

# The Retiree **ADVOCATE**

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

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December 2017

Special showing of  
**CARE,**  
a documentary on  
elder care  
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## PSARA Holiday Potluck & Membership Meeting, December 14

PSARA's December membership meeting will be especially interesting and historic this year. After almost nine years as President of PSARA, Robby Stern will be stepping down from the post he filled so well, and a new team of officers will come forward to carry on our work.

Robby will be our featured speaker, sharing his experiences at the helm of PSARA. For a preview, you can read his article on Page 3. PSARA will also elect a number of new officers and Executive Board members.

If you want to run for an office or an Executive Board position, please contact the Elections Committee, chaired by PSARA Treasurer Tom Lux, at [treasurer@psara.org](mailto:treasurer@psara.org)

Join us for this important meeting – and annual holiday potluck – on Thursday, December 14, at UFCW 21's Joe Crump Hall, 5030 1st Avenue S, Seattle 98134. We'll gather at noon for the potluck, then go on to the business meeting.

At the meeting you'll also get an opportunity to help PSARA by bidding on some of the exciting items we'll offer at the silent auction. Buy your holiday gifts, or just keep them for yourself (we won't tell anyone...).

If you have items to donate to the silent auction, email PSARA's fundraising committee at [fundraising@psara.org](mailto:fundraising@psara.org)

If you're planning to come to this meeting, please RSVP to [organizer@psara.org](mailto:organizer@psara.org) or call the PSARA office, 206-448-9646. Let us know what food item you'll bring for the potluck. Please consider bringing a non-perishable food item or a cash donation for the Puget Sound Labor Agency Food Bank.



PSARA members and friends at our 2016 holiday potluck and membership meeting.  
(Photo: Garet Munger)

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## Please Make an End-of-the-Year Donation

By Robby Stern

2017 has been an amazing year for the PSARA Education Fund. *The Retiree Advocate* and more than 35 educational presentations about the fight to preserve and expand Social Security, Medicare, and Medicaid reached thousands of people in and beyond the Puget Sound region. The work of volunteers, along with the hire of Mike Andrew as a full-time PSARA organizer, has greatly increased our opportunities to educate larger numbers of people.

At the same time, the challenges we face are enormous! President Trump and Congress are attacking funding for Social Security, Medicare, and Medicaid. If successful, these attacks will weaken the effectiveness of these vital programs. We plan to continue to grow, educate, and advocate. We owe this not only to ourselves but to our children, grandchildren, and generations to follow.

Additionally, our educational work highlights the need for funding for long-term care, climate justice, and affordable housing. We also lend our solidarity to the fight for worker justice.

Our costs increased in 2017. With your help, we plan to carry on in 2018. Your end-of-the-year donation to the PSARA Education Fund (tax deductible) will support this work.

## The Retiree ADVOCATE

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Visit our website for up-to-date information or to renew:

[www.psara.org](http://www.psara.org)

or visit PSARA on Facebook

## Tenant Rights Rally

Tuesday, December 5, Westlake Park, 10:00 a.m.

On December 5, landlord associations are holding a conference with 1,500 landlords from across the state to learn how to use existing laws against tenants.

The same landlord association spends thousands of dollars trying to influence local elections, lobbying against tenant rights on the local and state levels, and suing to block tenant rights.

We will rally at Westlake Park at the same time as the conference, share our stories, learn our rights as tenants, and demand expanded tenant protections.

Join Washington CAN! and PSARA from 10:00 a.m. to 1:00 p.m., Tuesday, December 5, at Westlake Park, 4th Avenue and Pine Street, downtown Seattle.

## Go Birding with PSARA Saturday, January 6, 2018

Want to go birdwatching? This time we're headed to the Skagit Flats, one of the major stopping places for northern migrants, at the request of some of our wonderful PSARA members to the north and their friends. We will look for Tundra and Trumpeter Swans, Snow Geese, Short-Eared Owls, and hopefully Rough-Legged Hawks and other raptors, as well as migrating sea ducks. Maybe this will be a Snowy Owl year. We never know who might show up, so we hope you will join us regardless of where you live! Check out this website for more information on the Flats: [http://wdfw.wa.gov/lands/wildlife\\_areas/skagit/](http://wdfw.wa.gov/lands/wildlife_areas/skagit/)

Our guides will be PSARA Executive Board member Karen Richter, and her friend, birding expert and naturalist Noelle Congdon, also a PSARA member.

Beginners are especially welcome as we look for all the migrants. Unlike our trips to Nisqually, there is no specific trail. Instead, we will be driving/caravaning from site to site, using a scope and our binocs. We will be on a few short trails as we look for various birds, particularly the owls. Plan to be standing outside for short periods of time. Wear sturdy shoes and dress for the weather.

We plan to carpool from Karen's house in West Seattle at 9:00 a.m., returning before dinner. Or we can meet you along the way as we carpool north. Bring your binocs if you have them (extras will be available), a lunch, and a donation to PSARA. Email Karen at [kerichter100@gmail.com](mailto:kerichter100@gmail.com) or call her at 206 679-3295 for more details. The rain date is Saturday, January 20.

## PSARA Diversity Committee to Change Its Name

Upon approval by the PSARA Board, the committee formally known as "Diversity" will become "Race/Gender Equity Committee." At its meeting November 16, the committee decided that its developing workplan over the past year and into 2018 was more in line with race and gender equity/inclusion issues.

The committee invites all PSARA members interested in joining the committee to attend monthly meetings. Committee meetings are held the third Thursday of the month at 11 a.m., prior to the monthly Board meetings.

The next meeting of the committee will be at 11 a.m. on January 18, 2018.

For more information email the committee at [diversitycommittee@psara.org](mailto:diversitycommittee@psara.org) or call the PSARA office, 206-448-9646.

# Thank You

By Robby Stern

As I approach the end of more than eight years as President of PSARA, I think back to when I started, what motivated me, how the organization has done, and the challenges that lie ahead for PSARA. It is clear to me that it is time for new, younger leaders to take over the helm of PSARA.

I will be there to support their efforts. The challenges are huge for those of us who care about retirement security for all. The Republicans in Congress and the White House are mounting significant attacks on the values that PSARA members share.

I love PSARA and will remain active. I will serve as the president of the PSARA Education Fund and the editorial board of the *Retiree Advocate*, remain as Chair of Social Security Works WA, and be active as a PSARA representative with the Health Care is a Human Right Coalition. The additional time I will have (Dina and I will be providing childcare for our grandson, Manny, two days a week – a very welcome limitation on my time for political work!) will allow me to do a better job with these political/educational/advocacy commitments. I also look forward to standing for election to the PSARA Executive Board at the December general membership meeting.

When I retired as Special Assistant to the President of the Washington State Labor Council on April 1, 2008, I was 64 and had just come through two bouts of cancer. Approximately a year prior to my retirement, one of my beloved mentors, Will Parry, then-president of PSARA, and Al Peppard visited my office and asked me to consider retiring so I could become an active leader of PSARA. They explained to me that they felt they were getting too old for the time and responsibility that leading the organization required. Will was 88, and he definitely wanted to stay active as the editor of the *Retiree Advocate*. But administering the organization was becoming too much for him.

I had been thinking about retiring early, and after talking to Dina and my best friend, Jeff, about the role of PSARA in the broader progressive struggle, this made sense to me as the next step. Fortunately, between my two defined benefit pensions, Social Security and our savings, it was financially viable.

It was my analysis then as now that the coming numerical growth of seniors with the aging of the baby boomers required an active, progressive retiree advocacy organization. The concern was that when people retired out of their work places, the source of their information would be the corporate-controlled mass media, and that would lead to a move to greater conservatism. Unfortunately, that has proved to be correct as we see the role that older people have played in electing conservatives and worse to office.

PSARA was an alternative source of information and progressive advocacy in our community. It was a very small but vital alternative to the corporate AARP. Will's work on the *Retiree Advocate* and his steadfast commitment to progressive values coupled with an uncanny ability to present reasonable explanations of what needed to be done was and continues to be an inspiration. I wanted to try and "Carry It On." (Will loved to lead us in singing this song written by Gil Turner). I wanted to assist in building PSARA into an even more effective voice in the progressive community and in the broader community.

As a result of an amazing group of volunteers and you, our wonderful membership, we have made great strides in the last nine years.

It began with the fight to Scrap the Cap. Will, a master of words, coined this phrase. It was brilliant. PSARA started educating about the cap more than a decade ago in the left-hand corner of the country. It has now become a



national campaign. It is pretty amazing! In 2009, when we first brought a resolution supporting scrapping the cap to the Alliance for Retired Americans convention, they tabled the resolution with significant opposition to the idea. Now, not only has it been embraced by the Alliance and Social Security Works, but more and more Democratic elected officials are supporting an offensive strategy predicated on scrapping the cap. It was an issue in the 2016 Democratic presidential primary season. PSARA has played a significant role in making that happen!

We have, just in the last 18 months, presented educational forums on the need to expand Social Security, Medicare, and Medicaid to thousands of Washingtonians throughout Western Washington and are planning to expand statewide. The "Scrap the Cap, We're Moving In" video, created by staff and volunteers at the Economic Opportunity Institute, has been viewed by hundreds of thousands across the country.

Our membership has more than doubled since 2009, and local PSARA committees are developing in different parts of the region.

*Continued on Page 11*

# New Seasons Market Workers Are Organizing

By Vinod Goswami

You've heard us talk about the problems with New Seasons Market for over a year, and now New Seasons employees in Portland are speaking up about them, too.

Just as we've been hearing from New Seasons workers in Mercer Island, Portland workers are tired of the company's punitive attendance policy, continuous understaffing, and substandard wages and benefits.

Workers are also particularly frustrated with stories about the racism and discrimination they've experienced at New Seasons, and more employees are bravely coming forward to share their stories. One employee, Alivia, from the Williams store in Portland said, "I think there used to be more black folk working here back when they first opened, but honestly, the store is so racist they've either been fired for stupid reasons or quit because they couldn't stand how differently they were treated." Nobody should have to endure this type of treatment at work.

On November 1, hundreds of New Seasons workers in Portland announced they're uniting across 18 stores to form the New Seasons Workers Union.

These workers issued a Statement of Principles that calls on the company to live up to its claims of being socially responsible. In the Statement, workers say New Seasons has changed since being acquired by private equity firm Endeavour Capital, and the company's "progressive reputation is now little more than a clever marketing strategy." Workers have asked New Seasons executives to meet with them and agree to a Code of Conduct that mandates respect for workers' rights to speak up collectively and organize.

New Seasons has responded by claiming their "speak up" culture ensures workers have a safe way to share their concerns with management. But workers disagree -- they are forming New Seasons Workers United to have a say in how they're treated and to level

the playing field between workers and management. Many of us know from experience that unless you have the backing of your co-workers through a strong union, it's common to face retaliation for speaking up about working conditions.

As New Seasons seeks to expand into the Seattle area, 34 community organizations and legislators have joined the Seattle Good Jobs Coalition. We will continue to take action to ensure that New Seasons respects workers' rights here and in Portland.

PSARA members have been a critical partner in this fight, and we're grateful for all the work you've done. As this campaign continues to build, we are always open to more community support. If you're interested in getting involved or learning about how you can hold New Seasons accountable in your neighborhood, visit [www.nsmsick.org](http://www.nsmsick.org)

*Vinod Goswami is a member of PSARA and UFCW 21, the union that represents grocery workers.*

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## PSARA Holds Successful Legislative Conference November 21

*Photos by Garet Munger*



Featuring a keynote speech by State Senate Majority Leader Sharon Nelson (above left), PSARA held its annual Legislative Conference on November 21.

After breaking the Republican stranglehold on the State Senate, the legisla-

ture would "look at what we can do for seniors and their families," Nelson said.

After hearing from Nelson and PSARA lobbyist Pam Crone, we broke up into groups by legislative district to plan for in-district meetings with our elected rep-

resentatives and for Senior Lobby Day in Olympia, February 22, 2018.

Stay tuned for more info on Senior Lobby Day coming up in future issues of *The Retiree Advocate*.

# Fo' Real: The Most Potent Weapon

By Bob Shimabukuro

*The most potent weapon of the oppressor is the mind of the oppressed.*

---South African freedom fighter Stephen Biko

*Manuela boy, my dear boy, you no mo' hila hila*

*No mo' 5 cents, no mo' house*

*Go Aala Paka hila moi*

--opening first verse of one song my dad w'en sing a lot, strumming the uku-lele on C chord for the whole thing.

So two mo' story I go write 'bout being poor. Hope you can understand how poverty, just like race, can grind on your inside and make you feel bad, and you t'ink you not so hot, dat you stupid, dat you no can understand nothing. But you really can understand, no let nobody call you stupid. You have to fight dat all the time.

## Poverty Story 4: School Daze

First day, teacher w'en pass out list of stuff we need for class. I already nervous. I know mom going have hard time buy supplies for all us kids.

I ask Mom, "Can I get the color pencils? Can do more stuff than crayons. Can mix colors nice. Smudge stuff too." "We'll see," she says, not committing herself.

"Just the 8-pencil pack will be okay. I'll take good care of them. Make 'em last a whole year."

I was so happy when I found out that Mom did indeed buy the 8-Pack.

The next morning at school a classmate, Sandra, asked, "What kind of colors did you get, pencils or crayons?"

I showed her my box and she was elated. "Great!" she said. "When I asked my mom if I could get the color pencils, she said, 'if Bob can get pencils, I guess it wouldn't be so bad if you bought some too.'"

I smiled, but inside my stomach was churning. I felt that my purchases had become benchmarks for needs and extravagances. That bothered me.

"Poor Bob can afford this, then so can I!"

## Poverty Story 5: Palama Settlement

Teacher say, "Good news. Everybody turned in their OK cards. (Dental cards, brought from the Dentist, to ensure everyone had no teeth issues. The rest of the class had gone to their family dentist during the summer for check-ups.)

"Well, everyone except Bob, but he doesn't count, because he goes to Palama Settlement for dental work, and he has to wait until his turn comes up."

"What's this about?" I asked myself.

"So, since everybody else turned in their OK cards, we were the first class to turn in 100 percent, which means that we will get some ice cream."

"Will Bob get some too?," asked some kid.

"Of course," teacher answered.

"Well, that's nice," I thought to myself. But I didn't dare look around to find out who was looking out for me. I wanted to hide. And "Bob doesn't count," and "Palama Settlement" meant one thing: it had something to do with being poor.

These events occurred often, especially when I was in school. I didn't know then how much they affected me. They don't fit the categories that were offered at the racism workshops I have attended, but they do reflect an internalized oppression that still puts me on the defensive and still hurts, even after life past 72 years.

Yeah, we all have to stay strong.

Let's catch a breath, then keep moving.

In the meantime, I'd like to leave you with this story about my grandson Mako as told by his dad, Wayne:

Yesterday, walking home from school, I asked Mako (2nd grade) if he had learned about Columbus at school. He said, Yes, and so I asked him what he had learned. He said he had learned that Columbus stole from the Native Americans and killed a lot of them.



He later said that learning about those things kind of bummed him out, which I did understand. Columbus was a real bummer.

"Yes!" I thought. That 2nd grade class has more fo' real information/knowledge than our President, his Cabinet, and over half of Congress. A very good start! It also affirmed that the coming generations are going to be all right.

## Postscript: Internalized Racist Oppression

BS: "Zenwa, you ever hear about IRO?"

ZS: "Not the Oppression part. But the 'Internalized Racism' part, yeah."

"Well, what does it mean?"

"Internalizing our own racial stereotypes."

An inferiority complex based upon treatment by the dominant culture. BS

How to deal with yourself in a world of crap is a major part of coming to terms with internalized racial oppression. Alice Ito

The devaluing of one's own identity and culture according to societal norms.

Kenneth Jones, Western States Center/Peace Development Fund

*Bob Shimabukuro is Associate Editor of the Retiree Advocate.*

# Trump Tax Plan: Beware the Jabberwock

By Michael Righi

Nothing is certain but death and taxes. And lies about taxes. Back in the day, when Reagan claimed that his tax cuts would create jobs and higher wages and budget surpluses, it was called "supply-side economics." Now, at least, Trump's and Paul Ryan's statements to the same effect are widely recognized as what they are, lies.

Friends ask me what the Republicans are thinking, pushing a tax plan through Congress that is remarkably unpopular, according to most polls. People recognize that it is a naked looting of the Treasury by plutocrats who must be just, well, greedy.

There is that. But the plan is also the latest attempt of conservative elites, now hiding behind Trump, to eviscerate social programs such as Social Security and Medicare, cut back on public goods such as education and scientific research, and further constrain the regulatory abilities of the government. All of which benefit the rest of us, after all. And those programs are part of a social compact that our elites have decided to do away with.

Let's talk some specifics of the Republican tax plans: First, recognize that these plans are overwhelmingly about cutting corporate taxes. There is a lot of smoke about cuts for the "middle class," about which families might actually get a tax cut and who will have to pay more (most families by 2027). But these are all temporary! The only permanent tax cuts are for corporations (35% to 20%).

The facts (you know, actual data) show that while corporate profits are at historical highs, but corporate investment in new equipment or technology or factories or buildings, the spending that creates actual jobs, is at a low. So what is the point other than to increase stock prices and CEO pay and dividend payouts to the richest 1%?

Apologists for the Trump/Ryan plan argue that U.S. corporations need to have a low tax burden when competing with foreign multinationals. You do have to laugh at the idea of a "US corporation" – in what meaningful sense

is Apple or Nike or AT&T or GM a US corporation any more? Why do we want governments competing to give corporations tax breaks? Other countries could cut their taxes in response in a race to the bottom and thus have even less to spend on valuable programs.

Corporations have been stashing money in the trillions overseas in no-tax locations. They owe almost \$1 trillion in taxes on those profits. The tax plan would let them bring that money back to the US at about a 10% tax rate. What would that do if it actually worked? It would jack up the value of the US dollar, hurt US exports, and thus raise the trade deficit that has been responsible for the loss of so many jobs. There is a pattern here – it helps the rich and hurts working people.

There is more! How about the fact that the tax plan would eliminate tax deductions for state taxes? What this means is that progressive high-tax states that have well-developed social programs will be penalized. Or what about the provision that would extend 529 Programs (a tax break for saving for college) to K-12 schools? This means well-off families can get help sending their kids to expensive private schools.

Plutocrats don't just want to enrich themselves; they have (rich) family values. So besides making sure their privileged kids get schooling and connections, the tax plan would essentially eliminate estate taxes, raising the tax-free amount to \$11 million per person. So the wealthy are not only getting wealthier. We are creating an even more entrenched hereditary plutocracy.

## Our Vorpall Swords!

How do we cut through all this nonsense? What do we tell family and friends at holiday gatherings? We do need to recognize the lies and be able to explain some of the nonsensical claims. And how conventional this all is, a reprise of what Republicans have been doing for 40 years.

But more, we need to emphasize that they are coming for Social Security, Medicare, Medicaid, and the ACA. When budget deficits rise, the "what else can we do" laments will begin. Are people who wring their hands over federal debt when Democrats are in charge complete hypocrites for pushing tax cuts today? Of course! And are deficits (inflated by tax cuts) often invoked as the need to savage Social Security, Medicare, Medicaid, and the Affordable Care Act? And wouldn't gutting these programs be terrible for vulnerable Americans? Yes and yes.

But there is no pressing economic reason to worry about federal budget deficits. Their political effectiveness is only enhanced by well-meaning people echoing false claims supporting hysteria about debt. The reason to oppose the latest round of Republican tax cuts is not because they make the deficit grow, but because they're simply unfair and stupid. That should be more than enough.

As we have put it in the past, the problem with American paychecks isn't what taxes are taking out of them, it's what employers are failing to put in them.

To boost wage growth, policies that restore some genuine leverage to workers when they bargain with employers over pay need to be implemented. Key examples of policies that increase this leverage include ensuring the economy is pinned at very low rates of unemployment for extended periods of time and ensuring that the right of workers to bargain collectively is enforced. But there are literally dozens of other policies that would improve workers' leverage along important margins as well.

Finally, a plea when arguing with conservatives (or anybody else) about these tax cuts: Read "Jabberwocky" by Lewis Carroll, my friends. Cut through the nonsense!

*Michael Righi is a retired economics professor and a member of PSARA.*

# PSARA Holiday Potluck and Membership Meeting



**Thursday, December 14, 2017 -- Noon to 3:00 p.m.**

***Joe Crump Hall, UFCW 21 office, 5030 1st Avenue S, Seattle 98134  
Served by Metro Route 132***

***Noon - 1:00 p.m.*** Silent Auction, Socializing, and Potluck Lunch. Please bring a dish to share: main dish, salad, fruit, dessert, or non-alcoholic beverage.

***1:00 p.m.*** PSARA Membership Meeting: election of officers and Executive Board and planning for PSARA's future.

***RSVP please! Email [organizer@psara.org](mailto:organizer@psara.org)  
or call the PSARA office, 206-448-9646.***

***When you RSVP, please let us know what you are bringing to the potluck.  
If you need a ride or if you can offer rides,  
please let us know when you RSVP.***

***If you have items to donate to the Silent Auction, please email  
[fundraising@psara.org](mailto:fundraising@psara.org) or call the PSARA office.***

# The GOP Tax Plan Is an Attack on Seniors

By Nancy Altman, President of Social Security Works

Earlier this year, Republicans failed to pass Trumpcare, which would have taken health care away from tens of millions of Americans to pay for a giant tax cut for the GOP's wealthy donors. They failed because of massive resistance from the American people. Yet they remain undeterred. They are now trying to pass a so-called "tax reform" bill that is actually Trumpcare in reverse order. It would give a giant tax cut to their donors, which will be paid for by gutting Medicare and Medicaid.

This strategy is laid out clearly in the budget plan passed by House and Senate Republicans, which cuts \$1 trillion from Medicaid and nearly \$500 billion from Medicare, while radically weakening their protections. Moreover, the Congressional Budget Office (CBO) has found that the GOP tax bill would trigger \$400 billion in automatic cuts to Medicare in the next 10 years!

The tax bill's attack on seniors doesn't stop there. The House's bill would also repeal the medical expense deduction, which allows people who spend over 10 percent of their income on medical costs to deduct some of those costs from their taxes. Given that older Americans have disproportionately high health care costs, it's no surprise that 75 percent of people who take this deduction are over 50.

The GOP's tax scam is a threat to Social Security's future as well. The program is not endangered as directly as Medicare or Medicaid, because it is not part of the federal budget, but instead is funded directly by the American people's payroll contributions. However, by allowing the wealthiest to convert their salaries, which are subject to Social Security contributions, into unearned income, which is not, the tax scam will cost Social Security dedicated revenue.

Moreover, while it takes 60 votes in the Senate to cut Social Security's benefits, the program's administrative budget is a different story. With baby boomers turning 65 at the rate of 10,000 per day, we should be increasing the Social Security Administration (SSA) budget so that the American people receive the high quality service they deserve and have already paid for. Instead, Congressional Republicans continue to starve SSA. This has resulted in field office closures, long wait times on the 1-800 line, and an enormous backlog for disability claims. But that isn't enough harm for the Republicans. They plan to pay for the tax giveaways to the rich by limiting how much SSA can spend yet again, starving it even more.

Republicans are trying to pass this tax bill at lightning speed, before the



Nancy Altman

American people realize what's going on. Don't let that happen. Call Senators Patty Murray and Maria Cantwell and tell them to do everything they can to resist and slow down this bill. Then, call your House member and demand they vote no. Tell your friends and family in other states, especially those with Republican Senators, to call daily and organize rallies.

Seniors, people with disabilities, and millions of other Americans came together to defeat Trumpcare. We the people can defeat the GOP's tax scam, too.

*Nancy Altman was appointed by Nancy Pelosi to the seven-member Social Security Advisory Board (SSAB).*

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## Colin Kaepernick's Thanksgiving



Colin Kaepernick made a surprise appearance at the Alcatraz Indigenous People's Sunrise Gathering on November 23.

A tradition since 1975, the annual dawn festivities, also known as Unthanksgiving Day, commemorate the 1969-71 occupation of Alcatraz by Native American activists.

"I realize that our fight is the same fight," Kaepernick told the gathering. "We're all fighting for our justice, for our freedom, and realizing that we're in

this fight together makes it all the more powerful.

"If there's one thing that I take away from today and seeing the beauty of everybody out here, it's that we're only getting stronger every day, we're only getting larger and larger every day. I see the strength in everybody.

"The dancing, the rituals – that is our resistance. We continue to fight. We continue to fight for justice. We fight for our freedom, and we continue on that path."

# US, NATO, EU Are All for Democracy and Self-Determination... Until They're Not

By Mike Andrew

**D**ecember 26, 1991 – the Soviet Union is formally dissolved. Beginning in August that year, its constituent republics, each representing a separate nationality within the Soviet federation, had been seceding from the country.

Eleven of the 15 Soviet republics had already taken the initiative and signed a joint statement declaring that the Soviet Union was extinct.

The US, NATO, and the European Union (EU) cracked open the champagne. For almost 70 years this had been their fondest dream – the end of Communism and the triumph of what they called “democracy and self-determination.”

Even before the Supreme Soviet, the USSR’s legislative body, passed the formal dissolution, US President George H. W. Bush had recognized the independence of the former Soviet republics.

EU and NATO diplomats had been working behind the scenes for years to encourage separatist tendencies in the Soviet republics. Now they jumped at the chance to recruit the newly independent countries into their orbits.

Estonia, Latvia, and Lithuania – all former Soviet republics – became members of NATO and the EU, just as former Soviet allies like Poland, Romania, Hungary, and Bulgaria did.

The same year, the US, NATO, and the EU also helped to dismember socialist Yugoslavia, insisting on independence for all of its constituent republics, and gathering the most pro-West republics into their orbit.

Today, Slovenia and Croatia are members of both NATO and the EU, and Montenegro is a part of NATO.

**F**ast forward to **October 1, 2017** – Catalunya votes for independence from Spain. The US, NATO, and the EU are aghast.

Instead of protesting violent police attacks on Catalan citizens trying to vote – attacks ordered by Spanish Prime Minister Mariano Rajoy – US and EU diplomats warn Catalunya they will never recognize Catalan independence.



*Two of a kind? Trump (left) shakes hands with Spanish PM Rajoy (right) outside the White House. (Photo: El Diario)*

Donald Trump receives Rajoy at the White House and goes on TV with the grinning Spanish leader.

“I bet you if you had accurate numbers and accurate polling, you’d find that they love their country, they love Spain, and they wouldn’t leave. So I’m just for a united Spain,” Trump says.

“I really think the people of Catalonia would stay with Spain. I think it would be foolish not to. Because you’re talking about staying with a truly great, beautiful, and very historic country,” he added.

Substitute “Soviet Union” for “Spain” and “Estonia” or “Latvia” for “Catalonia.” Anyone talking like that in 1991 would have been dismissed out of hand as a Soviet stooge.

According to CBS News, Trump and Rajoy “committed to fighting various international threats to democratic values” in their joint press statement issued from the White House.

Of course. US presidents and their counterparts always commit to fighting “international threats to democratic values,” but in this case the statement is particularly hollow.

We know Trump, and we know how much he’s committed to democratic values. The one American readers might not know so well is Rajoy.

The EU, and to a lesser extent the US too, responded to the 2008 recession with an austerity policy that called for draconian cuts to public expenditures, including pensions, healthcare, and other social spending.

This turned out to be exactly the wrong thing to do, since it dramatically increased unemployment and caused the economies of the poorest European countries – Spain among them – to collapse. Nevertheless, Rajoy was one of the strongest advocates of EU-imposed austerity, earning him the support of the EU’s bureaucracy.

But Rajoy is no neoliberal. He is, in fact, the political heir of the fascist movement led by Francisco Franco, who ruled Spain from 1939 until he died in 1975.

One of the hallmarks of the Franco regime was suppression of Spain’s minority nationalities – the Basques, Catalans, and Galicians – and Rajoy is carrying on that tradition.

In 1991 the US and Europe quickly endorsed the breakup of the Soviet Union in order to pick up the pieces afterwards. In 2017 they just as quickly endorse the unity of Spain, apparently ready to sacrifice Catalunya to fiscal austerity.

# How the ‘Millennium Migration’ from Latin America Shaped the US for the Better, Part I

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

A century ago, Italian immigrants told a joke: “Before I came to America, I thought the streets were paved with gold. When I got here, I learned three things: one, the streets were not paved with gold; two, the streets were not paved at all; and three, they expected me to pave them.”

Over the past half-century, Mexicans and Central Americans immigrants haven’t found as many streets to pave. But they’ve been drawn northward by the same voracious demand for their labor in fields like agriculture, residential construction, food services, and lodging. They too have taken hard, low-paying jobs, and stimulated the economy as workers, consumers, and entrepreneurs.

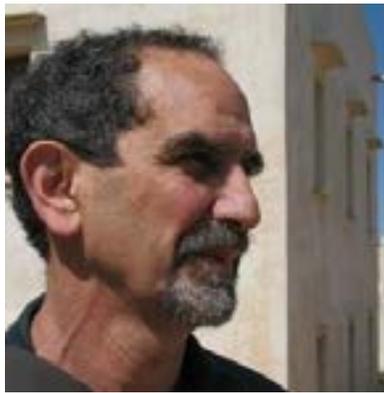
The newcomers have been criminalized, unjustly imprisoned, and deported. Nevertheless, many have put down deep roots where they’ve settled. In many dimensions, they’ve enriched the “gorgeous mosaic” that we’re still struggling to become.

In the end, the benefits of this mass migration have far outweighed the costs. But you’d never know it from a debate distorted by decades of anti-immigrant demagoguery. To understand this disjunction, we need to take a hard look back at what actually happened.

## You say Rio Grande, and I say Rio Bravo

From the last part of the past century through the beginning of the Great Recession, an epochal exodus of Mesoamericans poured across the border into el Norte. The tide rose gradually in the 1970s, accelerated in the 1990s, and crested around 2000. It subsided through the following years, and ended with the bursting of the housing bubble around 2008. Let’s call it the Millennium Migration.

The migrants were driven by powerful push-pull effects: a debilitating depression with 20 percent unemployment following the mid-1990s peso crisis in Mexico, next door to a boom in



Peter Constantini

the United States that raised even low wages and offered plentiful jobs. Meanwhile, the U.S. workforce was shrinking due to low birth rates. The North American Free Trade Agreement and the Mexican government’s elimination of protections for small farmers drove a couple million of them off their land. Many went north.

The Millennium Migration built on what had been going on for over a century: circular migration back and forth across the border to the rhythms of the U.S. and Mexican economies. Some 60 percent of the voyagers did not have papers. Many were driven by what might be called the Mexican Dream — sending home remittances to support their family and returning after a few years to build a house or open a small business. But this time the demand for their labor pulled them into new fields beyond agriculture, like residential construction and food service. And changing enforcement patterns pushed some towards new areas of the Midwest, Southeast, and Northeast.

This migratory surge was probably the largest in United States history in absolute numbers, although proportionately to population it was not as high as the peaks of the 19th and early 20th centuries. It left Latinos the largest minority group in the United States, with 16.3 percent of the population, and shifted demographic and political balances in much of the West and Southwest.

The Millennium influx slowed gradually after the dot-com crash and ended with the Great Recession. The bursting of the housing bubble deflated residential construction, along with other sectors where many immigrants worked. From 2008 on, slightly more undocumented people went back to Mexico than entered the U.S., and the population of undocumented Mexicans plummeted by 18.8 percent from 2007 to 2014. The total Mexican-born and total undocumented population from everywhere both declined, but less steeply. In other words, unauthorized immigration ultimately proved to be self-regulating in response to the economy.

Today, another mass migration from the south is increasingly unlikely. Some of the factors pressuring migrants to leave Mexico receded: Birth and population growth rates shrank, along with numbers of prime-age job seekers, while life expectancy and the economy grew. Now Central Americans and others have surpassed Mexicans entering at the southern border, although in much smaller numbers than before. Overall, immigrants from China and India now both outnumber Mexicans.

The end of the Millennium Migration, however, has left a diaspora of some 11 million undocumented immigrants, more than half Mexican, stranded here at the mercy of a cruel and unusual immigration system. Their average residency is 13.6 years, and two-thirds have been here more than 10 years. Of these long-term settlers, nearly half own their own home. More than four-fifths of their children are U.S.-born citizens, and many of the rest are Dreamers. Many are in mixed families also including citizens and authorized immigrants. They have sunk deep roots into their communities and economies.

*Peter Constantini is a PSARA member. This is Part I of a longer article first published in Foreign Policy in Focus. The rest of the article will be published in future issues of The Retiree Advocate.*

# Thank You

Continued from Page 3

There is so much more I could mention, but I want to discuss challenges. There are many, and they are daunting. Surviving the next three years without major damage to our efforts to-date will be very difficult. The foxes have taken over the hen house in D.C., and we should have no doubt they want to eat us and destroy the human values we uphold. They are completely profit-driven and are doing all that they can to eliminate the barriers to the rich getting richer while the rest of us be damned. The present tax scam legislation with the resulting very large cuts to Medicare, Medicaid, and very likely Social Security are examples.

I know that the new leaders and the membership of PSARA will counter these efforts in coalition with other organizations. There are times when the fights on so many fronts can make us weary. One of the challenges for PSARA in the coming years is to love and support our activists and help them through this difficult time in our lives.

PSARA and the Education Fund will need more financial resources. PSARA has hired a capable full-time organizer, Mike Andrew. We are also working to reduce our expenses in other areas, but we will need more resources to "carry it on." We will need to raise those resources in two ways: growth of membership and fund raising. PSARA and the PSARA Education Fund will need help from all of us if we are to become as effective as we need to be.

Finally, THANK YOU! It has been a wonderful privilege to serve as the PSARA president. Thank you for your membership, your support, your activism, and your donations. I look forward to thanking many of you personally at the December holiday party and membership meeting. I look forward to working with you as we all "Carry It On."

# CARE Documentary, December 9

Please Join Us at 1:00 p.m.

By Mike Andrew

**W**hat is it like to be old, sick, and dependent on a caregiver to make it through all your day-to-day tasks?

What is it like to be the caregiver who is an old person's vital link to the world? The documentary *CARE* pulls back the curtain on the world of elder home care, a world that remains largely unseen to society at large.

**Join us to see this important film on Saturday, December 9, at 1 p.m. CARE will be shown at the Washington State Labor Council office at 321 16th Avenue S (16th Avenue S and S Jackson Street), Seattle. The showing is co-sponsored by PSARA and SEIU 775NW, the union that represents home care workers.**

*CARE* delves deeply into the world of elder home care through the eyes of both paid caregivers and their clients.

Through these personal stories, *CARE* reveals the deep humanity of home care work, as well as the challenges faced by elders, their families, and their caregivers. It also reveals the beginning of a movement to improve how we care for both for the growing number of older adults and for those who make their lives livable.

Vilma, for example, cares for Dee, 92, an active businesswoman until dementia ended her work life. With her only family 3,000 miles away, Vilma is her lifeline. Yet Vilma is undocumented and needs to get a green card.

In an isolated rural area, Laurie cajoles Larry to do his exercises and have hope while he waits for a lung transplant. Larry's wife, Tiff, says, "This is the hardest job in the world," but Laurie doesn't make enough money to pay her rent.

When Toni's husband, Peter, a former CBS executive, was struck with Parkinson's, she realized the only way to keep him home was to have 24/7 help. At first she was uncomfortable having care workers constantly in her home, but, as she realized how dependent she and Peter were on them, her concern changed to "You're not going to quit, are you?"

In spite of her realization that she and Peter are dependent on home care for him, they also know they're going broke paying for it.

*CARE* highlights an issue that affects us all. Providing quality care for an aging population will require reimagining how we value and compensate care workers and how we support families who need their services.

## 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 Fundraising Committee:** 1:30 p.m., Monday, December 4, Washington State Labor Council office, 321 16th Ave. S. All are welcome.

**Tenant Rights Rally:** 10 a.m., Tuesday, December 5, Westlake Park, 4th Ave. & Pine St., Seattle. See Page 2 for more information.

**West Seattle Hot Topics for Seniors & Senior Wannabes:** Noon – 1:30 p.m., Wednesday, December 6, Southwest Library, 9010 35th Ave SW, Seattle, (35th & Henderson). Topic: *Sharing Humor*. Brown bag lunch.

**PSARA Environmental Committee:** 10 a.m. – 11:30 a.m., Thursday, December 7, Washington State Labor Council, 321 16th Ave. S, Seattle. All are welcome.

**PSARA Government Relations Committee:** 1 p.m. – 2:30 p.m., Thursday, December 7, Seattle Labor Temple, 2800 1st Ave., Room 226. All are welcome.

**PSARA Education Committee:** 10 a.m. - noon, Monday, December 11, Washington State Labor Council, 321 16th Ave. S, Seattle. All are welcome.

**PSARA Holiday Potluck & Membership Meeting: Noon – 3 p.m., Thursday, December 14, Joe Crump Hall, UFCW 21 offices, 5030 1st Ave. S, Seattle. All are welcome. For more info, see the article on Page 1 and the flyer on Page 7.**

**PSARA Southend Committee:** 12:30 p.m., Thursday, December 21, Burien Library, 400 SW 152nd St., Burien. All are welcome as we plan PSARA events in South King County.

**PSARA Fundraising Committee:** 10:30 a.m., Tuesday, January 2, PSARA office, 2800 1st Ave., Seattle, Room 262. All are welcome.

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## Green Lake Discussion Group

The Green Lake Discussion Group is scheduled for noon to 1:30 p.m. on the second Thursday of every month, at the Green Lake Library, 7364 E Green Lake Dr. N, Seattle.

We're sorry for the conflict this month with the PSARA Holiday Potluck & Membership Meeting.

The Green Lake Discussion Group will continue in 2018, on the second Thursday of every month.

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