

The Retiree **ADVOCATE**

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

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July 2018

Members Matter:
**Interview with
Norma Kelsey and Her
Son, Jack**

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Benefit Concert for PSARA with Peter Costantini and Lou Truskoff, August 5

By Amy Davis

Please join us for a rousing afternoon of song featuring PSARA members Peter Costantini and Lou Truskoff. The concert will be held on Sunday, August 5, at 2:30 p.m., at the Bay Vista Tower, 2821- 2nd Ave., Seattle (the building behind the Seattle Labor Temple). We will provide cold drinks and some delicious snacks.

Peter Costantini has been singing and playing music since forming a garage band in high school. A committed community activist, he co-founded the Seattle Tenants Union and is currently involved with the immigrant rights movement. He is a former member of locals 541 and 242, the Ship Scalers and Laborers Unions. Peter is also a talented writer; several of his recent articles for the Institute for Policy Studies have been reprinted in the *Advocate*.

Lou Truskoff, a long-time social justice advocate, is a member of the American Postal Workers Union and past president of its local chapter. He co-founded the Seattle Labor Chorus and has brought music and song to countless meetings, picket lines, and demonstrations over the years. He says that leading others in song is his greatest pleasure.

Lou and Peter first sang together in the 1970s at an event in support of the United Farmworkers boycott. Later they formed a quintet, the Solidarity Singers, along with friends Mark Aalfs, Janet Stecher, and Susan Lewis (the latter two now of Rebel Voices). The group performed around the Puget Sound region



*A recent...well, circa 1988...photo of Peter (on the left) and Lou performing. They haven't changed a bit.
(Photo courtesy of Lou and Joan Truskoff)*

in the '70s and '80s and featured songs of solidarity and social justice. Peter and Lou have sung together periodically ever since and are looking forward to bringing their music to PSARA.

To reserve a spot, please RSVP by email to concertpsara@gmail.com (preferred), or call the PSARA office, 206-254-4910. If registering by phone, please leave a phone number where you can be reached. We will send you a confirmation along with parking and building access information. The

building location is easily accessible by bus. We will be taking donations at the door; checks should be made payable to PSARA.

We hope you can join Peter, Lou, and other PSARA members for an afternoon of spirited and uplifting music. Seating is limited, so be sure to RSVP soon. We look forward to seeing you there!

Amy Davis is a member of PSARA's Fundraising Committee and one of the Advocate's dedicated proofreaders.

The Retiree ADVOCATE

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Thank you for Giving BIG

The total GiveBIG donations to the PSARA Education Fund were over \$18,000. This will help enormously in meeting the costs for the continuing production of the *Retiree Advocate* as well as supporting our educational work. THANK YOU to the PSARA and PSARA Education Fund Executive Boards for your generosity and THANK YOU to the more than 60 members who responded to the challenge. PSARA and the PSARA Education Fund are very fortunate to have such a wonderful, generous, and committed collection of leaders and members!

Introducing *Members Matter*, a New Advocate Feature

In this issue of the *Retiree Advocate*, we're introducing a brand new feature: *Members Matter*, an ongoing series of interviews with PSARA members. You'll find the first in the series, a fascinating interview with Norma Kelsey and her son Jack, on Page 8.

With these interviews we hope to capture the breadth and depth of our members' life experiences and to pass those experiences on to future generations. Above all, we hope to tell a good story.

Video interviews are conducted by our own Angie Bartels and Karen Richter. The videos themselves will live permanently in the Labor Archives at the University of Washington. Brief excerpts will be published in the *Retiree Advocate* on a regular basis.

If you have a story to tell or if you know of another PSARA member with a good story others need to hear, email Karen at kerichter100@gmail.com

40 Years of Struggle, July 8

Forty years ago in July, 1978, Seattle's newly-formed Jewish Liberation Alliance (now Kadima) organized a rally in Occidental Square to show solidarity against Nazis marching in Chicago that same day. Nearly 500 people showed up in Occidental Square to rally against a rise in emboldened hate and bigotry.

On Sunday, July 8, 2018, PSARA will join Kadima and others to celebrate "40 Years of Struggle" and rededicate ourselves to fighting hatred, racism, and bigotry. We will continue our solidarity with the victims of these evils.

Please join us on Sunday, July 8, 2:00-3:30 p.m. at Occidental Square, 117 S Washington St., Seattle.

Save the Date!

Meet the Writers, October 14, 2:30 p.m.

Starting on Page 9 of this issue, Robby Stern has an article on two great new books: *Summary Execution* by Michael Withey and *Protest on Trial* by Kit Bakke.

We're pleased to announce that the authors will be with PSARA to talk about their work and what it means for the present day on Sunday, October 14, 2:30 p.m., at Bay Vista Tower, 2821 2nd Avenue, Seattle. Watch for details in upcoming issues of the *Retiree Advocate*.

Bob's World: Very Early Childhood Development

By Bob Shimabukuro

Before I was born...
Mid-1800s, Commodore Matthew Perry come to Edo Bay. Make demands. "We like use your bay fo' trade and ship repair. Open up the Bay for us or we blow you up," dey say. Japan know what going happen. Dey see the cannons on the ships. Dey get no choice. Dey say, "okay."

Later, Japan think about it. "We need change how we do business or they goin' take everything and we goin' get nothing. So they start building dere own industries, like ships, airplanes and all kine weapons. New kine machinery, new kine stuff."

Workforce change. Lots of workers leave Japan, go work somewhere else, like USA and South America. Late 19th century, lots come Hawaii fo' work on plantations.

—Dad

Same time, Hawai'i changing. Get British first (Captain Cook), then missionaries from America, they "help" royal family change religion and land ownership rules in Hawai'i (1848 Mahele), and by the turn of the century, they gain control of the land, economy, uh, well, the whole country, call it Hawai'i and w'en petition to become colony of the USA (Why not? They w'en use the US Navy to help them overthrow the legitimate Royal governing body.)

The flag for the Territory (euphemism for "colony") of Hawai'i was/is still absurd as a state flag, but truthful for the circumstances, a combination of the Union Jack and the stripes of the US flag.

* * *

After your faddah born (1907), mama tell our faddah, "no mo' babies. You go Hawai'i, make money, send back home."
—Zenwa Uncle

* * *

My Feelings As A Human Being Just Before Death....

Zenshu Shimabukuro (Dad) as translated from Japanese by Zenwa (Uncle) Shima. Zenwa Shima's translation, in turn, as interpreted by Bob Shimabukuro.

I have a joyful feeling that I must go away to another world in the near future. Judging by the sound of my heart flow, I have no confidence in living very long.

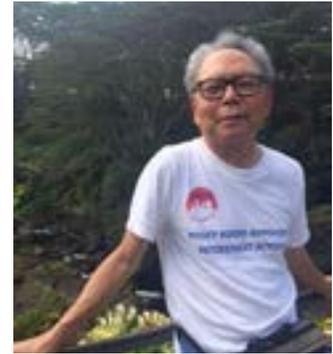
This joyful feeling, which I can die without fear, is not due to a belief in God, nor a dreamy heaven with its blossoms of beauty of the arts. A creature of nature desires to live, and by my philosophy of human life, gave me this satisfaction.

Even the doctor doesn't know my body condition (because of my poverty). I don't care to know more about it, especially when more knowledge would cost money, money which I don't have.

All mankind have higher thinking power than other creatures. The study of the various systems of thought explaining the causes, principles and relatives of natural and moral law, or the reasoned systematic science of any subject, we call philosophy, which some people may think or believe is religion or god.

With this contemplative thinking power I made an effort sacrificing my blood to a life of raising my beloved children to be educated brainy persons in this world. To do this, they have had to study hard and all the children became studious (diligent) persons as I wanted.

For this reason I am now satisfied and ready to die anytime without any fear and worry.



Alone in midnight
Unable to sleep
Thinking this and that
Past and future
Just like in a dream

* * *

And lest we forget, the 30th anniversary of the signing of Civil Liberties Act of 1988...*the hard work and dedication of the Washington Coalition on Redress could be seen in the impressive final tally on the Civil Liberties Act among members of the Washington State congressional delegation: 10 yes, 0 no. President Ronald Reagan signed the Civil Liberties Act on August 10, 1988.*
---from *Born in Seattle: the Campaign for Japanese American Redress*

Note: These "Bob's World" stories will go back in time, and relate it to what's going on in the world currently. It's been hard to think in 15-minute sequences, but this format may help me focus on what is happening in my world and not get too carried away.

There will be more about the Mahele in future columns, but if you're interested in what it was and what it did, Lili'kala Kame'eiehiwa, Hawai'an scholar, has written an excellent book about it: *Native Land and Foreign Desires*, Honolulu, 1992.

Bob Shimabukuro is Co-Chair of PSARA's Race/Gender Equity Committee and Associate Editor of the Retiree Advocate.

How Can We Let Them Do That?

An Interview with Dina Burstein about the Central/Southeast Seattle Rapid Response Network

By Mike Andrew

“In my heart, I’m very affected by refugees,” Dina Burstein told me when we sat down to talk about the Rapid Response Networks being established in Seattle.

“Many Jewish people feel this way. For me personally, all four of my grandparents were refugees. The laws were different at that time. You didn’t have to be from the ‘right population,’ so they were let in. Robby’s family also experienced similar things. They came here to escape war and fascism.

“It’s so familiar. The knock on the door when they come to take you away – how can we let them do that? They seem to want to harm people as much as they can.”

Although she describes her past acquaintance with refugees and other immigrants as only “superficial,” based on interactions when she worked at Harborview, Dina is now in the thick of the struggle to protect immigrant communities from the one-two punch of ICE raids and hate crimes.

Dina is now a lead organizer of the Central/Southeast Seattle Rapid Response Network, one of several being created to cover different geographical areas across the city. Similar groups already exist in the University District and Downtown Seattle.

“The idea is to reach out to faith groups,” she explained, “and also to individuals who would like to be our allies.”

Currently, seven congregations are involved, with ten others in discussions with organizers who hope they will decide to affiliate with the group. Two are Somali mosques, two are Catholic churches, one is a Jewish congregation, one is Lutheran, and one Presbyterian.

“It’s important for the congregations to get to know each other as human beings and as friends,” Dina said. “Without giving attention to forming relationships, the network will fall apart. After all, we have to trust each other to

stand up for each other’s safety if ICE pulls up.”

The work of the Rapid Response Networks is multifaceted, Dina explained. One part is training impacted communities so that people know what their rights are. Another important part is training observers who can show up if people call the network hotline when there’s a raid.

“Many times having a team of allies there prevents ICE from following through with detention,” Dina said. “That would be the best outcome. We also want to document ICE’s conduct. If ICE violates the rules, it’s possible to advocate for the person to be set free.”

Another important area of work is finding safe places for refugees and their children.

“Churches have buildings,” Dina said, “so it’s possible to house people who are in unsafe situations. And part of knowing your rights is knowing what you’d do with your kids if you were detained.”

Although they are peaceful people of faith, the Rapid Response teams analyze the city with the precision of military strategists.

“Think of the city in terms of danger zones and safe spaces,” Dina said. “Danger zones would be Somali grocery stores. Casa Latina. Plain clothes ICE agents in the bus tunnel downtown. So we develop a safety plan for the hot spots.”

Unfortunately, ICE is not the only threat to immigrant communities. One so-called “alt-right” group likes to impersonate ICE agents and challenge anyone they perceive as an immigrant to show their IDs.



Dina with granddaughter Mina

“Not long ago, there was one of them stalking CAIR (Committee on American Islamic Relations),” Dina said shaking her head. “And one came to bystander intervention training. He was very quiet, though.”

Although the Rapid Response Networks help train immigrant communities, Dina believes she’s also learned from her new friends.

“Religion has something to teach us about fighting for justice,” she smiled. “You know, a Somali Muslim told me that it’s a tradition in his religion that you’re responsible for the well being of people in 40 houses in every direction. It’s really beautiful to sit in a room with people like that.”

For PSARA members who want to get involved in the work of the Rapid Response Networks, you can get information by emailing centralrapidresponse@gmail.com

Dina Burstein is a PSARA member.

The Bottom Line on Social Security's Bottom Line

By Aaron Keating

The 2018 Social Security Trustees Report is out and here is the bottom line on Social Security's bottom line: it's in good shape – and with a few legislative changes could be even better.

A large (and still growing) surplus means Social Security is fully funded for at least the next decade and a half. The Social Security Trust Fund balance stood at \$2.89 trillion at the close of 2017, with an annual surplus of \$44.1 billion. The program can pay all benefits to beneficiaries, as well as associated administrative costs, for the next 16 years – and, with no changes, 79 percent of all program costs after 2034.

It's important to remember that Social Security will keep on paying benefits even if the Trust Fund is depleted – and there's a pretty straightforward way for Congress to avoid any reduction in future benefits for today's younger workers: Social Security can fully pay all scheduled benefits for the foreseeable future if Congress ensures the wealthy pay their fair share. Currently, workers and their employers each pay 6.2 percent of wages toward Social Security – but there's a cap: high-earners don't pay anything on wages over \$128,400.

According to a recent report from the Congressional Research Service, Congress could extend the Trust Fund's surplus until 2087 by simply scrapping that cap, so that the wealthy pay Social Security taxes on all of their income – like the rest of Americans already do! If those facts come as a surprise, you may be one of the millions of Americans who have been subjected to a relentless campaign to convince them Social Security is in crisis and won't be there when they retire.

But nothing could be further from the truth. Social Security is not only the largest, best-known and most efficient



Aaron Keating

retirement, survivors, and disability insurance program in America's history; it is also the nation's most secure and conservatively invested public trust. What's more, Social Security doesn't just work – it works well!

- In Washington, nearly 1.3 million state residents of all ages receive Social Security benefits. That's 18 percent of our state's population, who in turn provide income for 30 percent of the state's households.

- Social Security is a remarkably effective anti-poverty program. Social Security dramatically reduces poverty among the elderly in Washington from 35.1 to 7.4 percent. Retirement benefits are modest, averaging \$1,379/month (\$16,549/year) – but without them, an additional 301,000 Washingtonians age 65 or older would have lived in poverty in 2015.

- Social Security protects children and families against tragedy. For 98 percent of Washington's more than 1.6 million children and families, Social Security is the primary insurance protection in the event a parent or spouse dies

or is disabled. In 2016, over 109,000 widow(er)s and children in Washington received an average \$1,219/month (\$14,631/year). Over 211,000 disabled workers and their families received an average \$1,061/month (\$12,737/year).

Social Security does this in every state across the nation. So why is an entire political party and its leaders dedicated to pulling the economic rug out from under millions of Americans? To trade Social Security for more tax cuts to benefit the super-wealthy.

Reducing Social Security benefits, limiting cost-of-living-adjustments (COLAs) and/or increasing the retirement age would diminish economic security for nearly every American. It would disproportionately affect low- and middle-income families, particularly women and workers of color who, unlike wealthy individuals, often do not have significant retirement savings and work in more difficult and physically demanding jobs.

It's time for Congress to expand and improve Social Security – so it continues protecting our families and communities, and creates a more equitable and secure future for us all by raising benefits overall, crediting time caring for family, restoring student survivor benefits, adopting the Consumer Price Index for the Elderly (CPI-E) inflation index, restoring office access & services.

Take a minute to get in touch with your elected representatives in the House and Senate – no matter their political stripes – to remind them that Social Security is important to you and your community and to encourage them to sign on to legislation that will expand and improve Social Security.

Aaron Keating is the Managing Director of EOI (the Economic Opportunity Institute) and a member of PSARA.

Medicare/Medicare Advantage

By Robby Stern

The most recent Medicare Trustees Report regarding the challenges to the Medicare Trust Fund are disturbing, in large part because of who is in control of the Congress and Executive Branch.

In the past, when there were financial challenges to Medicare, the Congress, supported by the President, voted to allocate more money to the trust fund. That outcome seems unlikely with the present configuration in Congress and the Executive branch. The tax "reform" legislation that was passed in 2018 plays a significant role in the depletion of the Medicare Trust Fund, according to the analysis of the actuaries who provided the data for the report.

The Center for Medicare Advocacy (CMA) issued a press release in response to the Medicare Trustees Report which stated that the Part A Trust Fund would be insolvent in 2026, "three years sooner than last year's projection." The release points out that "the good news is this is about nine years later than it would have been without the Affordable Care Act," which the Trump administration is bound and determined to disassemble. Then the press release goes on to say, "The bad news is the projection reflects recent, ill-advised laws and policies – including the recent tax cut, increased enrollment in and inflated payments to private Medicare Advantage plans, and increased spending, particularly for prescription drugs."

CMA and other advocates for Medicare, including the *Retiree Advocate*, call for an end to overpayments to Medicare Advantage plans, negotiation over drug prices for the whole Medicare program, and an end to efforts to repeal the ACA. We also know that lowering the age of eligibility for Medicare will enhance the financial health of Medicare. These are issues for the 2018 election cycle. Continued control by those who want to cut Medicare and Medicaid would not be good.

Despite the overwhelming popularity of Medicare and Social Security, it is the dream of these right-wing politicians to sharply limit or eliminate these two programs. The opportunity to be able to say we had to cut Medicare (or Social Security) to save them is a dream come true. Pushing people into the private health care insurance markets is a perfect example of serving the ones who brought them to the dance.

Obviously, political action is required to stop the attacks on Medicare and Social Security. Changing who controls Congress in 2018 will make a huge difference. We in Washington have a role to play. The 3rd, 5th, and 8th Congressional districts provide an opportunity for Washington to impact who controls Congress. We have an opportunity to raise the need to preserve and expand Medicare and Social Security into these campaigns. We all must do what we can!

The Foxes in the Hen House

The Center for Medicare Advocacy along with Justice in Aging and the Medicare Rights Center sent a letter to the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS) raising "strong objections to serious inaccuracies" in the draft of the 2019 *Medicare and You Handbook* used by tens of millions of Medicare recipients annually to help them make decisions about which Medicare plan to choose. The Medicare advocacy organizations assert that the draft fails to present information "in an objective and unbiased way".

Examples of the serious distortions include:

- It suggests that Medicare Advantage is a less expensive alternative for beneficiaries;
- It fails to draw the clear distinction that traditional Medicare allows access to all Medicare participating providers

while Medicare Advantage plans limit access to a set network of providers in a geographic area; and

- It characterizes prior authorization requirements in Medicare Advantage plans as a benefit rather than a limitation on access to services. These are mandatory hurdles for Medicare Advantage enrollees that do not exist for enrollees in traditional Medicare.

The tilt by CMS to private insurance Medicare Advantage plans is not surprising, given who is the Secretary of Health and Human Services (HHS). Nevertheless, HHS and CMS as a division within HHS are charged with the responsibility to provide objective information "in order to promote an active, informed selection among such options. 42 U.S. Code, Section 1395w-21(d)(1)"

In an article discussing the draft Medicare & You Handbook, Reuters journalist Mark Miller stated:

"the handbook problems fit a pattern in the Trump administration, which has taken a number of steps to impede the flow of unbiased health insurance assistance. The administration has twice proposed to eliminate federal funding for State Health Insurance Assistance Programs, which provide critical assistance to 3 million seniors annually with their plan selections, and it has slashed funding for consumer outreach and enrollment assistance for Affordable Care Act coverage...there is still time for Medicare to correct the problems – and CMS should play this straight. Medicare Advantage is doing just fine without using the handbook to tip the scales."

Robby Stern is President of the PSARA Education Fund and a member of PSARA's Executive Board.

Images of the June PSARA Membership Meeting

Photos by Garet Munger



It was a full house at PSARA's June 21 membership meeting, and a memorable experience for all.

Above left, Lou Truskoff leads us in song. Above right, Washington State Labor Council President and PSARA member Jeff Johnson gives the keynote speech.

At left, PSARA Executive Board members Vivian Lee and Bonny Oborn confer on a very important matter.

Below, PSARA's Co-Presidents, Tim Burns (at the lecturn) and Jessica Bonebright (at right) introduce VPs and committee chairs: from left, Bob Swanson, Pam Lux, Mindi Lee, Bob Shimabukuro, and Steve Bauck (standing between Tim and Jessica).

Thanks to Jeff for being with us for his last speech to PSARA as WSLC President and to UFCW 21 for the use of Joe Crump Hall.



Members Matter: Interview with PSARA Member Norma Kelsey and Her Son, Jack

By Angie Bartels and Karen Richter

PSARA's Oral History project is underway. Our first interviewee was Norma Kelsey, a long time PSARA member and activist. Her interview was conducted in April and lasted about an hour and a half. The following are some highlights of the interview and of Norma's life. You can hear it in its entirety by going to the University of Washington's Labor Archives, at <https://tinyurl.com/y7pcfg53>

Where were you born?

Independence, Kansas in 1935. I'm 82 years old now and Jack is 65. My grandparents arrived in Independence by covered wagon and were homesteaders there. My mother was born in Petroleum, Indiana, which no longer exists. I was one of nine kids, the second to oldest. My father was a painter and mother was a housewife.

Where did you go to school?

I went to grade school in Independence. Then my family moved to Wichita for work. I went to junior high and high school there. I discovered boys in 11th grade, quit school and got married at 16 years of age. Jack was born a year later and I had two more kids by age twenty. My husband was very brutal to them and to me, and we escaped with our lives, went home to my mother and I divorced him. After about a year I met my wonderful second husband Robert. He had a son. Then we had a child. My parents moved to Fair Oaks, California, for work, and we did too. We then fostered twins who needed our love. We had a very large family! Robert was such a kind hearted man. He founded a Boy Scout Troop for mentally disabled kids, including our son Jack.

I returned to Independence for a twenty year reunion and found that nothing had changed. People believed the same things as when I left: that men were the head of the house and women always obey them, and that the races should not mix. They never moved on to other belief systems. I'm glad I don't live there!



Norma and Jack

Photo courtesy of Karen Richter

How did you get drawn to the Labor Movement?

My sister and I were members of the Salvation Army Church. They teach to give and not take and that our role in life is to help others. Life isn't about what you get, it's what you give, that we have a responsibility to others.

When I divorced, I got a job as a receptionist at the Machinist's Union. The labor union became my religion, and I worked for unions for the next 56 years. Organized labor is a way of living life much like the beliefs of the Salvation Army Church: helping others, giving to them, my brothers and sisters.

Who inspired you?

My second husband was a concrete engineer, and he had a job offer in Seattle, which we accepted. I transferred to Local 8, which was in trusteeship. I met Maureen Bo, and we formed a committee as we didn't want to merge with the international. We hired a lawyer, and I met more inspiring women in addition to Maureen, such as Karen Keiser. Maureen worked at the WSLC and was never afraid of a new challenge. She inspired us to put together a group of women to fight for our rights. She continues to inspire me today!

What has kept you so positive?

I have suffered from bad depression during my life. I discovered that you can choose to be happy and let the rest go. I almost died last year. I wound up in the emergency room. A wonderful nurse held me, sang to me throughout the night and saved my life. While recovering from severe dehydration, not eating properly or taking my medication, I heard the doctors saying awful things to immigrant workers. I figured if I wasn't going to die I might as well do something about it. I let the workers know about their rights and Local 6 sent a rep. They had a work stoppage and things improved.

What surprises you?

I cannot believe that people still support Donald Trump. I just don't understand how people can be so blind. A President lied, and people know it but still support him. How can he still be in office? We think we make progress, but sometimes it can be lost unless we keep fighting.

What advice would you give?

Do as much as you possibly can. Don't take yourself so seriously. Have some fun. Volunteer. You will never regret having a new experience. In PSARA we have fun! The mailing party is a great place to have fun together. Remember anyone can do anything. If Trump can be President I can be Queen Mary!

Thank you, Norma. You inspire us and we love sharing stories with you at the mailing party.

If you would like to suggest a PSARA member to be interviewed or if you would like to be interviewed please contact Karen Richter at kerichter100@gmail.com.

Karen Richter is PSARA's Co-Vice President for Membership and Chair of the Fundraising Committee. Angie Bartels is a member of PSARA's Fundraising Committee.

Two New Books Worth Reading

By Robby Stern

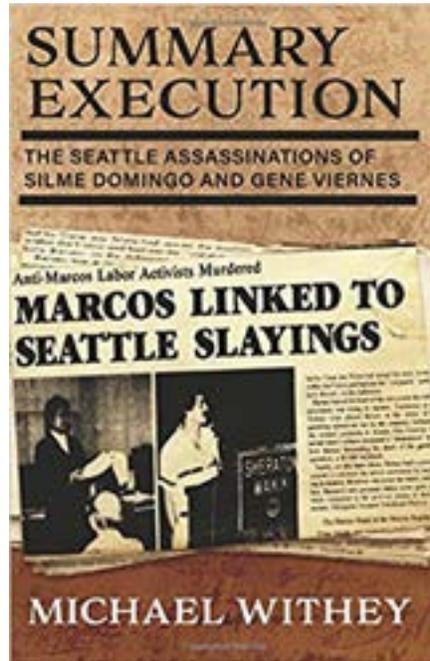
“What we understood and what we have to pass on to younger generations is that the struggle for a truly just and equitable society is a marathon, not a sprint.” A quote by Na’em Shareef at the recent 50th Anniversary commemoration of the Seattle Black Panther Party.

Two recently published books are very worthy of your attention. *Summary Execution* by attorney Michael Withey relates in a compelling personal narrative the story of the assassination of local Filipino labor and community leaders Silme Domingo and Gene Viernes in their union hall in 1981, and the eight long years of struggle on the part of their family, friends, and allies to achieve justice and hold those responsible, accountable. Mike Withey is a friend of the assassinated men and was the lead attorney in the effort.

Protest on Trial by Kit Bakke provides an easy-to-read history of the Seattle Seven (Eight) and the conspiracy charges brought against them by the federal government in 1970. It reveals some of the lengths to which our federal government is prepared to go to shut down organizing and protest.

Silme Domingo and Gene Viernes were part of a Rank and File Committee of union members working to wrest control of the Cannery Workers Union (a union composed primarily of Filipino workers) from the hands of gangsters and corrupt officers. Silme and Gene and several other members of the Rank and File Committee were also members of the KDP, a disciplined organization of primarily Filipinos throughout the US that were working to remove the US-supported brutal and corrupt dictator in the Philippines, Ferdinand Marcos.

Tony Baruso, the corrupt, ruthless president of the local union partnered with the Tulisan street gang, thugs in the Filipino community, to run and profit from the bribes and profitable

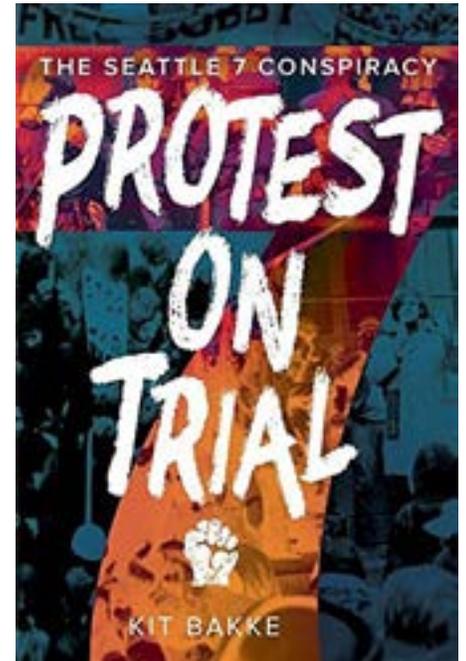


gambling operation in the Alaska canneries. Baruso was also a significant ally in the US of the Marcos regime.

Silme and Gene were elected officers of the local union, with Gene serving as dispatcher. In May, 1981, the new leaders announced a fair system of dispatching workers to the canneries, eliminating the bribery that previously existed. The new system threatened the significant money and power being reaped from the corruption.

At the same time, the book recounts how Silme and Gene were continuing their anti-Marcos work. Gene traveled to the Philippines in April, 1981, and met with various anti-Marcos organizations, brought money to assist their efforts, and wrote about what he observed.

The Cannery Workers Union was Local 37 of the International Longshore and Warehousemen’s Union (ILWU). Almost immediately after Gene’s return from the Philippines, Silme and Gene wrote a resolution on the situation in the Philippines regarding the ter-



rible conditions of workers and the repression of unions to present to the international convention of the ILWU in Honolulu. The resolution called for the ILWU to send an investigative team to the Philippines, something Marcos and his US allies strongly opposed. Despite the vocal opposition of the Marcos government and allies, the resolution was approved.

Shortly after these events, on June 1, 1981, Silme and Gene were assassinated in the union hall in Seattle. Gene’s wounds were so grievous that he died immediately. Silme, with incredible bravery and determination, was able to stumble out to the street and identify two assassins to a fire fighter. After surgery to try and save his life at Harborview, as he was dying, he also revealed the identity of the assassins and an additional conspirator to his wife, Terri Mast, and his mother, Ade.

The book then narrates the incredible story of the union members and

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Two Books Worth Reading

Continued from Page 9

community members who came together to form the Committee for Justice for Domingo and Viernes (CJDV) and the continuing and successful fight by the Rank and File Committee to take control of the union from the criminal elements led by Tony Baruso, whose gun was identified as the murder weapon. After eight years of determined activity by the CJDV, the vast conspiracy was unraveled. Marcos, his US allies, and Tony Baruso were held accountable along with the earlier successful prosecution of the murderers who pulled the trigger and the gang leader.

Who has not yet been held accountable are the US government officials who had to have given permission in some way for the assassination to occur in the US and are still engaged in a cover-up of the role played by the FBI. That effort continues to this day. To find out more, go to <https://vimeo.com/266574190>

It is an amazing and inspiring story and the book is an easy read (although the subject matter is very difficult) and really worth reading!!

Protest on Trial by Seattle author Kit Bakke is also a compelling book that recounts a history I thought I knew. My former wife, Susan Stern, was one of the co-defendants.

The Seattle Liberation Front (SLF) formed in Seattle after the demise of Students for a Democratic Society at the University of Washington. The event that was used to bring the conspiracy charges was the TDA (The Day After) demonstration at the Seattle Federal Court House. "The Day After" refers to the day following the sentencing of the Chicago Seven, a federal conspiracy trial centering on the demonstrations at the 1968 Democratic convention in Chicago. The TDA demonstrations were held across the US but the only federal charges arising from these nation-wide demonstrations occurred in Seattle.

There were eight individuals originally charged with conspiracy (one

individual went underground), and the leading government officials bringing the charges were Attorney General John Mitchell's "Justice" Department and the J. Edgar Hoover-led FBI. The charges were "conspiring to damage government property", and "using interstate commerce including highways, telephones, radio, or the mail 'with intent to incite, organize, promote, and encourage a riot'" otherwise known as the "H. Rap Brown Law."

Kit Bakke posits that Seattle was uniquely chosen because the SLF in Seattle was not confined to college campuses. They were organized as collectives and were a "region-wide, anti-war, anti-racist, and community service organization." They organized among multiple constituencies and worked on a variety of issues, including health care, immigrant rights, and worker cooperatives. Some of their projects continue to this day, including Country Doctor clinic, Northwest Immigrant Rights Project, and the Central Coop. Along with leading mass anti-war demonstrations, they also worked on statewide tax reform, fought a freeway extension through an African American neighborhood, and went to unemployment offices, talking to people and providing donuts for people standing in what were at the time very long unemployment lines.

Not all of the members of the alleged "conspiracy" were SLF members, and none of them had either been arrested or been photographed doing illegal activity at the TDA demonstration. There were significant political differences among the "conspirators." Many who attended the TDA demonstration believe that it really was a police riot!

The book tells the story of who the "conspirators" were, the trial, and the actions around the trial by the co-defendants, the attorneys, and Judge George Boldt. The government case literally fell apart, but the Judge sentenced the defendants to prison immediately for contempt.

The authors of the two books draw important lessons from these relatively recent historical events, lessons I believe to be important to today's activists. There were two additional insights I garnered from reading the two books consecutively.

The community members involved in the struggle for justice for Silme and Gene had a deeper understanding of the long-term nature of our struggle. I attribute this understanding to the leadership being part of the KDP and also from communities of color with a history of fighting racist oppression. Many of us younger white people in the anti-war, anti-imperialism movement treated what we were doing at the time as a sprint rather than a marathon. The new left specifically rejected the old left and failed to heed the thinking of older leftists who had a greater understanding of the need to see our efforts as a part of long-term struggle. We failed to develop our strategy and tactics accordingly.

Additionally, the government response to the white-led SLF was repression, prison, and ultimately destruction of the SLF (although Country Doctor and the Northwest Immigrant Rights Project live on!). The goal of the Nixon administration was accomplished. On the other hand, the response of the government to the work of Silme and Gene, Fred Hampton, Malcolm X, and other leaders of color was more severe. Racism in our country provided the context for assassinations and brutal violence, along with mass incarceration, similar to what is happening today.

There are lessons to be learned from our recent history, and these two books help to bring some of these lessons forward to the present.

Robby Stern is President of the PSARA Education Fund and a member of PSARA's Executive Board.

Yeah, Duh! Anti-Poverty Programs Reduce Poverty, New Study Says

By Mike Andrew

Federal programs designed to protect people from poverty actually reduce poverty, a new study found. Programs included in the study included Social Security, SSI, SNAP, and the EITC.

For most of us this is kind of “Yeah, duh!” But the interesting thing about the study is where it comes from – the University of Chicago, home of Milton Friedman, advisor to Ronald Reagan and Margaret Thatcher and granddaddy of trickle-down economics.

The study is more comprehensive than most studies, according to the researchers, because it uses administrative data from the programs’ payment records, not just survey data of recipients from the Census Bureau.

And it sheds new light on the highly politicized debate about federal programs that are often labeled “handouts.”

At the center of the debate is the question of effectiveness, and the study finally answers it in a comprehensive way for six major programs: SNAP (food stamps), Supplemental Security Income (SSI), Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF), Social Security, housing assistance, and the Earned Income Tax Credit.

“Much of what we know about the effects of these programs comes from survey data. But there is a lot to learn from the administrative data,” researcher Derek Wu told Yahoo Finance. “Take single-parent families, for example. Even though these families are still relatively underserved by the safety net, the effects of certain programs (like Social Security, SSI, and public assistance) on their poverty rate more than double when we bring in administrative data.”

The research found that all programs except for the EITC “sharply” reduce deep poverty, which is defined as 50% below the poverty line, or a yearly income of \$12,140 for an individual and \$20,780 for a family of three.

The EITC has a bigger impact for families around 150% of the poverty line, an income level often described as “working poor.” The researchers called the tax credit, along with SNAP, the “most effective” of the means-tested programs.

For seniors, Wu said the research found that Social Security “single-handedly slashes poverty by 75 percent.” Social

Security’s overall effect on all poverty is also enormous, responsible for by far the largest poverty reduction among all these programs, the study said.

When it comes to alleviating deep poverty, Wu said, “many of the means-tested transfers (like SSI, SNAP, and housing assistance) play a substantially larger role than Social Security, which pays out more for those who put more in.

Asked what he would emphasize for politicians and policymakers, given what the study has found, Wu pointed to the study’s bottom line.

“Many of these government programs do have pronounced effects on poverty, especially if you look at groups that the programs are designed to target,” said Wu.

At Attention!



“Hey, he is the head of a country and I mean he is the strong head. Don’t let anyone think anything different. He speaks and his people sit up at attention. I want my people to do the same.” Donald Trump

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Meetings and Events

PSARA Climate and Environmental Justice Committee: 10:00 a.m. – 11:30 a.m., Thursday, July 5, Washington State Labor Council office, 321 16th Ave. S, Seattle. All are welcome.

PSARA Government Relations Committee: 12:30 p.m. – 1:30 p.m., Thursday, July 5, Washington State Labor Council office, 321 16th Ave. S. All are welcome.

Forty Years of Struggle: Sunday, July 8, 2:00-3:30 p.m., Occidental Square, 117 S Washington St., Seattle. We join Kadima to mark the 40th anniversary of rallies to stand against neo-Nazi organizing, and to rededicate ourselves to that cause.

PSARA Fundraising Committee: 10:30 a.m. - Noon, Tuesday, July 10, Washington State Labor Council office, 321 16th Ave. S. All are welcome.

PSARA Education Committee: 2:00 p.m., Tuesday, July 10, Washington State Labor Council office, 321 16th Ave. S, Seattle. All are welcome.

Special Combo Meeting: West Seattle Hot Topics for Seniors & Senior Wannabes plus PSARA Southend Committee: Noon – 1:30 p.m., Wednesday, July 11, Southwest Library, 9010 35th Ave SW, Seattle, (35th & Henderson). Topic: *Retirement Security for Everyone*. Brown bag lunch.

Green Lake Discussion Group: Noon - 1:30 p.m., Thursday, July 12, Green Lake Branch, Seattle Public Library, 7364 E Green Lake Dr. N, Seattle. Brown bag lunch.

PSARA Race/Gender Equity Committee: 11 a.m.–Noon, Thursday, July 19, Seattle office Washington State Labor Council, 321 16 Avenue S, Seattle. All are welcome.

PSARA Executive Board Meeting: 12:30 p.m. – 3:00 p.m., Thursday, July 19, Washington State Labor Council office, 321 16th Ave. S, Seattle. All are welcome.

