February 26 is Senior Lobby Day
By Chuck Richards

The 2015 legislative session begins on Monday January 12. And Puget Sound Advocates for Retirement Action (PSARA) members will be going to Olympia on Thursday, February 26, for Senior Lobby Day, to once again urge legislators to consider both increasing revenue and to share with seniors and working families the prosperity slowly returning to the state’s economy.

State government has a looming $2.35 billion budget shortfall. Many health and human services programs face cuts without strong advocate support. The state Supreme Court has ruled the state must increase funding for education and improved mental health treatment. Court cases are also challenging prison conditions. Now is Continued on Page 11

Forum on Expanding Social Security February 23

Nancy Altman will be one of the featured speakers in a forum on Monday, February 23 in Seattle entitled “Social Security - Why It’s Not Broke and How We Can Expand It.” Joining Ms. Altman on the program will be Seattle City Council member Kshama Sawant and Washington State Labor Council President, Jeff Johnson.


What Dr. King Would Say
By King County Council Member Larry Gossett

Thursday, January 15, 2015, marks the 86th birthday of the Reverend Doctor Martin Luther King, Jr. And as some PSARA members know, 86 is the new 76, or even the new 70, if one is lucky enough to reach the awesome age of 86 in relatively good health. This is why I confidently predict that were Dr. King alive today, he would be speaking eloquently against the unjustifiably high numbers of poor Black males being killed or seriously injured by white police officers, often under suspicious circumstances, in urban communities all across our country. Dr. King would be witnessing the outrage and protest taking place across the nation. He would note that people of all races are marching and participating in huge rallies around the modern day movement mantras of “no justice, no peace!” and “black lives matter!”

The three most visible cases highlighted by protesters, as being “tragically unjust,” are the senseless killings of Eric Garner in Brooklyn, N. Y., Michael Brown in Ferguson, Missouri, and 12 year old Tamir Rice in Cleveland, Ohio. But there are many more!

Dr. King would hear the same complaints he heard from many whites while leading civil rights protests in the South. They cautioned protesters to “be patient,” “stop rioting,” and “obey the law” or to “get a job.” And like he did back in the 1960’s, he would be brutally honest in his response to them. He would talk to them about how difficult it is to acknowledge truths about the sordid history of race relations in this Continued on Page 10
At the December membership meeting, some new officers and Executive Board members were elected.

The newly created Membership Vice President is Susan Levy. Previously Outreach Vice President, Susan is a retired professor of economics and labor relations at Shoreline Community College, as well as the former President of American Federation of Teachers WA (AFT WA). She also serves as Vice President of the Retiree Chapter of AFT WA and as their representative to the Social Security Works WA Coalition. Vivian Lee and Mildred Ollee will serve as Outreach Co-Vice Presidents.

**Vivian Lee** is a retired senior manager for women’s health programs in Federal Region X of the US Public Health Service. She now volunteers at the UW promoting diversity and scholarship fundraising. She is active in the Mary Mahoney Professional Nurses Organization for health screening in underserved populations. She is active in social justice organizations and in organizations that address issues of racial disparities.

**Mildred Ollee** retired as the President of Seattle Central Community College after having spent over 35 years in community college education. By working with individuals and organizations like PSARA, Mildred looks forward to furthering her goal of making our community and the world a better place.

In addition, there are two new members of PSARA’s Executive Board.

**Bobby Righi** is a retired community college mathematics teacher. She has been active in social movements since returning from the Peace Corps in 1967 and jumping into anti-Vietnam War demonstrations and support for Black Liberation struggles. She is a member of the AFT and serves on the PSARA Environmental Committee.

**Jackie Boschok** retired after 20 years with Boeing. Jackie served 10 years with the Machinists Union as a Business Representative/Organizer and then as Health & Benefits staff. She is the President of IAM 751 Retirement Club and Treasurer of the WA State Alliance for Retired Americans.

These four smart, creative women will strengthen PSARA. They will help guide our efforts to build a movement to fight for retirement security and to do our part in the struggle for economic and social justice and environmental sustainability.
Changes in the USA, Changes in PSARA

By Robby Stern

On Saturday, December 6, I attended a march that was primarily organized through social media and was led by students from the University of Washington and the Black Student Union at Garfield High School. The theme was “Black Lives Matter.” Speeches stressed that significant steps must be taken to address the treatment of African Americans in our communities by the police. Also highlighted was the growing economic inequality in our country that has hit hardest in the African American community and is being keenly felt by people of color throughout our country.

It was a sad irony that an article had appeared in the Seattle Times that morning about a 23-year-old African American woman who had been intoxicated and involved in some kind of domestic skirmish. A Seattle police officer had arrested and handcuffed her, and as he was pushing her into his police car, she kicked at him. The officer then proceeded to slug her in the eye, while she was handcuffed, doing significant and possibly long-term damage to the woman. The City Attorney had recommended that felony assault charges be brought against the officer, but the County Prosecutor announced that no charges would be brought.

The killings of, among others, Michael Brown, Eric Garner, and 12-year-old Tamir Rice, are murders that should be prosecuted. At the same time, it was inspiring to witness the young leaders and the huge presence of young people at the rally and march at Garfield. A new crop of smart, talented, and spirited young progressive leaders is emerging, and we can look forward to following their leadership.

While marching, I was talking with Steve Ludwig, a PSARA member and a friend from Seattle SDS in the 1960s. I was remembering with Steve how we had come to understand the Marxist concept of the capitalist need for a “reserve army of labor.” This reserve labor force was needed to fight the imperial wars, to serve as a threat to employed workers who are demanding higher wages and working conditions, and also to be available when the cyclical economic system required more workers.

What has changed since that era is the deindustrialization of our country as a result of trade agreements and the movement of production to low wage and often repressive countries. There is still the need for a “reserve army of labor,” but there are also now whole layers of humanity in our country who are no longer needed by the plutocrats to serve in the traditional role of the “reserve army.” They are essentially turned over to the police forces and private security forces and prisons of our country to control. The prisons are filled with these human beings, often people of color, who are deemed expendable by our vicious, predatory economic system. The killings and the brutality by the police and the mass incarcerations are fundamentally a result of this economic system (which is also poisoning our environment and threatening the very existence of our planet). These plutocrats use racism to divide us.

PSARA will work in solidarity with those who are challenging this inhumane approach to human life.

Changes in PSARA

PSARA has experienced a significant increase in our membership. Additionally, we are occupying a leading role in the fight for retirement security in our region and even nationally, and have also become an important voice in a variety of important progressive issues. We continued to do this work primarily with committed volunteers. However, revenue has not kept up with our growing expenses.

Several decisions were made at our December membership meeting that our members who were not present should know about.

1. We added a new Vice President position. We now have an Administrative Vice President (Maureen Bo), a Membership Vice President (Susan Levy) (the new position), and an Outreach Vice President position that will be shared by Vivian Lee and Mildred Ollee. The decision to add a Membership Vice President was made to lighten the work load on the officers.

2. Members attending the December meeting voted unanimously to increase the annual dues. The change takes effect in January, 2015, and will impact individual members when the dues most of you pay annually expire. The new dues structure is:
   - Annual dues - $20
   - Living lightly - $15 (or whatever you can afford)
   - Supporting - $50
   - Sponsoring - $100 (or more)

3. We are in the process of creating a 501c3, the PSARA Education Fund, which will be responsible for paying the costs of producing The Retiree Advocate. If you itemize your deductions and wish to take an IRS deduction for your dues or contributions for the Retiree Advocate, you can write your checks to the PSARA Education Fund beginning January, 2015.

The officers and executive board of PSARA are deeply appreciative of the support and volunteer efforts of many of our members. Together we are working to make our world a little better place for ourselves, our children, our grandchildren, and the generations to follow. We are engaged in a worthy task.

I wish all of you a healthy and fulfilling 2015!!
Recognizing Health Care as a Human Right
By Tatsuko Go Hollo

Washington State has long been a leader in health care innovation -- from the success of Cover All Kids, which has enabled every low-income child, including undocumented children, to have access to health coverage, to the most recent effort to establish a health benefits exchange. That forward-thinking leadership has paid off in some ways: the number of uninsured in Washington has declined by 370,000 individuals since the Affordable Care Act was fully implemented one year ago this January.

We still have some distance to travel, though. One in 10 Washingtonians remain uninsured, and many more aren't getting adequate care. With so many families still facing exorbitant out-of-pocket expenses, finding affordable coverage and care is still a big concern. But it goes beyond that: the failure to recognize health care as a human right is, quite literally, a matter of life and death. Nationally, 45,000 Americans die each year from lack of care.

These problems have been ingrained in our nation's healthcare policies for many decades -- and people have been organizing and fighting for universal coverage for just as long. Here in Washington, a group of dedicated advocates recently formed to launch the Health Care is a Human Right Washington campaign. Endorsing organizations include single-payer advocates, labor unions, and community groups including PSARA, all of whom have agreed to 12 principles that guide our efforts, to include universal access, affordability, equity, quality, and transparency.

The campaign's first order of business in the 2015 legislative session will be to advance legislation that establishes the intent to cover all Washingtonians. The bill recognizes the gaps in our current system and the resulting burdens faced by state residents, but notably, it also calls for universal coverage in our state by the year 2020. There are no funding requirements or policy directives included in the legislation, as we plan to develop the best solutions with policymakers and stakeholders in the coming months. Senator Frockt has agreed to champion this effort in the Senate, along with Representative Robinson as prime sponsor in the House. Both are enthusiastic about the bill and are committed to achieving universal coverage in Washington.

Despite much progress, our society remains rife with inequity. People are denied their human rights every day in our communities and workplaces. It is only by standing together in recognition of the tremendous injustices that disproportionately burden those in the margins, that we can bring those injustices out of the shadows of our awareness.

While we are encouraged by the support of many organizations and community members, this campaign will not be successful without tremendous will of the people from every corner of the state. We are counting on the enthusiasm and vigor of community and grassroots activists (like PSARA members!) to ensure health care is fully realized as a human right and universal coverage is ensured for all Washingtonians.

For more information about the Health Care is a Human Right Campaign, including a list of our principles, campaign materials, and legislative updates, please visit: www.healthcareisarightWA.org.

Tatsuko Go Hollo is a Senior Policy Associate at the Economic Opportunity Institute, chairs the Policy Committee of the Health Care is a Human Right Coalition-WA, and is a PSARA member.

PSARA members enjoyed good politics and good food at our December Winter Membership Meeting. At left, Washington State Labor Council President Jeff Johnson addresses the meeting. At right, PSARA members help themselves to a delicious potluck buffet.

(Photos: Garet Munger)
Let's Catch a Breath, Then Keep Moving
By Bob Shimabukuro, Retiree Advocate Associate Editor and a member of PSARA's Executive Board

I can't breathe #1: Getting personal with asthma.
1950-51: We drove up to a small hospital emergency entrance just outside Manoa Valley. I had a hard time breathing. Dad ran into the emergency ward. He came back to the car in a little while. I heard him mention "Childrens Hospital." He talked with Mom a bit, and we drove to another hospital.

Someone carried me into the emergency room, placed me on a wheeled bed, took me to a room and laid me on a bed under a tent. I remember two words were spoken: "asthma," "oxygen." For the first time in I don't know how many hours, I didn't have to struggle to breathe. Didn't even have to breathe, it seemed. Thought this must be heaven. I was five at the time.

I can't breathe #2: Social cost of asthma.
2014: The South Bronx, to cite just one example, has notoriously high asthma rates—and according to one study, a staggering 21.8 percent of children living in New York City public housing have asthma, three times higher than the rate for private housing. The choking of those children is not as immediately lethal as the kind of choking that stole Eric Garner's life, but it is very real nonetheless. ---Naomi Klein, The Nation, "Why #Black Lives Matter Should Transform the Climate Debate."

I can't breathe #3: Choking off the spirit.
1950-51 Manoa Valley near the the Chinese cemetery: I was upset and crying. Mom carried me outside into our yard, humming a tune as she gently rocked me. I learned quickly that the more I cried, the harder it was to breathe. I stopped crying. I have rarely cried since. In fact, I learned that any extreme motion or emotion makes it more difficult to breathe. Laughing, talking, singing, exercising, or getting angry, elated, and excited made it more difficult to breathe.

All that was left about being human to me, was thinking, listening, and daydreaming. And avoidance of extremes that could alter my breathing.

I can't breathe #4: Those who can, teach. Those who can't teach, make laws about teaching.
When we cut off one's access to air, water, or food, we kill. When we choke off emotion, thoughts, ideas and dreams, we also kill. The spirit, that is. A spiritual death occurs. In elementary school, I taught, I learned, I skipped school because of asthma.

I can't breathe #5: 1951, Miss Alapa'i's first grade class: "Bob, go outside with K, A, and C. Go show 'em how fo' read. Help them out, okay?"
1952, Miss Miyasaki's second grade class, after I spent weeks at home, yet whizzed the Weekly Reader test which had placed me at 9th grade level reading comprehension: "Bob, can you help C, P, E and S.? Tutor them in their reading, okay?"

In a letter to my oldest brother Tom, Dad wrote, "As for Bob, his teacher always say, he so smart, he teach himself." That made me think I was really smart and started telling people what to do. Until one day, after school, I got a wake-up call. A classmate came up to me and said, "You think you're smart? Well, think about this!" And he punched me in the gut. Hard. I went down; I couldn't breathe. He laughed and walked away. I concluded, "People don't like being told what to do. That's just not a good way to teach."

I can't breathe #6: 1950-51. Education is a lifelong proposition.
Dad: "Schools are for learning all kind stuff. But folks learn at home, outside, at friends house, at relatives house. All over get good teachers & bad teachers. Bad teachers no tell the truth, some don't even know the truth. They no tell you about Opium War, Spice War, Banana War, Indian wars, slavery, unions, bosses, plantations."

I can't breathe #7: Even after retire, can make things bettah.

I can't breathe #8: Raise the level of consciousness.
Zenwa Uncle: Everybody learn dis 'n dat all the time, from baby time to die time.

Dad: When (you) stop learning, (you) die. Brain is for learning (how to continue the species). When no can think any more, die (physically).

But all we learn is passed on. That's why important to have young folks, old folks together. Old folks at least know what doesn't work.

I can't breathe #9: The answer, my friend, is not blowing in the wind.

The 1960s: What was really blowing in the wind was just another punch in the gut that slowly sucked all the air out of us. We are in a worse position in social, economic, and racial equality. We need to pick ourselves up and get ready to fight.

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Seattle Housing Authority Walks Back its “Stepping Forward” Plan
By Mike Andrew

The Seattle Housing Authority (SHA) has suspended its so-called “Stepping Forward” plan. The proposal would have increased rents for thousands of low-income residents of buildings managed by the SHA.

In a December 15 statement, SHA said there would be no rent increases in 2015, and that it might abandon the plan altogether.

“We have decided to put consideration of the Stepping Forward proposal on hold,” SHA Executive Director Andrew Lofton wrote in a letter to Seattle Mayor Ed Murray.

“In early 2015 we will work with our board of commissioners to establish a process and time frame for a new policy recommendation. We are unlikely to put forth a rent policy proposal before 2016.”

According to SHA, 24,000 low-income families have applied for 2,000 available rent vouchers, and some 9,000 households are on its waiting list for public housing.

Rather than increasing the number of units available for low-income households, the ill-named “Stepping Forward” proposal was designed to deal with increased demand for low-income housing by introducing market considerations into SHA’s rent structure.

Under the plan, rents would have been based on size of the apartment rather than household income. Rents would also have increased every year to reflect rising rents in market-rate units.

Like many neo-liberal public officials, SHA Executive Director Lofton blamed low-income families for their inability to pay market rates for housing. The Stepping Forward plan was meant to “push tenants to become self-sufficient,” he claimed.

Predictably, the proposal met a firestorm of protest. Many SHA tenants, advocates for low-income housing, and elected officials came out against the plan, predicting that some households would be unable to keep up with the rent increases and would wind up homeless. It would also have a disproportionate impact on immigrants, refugees, families of color, and female heads of household, they said.

Tenants demonstrated against Stepping Forward at a number of SHA meetings, at a City Council hearing, and in the Mayor’s office in City Hall. Mayor Murray announced his opposition to the plan, and appointed two new SHA commissioners who promised to vote against it.

Housing advocate and PSARA Executive Board member Sarajane Siegfriedt noted that PSARA members participated in the fight to save low-income housing units.

“All PSARA shares in the reflected light of this victory of justice for Seattle Housing Authority’s tenants, whom we and City Hall supported,” she said. “The Tenants Union affirmed the principle that low-income people should pay no more than 30% of their income in rent.”

Seattle City Council member Kshama Sawant, who worked to scrap the SHA plan, said that organizing by tenants and activists was responsible for beating back the proposal.

“[W]e should recognize the important work we have done and remain vigilant and prepared to defeat Stepping Forward once and for all,” Sawant said. “We can start by keeping the pressure on City officials to only confirm SHA Board members who are committed to keeping tenant rents at no higher than 30% of income.

“We also need to use the momentum from this victory to build an even stronger affordable housing movement to win rent control and a massive expansion of quality publicly-owned affordable housing, in order to address some of the root causes of the affordable housing crisis in Seattle,” Sawant added.

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PSARA Member Sally Kinney Honored for Homeless Remembrance Project
By Susan Levy

Seattle Parks and Recreation Department presented their 2014 Denny Awards this month. The award for Community Stewardship went to the Homeless Remembrance Project Committee. PSARA member Sally Kinney was one of the members of the Committee that received the award.

This committee has worked to create places of hope, healing, and beauty in memory and honor of homeless people. For 10 years, the Homeless Remembrance Project—a collaborative effort of homeless women, faith community leaders, designers, artists, social service providers, and other friends—has worked to create places of hope, healing, and beauty, to honor and remember homeless people who’ve died in King County.

The concept is twofold: The Tree of Life, in Victor Steinbrueck Park, is a sculpture with space for community gathering, hope, and healing; recognizing that we are one people, homeless and housed together, and we can end homelessness. Leaves of Remembrance on Seattle sidewalks bear the names of those who have died, and at the website Fallen Leaves we share their stories.
2015 PSARA
Senior Lobby Day

8th Annual PSARA
Senior Lobby Day
In Olympia
Thursday, Feb. 26th

Join others from your Legislative District to visit your legislators.
RSVP now to join PSARA on Senior Lobby Day.

PSARA carpools leaving Seattle at 7:30 a.m.!
For RSVPs and carpool information contact
govrelations@psara.org
or call PSARA at (206) 448-9646

Morning Updates: 9 to 11:30 a.m.
Box Lunch provided: 12 noon
Visits with legislators to discuss our main issues:

- Elimination of tax exemptions with no public benefit
- Allocation of new resources for low-income housing
- Supporting steps to expand health care coverage
- Establishing a state minimum wage
- Investment in public transportation creating Green Jobs
- Studies of costs for a long-term care program for Washington residents & costs for creating a state-based supplemental Social Security program.
The Fight for Equal Pay

By Marilyn Watkins

Back in 1943, when women flocked into the workforce to help win World War II, Washington State banned paying women less than men for similar work. Now 70 years later, women’s pay still trails behind men’s. Women make up almost half of our workforce and earn the majority of college degrees. Yet, the typical Washington woman who worked full-time, year-round in 2013 took home only 80 cents for every $1.00 made by a man.

On average, Washington women working full-time in 2013 were paid $18,000 less than men. Women of color face especially large wage disparities. Nationally, to reach the median income a white man brings home in one year, white women must work until mid-March of the following year, Black women to late June, and Latinas to October.

Those pay gaps leave big holes in family budgets and make it harder for local businesses to prosper. A lifetime of lower wages also mean women get lower Social Security benefits and have less in retirement savings.

Job segregation and the lower value society assigns to “women’s work” explain a big part of the wage gap. Men hold 8 in 10 jobs in highly paid computer-related fields and in engineering, and 3 in 4 jobs in aerospace manufacturing. Women predominate as health technicians, office administrators, and personal care services. In groceries, men dominate as meat cutters and make higher wages than deli workers, who are mostly women.

Unequal pay persists at all education levels and across occupations. Up to 40% of the gap cannot be explained by differences in occupation, industry, union membership, education or experience. It can only be explained by discrimination.

Studies have shown that women are offered lower compensation than men when first hired, even with the same education and experience, and they receive smaller and less frequent promotions. There’s also a “motherhood” penalty. Employers are less likely to hire women with children than either childless women or fathers. And mothers tend to make lower wages than women without children, even when they work as many hours.

Both federal and state laws ban gender- or race-based discrimination in employment. But courts have allowed employers wide latitude in justifying paying women less than men. In fact, employers can get off by claiming there was no reason they paid a man more, just that they did not intend to discriminate.

Many women also never find out they are being paid less. In a recent national study, one third of private firms admitted to actively discouraging or prohibiting employees from discussing pay with other employees, with some even firing workers for talking about wages.

Greater transparency in the workplace will open new career opportunities for more women, and begin to challenge society’s general undervaluing of women’s work.

In 2015, the Washington Equal Pay Opportunity Act will be introduced in the Washington State legislative session. It will

• Protect the rights of all workers to discuss compensation and prohibit retaliation against employees who do so. This will enable workers to find out if others in the company are being paid more for the same work.
• Protect the right of workers to ask why they are being paid less, or why they do not have the same access to job or career opportunities as others.
• Authorize the Department of Labor and Industries to investigate charges of gender discrimination, so that workers aren’t forced to go to court unless they want to, and require employers to provide job-related reasons, such as education, skills, or experience, for differences.

No single policy will assure women fair wages, but the Equal Pay Opportunity Act together with Paid Sick and Safe Leave, and Family and Medical Leave Insurance will boost family budgets and women’s incomes, while working and in retirement.

You can help the Work & Family Coalition pass the Equal Pay Opportunity Act. If you were/are paid less than your male counterparts during your worklife share your story with Gabriella at eoonline.org.

Marilyn Watkins is Policy Director at the Economic Opportunity Institute and a Member of PSARA.
I can’t breath #10: Education is the answer.

That’s what Dad (Zenshu) and Zennwa Uncle used to say. It wasn’t until I read Grace Lee Boggs that I realized that they were also referring to more personal and personalized education directed to the student. Start with what the child knows and wants to know and go from there. Make learning enjoyable. Work together with other children and adults. Other people.

Junior High time:
“Bob, can borrow your notes?”
“No, never take notes. Was sick. Had the book. Read the book.”
“Oh, man! Next time take notes when you read ‘em. Den I can look at ‘em, too.”

I can’t breathe #11. What would Arne Duncan say?

What would Arne & Bill Gates say? Or Common Core? Or Race to the Top? They don’t know the truly important things about teaching, about learning and education. They haven’t a clue of what happens to a child who is eager to learn, only to find that he/she is punished for what he doesn’t know, rather than credited for what he knows about surviving a very challenging environment. Yet, they still are calling the shots for education. They are trying to replicate the extreme damage they have already done to the world and to the people who inhabit that world, and extend it to our last hope, our children and grandchildren.

For Eric Garner, may you rest in peace.

For the rest of us choking, literally and spiritually, we know that we cannot rest in peace. We must remain cool, calm, and collected, and act only when we are strong, all of us, together. We know we must make allies. While we accept the fact that some of us will not see the “new world,” we also know that collectively we will overcome. Let’s catch a breath, then keep moving.

Let’s Catch a Breath
Continued from Page 5

PSARA Takes on Walmart
Photos by Garet Munger

PSARA joins in protesting the firing of Jared Surdam, a Walmart worker who had been pointing out the unsafe conditions at the Lynnwood Walmart store. He was fired the day before he was going to join with other Walmart workers around the country in a one-day strike. The NLRB recently ruled that workers like Jared cannot be fired for speaking out and going on strike. Jared was fired because of "attendance" and they used the day he went on strike in June as part of that claim.

At left, PSARA Executive Board member Kristen Beifus and OurWalmart lead organizer Russ Edgerton, point at a sign reading "No Illegal Dumping" -- something Walmart continues to do to their workers.

At right, PSARA Executive Board member Steve Kofahl, PSARA member Diane Zahn, and her grandson, Walter (future PSARA member?) proudly display the PSARA banner.
country. America, he would say, began in “black plunder and white democracy”. The men and women who founded the United States dedicated its beginning to a commitment to “freedom, equality and the pursuit of happiness” for whites only. Most of the founding fathers either owned African slaves or joined hands with those who did.

He would say, “This is the crux of the problem we are still wrestling with nearly 400 years after the first African slaves were brought over to colonial America. Blacks had their bodies plundered, their families plundered and their labor plundered. Meanwhile, Europeans coming to America experienced a fuller expression of freedom and democracy in the new world than they had ever dreamed was possible in Europe.” He then would elaborate, by explaining, “This feature of life in North America was seen by the majority of whites not as a contradictory phenomenon, but as a complementary one.”

Dr. King would try to help Americans understand that the inability of whites to see Blacks as equal human beings has become an intrinsic part of America’s “unlovely history.” He would remind us that the brutal history of economic exploitation and racism is still alive and well in places like Ferguson, Missouri. Dr. King’s analysis would be clear, focused and direct. He might say something like:

“I hear many commentators on CNN and MSNBC and white counter-demonstrators telling black protesters in Ferguson to be patient, go slow, stop rioting, get a job—but they are saying nothing about Michael Brown being an unarmed black teenager, with his hands up in the universal symbol of surrender when the white policeman repeatedly shot him. They have said little about the fact that the population of Ferguson is 65 percent black, but the police department only has seen it fit to hire three black police officers (out of a total of 53 officers). I am also concerned that as we celebrate the fiftieth anniversary of the passage of the Voting Rights Bill, that there are seven city council members in Ferguson and not one of them is African American. I say to you, my friends, we are hearing some unmistakable cries for social change and reform in Ferguson today!”

Martin Luther King, Jr. would not conclude his time with us without recognizing that progress has been made, and that we must continue to believe that “we are all capable of helping America live out its true meaning and destiny.” He would point out that the implementation of the Civil Rights and Voting Rights measures have enabled millions of African Americans to move into the middle class; segregation and other Jim Crow laws have, for the most part, died a righteous death.

Finally, if he were in Seattle to celebrate his birthday with us, he would be quite taken aback to find that in this extremely beautiful and wealthy county that bears his name, Black people in Seattle have seen their average annual household incomes drop in just two years from $34,000 in 2012, to a shocking $25,700 in 2014. This startling decline in wages, Dr. King would be told, means Black families in Seattle are now the ninth poorest in the country. For comparison, he’d be informed that the annual household income for white families in Seattle has reached $72,000.

He’d conclude his discussion with us by saying, “we got a lot of work to do.”

My hope is this tribute to Dr. King will refresh people’s memory about why we so love this great American, what his legacy means, and how it continues to inspire us today!

Larry Gossett is a Metropolitan King County Council Member and a PSARA member.

Hands Up, Don’t Shoot! PSARA joins other community members to rally at Garfield High School and then march through Seattle to demand justice for Mike Brown, Eric Garner, and other victims of police violence. (Photos: Garet Munger)
The Seattle forum is part of a campaign to expand the growing chorus of voices in Congress and elsewhere calling for the expansion of our Social Security system. We know that Social Security is not “going broke” and also does not add a penny to the national debt. We are fighting against the three-decade-long, billionaire-funded campaign to make us believe that Social Security is destined to collapse.

With the decline in defined benefit pensions and the total inadequacy of 401(k)s, there is a looming retirement crisis that will affect more than two-thirds of today’s workers. Social Security is a powerful program that can help stop the collapse of the middle class, lessen the pressure squeezing families from all directions, and help end the upward redistribution of wealth that has resulted in perilous levels of inequality.

All Americans deserve to have dignified retirement years as well as an umbrella to protect them and their families in the event of disability or premature death. At stake are our values and the kind of country we want for ourselves and for those that follow. From the Silent Generation to Baby Boomers, from Generation X to Millennials and Generation Z, all of us have a stake in understanding the real story about Social Security.

Nancy Altman is the Chair of the Board of Directors of the Pension Rights Center, a nonprofit organization dedicated to the protection of beneficiary rights. She is also on the Board of Directors of the National Academy of Social Insurance, a membership organization of over 800 of the nation’s leading experts on social insurance.

From 1983 to 1989, Ms. Altman was on the faculty of Harvard University’s Kennedy School of Government and taught courses on private pensions and Social Security at the Harvard Law School. In 1982, she was Alan Greenspan’s assistant in his position as chairman of the bipartisan commission that developed the 1983 Social Security amendments.

Please plan to attend this exciting forum on Monday, Feb. 23, from 7:00-8:30 p.m. at Joe Crump Hall, UFCW 21, 5030 First Avenue S., Seattle.
Meetings and Events

**PSARA Government Relations Committee:** 1 p.m. – 2:30 p.m., Wednesday, January 7, Seattle Labor Temple, Room 234, 2800 First Ave., Seattle. All members welcome as we make further plans for Senior Lobby Day.

**Green Lake Discussion Group:** Noon to 1:30 p.m., Thursday, January 8, Green Lake Library, 7354 East Green Lake Drive N., Seattle. Brown bag lunch. There will be a discussion about climate change, environmental sustainability and jobs led by PSARA Executive Board members Tom Lux and Bobby Righi. All are welcome. For further information contact Susan at membershipvp@psara.org

**PSARA Education Committee:** 12:30 – 2:00 p.m., Monday, January 12, Seattle Labor Temple, Room 234, 2800 First Ave., Seattle. All members welcome as we discuss the development of a new educational program on the fight for retirement security.

**PSARA Environmental Committee:** 1 p.m.- 2:30 p.m., Wednesday, January 14, Seattle Labor Temple, 2800 First Ave., Room 208, Seattle. All members welcome as we discuss the work PSARA will do to add our strength to the struggle to address the causes and solutions to the crisis created by climate change.

**PSARA Diversity Committee:** 11 a.m. – 12:30 p.m., Thursday, January 15, Central Area Senior Center, 500 30 Ave S, Basement Meeting Room, Seattle. Members welcome as the Committee finalizes our planning for the tour of the Northwest African American Museum by PSARA members.

**PSARA Executive Board Meeting:** 12:30 p.m. – 3 p.m., Thursday, January 15, Central Area Senior Center, 500 30th Avenue S., Seattle. All PSARA members are welcome.

**Dr. Martin Luther King Day:** Monday, January 18. We are awaiting word on the schedule for the annual Seattle rally & march. We will rally and march with the PSARA banner. Members will receive emails once we know the details. If we do not have your email address, you can call the office and we will share the details with you. (206) 448-9646

**PSARA Diversity Committee Tour of Northwest African American Museum:** 11:00 a.m. – 1:00 p.m., Thursday, January 29, Northwest African American Museum, 2300 S. Massachusetts St, Seattle. A docent-led tour about the roots of the African American community in the Pacific Northwest. We will go to lunch after the tour at a nearby restaurant. Call the office, 206-448-9646 to be placed on the waiting list.