

The Retiree **ADVOCATE**

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

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Finding Inspiration and Courage in Egypt

By Mark McDermott

Last November, my wife and I spent almost a month in Egypt and Ethiopia. It was a trip of a lifetime experiencing the history of 3,000 years of rule of the Pharaohs and the modern day struggles for democracy and freedom against the modern day Pharaohs.

We traveled to Abu Simbel, the site of two famous temples of Rameses II, the greatest of the Pharaohs. In the 60s, the UN saved this great site from being permanently flooded by a new dam. The temples were dismantled and reassembled overlooking the Nile in an extraordinarily beautiful and desolate site. I followed this story as a youth and waited 50 years to see it. It was worth the wait.

What did Abu Simbel mean to the people of the time? Walking into the Rameses temple, we faced a huge wall carving, the dedication wall. Rameses had one foot on the face and throat of a black Nubian slave lying on the floor. Scepter of kingly rule in one hand, whip in the other, Rameses lashed out at other cowering Nubian slaves while the gods approved.

We were visiting a shock-and-awe temple dedicated to conquest and slavery. The temple was a warning to the conquered peoples. We have the power to enslave you, we have the wealth to build awesome monuments, and we have the power to crush you again if you fight for your freedom. My childhood fantasies of awesome beauty collided head on with glorifying brutal conquests and a monument to injustice. We found this conflict repeated at other ancient sites.

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PSARA Senior Lobby Day on February 25

By Paul Muldoon

It's approaching spring. What better time to enjoy our state capitol? Yes, the birds will be chirping on February 25 when we load the buses and the carpools to make our annual trek to Olympia. We still have lots of room to fill our bus and carpools. We need a good turnout for this year's Senior Lobby Day. Last year, as in years past, our discussions with legislators brought home the importance of these visits to reinforce PSARA's message on health care for all and economic and environmental justice.

To participate in Lobby Day is easy. Simply email to govrelations@psara.org. Or call the PSARA office at (206) 448-9646. Registration and lunch is provided for all PSARA members who contact us in advance. In your email be sure to let us know if you need a ride to Olympia or are planning to take the IAM Local 751 bus. If so, call Jackie Boschok at (206) 890-1009. We are short on drivers who are willing to share rides with PSARA members north of downtown Seattle.

Senior Lobby Day briefings are held at United Churches, 110 11th Ave SE in Olympia. Registration begins at 8:30 a.m. and speakers will open sessions at 9 a.m. We are making appointments with legislators for all those who contact us prior to February 21.

Senior Lobby Day is an excellent opportunity to not only talk to your legislators but also to receive briefings on key issues from the Governor's staff, state legislators and their staff. This year we anticipate that we will be challenged by those who want to use the State Supreme Court's decision on school funding (McCleary decision) to cut social programs in order to fund schools rather than taking seriously needed revenue-raising measures. We also expect legislative attacks from the Senate on workers, the transgender community and women's right to choose.

We will express our support for the Governor's supplemental budget proposals that address funding to fight forest fires and include much-needed additional funding for mental health and an increase in teacher pay. Additionally, there is \$1 million in the Governor's budget earmarked for senior housing and \$10 million for low-income housing. We support this as well as an additional \$10 million that the low-income housing advocates are requesting.

Please join with other PSARA members as we express our vision of the kind of state we want Washington to be.

Paul Muldoon is PSARA's Membership Vice President.



The Retiree ADVOCATE

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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

MLK Day, 2016

Photographs by Garet Munger



On January 18, thousands of people once again took to Seattle streets to commemorate Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.'s birthday.



King County Councilmember and PSARA member Larry Gossett poses with young constituents.



Seattle Mayor Ed Murray greets PSARA Outreach Vice President Susan Levy in Garfield's gym.

This year's MLK Day theme was "We have the power to make change." Marchers, including PSARA Government Relations Co-chair Chuck Richards (in the right foreground), looked determined to do just that.



Remembering Liz Yates and Using Our Power to Make Change

By Robby Stern

"We Have the Power to Make Change" was the theme of this year's Martin Luther King Jr. Celebration at Garfield High School. The button that was distributed prior to the rally and march said "Organize." Truer words were never spoken. We have the power to make change if we are determined, organize, and act collectively.

During the Martin Luther King Jr. weekend, I attended a memorial service for Liz Yates, a long-time member of PSARA dating back to when PSARA was known as the Puget Sound Council of Senior Citizens. Liz died at the age of 90 after a remarkable life of progressive activism hugely impacted by her membership in the Communist Party. Liz's life demonstrates the truth of the power to make change if we organize and work collectively.

Liz was a language arts and journalism teacher at Rainier Beach and Garfield High Schools. She founded the journalism program at Rainier Beach and by all accounts was a beloved teacher who deeply believed in the potential of all her students. A couple of former students came to the memorial and spoke of the very significant influence Liz had on their lives.

Liz was a very early activist and organizer in the Seattle Teachers Association, the organization that became the Seattle Education Association. It was the largest teacher organization in the state and fought for greater respect and compensation for teachers, better funding for education, and quality education for our public school students.

She supported the African American students in the founding of the Black Student Union and spoke eloquently of their right to be activists at a time when student activism in the high schools was being challenged by the administrations.

Liz also embodied her commitment to economic and social justice in her personal life, adopting two Native American children from the Yakima Nation and imbuing them with pride in their tradition and heritage. The memorial was filled with her children and grandchildren who spoke emotionally of their love and deep respect for the enormous contribution Liz made to their lives.

Liz was an activist and leader her whole life. She wrote as her epitaph, "If I should ever do anything noble or heroic in my life, I would want it known after my death that it was my membership in the Communist Party and association with the courageous members of the Party that taught me to value life so much that I could sacrifice for it.

"If not, and I just live out my ordinary – but far from humdrum – years, as is most likely, I would want it known that it was the same association and vision that enabled me to endure, and to keep working and fighting for a better world."

Kathleen Robel, a close friend and officiant at the memorial, wrote the following poem in honor of Liz:

*Weep not for me.
My presence surrounds you.
My spirit will always be on the picket line.
My intellect will stay in the classroom.
When black lives matter, I will rejoice.
When there are no homeless or hungry, I will feel real joy.
When fair wages are met, I will give an amen.
When Bernie Sanders is President
I will gather these arthritic bones and do a cartwheel in my grave.
And when there is peace in the world, I will rest.
No, don't weep for me.
I want to bring smiles from all the memories past.
Celebrate my life.
Mourn not my death
For I live in all of you.*

Liz and all the activists that precede her are a testament to the power of all of us to make change if we are determined and act collectively and in a coordinated fashion. We do not have the responsibility to complete the task of making our world a better, more humane place, but we do have the ability to do what we can to help get us down that road.

New Officers Set a Determined Path for PSARA

New officers have taken the helm of leadership in PSARA. Bobby Righi has



agreed to serve as Administrative Vice President, Paul Muldoon is our new Membership Vice President and Susan Levy has joined Vivian Lee as our Outreach Vice President. Additionally, Tom Lux, our acting treasurer, was elected as Treasurer. New members of the Executive Board are Jessica Bonebright and Steve Bauck. You can learn more about PSARA's leaders by going to our website, www.psara.org

These new, very talented people join a team of PSARA leaders who are setting an ambitious path for our organization. We hope we will get the support of our members!

"Making Retirement Security Real for Everyone" is the theme of much of the work PSARA is doing. We are holding meetings with members of our congressional delegation, urging them to be leaders in expanding Social Security and Medicare. We are supporting efforts to create a state-based Social Security supplement. Much is now being written about the growing threat of increasing poverty in the senior population. The impact of severe economic inequality and destruction of defined benefit pensions is the reality for the vast majority of our U.S. population.

PSARA's leaders are spending many hours thinking, discussing, and organizing to create a better future for seniors and the generations to follow. Your PSARA membership helps. As we organize to be more effective, please consider what more you can do.

ZoomCare Doesn't Care

By Steve Marquardt

On January 13, PSARA members and allied organizations including Washington CAN, Physicians for a National Health Program, Healthcare for All, and UFCW 21 held a raucous rally outside the Belltown, Seattle, clinic of ZoomCare, a for-profit chain of primary- and urgent-care clinics based in Portland. ZoomCare got our attention with its refusal to accept Medicare, Medicaid, or TriCare and its big plans for growth in the Seattle area.

In Seattle, the chain plans to add 10 clinics this year alone to the six already here. ZoomCare's CEO and the Private Equity firm backing him think they have found the formula for health care success—marketing to the young and healthy and leaving those who need real care for an overburdened non-profit system. "ZoomCare's going to change the way health care is being delivered, neighborhood by neighborhood," he told a journalist last year. But as a poignant open letter from a Portland non-profit to ZoomCare's CEO put it, there is a huge problem with the "change" he aims at: "We need ZoomCare to be with us in caring for the elderly, those with lower incomes, and those with no insurance."

As Dr. David McClanahan of Physicians for a National Health Program, NW Washington, pointed out, ZoomCare proudly features a glowing Fortune magazine article on its website describing the company as "the Uber of Healthcare." Like Uber, Zoom's goal is market domination, an even larger problem if Zoom succeeds



"Seniors and Low-Income People Deserve Respect," we chanted, "Serve All People or Leave Our State!"
(Photo: Garet Munger)

in its bid to become an insurer in Washington State. PSARA president Robby Stern told the rally that he had sent a letter to State Insurance Commissioner, Mike Kreidler, with the message that neither "Washington residents nor Medicare nor Medicaid will benefit in the short-run or long-run from Zoom Insurance's presence in our state. We urge you in the strongest terms to reject Zoom as an insurance carrier in our state."

Rally participants learned in person how ZoomCare's exclusionary approach affects patients. A woman living above the Belltown clinic described to PSARA members at the rally how she had been excited about a clinic opening in her building. When she went to the clinic she was denied care because of her Medicaid insurance coverage. She was told she would have to go elsewhere to one of the dwindling pool of crowded providers who accept Medicare and Medicaid for the care that she needed. Her spontaneous testimony underscored the hard truths in the speech of Washington CAN

leader Gina Owens about her struggles as a woman on Medicaid seeking quality health care.

Chants of "Seniors and Low-Income People Deserve Respect, Serve All People or Leave Our State," and rousing songs by the Seattle Labor Chorus Flying Squad earned high-level corporate attention: ZoomCare's CEO instructed a staffer to ask us who had organized the rally.

We urge you to share your thoughts about ZoomCare's policies with Stephen Babson, the senior Private Equity representative on ZoomCare's Board, at (503)-223-2721.

There will be another protest directed at ZoomCare on Monday, February 22 at noon at ZoomCare's Capitol Hill Clinic at 531 Broadway Avenue East, Seattle. Please join us as we let this predatory business network of health care clinics know they are not welcome in King County.

Steve Marquardt is a researcher with UFCW 21 and a PSARA member.



Labor Chorus Flying Squad: "We will not give up the fight, we have only started."
(Photo: Garet Munger)

It's Time to Listen – It's Time to Close the Opportunity Gap

By Frieda Takamura and Sili Savusa

One of our core values as a country and state is providing the best opportunity for our next generation to succeed; this means all children regardless of sex, race, ethnicity, or other defining characteristic.

Unfortunately, Washington has been failing. Studies have repeatedly shown that throughout Washington we have seen persistent achievement and opportunity gaps that exist between our students of color and the student population as a whole.

The term “opportunity gap” is a term used to describe the structural issues within our education system that can hold back our students. There are many issues that factor into student success. Poverty and parent involvement certainly play huge roles in determining how well a student does in school, but when a consistent 20–30 percentage point gap in student achievement exists between students of color and white students, other factors must be examined.

We have seen that opportunity gaps have narrowed through careful analysis and use of data, targeted strategies to provide equal opportunities to all students, and meaningful partnerships with communities and families. Now is the time to take these ideas and implement them in a holistic way across the state to foster student success.

Crafting a Plan for Student Success

This year the Legislature is once again considering a comprehensive plan to address institutional inequities that run deep in our schools. The plan, based on the work of the Education Opportunity Gap Oversight and Accountability Committee (EOGOAC) and stakeholders, is in the form of House Bill 1541 and Senate Bill 6192, authored by Rep. Sharon Tomiko Santos and Sen. John McCoy.



Frieda Takamura

The EOGOAC, a legislatively mandated committee formed in 2009, is comprised of representatives from the State's three ethnic commissions, federally recognized tribes, and the Legislature. The committee is tasked with advising lawmakers on the best ways to improve educational outcomes for children of color throughout Washington.

The core goal of the committee is to put forth a set of recommendations on how we break down barriers to better achieve equity for ALL students. Over the past five years, as a result of much research and community engagement, the committee has put forth a comprehensive plan on how to better meet the needs of students of color, regardless of their backgrounds.

The recommendations build upon the assets that our students of color bring to school. Some of these recommendations include promoting the cultural competence of educators; the recruiting, hiring, and retaining of educators of color; endorsing educators in English Language Learner (ELL) instruction; strengthening transition programs for students; and improving the collection of student demographic and performance data for students of color.



Sili Savusa

Although these recommendations have passed the House of Representatives, they have repeatedly stalled in the State Senate for multiple years, despite repeated attempts by committee members and allies to pass this comprehensive approach to better meet the needs of our students.

Listening to Those Who Understand It Best

What is even more concerning, is that despite a lack of participation in the crafting of the recommendations, during this current session Republican legislators have dropped their own legislation that ignores the work of stakeholders from communities of color.

These Legislators are now telling leaders from the Asian and Pacific Islander communities, the African American, the Latino, the Native American, and other ethnic communities who have studied the issues exhaustively that they, the legislators, better understand the institutionalized racism, disparate educational opportunities, and different treatment experienced by students of color than those who have experienced it firsthand.

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A New Seattle City Council: Which Way for Seattle?

By Mike Andrew

A new Seattle City Council was sworn in January 4, the first one elected under the new system of district representation.

Four of the nine Council members are new. Veterans Nick Licata, Tom Rasmussen, and Sally Clark moved on to new endeavors, and Jean Godden was defeated in the primary.

Five of the nine are now women: Kshama Sawant and Sally Bagshaw stayed on from the old Council, and they are now joined by Lisa Herbold, Debora Juarez, and Lorena Gonzalez.

Juarez and Gonzalez are the first Latinas ever to serve on the Seattle City Council. Juarez is also a registered member of the Blackfeet Nation and the first Native American on the Council.

After the swearing-in, Bruce Harrell was elected Council president, succeeding Tim Burgess.

Old familiar faces are gone and bright new Councilmembers sit in their places, but whether the new system of electing Councilmembers, and the new members it produced, will mean a change in city politics is not clear.

While Councilmembers generally stuck to scripted talking points in the short speeches they made after being sworn in, contrasts in style and possibly substance were already evident.

Kshama Sawant, for example, laid out an aggressive agenda for Seattle – rent control, construction of thousands of City-owned rental units, reining in of police, and legislating fair workplace schedules to help fast-food workers.

Sawant also called on her City Council colleagues to pass an income tax on the rich.

"We cannot wait around for the state to act or be held back by an antiquated 1930s Washington State Supreme Court decision," she said. "Seattle can and must pass a millionaire's tax."

In contrast, Debora Juarez took a more nuts and bolts approach. While she described herself as "a product of



Unlike the staid inauguration ceremonies of the past, this one was marked by frequent cheers and applause from the standing-room-only crowd that packed the Council chambers. Many held signs demanding a "millionaire's tax" to finance affordable housing.

1970s war on poverty programs" and "a product of affirmative action," Juarez stressed her role as a district representative.

"We have to know where there are potholes, where the gutters need repair," she said. "That's what we're supposed to do, represent our neighbors."

Newly elected Council President, Bruce Harrell, struck a progressive note in his speech. It is part of Seattle's "collective political DNA" to value "equity, justice, and fairness," he said.

"I am constantly reminded about the cruel and inhumane treatment that certain people conduct when they have the upper hand in power," Harrell added. "The City needs to be led by people who know what it means to be without power."

In contrast to Harrell's sweeping observations on political power, new Councilmember Rob Johnson said he was happy to be known as a policy wonk, and called on his colleagues to "commit to planning for 2065, not just 2016."

While most Councilmembers chose to be sworn in by their partners or family members, some took the opportunity to make a symbolic statement.

Lisa Herbold was sworn in by her former boss, Nick Licata. As Licata's legislative aide for 18 years, Herbold was seen as the heir to his progressive legacy. Having Licata swear her in was literally the passing of the baton.

Sawant was sworn in by home health care worker Sahro Farah and Port of Seattle security guard Osman Osman, who are also local tenants' rights activists, a perfect choice to highlight her commitment to affordable housing.

Mike O'Brien was sworn in by Courtney Burnett Lauer, now in transitional housing with her husband and three children, but once homeless. After making a brief statement, O'Brien turned the microphone over to her.

"I want to thank the City of Seattle for all the help and all the support," she said, "but we're only one of many families fighting to survive."



2016 PSARA Senior Lobby Day

Annual PSARA Senior Lobby Day in Olympia

Thursday, February 25

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 am

Box Lunch provided: 12 noon

Visits with legislators to discuss our main issues:

- **Opposing cuts to programs that provide vital services to seniors, children, and low- and moderate-income families**
- **Elimination of tax exemptions that have no public benefit**
- **Allocation of new resources for low-income housing**
- **Supporting steps to create universal health care coverage**
- **Establishing a \$15 state minimum wage and paid sick days for workers statewide**
- **Studying the feasibility of establishing a state-based supplemental Social Security program**

"Being tortured has been the best experience in my life."

Part II of an interview with David Ayala, organizer with Working Washington

By Peter Constantini, reprinted from *Foreign Policy in Focus*

Editor's Note: This is Part II of an interview with David Ayala, now an organizer with Working Washington. In Part I (in the January Retiree Advocate), Ayala recounted how he became an opponent of El Salvador's right-wing government in the 1980s. The rest of the interview will appear in subsequent issues of the Retiree Advocate.

A point of no return for many was the assassination of Archbishop Oscar Romero, the leader of the Salvadoran Catholic Church. In a sermon on March 23, 1980, he beseeched soldiers to disobey orders to kill civilians. The next day, a death squad directed by military leaders shot him through the heart as he celebrated mass. The same forces then machinegunned his funeral, killing 42 mourners, and then attempted to kill the judge investigating the murders.

As the conflict descended into civil war and the military slaughter of civilians mounted, some of the political opposition and civil society gravitated towards a new coalition formed by a range of leftist groups — the Farabundo Martí Front for National Liberation, or FMLN. The FMLN is now a mainstream political party. But it began as an armed revolutionary insurgency that received political support and arms from leftist governments in Nicaragua, Cuba, and the Soviet Union. It was also backed by a wide range of political and social groupings in Europe and the Americas.

All that made for dangerous politics in the Cold War era. Washington was still reeling from the 1979 uprising in neighboring Nicaragua, which had overthrown the 45-year Somoza family dictatorship. Like the "Fourteen Families" — the violent oligarchs who'd ruled El Salvador for decades — the Somozas had been stalwart U.S. allies. Washington policymakers viewed the Salvadoran military as a reliable, if embarrassingly brutal, bulwark against further revolutionary change in Central America.

As the war escalated, the Reagan and George H.W. Bush administrations

responded with lavish aid. During the 1980s, the U.S. gave El Salvador, a tiny nation of a little over 5 million people, nearly \$1 billion in military funding, along with other economic assistance totaling nearly \$2.6 billion. It was the fourth-largest U.S. aid program in the world at the time. Elite Salvadoran forces, most famously the Atlacatl Battalion, were trained by the U.S. military as poster children for the effectiveness of new counter-insurgency doctrines. In the field, however, they proved unable to defeat the FMLN guerrillas. Instead, they committed major massacres of hundreds of civilians, murdered prominent Jesuit priests, and systematically terrorized rural populations.

Covering the carnage with a flimsy negligée of "democracy promotion," the U.S. State Department and CIA funded and staged elections that excluded the most important opposition parties and were held under a state of siege. The civilian governments they installed exercised virtually no control over the military and its death squads.

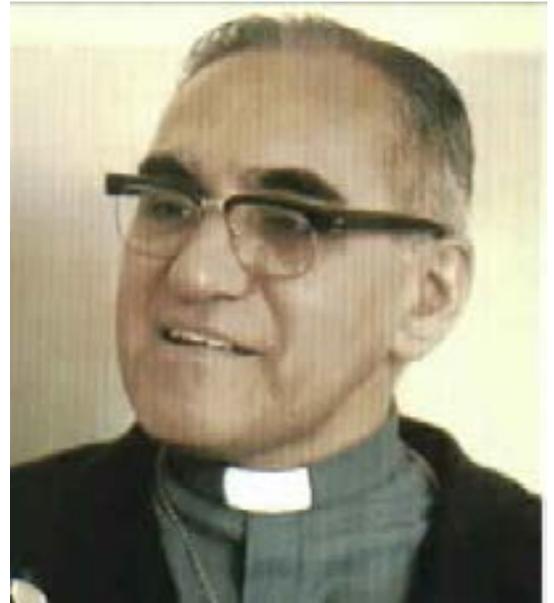
As Archbishop Romero had asserted in a sermon opposing U.S. aid, "Political power is in the hands of the armed forces, which are unscrupulous in their use of this power. They only know how to repress the people and defend the interests of the Salvadoran oligarchy."

A Good Fish

When the war broke out, Ayala was working for the government institute that managed pensions for public employees.

"I started seeing a lot of injustices there," he recalls. "So we put together the union in our institution. Unions are different down there. Unions are created from the base."

Ayala was elected grievance secretary. There was a lot of violence against unions then in El Salvador, he remembers. And the person most likely to be assassinated



Archbishop Oscar Romero, whose assassination by a military death squad was "a point of no return" toward civil war in El Salvador.

was the grievance secretary, who dealt with all the workers' complaints — "the one who was fierce and brave and faced the management all the time," he puts it.

Ayala's owlish and shy demeanor seemed improbable for the role. "The third time I was elected, I said, 'Wait, why you are electing me? I'm a peaceful guy.' And one worker said: 'That's the difference, because you confuse management.'"

By then El Salvador had become "a society of terror," he said. "There were other places where managers had been killed, but mostly union secretaries or union people were being killed."

"I was a really committed guy," he says. "I wasn't part of the FMLN guerrilla movement, but we coincided on some issues with the FMLN, like a negotiated end of the war. I was on television as a union leader, part of the umbrella of unions later on, calling to end the war, opposing the status quo."

Both David Ayala and Peter Constantini are PSARA members.

TPP, TransCanada, and The Keystone XL

By Michael Righi



Bobby (left) and Michael Righi

First, let's be absolutely clear. The Keystone Pipeline, designed to bring the dirtiest fossil fuels on the planet from the Alberta tar sands to U.S. Gulf Coast refineries, should never be built. It should have been denied permits years ago. But it took a massive effort by farmers, native groups, ranchers, and environmentalists over those years to get President Obama to put a stop to it.

TransCanada, the Canadian corporation proposing to build it, despite lands and aquifers that would be fouled by pipeline leaks and the air becoming even thicker with carbon, based its public relations case mainly on all the jobs that would be created. But, eventually, after anti-pipeline pressure mounted, even Obama admitted that about 50 – 100 permanent jobs would be created.

Jobs? Their claim is another attempt to divide workers and those who care about the planet, as if those are different groups of people. The best answer to the so-called jobs campaign comes from the Labor Network for Sustainability, who did a solid factual analysis of the few jobs that it would take to build the pipeline.

But they went further and showed that many more jobs would be created by eliminating a couple of the subsidies that fossil fuel companies receive for discovering and producing oil and using that money to rebuild the water and other infrastructure in the five states the pipeline would have passed through. That is the kind of thinking and analysis we all need to get from

a fossil fuel world to a fossil free world without the burden of adjustment falling on working people.

So the pipeline issue is over and done with, right? Well, TransCanada has recently announced it will take the U.S. government to "court," demanding \$15 billion compensation for the denial of the permits it needed. This is not a U.S. court or a Canadian court. It is a special tribunal set up by the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA) between Mexico, Canada, and the U.S.

You thought trade agreements were about trade? Since the negotiation of NAFTA in the early 1990s trade agreements have been mostly about adding to investor and corporate rights. One of these "rights" (it's a wrong, actually) has been to allow corporations to sue governments when they think their profits are threatened by government regulation. This is called Investor-State Dispute Settlement (ISDS -- sorry about the geeky language, but we need to know what they are up to).

An article in Forbes magazine, the mouthpiece for the 1%, urged TransCanada to sue, on the basis that Obama's denying their permits was a

case of discrimination. Meaning that these permits had not been denied in the past. Well, let's just suppose that we did not know in the past how damaging to the climate tar sands was (Exxon, of course, knew). Does this suit then mean we can't do anything about it now?

I know this whole affair sounds ridiculous, but many corporate lawyer types think TransCanada has a winnable case. These claims are heard by a panel of trade lawyers who are a self-selected group acting as both judges and advocates for corporations they often represent. Public comment plays no role in these hearings.

All this is under NAFTA. But now, with the Trans-Pacific Partnership (TPP) recently negotiated between the U.S. and other Pacific Rim countries, the investor-state (ISDS) provisions have been strengthened. Government attempts to regulate carbon pollution will have to meet the further test of not disadvantaging some foreign corporation (or U.S. corporation that locates elsewhere). Democracy is out the window – three corporate lawyers may have the power to overrule tens of thousands of public protests.

The TPP is soon to be voted on by Congress. Let your Congressperson know that you know about all this. You are not supposed to be up on NAFTA, the TPP, and ISDS. This is supposed to slide through with little public awareness. Tell them to vote against the TPP when it comes up. We need trade agreements that protect workers and the climate, and the TPP does neither.

Michael Righi is a member of PSARA's Education Committee. He and Bobby were in Paris for the COP21 Climate Summit. They reported on their experiences in the January Advocate.

Finding Inspiration and Courage in Egypt

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Abu Simbel, monument to slavery.

At the end of the trip, a friend and I went a second time to the Egyptian Museum, the world's greatest collection of Pharaonic art. It is located on Tahrir Square, the site of the 2011 Egyptian Spring uprising. A huge run-down building, very dirty, poorly curated but nonetheless a spectacular place to visit. We went to the outdoor snack bar to reflect on our trip, the museum, and the connections between ancient times and today.

We talked over the roar of huge machines jackhammering down a six-floor gutted building next door that covered an entire city block. "It's the sound of freedom," I said. They were demolishing the former national headquarters of the former military dictator's political party. It was a monument to 31 years of military rule under General Hosni Mubarak, a modern Pharaoh. It had been destroyed during the uprising in 2011.

Let's connect some dots. According to Congress, our government gave Egypt \$18 billion in military aid between 1998 and 2011. Egypt has been a solid ally in the "War on Terror." They do our dirty work of interrogating and torturing suspected terrorists so our government can deny responsibility. To quote former CIA agent Robert Baer: "If you want a serious interrogation, you send a prisoner to Jordan. If you want them to be tortured, you send them to Syria. If you want someone to disappear -- never to see them again -- you send them to Egypt."

In 2011, the Egyptian people shocked themselves and the world by toppling

Mubarak. In 17 days they overthrew a Pharaoh for the first time in 5,000 years of recorded history. They toppled Mubarak, but they did not topple the structures of oppression. In the election that followed, they had a choice between Mubarak's vice president and the Islamist Muslim Brotherhood. Progressive forces were in disarray after decades of U.S.-backed repression. The Muslim Brotherhood narrowly won.

Within a year, the people poured into the streets again calling for the ouster of the Muslim Brotherhood government. Given that the secret police and corrupt and violent local police have not been tamed, people were cautious talking about the current situation. Everyone we talked to welcomed the military overthrow of the Brotherhood.

They also said that their struggle for democracy, freedom, and social equality would be long and hard, but the people have found their power like never before.

Finding inspiration. On January 1, 2011, a suicide bomber killed 21 Coptic Christians outside a church. Thirty-two days later, hundreds of Copts encircled thousands of Muslims who were praying in Tahrir Square as the uprising began. What were they doing? They were protecting their brother and sister Muslims

from possible attacks as they knelt to pray. Christians and Muslims standing together for freedom, justice, and social equality. Everywhere we went, we were treated well, including the two young men on the crowded subway car who got up and offered us their seats. Maybe we can learn from them.

Returning home was very difficult: massacre at Planned Parenthood in Colorado; cover-up of police murder of young black man in Chicago, with the Mayor's office implicated in \$5 million of legal hush money; racism, sexism, homophobia, immigrant bashing, union bashing, climate-change-denying, evolution-denying, divide-and-conquer hate and fear mongering -- all fundamental parts of the Republican campaign for President.

I love my country and want it to live up to its stated and noble ideals that inspired me in my youth and today. I want us to stop propping up brutal military dictators. Thank goodness no Egyptian asked us why the American people supported a brutal dictator like Mubarak. I want us to build a country in which everyone is treated equally and fairly. We have work to do. I draw inspiration from the courage of the Egyptian people.

Mark McDermott is Co-chair of PSARA's Education Committee.



Tahrir Square, monument to resistance.

It's Time to Listen – It's Time to Close the Opportunity Gap

Continued from Page 5

Let's be clear: ultimately, stakeholders from the EOGOAC believe that our public education system is good. When it fails our students, it is not about intent – it is about impact. However, it is critical that we look to better our schools in a holistic way, not just with piecemeal band-aid approaches that tinker on the edges instead of truly addressing the systemic problems.

It's time for legislators to listen – for the sake of our children and for the sake of equal opportunity for all.

Frieda Takamura is a former educator who serves as the Asian community representative on the Education Opportunity Gap Oversight and Accountability Committee. She also serves as PSARA's Secretary.

Sili Savusa is Executive Director of the White Center Community Development Association and the Pacific Islander community representative on the EOGOAC, and a PSARA member.



*Former Seattle City Councilmember Nick Licata signs copies of his new book *Becoming a Citizen Activist* at PSARA's Greenlake Discussion Group. Licata read from the book and answered questions on January 14. (Photo: Garet Munger)*

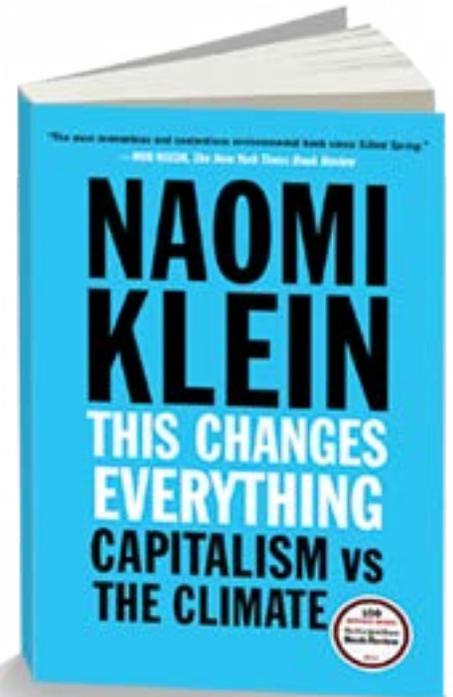
New PSARA Book Group

Several PSARA members have asked if there could be another book group to discuss *This Changes Everything* by Naomi Klein. The *New York Times Book Review* referred to *This Changes Everything* as the most important book on the environment since Rachel Carson's *The Silent Spring*, published in 1962.

The PSARA book group would meet five times on a Saturday or Sunday for two hours beginning in March. Actual times are worked out with participants. The meetings will be three weeks apart and normally involve reading 90 pages between sessions. Bob Barnes and Michael and Bobby Righi, who led the previous book group, will facilitate the discussion.

The first PSARA book group on *This Changes Everything* was very successful and all of the participants felt like it had been a great discussion and a great learning experience.

If you are interested in participating, please email adminvp@psara.org or call the PSARA office at (206) 448-9646. If there are enough people interested, we will launch this second book group.



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

Name (Please print): _____

Address: _____

Phone: _____ Email: _____

Meetings and Events

PSARA Environmental Committee: 10 a.m. - 11:30 a.m., Thursday, Feb. 4, Seattle office WA State Labor Council, 321 16th Ave. S, Seattle. All welcome!

PSARA Government Relations Committee: 1 p.m. - 2:30 p.m., Thursday, Feb. 4, Seattle Labor Temple, Room 226, 2800 First Ave., Seattle. All welcome as we discuss Senior Lobby Day and other local and federal issues.

Green Lake Discussion Group: Noon to 1:30 p.m., Thursday, Feb. 11, Green Lake Library, 7354 East Green Lake Drive N., Seattle. Brown bag lunch. Topic: Aging in Literature and Movies - How is it portrayed and what does it tell us about our society? All are welcome. For further information contact Susan at sjlevy.01@gmail.com

PSARA Diversity Committee: 11 a.m. - noon, Thursday, Feb. 18, Seattle office Washington State Labor Council, 321 16th Avenue S., Seattle. All are welcome as we continue planning our activities for 2016.

PSARA Executive Board Meeting: 12:30 p.m. - 3 p.m., Thursday, Feb. 18, Seattle office Washington State Labor Council, 321 16th Avenue S., Seattle. All are welcome.

Protest ZoomCare: Noon - 1 p.m., Monday, Feb. 22, 531 Broadway East, Seattle (Broadway East & East Mercer on Capitol Hill). ZoomCare, a new Oregon for-profit clinic network, plans to expand to 16 clinics in King County. They refuse to accept Medicare and Medicaid patients. Their business model is to serve younger and healthier people, putting more pressure on other providers. Join us for this one-hour protest.

Annual Senior Lobby Day: Thursday, Feb. 25. Contact Chuck Richards and Tim Burns at govrelations@psara.org or call the PSARA office, 206-448-9646 if you are interested in going to Olympia with PSARA to advocate for PSARA's legislative agenda. See article on Page 1 and flyer on Page 7.

This Changes Everything: The Movie

Climate change is **THE existential threat of our time**. It is impacting our communities and our workplaces right now. Join labor and community members in the viewing of a film based on climate activist Naomi Klein's book, *This Changes Everything*.

At the end of the film there will be a discussion on the local ways to take action on climate including the TPP, just transition, and investment in infrastructure. Bring your questions, your ideas, and your energy.

Two showings to choose from:

Dinner and a movie (Please RSVP, PSARA office, 206-448-9646)

Thursday, March 3, 2016

6 p.m. - 8:30 p.m.,

UFCW 21, 5030 1st Ave. S. Seattle, WA 98134

Brown bag lunch and a movie

Friday, March 4, 2016

11 a.m. - 1:30 p.m.,

Washington State Labor Council, AFL-CIO, 321 16th Ave. S., Seattle 98144

Sponsored by the Washington State Labor Council, AFL-CIO; UFCW 21; Teamsters 117; and PSARA.

