

The Retiree **ADVOCATE**

The Monthly Publication of
PSARA EDUCATION FUND
“Uniting Generations for a Secure Future”

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December 2015

**Help Defeat the
TPP**
By Robby Stern
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Stand Up for Health Care As a Human Right on December 10

By Dina Burstein

“Of all the forms of inequality, injustice in health care is the most shocking and inhuman.” Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.

According to the United Nations Universal Declaration of Human Rights, health care is a human right. PSARA members are invited to observe International Human Rights Day on December 10 by sending a message to our state legislators in support of legislation generated by the Washington Health Care is a Human Right campaign. The legislation (HB 1321 and SB 5305) calls for the creation of a plan that will provide universal, accessible, affordable, and comprehensive health care for all residents of Washington State.

The Affordable Care Act (ACA) has helped more than half of the uninsured in Washington State gain health insurance, but it does not cover everyone; and many of those who are covered

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PSARA Membership Meeting & Holiday Potluck

By Maureen Bo

Please join us for our great holiday potluck and membership meeting Thursday, December 17, from noon until about 3 p.m. It is a great time to eat good food, get new information on our issues, learn about what has happened this past year and future plans for PSARA, and socialize with other PSARA members and community leaders.

We will have a short but important business meeting, including election of PSARA officers and board, and a discussion on proposed organizational goals. Bobby Righi, who is running for election as PSARA's Administrative VP and also serves on PSARA's Environmental Committee, will be in Paris for the International Climate Change Summit. She will brief us on what happened from the perspective of a grass roots leader.

This is a notice of our yearly election of PSARA officers and Executive Board. Board positions require regular attendance at board meetings on the third Thursday each month, participation on at least one of PSARA's committees, and requests to participate in rallies and events when possible. Our By-laws state that officers and board members “are expected to participate, promote, and facilitate PSARA activities.”

If you are interested in running for a board position or for an officer's position beginning January 2016, please contact our election committee, Mike Warren or Bonny Oborn, by leaving a message on the office phone 206-448-9646 or email adminvp@psara.org

Please RVSP for the membership meeting to Maureen Bo at adminvp@psara.org or 206-448-9646. Tell us what food or beverage you can bring to the potluck, and if you need a ride or can give a ride. Also please consider bringing non-perishable food or drink items or cash for the ML King County Labor Food Bank. See the flyer on Page 7 for the address and more information.

Seniors Deserve a Raise

By State Senator Pramila Jayapal

While Social Security beneficiaries are denied a cost-of-living raise in 2016, CEOs of large corporations are sitting on massive nest eggs.

This December millions of people who rely on Social Security will be receiving letters informing them they will not be receiving a cost-of-living increase in their benefits in 2016. This will be only the third zero percent increase since 1975.

The federal government's formula for calculating inflation relies heavily on oil prices, which have dropped. But

seniors, who use up less gas than typical commuters, are facing skyrocketing costs for some of the things they need most, like pharmaceuticals and rent.

In response Senator Elizabeth Warren (D-Mass) has introduced the Seniors and Veterans Emergency Benefits Act (SAVE Benefits Act), which would give about 70 million seniors, veterans, people with disabilities, and others a one-time payment equal to 3.9

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For up-to-date information about PSARA and issues important to all of us, visit the PSARA website: www.psara.org

Retirement Security Reception November 10



PSARA members met with supporters from organized labor on November 10 at UFCW 21's Georgetown headquarters. Among those participating in the reception and discussion were WSLC President Jeff Johnson, MLKCLC Executive Secretary Nicole Grant, SEIU 775 Vice President Adam Glickman, UFCW 21 Community Affairs Director Steve Williamson, and UNITE HERE 8 staff member Eunice How.

PSARA explained the vital role our intergenerational diverse members play in struggles around retirement security and income inequality. All those in attendance made a joint commitment to support PSARA's transition to the next level of organization. (Photo courtesy of UFCW 21)

PSARA Meets with Senator John McCoy November 10



Diversity Committee Co-Chair Mildred Ollee, PSARA Secretary and Diversity Committee member Frieda Takamura, and Executive Board member Gene Lux talk (and laugh!) with Senator John McCoy after his spellbinding and very informative presentation on November 10. Senator McCoy used the vehicle of telling his own story to explain some of the major challenges confronting the 29 sovereign Native American tribes in Washington. All of the 20 PSARA members attending felt they had been able to engage in a conversation with a truly remarkable man. Thanks to the Diversity Committee and particularly Frieda for inviting Senator McCoy to spend two hours with us. (Photo: Garet Munger)

Let's Help Defeat the TPP

By Robby Stern

The text of the secretly negotiated TPP has finally been released, and it appears to be a very bad agreement for ordinary people. Lori Wallach from Public Citizen's Global Trade Watch indicated that the "final text is worse than we thought."

We have had abundant experiences with the free trade agreements, and each time the proponents declare that this agreement is the best one yet. And each time the statements have proven false. For example, President Bill Clinton asserted, "NAFTA is the first agreement that ever really got...any teeth in what another country had to do with its own workers and its labor standards... There's never been anything like this before." (1993)

Next came CAFTA. US Trade Representative Rob Portman under GW Bush asserted in 2005, "CAFTA has the strongest labor and environmental provisions of any trade agreement ever negotiated by the US. CAFTA is light years ahead of NAFTA."

Susan Schwab, US Trade Representative under GW Bush argued in 2007 that the Peru, Columbia, and Panama trade agreements "have unprecedented protections for labor rights." (Since 2004, 200 trade unionists have been murdered in Columbia.)

In each and every case these claims have proven false, but the proponents are counting on the failure of our historical memory to put another one over on us...and this one is a BIG one, covering approximately 40 percent of global GDP. We hear the same refrain from President Obama, "The TPP includes the highest labor standards of any trade deal in history."

We now know more about these free trade agreements. NAFTA cost the US 700,000 direct jobs and untold indirect jobs. It undermined labor and environmental standards in the U.S., Canada, and Mexico. It contributed to increasing inequality and stagnant wages in all three countries. It increased corporate influence in all three countries, particularly through the dispute resolution procedure that sets up private "corporate courts" used to hold democratically enacted policies for ransom. It undermined job

creating policies like local sourcing. And, it forced migration.

The TPP is NAFTA on steroids.

According to Ms. Wallach, "The TPP would VASTLY expand" the ability of foreign investors to attack U.S. policies and would expand the kinds of cases that can be brought before private panels. E.g. the Investment Chapter of the TPP would allow attacks against financial regulations that investors say undermine their "reasonable expectations," allowing them to sue for "expected profits."

Trade can be a good thing if it is designed to make everyone's lives better and shows respect for civil society. It is possible to have a genuinely progressive trade agreement but not if it is negotiated in secret and multinational corporations are the vast majority of entities allowed to provide significant input.

To quote Senator Elizabeth Warren prior to the release of the TPP, "From what I hear, Wall Street, pharmaceuticals, telecoms big polluters are all salivating at the chance to rig the [TPP and TAFTA] deal in the upcoming trade talks. So the question is why are the trade talks secret? I actually have had supporters of the deals say to me 'They have to be secret. Because if the American people knew what was actually in them, they would be opposed!'"

There are good reasons why the multinational corporations are all lined up in support of the TPP and groups from the affected TPP countries including labor, environmental groups, groups concerned about human trafficking, groups concerned about food safety, small farmer organizations, groups concerned about threats to democracy and democratic processes and more are calling for their government leaders to reject the TPP. Go back to the table to negotiate an agreement that does not further enrich the 1 % while causing more misery for the vast majority of people in the affected nations.

PSARA's Executive Board passed a resolution at the November Executive Board meeting opposing approval of the TPP and will forward it to the December membership meeting for a vote.

It is critical for PSARA members who oppose approval of the TPP to contact



our two U.S. Senators and your Congressional Representative now and tell them to oppose approval. This is a very important fight for all of us.

Veterans Day, 2015

My wife, Dina, my 91 year old father-in-law, Mordy, and I watched a very powerful World War I movie, *Testament of Youth*, around the time of Veteran's day. The horror and sacrifices associated with World War I were vividly brought home by the film. It was deeply affecting.

I remember friends who served in the armed forces during the U.S. invasion of Vietnam (many of whom opposed the war) and also friends who opposed the war and chose to resist the draft, some of whom went to prison or fled to Canada.

Living with my father-in-law, a World War II vet who served in the Pacific, has led me to think a lot more about veterans. Their experiences have been life-altering and all too frequently involved great sacrifices. From listening to my father-in-law talk, I have come to feel a much deeper appreciation of what it has meant in the lives of these young men and women.

I want to take this opportunity to express my thanks to all of you Retiree Advocate readers who served in the armed forces (whether you agreed with U.S. policy or not) and also the women and men who opposed war (a significant number of whom were in the armed forces.) Your life-changing experiences and sacrifices deserve respect and admiration.

PSARA Joins Effort to Tackle Global Warming

By Bob Barnes, PSARA Environmental Committee member and kayaktivist

On October 6 businesses, unions, communities of color, and faith groups stood shoulder to shoulder as the Alliance for Jobs and Clean Energy announced their plan to bring an initiative to the People in 2016. This initiative aims to address the cost of global warming by directing investments towards clean energy transition and reducing the impacts of global warming on the people, industries, and lands hardest hit.

Jeff Johnson, President of the Washington State Labor Council AFL-CIO, helped announce the new initiative. "The labor movement is convinced that the negative impacts of carbon pollution and climate change are hurting our economy, they're hurting our jobs, they're hurting our communities, and they're hurting our health," he said.

OneAmerica also joins PSARA on the Steering Committee of the Alliance. Rich Stolz, OneAmerica's Executive Director said, "It's the first time I've seen such a broad gathering of public health professionals, communities of color, businesses, and labor unions. It speaks to the sense of urgency and the need to do something on climate."

With threats including floods from rising sea levels and wildfires, Washingtonians are already feeling the effects of climate change. "More than others, low-income and minority communities face the brunt of that change," explained Stolz. Reinvestment from the carbon cap will go to communities such as these impacted by climate change.

"It's the strongest statement that we can make as a state about our values with regard to carbon emissions, the environment, and our communities,"



Stolz said. "This is a time when Washington's residents can take their own future into their own hands."

There will be a statewide effort needed to qualify the initiative for the 2016 ballot when the initiative moves forward to the signature gathering stage. PSARA will be one of many organizations who will be involved in this campaign.

For more information visit jobs-clean-energy-wa.com

Clean Energy and the Job Question

By Tom Lux

Let's talk about jobs. If we are serious about transitioning to a clean energy economy, as we should be, we have to talk about jobs. For a global clean energy economy to succeed, it must provide adequate transitional support for workers and communities whose livelihoods currently depend on the fossil-fuel industry.

The late U.S. labor leader Tony Mazzocchi, who used the term "just transition," also talked about a Superfund for workers. In 1993 he wrote, "Paying people to make the transition from one kind of economy – from one kind of job – to another is not welfare. Those who work with toxic materials on a daily basis...in order to provide the world with the energy and the materials it needs deserve a helping hand to make a new start in life."

With the Convention on Climate Change about to convene, the International Labor Organization (ILO) adopted criteria for a Just Transition. The ILO governing body has defined essential steps countries should take to transform their economies to a low-carbon future, creat-

ing new jobs and supporting workers and communities in high-carbon sectors as industries are transformed.

Commenting on the ILO's demands Brian Kohler, IndustriALL Director for Sustainability, added, "IndustriALL is actively promoting the view that the world needs a deal on greenhouse gas emissions but that such a deal must be accompanied by strong provisions to protect workers, their families, and the communities that depend on them."

This is very possible and worth fighting for. In addition, investments in energy efficiency and clean renewables will greatly expand job opportunities at every level of development, according to Robert Pollin, Distinguished Professor of Economics and Co-director of the Political Economy Research Institute at the University of Massachusetts-Amherst. Pollin goes on to state that if the US would increase "investments by around \$200 billion per year to raise energy efficiency standards and expand clean renewable production – about 1.2 percent of current

GDP – U.S. emissions would drop by 40 percent within 20 years while creating a net increase of 2.7 million jobs. This is after taking full account of the jobs that would be lost as oil, coal, and natural-gas production fell by 40 percent."

The fact that clean energy investments will generate a net expansion in employment in all regions of the globe means that there will be new opportunities for displaced fossil-fuel sector workers within the energy industry.

So those of us who are concerned about job creation and putting people back to work need to acknowledge that a clean energy economy provides many more jobs than the fossil-fuel corporations could ever promise. It is time to start demanding that we transition to clean energy not only because the environment needs this transition but also to make sure we, our children and grandchildren have the jobs we all need.

Tom Lux is PSARA's Treasurer and also serves as the Co-chair of PSARA's Environmental Committee.

Okinawan Long Term care

By Bob Shimabukuro, Associate Editor of the Retiree Advocate

"**W**hy do you always work so hard, Tom?" Toki asked.

"Because I want to make sure none of the Shimabukuros will be as poor as we were when we were kids."

Tom NISAN (Oldest Brother)

The scene in Arlington in August after I arrived at Tom Nisan's house: Toki Nesan had given me instructions about how to help the home health care personnel without interfering with their protocols:

Tuesday morning---

"I'm going to the store, Tom. What do you want to eat?"

"I'd like some Ramen."

About an hour later, Zenwa texted me. We had separated in the store because he needed to get some stuff for himself: "Dad, where are you?"

"Oh, I forgot what I was looking for."

"Ramen, Dad."

"Thanks."

Fifteen minutes later, we're back at Tom's home. I prepared the Ramen quickly, but I'm greeted with, "WHERE THE F*** HAVE YOU BEEN? IT'S WAY PAST ONE OCLOCK. TAKES YOU THAT LONG TO MAKE RAMEN?"

"Sorry, Tom. It takes me a lot longer to do things now."

Later, when I checked back with him: "How was the Ramen?"

"Great, but too late."

Wednesday, Thursday, he requested Ramen for breakfast and lunch also. I also added some inarizushi, his all-time favorite food. He ate about six of them, but he was still fixated on Ramen.

Friday:

Caretaker Muni came upstairs and told me that he wants "Roman," "Reeman" or "Rahmen" or something like that for breakfast, that he hasn't eaten yet. He's breathing heavily, as he tries to and walk upstairs to the kitchen. He's become a Ramen junkie.

About midnight, I heard his plaintive, "Bob, Bob, Hello, hello."

I get up and ask, "What do you want?"

"Can you make me a hamburger?"

"Uh,no. (Too much trouble for me.) How about some Ramen?"

"Okay, that sounds good."

And later, "That was the best Ramen I've ever had."

Torn between laughing and crying, I did neither and answered, "Well, thanks for the compliment, and for all that you've done for me," which brought about a smile as he fell asleep.

At least I had a chance to tell him thanks. The next week and a half with Tom was much of the same, but he was already sliding away. I thought he would die before the end of August, but he continued on until October 8.

Toki NESAN (Oldest Sister)

December 1988. My brother Sam handed me the phone, "Toki wants to talk to you." Just as Tom Nisan was expected to take care of the financial and external concerns of the family when Dad died, Toki Nesan was expected to help Mom take care of the younger members of the family; in our case, a family of seven kids, stretching over 14 years. Boss of the internal concerns. A Second Mom, so to speak. So I knew what she's going to ask. It continued throughout our adult lives.

"Why do I feel like he just wants to see me before he (our brother Sam) dies," asked Toki.

"Because that IS the way he feels."

"So, if I wait until Christmas to come, he'll probably live until Christmas."

"No, you should look at it as, he wants to see you before he dies, but if you can't make it, that's okay with him. The question really is, 'how would you feel if you didn't come and he did die before Christmas?'"

Toki cancelled her Christmas reservation, came a week earlier than planned, and Sam died about 20 minutes after talking to Toki Nesan in person.

Auntie NESAN

Some time ago, my friend Lia Shigemura told me this short story: Obaban (grandmother) cried out, "I have 5 daughters and 23 grandchildren. Why am I being put here (a low-income senior facility)?"



Toki (left) and Tom (right), when Toki was a junior and Tom a senior.

Lia's Auntie Nesan replied, "Because I'm 80-years-old and it's time I had a life of my own."

2015

Bob: Did your Auntie Nesan (like Toki Nesan, responsible for the younger kids in the family) have a long life after your Obaban went to the low-income senior facility?

Lia: Obaban died at 100, (born in 1891); Auntie Nesan died at 95 (born in 1911). Auntie Nesan lived for many years after Obaban went to the low-income senior facility -- and had a good life. ...

Auntie Nesan had a tough life...defined by duty (eldest daughter, surrogate mom, then married an eldest son -- chonan; then uncle died leaving her with 3 kids to raise alone; never remarried; entirely focused on others.)

And I need to acknowledge one other Okinawan Nesan, my cousin Irene, who's chief caregiver for her mom, my 102-year-old Fumiko Auntie.

In my perfect, visionary world, there would be universal income, and the NESANs of the world (I'm sure that people like them are in every culture) would be paid a family living wage plus benefits and, most of all, get time off so they get some relief.

Nick Licata Wants You to Change the World

A Review of *Becoming a Citizen Activist*

By Mike Andrew

Nick Licata wants you to change the world, and he's more than willing to show you how.

That's the message of Licata's new book, *Becoming a Citizen Activist*, now available from local publishing house Sasquatch Books.

"You don't have to be a Marvel comic book superhero to change the world," Licata writes in the book's prologue. "You don't even have to be a saint, a revolutionary, a political leader, or a community organizer. You just have to be aware of your surroundings and of the opportunities to improve your life and those of others."

It's a bold premise, and Licata certainly has the experience to back it up. In his 18 years on the Seattle City Council, Licata has fought for and won paid sick and safe days, a \$15 per hour minimum wage, funding to help the city's homeless residents, and citywide arts and literature programs.

In 2012 Licata was named Progressive Municipal Official of the Year by *The Nation* magazine, and he's been honored twice by *The Seattle Weekly* as Best Local Politician.

What Licata offers is essentially a playbook for activists. Using real life examples, many of them familiar to

Seattle readers, Licata explains how to organize your neighbors, fellow students or coworkers, how to use the media, and how to get public officials to do what you want them to do.

Activism doesn't require anything extraordinary, Licata says. In fact, it requires the most common activities.

Listen, he says. Listen especially to people who disagree with you so you can figure out how they're able to convince people. Watch, he says. Watch for local opportunities to address global problems. And talk. Use petitions, forums, social networks, all kinds of venues to talk to people who share the same problems and aspirations.

An interesting subtext is Licata's own evolution from a working-class Catholic boy so devout he was appalled when a college roommate put up Playboy pinups on the wall of their dorm room, to an SDS organizer, to the publisher of an alternative newspaper, to one of our most progressive officeholders.

It's a process anyone could go through, in the course of working for things they and their neighbors need. And that's the point.

While Licata does not delve into political theory, the book rests solidly on Licata's implicit faith in ordinary people.

Nick Licata reads from *Becoming a Citizen Activist*

At PSARA's Greenlake Discussion
Group

Noon on Thursday, January 14
Green Lake Library
7354 East Green Lake Drive N.

It is a profoundly democratic book.

Like other PSARA members, I've been in and around local politics for a long time, and I've watched scores of politicians at community events. Some look like they're doing a grim duty, shaking hands with the multitudes. Only Licata consistently looks like he's having the time of his life.

After reading *Becoming a Citizen Activist* I know why. Licata sees every constituent as a potential agent of social change, a future ally in the ongoing struggle for a better and more humane world.

Becoming a Citizen Activist is only \$16.95 in hardcover and is available at www.sasquatchbooks.com

PSARA VP Maureen Bo Tells Seattle City Council "People's Lives Matter!"



Maureen Bo, PSARA's Administrative VP, spoke for our organization at the Seattle City Council budget committee meeting November 16.

"Thanks to City Council members who show by their votes that they believe: People's Lives Matter!" she said.

"We ask you to pass the budget with all nine of the progressive amendments proposed. They are all important, but especially:

- Millions more are need for funding housing and hygiene centers for the homeless;
- 12-week paid parental leave for city workers;

--Pre-apprentice programs for youth.

"Seattle has been a leader in economic issues, and we can lead on these crucial issues, too. For old people and children, to be homeless is a death sentence on the unforgiving streets, an undeserved death sentence. Please support the amendments."

The committee voted for \$2.3 million in emergency services for the homeless, but against an additional \$10 million for new emergency shelters. They also rejected 12-week parental leave and a proposal for an LGBTQ community center.

(Photo: Garet Munger)



PSARA MEMBERSHIP MEETING; ELECTION AND HOLIDAY PARTY

Thursday, December 17, 2015 – Noon to 3:00 p.m.

***LOCATION: Greenwood Community Senior Center,
525 North 85th Street, Seattle. On bus line #48.***

Noon - Potluck Lunch and Socializing. Please bring a main dish, fruit, salad, dessert, or soft drink to share at the party. ***RSVP needed.*** Please let us know the food item you can bring by leaving a message on the office phone: 206-448-9646 or email adminvp@psara.org

***1:00 p.m. – Business meeting, election of officers, and
discussion of future planning.***

2:30 p.m. – Enjoy food and socializing.

If you cannot drive or take public transit and need a ride or if you can offer a ride to a member, please email Maureen Bo at adminsp@psara.org or leave a message on the office phone 206-448-9646.

Climate Justice is Stopping Deportations

By Jill Mangaliman

Reprinted from the International Examiner

Ending the road to detention, growing an intersectional movement.

When I think about who raised me in the social justice movement, instantly Maru Mora-Villalpando and her daughter Josefina Mora come to mind. Invited into their family and community for the last eight years, I have learned so much from them—on how to organize, how to love myself and others, and how to be brave and fight for the ones you love.

It is that love and bravery that encouraged me to join Maru, Josefina, and 20 others—mostly women, queer, trans, and youth—to chain ourselves together in metal and plastic containers to prevent the morning's deportation buses from leaving the privately run detention center in Tacoma. This action organized by Northwest Detention Resistance Coalition brought us together in order to protest the injustice of for-profit detention centers and their collaboration with local police departments, a system which Maru often refers to as the "Road to detention."

Last year's action on February 24, 2014 inspired a 50-day hunger strike and work stoppage from within, involving 1,200 detainees and bringing local and national attention to the Northwest Detention Center as one of the largest immigration prisons in the country, with a capacity to hold up to 1,575 immigrants. Up to 200 people, mostly women, many of whom are seeking asylum, are transferred from the U.S.-Mexico border to the detention center each month.

To the left of me on the lockbox chain, I got to know Elizabeth Ortega, a queer mixed latinx artist and alternative educator who works with youth. "We are calling for an end to all immigrant deportations and detentions, because communities throughout the Global South are losing their self-sufficiency and autonomy as their land, waters, food, air, and cultural ways of living are being bought and stripped away."

Elizabeth is absolutely right—ending immigrant deportations is an environmental issue. Firstly, the detention center is on a superfund site, exposing the detainees to pollution 24/7. Then, climate change has worsened drought and super-storm conditions, displacing millions across the globe. According to the CARE International report, climate refugees will number 200 million by 2050. The United Nations conversations on climate change in Paris this December must include conversations about the ending of unjust deportations and detentions in the United States, while rejecting large scale resource extraction and market-based solutions, which worsen environmental conditions in communities of color here and everywhere.

The Road to Detention is a gender justice issue. According to a recent report by Fusion, ICE has the controversial practice of placing transgender detainees in solitary confinement. "Over 300 people are in solitary confinement in ICE custody every night, including many trans detainees. ... ICE houses 75 trans detainees each night, 90 percent of them are transgender women." Meanwhile transgender women only make up 1 out of 500 detained immigrants in this country, and make up an alarming 1 out of every 5 confirmed sexual assaults in immigration detention.

Lastly, what it really comes down to is about making profit. A contractual provision obligates ICE to pay for a minimum of 800 immigration detention beds daily to the GEO Group, the private prison corporation that runs the facility. These so-called "guaranteed minimums" require payment to private contractors whether beds are filled or not, creating considerable pressure for ICE to keep the beds at the detention center full.

"The government could close these detention centers today and end the practice of corporations profiting from



imprisoning human beings," said Maru from the blockade. "Ensure all its residents have access to quality food and healthy homes, and change its international policies to create fair trade for people and the planet. People should not be forced to migrate, and those already here should be allowed to remain with their families and communities."

The lockboxes on our arms were certainly not comfortable, but it's nothing compared to the conditions which detainees experience inside those walls or how this Road to Detention ruins lives and separates families.

"Everything is connected," Elizabeth said. "Everything. We need to start building bridges instead of walls. And we are not going to stop. The U.S. has a long history of violating civil and human rights. These stories and voices need to be heard."

Just like the chant we often say at the gates of the detention center so loudly that those inside can hear, "No están solos," or "You are not alone," the Northwest Detention Center Resistance Coalition, Got Green, Rising Tide, Raging Grannies, the Trans and/or Women's Action Camp and others working for climate justice, food sovereignty, gender justice, and workers' rights will grow this intersectional movement, and keep returning here for future actions as long as unjust detentions and deportations continue.

Jill Mangaliman is Executive Director of Got Green and a PSARA member.

Agriculture and Climate Change

By Bobby & Michael Righi

The 21st Conference of the Parties (COP21) in Paris, the UN meeting on climate change is convening, and, according to reports from Bonn, where the agenda is being thrashed out, the wealthy nations, who are responsible for the damage to the environment, are still refusing to put up the funds to help poor countries deal with the effects of climate change.

Positive proposals for solutions will come from the thousands of people, speaking for the billions of us who will be drastically affected, who are planning to converge on Paris to try to wake up the negotiators, and to also confer together about what needs to be done.

The COP21 agenda should stop ignoring agriculture. Almost half of the greenhouse gas emissions that cause global warming are generated by industrial food production. Forests are cleared for crops and soils are used up, carbon-intensive fertilizers and pesticides and fuels are overused, products are transported thousands of miles, food is designed and processed and packaged and refrigerated, and a large percentage of food is wasted at every stage from production to consumption.

Apologists for industrial agriculture claim new technologies (such as geo-engineered seeds) will “feed the world” and mitigate climate impacts (so-called “climate-smart agriculture”). But there is a very different approach available to us — agroecology. The United Nations has found that we can double world harvests if we invest in natural farming, agroecology, and local knowledge.

Many small farmer organizations like UNHE from the Basque country of Spain, Via Campesina, the international organization of small farmers, and the Alliance for Food Sovereignty in Africa (AFSA) will be in Paris to demand an end to subsidies for industrial agriculture and support for small farmers who practice agroecology. Small farmers have access to only about 30% of the world's agricultural resources, but still produce 70% of the world's food.

Via Campesina, suggests five ways to cut most of the green house gases produced by industrial agriculture:

1. Return organic matter to the soil. Unsustainable agriculture has destroyed soil organic matter. This process has generated 25 to 40% of the excess carbon dioxide in our atmosphere. Return this carbon dioxide to the soil by building organic matter using generations-old farming practices: cover cropping, crop rotation, fallowing, and integrated animal production.

2. Stop using agrottoxins and chemicals. Instead, promote small-scale, mixed farms based on the science of agroecology. Industrial agriculture depletes the soil, and pests and weeds become resistant to chemicals. So, more fertilizer and more toxins are needed, in a vicious circle. Small farmers around the world produce food without chemicals, based on an extensive store of knowledge about their particular area and the wide variety of diversity in seeds, crops, and animals that has been preserved over generations.

3. Reduce food miles. We need to promote local consumption of fresh food. The corporate logic of carrying food around the world and back just doesn't make any sense. To reduce emissions, redirect food production towards local markets and healthy fresh foods.

4. Redistribute farmland to small farmers through comprehensive land reform. In the last 50 years, 140 million hectares of fertile land has been taken over by four big industrial monocultures: soybeans, oil palm, canola, and sugarcane. Peasants and small farmers are squeezed onto less than a quarter of the world's farmland, but still produce about 70% of the world's food!

5. Reject and debunk fake solutions to global warming, and promote solutions that really can work. International climate negotiators agree that the industrial food system is a major contributor to greenhouse gases, and that climate change poses huge challenges for our capacity to feed a growing world population. But instead of challenging the interests supporting industrial agriculture, governments and corporations promote fake solutions, like large-scale geo-engineering, drought-resistant GMOs, and agrofuels.



Bobby (left) and Michael (right) Righi

None of these technologies get at the root of the climate crisis; they only make it worse.

Wealthy countries must support small farmers with research and extension services to help develop healthy food for local markets. They must stop the huge subsidies to industrial agriculture and require industrial agriculture to stop devastating the soil, air, and water. Industrial agriculture conglomerates should not keep getting away with cost-free emissions of CO₂, methane, and nitrous oxide that pollute the atmosphere, and the release of phosphorous and nitrogen that kills life in the rivers and oceans.

Industrialized countries must stop pushing this form of agriculture onto other countries. Programs like the Gates Foundation's Alliance for a Green Revolution in Africa (AGRA) will move small farmers into the global market where they will lose control of their products. AGRA will consolidate land holdings in the hands of a few, and perpetuate the same tired old industrialized systems under new green-washed names like “climate-smart” agriculture.

COP21 must seriously take up the climate damaging effects of industrialized agriculture and support the globally necessary transition to sustainable agroecological systems of production.

Bobby Righi is on the PSARA Environmental Committee and PSARA's Executive Board. Michael Righi is on the PSARA Education Committee. They will be in Paris as part of the gathering of thousands to demand that the leaders of governments genuinely address the growing threat to our planet. Bobby & Michael are involved in the AGRA Watch program of the Community Alliance for Global Justice.

Stand Up for Health Care As a Human Right on December 10

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cannot afford the cost of their premiums and/or deductibles.

Under the Affordable Care Act, starting in 2017 states may apply for a waiver that will allow them to move towards a universal health care system in part by using federal funds coming to the state through the ACA. The people of the state of Colorado will vote on a citizens' initiative in 2016 to create such a system in their state. Other states are also working on legislation to create universal health care systems.

If a state meets the standards established in the ACA, it can utilize all the dollars that flow to the state through the ACA to design its own program and build towards a state-based universal health care system. Federal Medicare would not be impacted by this legislation.

In 2015, HB 1321 was considered in the Washington State House declaring the State's intent that all Washington residents be covered by the year 2020. We will keep building support in the House and Senate for this legislation in 2016 and plan to add language that a plan be developed in 2016 to achieve the goal of universal coverage for all Washington residents.

PSARA members for whom we have email addresses will receive an email from PSARA during the week of December 7 with instructions on how to use a link provided to you to send an email to your legislators. It will be very easy. Alternatively, you can go to PSARA's lively Facebook page where you will find the necessary information and link. On Thursday, December 10, International Human Rights Day, please take action. Send a message to legislators urging them to support this historic legislation.

Join Washingtonians from all over the state in calling on the state legislature to use the Affordable Care Act waiver to create a health care system that covers all Washington residents.

Dina Burstein is a PSARA member and a retired nurse.

Amor Church -- Meeting Hate with Love

By Garet Munger & Susan Levy

On Sunday morning, October 25, PSARA members responded to the call to stand with members of the Amor Spiritual Center and the wider Seattle community to demonstrate intolerance of the signs of hate and bigotry.

Amor Center on Beacon Hill had been spray-painted with messages of hate earlier in the week. When we got there the red spray-painted swastika had been removed, and there was no remaining evidence of that message of hate. The message was replaced with a multi-racial, multi-ethnic, multi-generational gathering from all around the wider Puget Sound. Reverend Mosely from the Amor Spiritual Center instructed us on how to make a love circle and walk around the block touching the church, the pavement, trees, everything, and recite a blessing "I love you. Thank-you." Reverend Mosely spoke of his belief that the Center's message of love can transform the act of bigotry and hate into a thing of beauty and can release positive vibrations into the city of Seattle.

The group reconvened on the sidewalk and heard more words in support of love and in opposition to hate and bigotry from Reverend Mosley, as well as City Council members Tim Burgess and Bruce Harrell and a member of the Seattle Police Department.

We were proud to be there with all the others and glad PSARA was part of the event.

Susan serves on the PSARA Executive Board. Garet serves on the PSARA Education Fund Board and is also the official PSARA photographer.



PSARA members at Amor Spiritual Center. Above, Catherine Pottinger, Frank Irigon, and Bruce Birkbigler. At right, Imogene Williams stands with Rev. Allen Mosley.

(Photos: Garet Munger)



Seniors Deserve a Raise

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percent of the average annual Social Security benefit, or about \$581. One reason Warren felt a 3.9 percent raise would be fair is that it is the same rate of increase in pay CEOs of large U.S. corporations enjoyed last year, according to the Economic Policy Institute. Washington Senators Patty Murray and Maria Cantwell have signed as original co-sponsors of Senator Warren's SAVE Benefits Act.

While CEOs have been raking in massive compensation, they have been slashing retirement benefits for ordinary American workers. Traditional, "defined benefit" pensions that guarantee a monthly check for life after retirement are fast becoming extinct in the American workplace. If US corporations today offer any retirement benefits at all, they are typically the "defined contribution" type, like 401(k)s, which are less generous and much riskier than traditional plans.

Last year only 18 percent of private sector workers were covered by a defined benefit pension, down from 35 percent in the early 1990s. Nearly half of all working-age Americans have no access to any retirement plan at work, according to economist Teresa Ghilarducci. Of workers aged 50-64, 29 percent have no defined benefit pension or retirement savings in a 401(k) or IRA. These workers will be wholly dependent on Social Security.

A recent report by the Institute for Policy Studies and the Center for Effective Government, "A Tale of Two Retirements," reveals how CEOs are actually personally rewarded for cutting employee retirement benefits. That's because the majority of executive compensation these days is in the form of stock-based pay. When CEOs cut benefit costs, it can boost profits and stock prices, which in turn expands the CEO's paycheck.

And as executive pay has soared, CEOs are putting more and more of their money into special deferred compensation accounts that grow and grow tax-free until they retire. Whereas

ordinary American workers face strict limits on how much they can contribute annually to a 401(k)—last year it was \$18,000 for workers under 50—the special executive accounts have no such limits.

This double standard for tax-deferred pay is a major reason CEO retirement nest eggs have ballooned. The IPS and CEG researchers found that just 100 CEOs have as much in their company retirement plans as the bottom 41 percent of American families.

I'm encouraged to see that the debate in Washington, DC over Social Security has shifted from a fixation on cutbacks to the need for expansion. Senator Warren's bill is innovative in that it would pay for the benefits increase by closing loopholes that currently encourage excessive executive pay. CEO pay would be reined in, while seniors would get the raise they deserve.

We should not tolerate a system that leads to millions of seniors with unmet basic needs while a handful at the top are perched on gigantic retirement funds much larger than they could ever spend. All of our seniors deserve a dignified retirement.

Senator Pramila Jayapal is the State Lenator from the 37th Legislative District and a PSARA member.

Senior Foundation Legislative Conference



President of Senior Lobby Walt Bowen is pictured visiting PSARA's display table at the Senior Foundation Legislative Conference.

Sarajane Siegfriedt and Lorna Stone were the volunteers working at the table.

Robby Stern spoke at the conference over lunch. Part of his presentation was showing the new Social Security video "Don't Wanna Work Til We Die," which was very well received. (A couple of people were actually dancing in the aisles!).

Robby talked about the need to expand Social Security and Medicare while resisting any efforts to cut these vital social insurance programs.

To Renew or Donate

PSARA Education Fund
2800 1st Avenue, Room 262, Seattle WA 98121
Donations are tax deductible

- Basic contribution: \$20
- Limited income/living lightly: \$15 or whatever you can afford
- Supporting: \$50 New contributor
- Sponsoring: \$100 or more Renewing contributor

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Meetings and Events

PSARA Environmental Committee: 10 a.m.-11:30 a.m., Thursday, Dec. 3, Washington State Labor Council (WSLC) office, 321 16th Avenue S., Seattle. All welcome as we discuss present activities and plan future activities including a screening of the new documentary, "This Changes Everything".

PSARA Government Relations Committee: 1 p.m. – 2:30 p.m., Thursday, Dec. 3, Seattle Labor Temple, Room 226, 2800 First Ave., Seattle. All welcome as we discuss our 2016 Legislative Agenda and plan for Senior Lobby Day on February 25, 2016.

Green Lake Discussion Group: Noon to 1:30 p.m., Thursday, Dec. 10, Green Lake Library, 7354 East Green Lake Drive N., Seattle. Brown bag lunch. The topic of discussion will be: "Year End Celebrations -- What Makes Your Holidays Meaningful?" We will also be looking ahead to 2016. All are welcome. For further information contact Susan at sjlevy.01@gmail.com

PSARA General Membership Meeting & Holiday Party: Noon – 3:00 p.m., Thursday, Dec. 17, Greenwood Community Senior Center, 525 N. 85th Street, Seattle. Don't miss it!! Help shape PSARA's future, join the holiday fun and add to the potluck!! Please go to Page 7 to get information about transportation and how to RSVP.

Consider an End-of-the-Year Donation to PSARA Ed Fund!

Many of us make end-of-the-year donations to our favorite nonprofits. I would ask you to consider making an end of the year donation to the PSARA Education Fund, our tax-deductible 501c3 that pays for the Retiree Advocate and the other educational work we do.

The new educational workshop, "Making Retirement Security Real for Everyone" will be taken statewide and maybe to other parts of the country. Your donation will help pay the expenses associated with this work.

Your generosity will help build a retirement security movement that will be part of the fabric of a broader progressive movement. By building this movement for retirement security for everyone, we may actually see the day when we have expanded Social Security and Medicare, the two bedrock programs for seniors, children, and the disabled. We will be leaving a legacy for our children, grandchildren, and generations to follow and honoring the struggle of those who came before us and left us these two programs.

