequestration and shade in a climate-changed world. 9-month old bare root seedlings will grow 40-80 feet tall at maturity! Chestnuts will grow 40-80 feet tall at maturity! Chestnuts

With OlyEcosystems

MLK Day, January 17
OlyEcosystems is a coalition working to turn West Bay Woods into urban wilderness that will support native species into the future. There’s a major planting event scheduled for MLK Day Jan. 17 with opportunities to contribute to this transformation. Volunteers spent a day in December seeding invasive plants to prepare the site for the January planting event. To find out more about this socially-distanced outdoor day in our community forest go to www.facebook.com/OlyEcosystems, or email Daniel at daniel@olycosystems.org.

Affordable and effective acupuncture

Every Tuesday from 2-7 pm, Saturdays 2-6
Olympia Community Acupuncture is a non-profit clinic offering group acupuncture, currently inside Unity of Olympia (1335 Fern St SW). Community acupuncture differs from standard acupuncture because patients are treated together in a large quiet room—a setting that makes treatment more accessible and affordable, and mirrors how traditional acupuncture is practiced. Treatments are individualized to address particular health concerns. Pay on a sliding scale from $20-50. Appointments at 360-352-3952 or book.com/OlyEcocare/ or email Daniel at daniel@olycosystems.org.

Community Spotlight Special Edition

January 2022

www.olywip.org
"For me, forgiveness and compassion are always linked: how do we hold people accountable for wrongdoing and yet at the same time remain in touch with their humanity enough to believe in their capacity to be transformed?"

- bell hooks, 1952-2021