

The Retiree **ADVOCATE**

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

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**Special Labor Day
Issue:**
*The Future of Working
People*

Low Pay for Women of Color = More Clout Needed in Politics

By Rebecca Saldaña

Equal Pay Day, April 12, is the date that symbolizes how far into the year women must work to earn what men earned in the previous year.

For women of color Equal Pay Day is much later in the year. African American women must wait until August 23 of each year, and Latinas wait until November 1, to catch up with the average earnings of a white American male.

What that means: glass ceilings may be shattering for some women, but not nearly fast enough for women of color, overall. Hillary Clinton's historic presidential bid notwithstanding, we still need to keep the question of political representation in our headlights and question who is out there watching out for our interests.

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Join Us for Labor Day "Taking It to the Streets" on September 5

Join PSARA for Labor Day at the Martin Luther King County Labor Council's annual celebration.

This year, our Labor Day will be the same, but different. The same progressive politics, the same delicious cookies (which we hope you will bring!) and snacks... BUT a different location and a whole new vibe!

Instead of a picnic in Woodland Park, we'll be part of a block party right next to the Seattle Labor Temple. That's right, the Labor Council has a permit to close Clay Street, which is the street that runs south of the Seattle Labor Temple. The Labor Temple will also be open for a "Taking It to the Streets" block party.

Come to the Seattle Labor Temple, 2800 1st Avenue, between 11 a.m. and 3 p.m., and look for the PSARA shirts. Our table will not be far away.

Please bring cookies to the PSARA table, which we will make available to everyone at the block party. You will also be able to enjoy union-made hot dogs and vegan chili, ice cream from SPEAA, and pop from the building trades. There will be music, of course, and an opportunity to lobby elected officials and candidates for office.

After the block party, hang around and walk up to the Space Needle with UNITE HERE Local 8 for a picket line to support workers at the Space Needle who have been involved in a five-year fight to negotiate a fair contract with job security at the Space Needle, Seattle's iconic institution.

See you there! Monday, September 5, 11 a.m. to 3 p.m., 2800 1st Avenue, Seattle.

The Crisis of the Black Working Class

By Larry Gossett, MLKing County Council member and PSARA member

"It's ONLY a question of time before white working class men and Black working class men see their common cause and unite against the aggressions of exploiting capitalists."

W.E.B. Dubois, "The Economic Revolution in the South," 1907

Labor Day weekend is again approaching, and many of us will be attending celebrations commemorating the progress of organized labor in our community and nation at venues throughout the Pacific Northwest. Given the great divide that existed between Black and white workers nearly 110 years ago, it is difficult to fathom

how the greatest Black intellectual during that period could express such optimism and confidence about the inevitability of white and Black workers uniting and coming together around a common cause.

During the period in our history when he articulated his optimistic faith in white and Black working class unity, the ruling white elites had been successful at establishing an ironclad caste system that made it almost impossible to build unity between white and Black workers.

During the last quarter of the 19th century, 90 percent of the Black popula-



tion lived in the South, where terror and racial division had re-cemented racial segregation and exploitation of Black people. In such circumstances, calls for "common cause" were nearly impossible to fathom. By way of example, during the last decades of the 19th Century every

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Social Security Works WA Meets with Senator Cantwell's Staff

Photos by Garet Munger

On August 15, a delegation of representatives from Social Security Works WA met with Nico Janssen, who provides legislative assistance to Sen. Cantwell on Social Security and Medicare issues in her Washington, D.C. office, and with Tommy Bauer, State Outreach Director for Sen. Cantwell. The delegation of Social Security Works WA members included representatives from Washington CAN!, Seattle NOW, Economic Opportunity Institute (EOI), Physicians for a National Health Program Western Washington, and PSARA.



Xochitl Maykovich, representing Washington CAN! and also PSARA's Facebook Administrator, made a very strong statement that we want and need Sen. Cantwell to come out strongly in favor of expanding Social Security and Medicare. To quote Xochitl, "We need Sen. Cantwell to put a stake in the ground calling for expansion of both of these programs because a crisis is developing and we need her to take leadership."

All of the advocates at the meeting spoke, combining personal stories with the necessity to take action at the federal level. They pointed out that while it may be possible to blame Republicans for inaction and efforts to cut these vital programs, the Democrats need to make clear publicly and vocally that the expansion of Social Security and Medicare will be one of their top priorities. We need Sen. Cantwell to take a position and to fight for that position. We urged that she and her colleagues develop a comprehensive piece of legislation for each of the programs that combines expansion with raising revenue through Scrapping the Cap in the case of Social Security, increasing the payroll tax from 1.45 percent to 2 percent for Medicare. We also should make people 50 and older eligible for Medicare.



Mr. Janssen assured us he will bring the message to Sen. Cantwell and will make every effort to bring us a response. John Burbank, Executive Director of EOI, stated that we would like to meet directly with Sen. Cantwell to make our case as to why we need her leadership on this issue.

One Year Later

By Robby Stern

Associate Editor Bob Shimabukuro suggested I write about the August 8, 2015, celebration of Social Security and Medicare in Westlake Mall on its one-year anniversary. Bob thought that even though the event did not go the way we had hoped, it did play a role in helping to elevate the public debate about the need to expand Social Security and Medicare. The discussion of expanding these two vital social insurance programs now has a prominent role in the national debate during this weird election year.

My wife, Dina, and I like to refer to the August 8 celebration as the event that will not die. Throughout this year it has been referenced again and again in personal encounters and news stories.

Our goal on August 8 was to project the necessity to expand Social Security and Medicare into the national debate during this election season. We invited Senator Bernie Sanders with the hope that his presence would draw a large crowd and possibly draw national press coverage. We did generate national coverage, but not in the way we expected.

Xochitl Maykovich and I co-chaired the event. Excellent local speakers and musicians celebrated the contributions Social Security and Medicare have made to our lives. When the local Black Lives Matter activists seized the microphone, we had to think fast together in the presence of the two BLM activists, the presidential candidate and his wife, and members of the assembled crowd all yelling at us. We collectively made the decisions to cooperate with the BLM activists with the expectation that they would ultimately allow Senator Sanders to speak.

August 8 produced an important stage to be seized by the Black Lives Matter activists, who sought to elevate the world's focus on the taking of the lives of Black men as a result of institutionalized racism. Smarter leaders than I made the decision that we could not

end the disruption by calling in the police. Looking back on this decision, I am glad that the international news about August 8 was about the disruption and not about a police action to end the disruption.

Since August 8 there have been more unjustified killings of Black youth and adults, the killings of police officers in irrational acts of retaliation, and a growing realization among many that the institutional racism that underlies all of these acts of violence and the deep racial injustices in our country are a cancer on the existence of all of us.

PSARA members can take some credit for the fact that the expansion of Social Security and Medicare has become a major topic of the national debate. PSARA has been advocating an offensive strategy (rather than cuts, we need expansion) and our voice has resonated nationally. The term "Scrap the Cap" was first developed by our beloved Will Parry.

At the same time, the person deserving the most credit for bringing the issue to the forefront, in my opinion, is Senator Bernie Sanders.

The need for expansion could not be clearer. A report prepared by the Democratic staff of the Joint Economic Committee of the U.S. Congress was released in mid-August. The report states that "roughly 45 percent of seniors – approximately 20 million people – rely on Social Security for the majority of their income... 22 percent of seniors count on Social Security for 90 percent or more of their income." According to the study, 41.5 percent of seniors would have been living in poverty in 2014 if they had not received Social Security.

The Report points out that Social Security is particularly important for



Robby Stern (left) and Bob Shimabukuro (right) at the August 8, 2015, Social Security Works rally. (Photo: Gareth Munger)

women. One in four senior women receive at least 90 percent of their income from Social Security compared to less than one in five men. For 13 percent of senior women, Social Security is their only source of income.

The numbers are more dramatic for Black and Hispanic workers. Workers of color, according to the report, "earn only a fraction of what white workers earn." They are less likely to have retirement accounts as they are more likely to work in low-wage jobs. The median annual income for Black seniors is about \$16,000 per year, 72 percent of the median income for white retirees. The median income for Hispanics is \$13,200 per year, 59 percent of the median income of white workers.

The report then goes on to point out that the move away from defined benefit pensions will "further elevate the importance of Social Security." Fewer than one in four 18 to 29 year olds will have defined benefit pensions. Two in five 45 to 59 year olds have a defined benefit pension now. Income inequality and the shift to defined contribution plans increase inequality for seniors.

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Why PSARA Opposes I – 732

By Robby Stern, Bobby Righi, Kristen Beifus, and Mauricio Ayon

“Climate change poses one of the greatest threats to social, economic and racial justice here in Washington State and across the world. And it’s happening right here, right now. Our jobs, health and communities are the prices we pay for escalating climate impacts like polluted air, severe weather and drought. But not all of us are impacted the same. Communities of color and those with lower incomes are the first and worst impacted by the brunt of global warming. That’s why getting it right — with equitable, inclusive policies — is so important.”

This quote, excerpted from a statement issued by Communities of Color for Climate Justice who oppose I – 732, speaks to the need to couple our actions in response to climate change with the necessity to address racial and economic equity. These are the most pressing and interrelated issues of our time.

Therefore it is essential that solutions to address the impacts of climate change further economic, social, and political equity and not rely on the current systems of free-market corporate-controlled capitalism. It is imperative that we act for our families and future generations to reverse climate change. At the same time we must act for our families to reverse trends of stagnant wages, higher costs of living, and growing income inequality, which have left many in our communities unable to provide for themselves and their families which cause harm to all of us. We cannot fight climate change effectively without also fighting for a more democratic and just society.

PSARA knows the time and effort some of our members spent qualifying Initiative 732 for the ballot this November. However, after hearing the



From left: Mauricio Ayon, Bobby Righi, Robby Stern, and Kristen Beifus.

debate at PSARA’s general membership meeting, where Jeff Johnson, President of the WA State Labor Council (WSLC), emphasized the need for major investment in our crumbling infrastructure - facilities for clean air and water, health care, transportation, education and housing, as well as training for workers to achieve our goal of full-employment, PSARA’s membership voted to oppose I-732.

The proponents of I- 732 say it is “revenue neutral,” but the Department of Revenue estimates it will cost Washington State \$914 million over the next four years to implement the initiative. Jeff Johnson voiced strong concern:

“At a time when our state is struggling to fund basic services — including public schools, mental health facilities, and many other essential services — I-732 would send Washington in the wrong direction and create more damaging austerity choices.”

I-732 lowers the state sales tax by 1 percent, reducing revenue to the general fund of the state. It provides some help to low-income earners by funding the Working Families Tax Rebate, but the assistance will only impact a minority of people hardest hit by a rise in fuel costs. Seniors on fixed incomes are among those who will not be included in the tax rebate. Businesses would not have to pay the B&O tax, which is supposed to be an incentive for them to remain in Washington. But in trying to be “revenue neutral,” I-732 fails to provide needed funds for public projects like

mass transit, infrastructure repair, and financing for energy-efficient building construction. These are projects which are necessary and would help provide jobs and job training.

I-732 provides no path for workers in the fossil fuel industry and their communities or impacted communities to access training and placements that they will need to continue to have meaningful work and provide for themselves and their families.

Through the Alliance for Jobs and Clean Energy, PSARA is part of an unprecedented coalition of labor, environmental, faith, health care, social and racial justice organizations, and individuals actively moving forward on a state-wide plan to address climate change. AJCE’s goals are to 1) cap carbon emissions, 2) charge the biggest fossil fuel users for their negative impact on our water, air, and land, and 3) invest in Washington State to support a clean-energy economy that protects our planet for future generations while enabling people to have access to sustainable livelihoods, while reducing inequality by investing in communities of color and lower-income communities, which are always the ones suffering the health effects of poor air and water quality, and incomes lower than a livable wage.

We have to work to make sure that everyone’s voice is heard in the fight against climate change. The key thing

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About Labor, About Jobs, About Slavery, About Change

By Bob Shimabukuro

Early morning, mid-August 1963, Portland International Airport: I was stunned by the sight of *haole* blue collar workers with lunch pails streaming into the airport. And likewise, on the bus ride from the airport to a downtown hotel to catch a bus to Reed College, I saw another first for me, *haole* farm workers, out in the farm fields around the airport.

And after a few days, I met another *haole* worker, our dorm house cleaner, ... Me, a poor Okinawan boy from Hawaii, had a maid. A *haole* maid! Weird.

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High School, 1961: There was a discussion in class about slavery when a student mentioned that she didn't see what was wrong with that. "You know, it just depended upon who the master was. If you had a good master, then they had a pretty good time." And some students agreed. No one said anything to counter her, including me. I was tired at that point. Being the class revolutionary was not my idea of fun.

◦ ◦ ◦

"Bob, I know where you're coming from, but revolutions are never made by poor people. Revolutions come from the middle class. Poor people don't have enough time to make revolutions. That's a historical fact. They make riots. You want to be a revolutionary, you really have to work the middle class." —one of my high school history teachers.

What was he talking about? What was the middle class? My world, as taught to me by my Dad and Zenwa Uncle, was divided into The Big Five (super rich families and the corporations they represented in Hawaii), rich bosses and their "running dog lackeys," bourgeois individualists and organized "skilled" workers, and "unskilled" poor workers/unemployed folks. So I guess

middle class meant "bourgeois individualists and skilled workers."

Dad and Uncle were also telling me that soon no mo' work for everybody, and everybody need share the work and maybe the pay too. 'Cause machines goin' do lot of the work for people. Folks then get plenny time fo' help or work with odda people. So make me feel funny kine when people think they no need care about folks who no mo' money or no can take care themselves. So I worry 'cause that's no fair, yah?

Also began for think: Dad not thinking about no mo' work for do; he thinking no mo' jobs.

So now what dat mean, when folks say, "middle class revolution," or "we gotta strengt'en the middle class?" Hear that a lot now. What happening to people below middle class? What dey goin' do?

Fifty years later, lots of folks talk about jobs. Contract jobs. And redefined jobs.

From cleaning houses, hotels, and hospitals; to care for elders, soldiers, the infirm, children, and pets. All kinds of buying and delivering services because people don't have time to do these things, because they're too busy designing apps to work themselves out of a job. Temps, consultants, self-created jobs.

Last year, Casa Latina Executive Director Hillary Stern told the *Advocate's* Michael Andrew, "It seems like that's the direction we're going, a gig economy, project work," rather than workers being permanent employees of a single company, she says. "And that's not just for immigrant workers."

The replacement of permanent full-time employment by as-needed hiring would make life more difficult both for workers and for the unions that want to organize them.

"The union model has worked, but it's not a growing model," she says. "Factories are moving overseas [along

with the manufacturing jobs that used to be the bedrock of organized labor].

"Now our problem is, 'How do we organize the businesses around us?' Maybe we organize guilds. That's the way we organized when we used to organize small businesses.

"The problem is how to finance that in a sustainable way. And we haven't figured that out yet."

And really, that is the problem, isn't it? As long as we're working within a capitalist system, how can we finance the revolution? So, 50 years later, I'm still with Dad and my Uncle, wary about the Strong Middle Class or a Middle Class Revolution, which could once again forget those who have suffered most from the actions of the upper classes.

Attn: I find that The Movement for Black Lives published (at least electronically) "A Vision for Black Lives" is something PSARA members should take a look at. This should be a vision for all America.

For the past year, I've been on a rollercoaster ride of emotions, health issues, and deaths of close relatives and friends. On August 7, the day that my immediate family was celebrating my (August 4) birthday, I learned that Fumiko Auntie (103) had died. It was tough, the last of the previous generation was gone. And she lived longer than her son, and two of her nephews. RIP Auntie. No one deserves to more than you.

Let's Catch a Breath, Then Keep Moving.



Bob Shimabukuro

Personal Reflection:

A Sanders Supporter Looks Back at the Convention

By Phyllis Baker

Bernie Sanders hit a brick wall named Trump. Without a frightening choice on the other side, he could have hung in there longer. Nothing was stopping him from strongly contesting the convention for whatever reason. The country was ready for Bernie's revolution. The timing was lousy.

Bernie broke a lot of ground. Nothing will be the same again.

What the Democratic convention demonstrated was a lack of any hint of a revolution—any change in the structure of our politics—the absence of any reflection of our vision for transformation. We protested. Yes, we got some of what we wanted but also a whole lot of what we didn't want. That's what is not generally understood.

Meanwhile inside the convention hall, a very unhappy senator from Vermont was in the process of compromising his mission. Because not to do so—not to join with his rival—might doom his nation to a brand of domestic fascism. Most of us understood. Some of us didn't.

Bernie did the "right thing." But it was heart-wrenching to watch, even on television. His statements were as tight-lipped as he could manage. Even in his support for Secretary Clinton, he was minimalist.

Bernie hadn't suggested to us the possibility of losing. He believed he was a winner. He failed to explain—though he hinted at it increasingly—that the need to stop Trump might trump his own crusade. I was unprepared for his sudden concession, tight-lipped though it was.

The fact remains that Sanders had (and has) a powerful movement going—one that in the absence of a Trump could have shaken up everything. In the face of restrictive election



Bernie did the right thing. But it was heart-wrenching to watch, even on television.

laws, unfair registration rules, and a DNC that was, as it turned out, leaning on the scales from the get-go, there was momentum, and it was building. The times seemed right. The grass roots excitement was all on Bernie's side.

A "New Progressive Party" as suggested by Robert Reich may be the only way to preserve the momentum. Reich said on Amy Goodman's Democracy Now! [It would be a party that] "would continue to build the movement to reclaim our democracy and economy from the moneyed interests. It would recruit and support Senate and House

candidates for the 2018 midterm and run a presidential candidate in 2020. It would continue to mobilize, organize, and energize the political revolution that Bernie began."

In contrast to the expensive and single-messaged Democratic blowout in Philadelphia, a New Progressive Party convention could be an exciting option. I'm not a Party person, but I would be happy to show up.

Phyllis Baker is a PSARA member and a valued monthly proofreader of the Retiree Advocate.

Secure Scheduling – The Right Thing to Do

By Katie Garrow

When I was 16 years old, I routinely missed volleyball practice after school because I got called in for a shift at the local teriyaki restaurant I worked for. My best friend resigned from her position as student council president halfway through our senior year because she "clopensed" (closed late and opened early on consecutive days) for the local Starbucks and didn't have time for our morning meetings. While in college, it wasn't uncommon for me to miss class because I had to cover a shift at my job.

As a working-class millennial, bad scheduling practices have always been a part of my life. It always felt like I had to pay my dues, and, if I worked hard enough, someday I would have a job with a regular, reliable schedule.

What I know now is that it is not just teenagers and students who work in low-wage industries plagued by unfair scheduling. It's people like my partner's mom, well into her 70's, who has a part-time job at Walmart and had to miss Christmas with us last year because they needed her at work. Even if it were only young people, it is not "character building" for a 17 year old young person to clopen on a school night; it's a moral failing of our society.

In Seattle, the Martin Luther King County Labor Council and our affiliates, like PSARA, are working to change all that. We've spent the last eight months campaigning for a Secure Scheduling

ordinance at the City of Seattle, and in mid-August, the proposed legislation was introduced. It requires employers to provide:

- Advance notice of our schedules so we can plan our lives.
- Predictability pay for adjusting our lives when things change at work.
- Shift swapping for additional flexibility when life happens.
- Access to hours for those who want them.
- A right to rest, which eliminates mandatory clopens.

Many union members know the value of policies like these because there are contractual provisions in most collective bargaining agreements. But part of the job of the labor movement and our allies is to fight for all working people, be they union or not. Furthermore, as social justice organizations, the labor movement, and PSARA understand our roles as champions for equity for people of color and women, the folks who are disproportionately affected by clopenings, a lack of full-time hours and unpredictable scheduling.



Kamaria Hightower, Communications Director for the Martin Luther King County Labor Council and a PSARA member, speaks at an August 9 press conference at City Hall, when the secure scheduling ordinance was introduced. (Photo: Heidi Groover, The Stranger)

The secure scheduling legislation will come up for a vote on September 13 at 9:30 a.m. Pressure from business is heating up, and we will need all hands on deck. We are urging PSARA members to join us at Seattle City Hall (600 4th Ave.) that morning to express support for the proposed legislation without amendments.

Katie Garrow is Deputy Executive Director of the Martin Luther King County Labor Council and a PSARA member.



Rebecca Albani joins PSARA's Green Lake Discussion Group to lecture on the topic "Images of Aging in Western Art."

Albani lectures on art history for the Frye Art Museum and other venues.

For upcoming Green Lake Discussion Group topics, see our Meetings & Events section on Page 12, or visit PSARA's Facebook page.

(Photo: Garet Munger)

Will Working People Have a Future?

By Mike Andrew

I came across a striking statistic in the Greek newspaper *Kathimerini*. More than 26 percent of Greeks aged 20-24 are “neither in employment nor in education or training” (NEET).

It turns out that’s a specific statistical category – NEET – tracked by the EU’s Eurostat, and it’s one measure of how healthy an economy is.

Italy, for example, has more than 31 percent NEET youth, while the Netherlands has only a bit over 7 percent.

This matters because NEET youth are not earning money to support themselves now or creating social wealth to support their age cohort in the future when they’re too old to work. So countries with a high proportion of NEET youth are on track for a “lost generation” of permanently destitute people.

Then it occurred to me to check on the percentage of NEET youth in the United States. It turns out we’re not as bad off as Greece, but we’re a lot worse off than the Netherlands.

According to OECD (Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development) statistics for 2014, the most recent year tabulated, 17.5 percent of Americans 20-24 years of age fell into the NEET category. More of them were women (over 20 percent) than men (almost 15 percent).

The OECD doesn’t break their statistics down in racial or ethnic categories, but the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics does offer youth unemployment figures broken down by race (although they’re not exactly congruent with the OECD figures).

According to the Bureau’s July 2016 unemployment figures, 12 percent of young men and 10.8 percent of young women are unemployed. For young white people, the unemployment rate is 9.9 percent. For young African Americans, it’s more than double, 20.6 percent. For Hispanics it’s 11.3 percent, and for Asians 10 percent.

This is at a point in our so-called “economic recovery” where unemployment for all workers is at 5.7 percent, a



rate which would be considered quite good compared to Europe. It’s actually one of the lowest unemployment rates reported by the OEDC.

So what do the numbers tell us?

First, the economic “recovery” simply restored the U.S. economy to a *status quo ante*. It did not alter the financialization of the U.S. economy, marked by concentration of capital in banks and investment institutions and the corresponding trend toward making money by trading paper rather than by manufacturing and selling products.

As a result, many of the jobs added during the “recovery” were low-pay, no-benefit service sector jobs, not the industrial jobs that used to form the bedrock of middle class prosperity.

Service jobs are exactly what young workers entering the work force would have gotten in the heyday of American capitalism until they were able to land good factory jobs. But these service jobs are increasingly filled by older workers who used to have the now-disappearing industrial jobs.

Along with this economic dislocation has come profound political dislocation. The post-recession political climate is marked on the one hand by a new openness to “political revolution” and “socialism,” but on the other hand by a revival of narrow nationalism and race-baiting.

It’s no accident, then, that Donald Trump’s most solid base of support is among people without a college degree. This has led to some smug commentary by pundits who cast Trump voters as ignorant fools. But that really misses the point.

It used to be that a kid could get out of high school, get an apprenticeship, learn a trade, get a good union job, buy a car and then a house, raise a family, send the kids to college in hopes they’d get even better jobs, and, after 40 years of work, retire with a defined benefits pension.

Not glamorous, but at least secure.

No more.

So if people without college degrees vote for Trump, it’s not because they’re too stupid to know what’s going on. They know exactly what’s going on. They just don’t know what to do about it other than vote for Trump and take the consequences.

What are their other options?

The contraction of the union movement over the past 40 years has weakened their first and last line of defense.

The Democratic Party, which was once their political home, has offered them only a hodgepodge of stopgap reforms, combined with a neoliberal economic agenda – including deregulation of banks and “free” trade – that undermined both the reforms and their livelihoods.

Bernie Sanders offered a practical agenda to remedy many of these problems, and some of his program has been adopted by Hillary Clinton. Whether this represents a real shift in the Democratic Party, or just election year rhetoric, remains to be seen.

Right now there is no national political organization and no corresponding platform that progressive voters can embrace wholeheartedly and unreservedly.

There are a number of organizations like PSARA fighting to create such a platform. And regardless of who wins the presidency we’ll have our work cut out for us!

The Crisis of the Black Working Class

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effort was being made to render “free Black Labor” incapable of competing with white workers. By 1900 every Black man’s voting rights had been taken away through legalized terror carried out by White Citizens’ Councils and the Ku Klux Klan.

Furthermore, 70 percent of Black workers were so-called “sharecroppers,” meaning they were to get a share of the plantation’s profits at the end of the year after the cotton was sold. But all that most Blacks, who were still illiterate, got was a bill from landowners saying “you still owe me money after I calculated your share.”

Hundreds of thousands of Black men were also illegally arrested and sold back to farmers, plantation owners, and industrialists through a super caste-like system the Southern ruling class dubbed the “Convict Leasing System.” Anytime turpentine farmers, mine owners, or other industrialists needed cheap labor, local county sheriffs would pick up any Black male they could find and charge them with “back talking a white woman, vagrancy, selling cotton after 6:00 p.m., illegal voting, homosexuality, using profanity, riding on a train without paying,” and so on. They would be sentenced, serving four months to two years of hard labor, and sold to local businessmen as involuntary servants.

This system was worse than slavery, because they did not have to feed convicts well and local sheriffs’ deputies made sure there was a supply of these hapless souls available as hard laborers. The most horrific part of this system was the use of children under the age of ten. The harsh conditions led to almost 30 percent of these men dying annually before they were let out of jail.

This was the situation in 1888 when the United Mine Workers Union started organizing in the Pratt Mines outside of Birmingham, Alabama. This union allowed Black men to join despite the opposition of many of its white male members.

Mine owners turned to local county sheriffs, who supplied them with hundreds of Black convict laborers to work in the mines. All of these folks were provided in violation of federal laws that prohibited peonage and debt slavery.

I wonder what would have happened in Birmingham in 1888 had the United Mine Workers been willing to challenge the mine owners in federal court. The entire history of the South might be different if the predominantly white union had picked up the gauntlet in favor of its Black comrades.

Poor Millennials. Seriously. They’re Poorer Than Us.

By David Groves

Labor Day is a time to reflect upon the contributions of the people who make this nation work. And no, Mr. Trump, I’m not talking about you and your billionaire “job creator” buddies.

I mean the folks who care for us when we are old or sick. The people who build and maintain roads, airplanes, office buildings, bridges, and tunnels. The women and men working to keep our families and communities safe, teach our children, grow and harvest our food, and provide critical public services.

It’s no secret that the working-class Americans we celebrate this Labor Day are struggling to maintain their quality of life. Growing inequality is well documented. Decades of trickle-down policymaking -- both by conservatives (tax cuts for the rich) and neoliberals (free trade and pro-corporate globalization) -- have dramatically failed us.

But the rising inequality I want to highlight this Labor Day -- one that should be of particular concern to those of us in the Puget Sound Advocates for Retirement Action -- is the growing disparity of wealth between generations.

If we think we’ve got it bad, our children have it worse.

Millennials, those young adults who are now between the ages of 15 and 33, are facing a perfect storm of joblessness, under-employment, debt, and shrinking incomes that amount to an absolute economic betrayal. And not just in the United States. Thanks to globalization, it’s happening throughout the Western industrialized world.

Using data from the Luxembourg Income Study, the largest database of international incomes in the world, an investigation by *The Guardian* found that in Australia, Britain, Canada, France, Germany, Italy, Spain, and the U.S., prosperity has plummeted for young adults:

“Where 30 years ago young adults used to earn more than national averages, now in many countries they have slumped to earning as much as 20% below their average compatriot. Pensioners, by comparison, have seen income soar... It is likely to be the first time in industrialised history, save for periods of war or natural disaster, that the incomes of young adults have fallen so far when compared with the rest of society.”

In the U.S., in particular, the data shows that under-30s are -- for the first time since anybody began keeping track of such things -- poorer than retired people. They are on a course to become the first generation to make less money (in real terms) than their parents.

Now there are “kids today” grumps out there who are convinced millennials are narcissistic, lazy, and entitled. Of course, their parents thought the same of them. This dates all the way back to Kennewick Man thinking Kennewick Boy couldn’t hunt-and-gather to save his life!

But, surely, even the grumpiest of grumps wouldn’t suggest an international wave of sloth and entitlement has deprived an entire generation of their share of prosperity. No, this was not caused by Twitter or by war or natural disaster. This disaster is man-made. No matter what policies and trends you blame, the bottom line is that the same jobs are not paying as much as they did when previous generations had them. Wealth is shifting away from young adults, not just to the 1% we are so inclined to berate, but to us.

Experts warn that this trend has grave implications for everyone in terms of social cohesion and family formation. Who’s going to help take care of us like we (hopefully) took care of our parents?

So this Labor Day, while we honor the contributions of all working people, let’s not forget the youngest among us. They’re often working multiple jobs, burdened by enormous educational debt and, yes, may be living in their parents’ basement.

But it’s no joke. It’s an international crisis.

David Groves is Communications Director of the Washington State Labor Council AFL-CIO, Editor of The Stand (www.thestand.org), and a PSARA member.

Low Pay for Women of Color = More Clout Needed in Politics

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Pramila Jayapal, a nationally renowned immigrant rights leader, made history when she clinched the lead in a crowded race for the liberal 7th Congressional District of Washington State recently. She is one step closer to becoming the first Indian American to serve in the U.S. House of Representatives. As a feminist woman of color arrested for standing in protest with undocumented workers, Jayapal has a chance to join forces with a powerful but small number of women of color in Congress this November.

Powerful Leadership

At the recent Democratic National Convention, we witnessed the leadership of people of color and black women's leadership in particular. Consider the powerful speech by Michelle Obama and also by the "Mothers of the Movement," when Sybrina Fulton, the mother of the late Trayvon Martin, said, "This is not about being politically correct; it is about saving our children."

Additionally, issues from reproductive justice to economic justice took center stage in the party platform and in the speech of the Democratic presidential nominee. All this contributes to many black women feeling hopeful about the expanding role of women in leadership in this country.

But along with this hopefulness come the setbacks, such as the attack on the Gold Star mother Ghazala Khan by Republican presidential nominee Donald Trump. This prompted a social media movement for and by Muslim women, #CanYouHearUsNow.

Yet and still, with the growing awareness and the mounting milestones achieved, not all women are equal in these United States of America. Women of color—Hispanic, African American, Asian American—represent more than 33 percent of the women in this country, according to 2015 U.S. Census Bureau statistics, and about 62 percent of women in this country are white.

U.S. Congress, in general, is a sinkhole for female representation, with women making up just 20 percent in either house.

Within those marginal ranks, the overall population statistics roughly hold up. Thirty-three of the 104 women serving in Congress in 2016 are women of color, according to the Center for American Women and Politics. These include 18 African Americans, 9 Latinas, and 6 Asian American/Pacific Islanders. There are no Native American women serving in Congress. To date, only 54 women of color have served in Congress.

Meanwhile the most diverse Congress in history isn't actually that diverse; it's still 80 percent white and 80 percent male. Given that fact, women of color deserve special merit badges for holding their own, proportionately speaking, with white women in the U.S. Congress.

Statewide Offices

In statewide elective executive offices, meanwhile, women of color lag further behind, which means our representation shrinks that much more. Women, overall, hold only 24 percent of 312 statewide elective executive offices. Within that minority, women of color are even harder to find. Of the 76 women serving in statewide elective executive offices, 9, or about 12 percent, are women of color.

In state legislatures, women overall, are 25 percent of the 7,383 seats. And, among them, women of color are once again in even shorter supply. Of the 1,815 female state legislators serving nationwide, 399, or about 22 percent, are women of color. They include 102 state senators and 297 representatives; 366 are Democrats, 30 are Republicans, one is non-partisan, one is Progressive, and one is with the Working Families Party. Women of color constitute about 5 percent of the total 7,383 state legislators.



Rebecca Saldaña

This means, moving forward, candidates who are women of color need to win seats, confronting not only patriarchy but racism. Five-term U.S. House Rep. Yvette Clarke reports she still gets asked for an ID when she is in the halls of Congress to serve. As the Black Lives platform so eloquently stated, if we don't seize this moment, breathing will become harder for all of us.

As citizens, we need to champion women of color and queer people of color. We need them to champion progressive platforms that can actually improve the lives of women of color and our communities. With Women's Equality Day on August 26, there was no better time to assess not only how far some women have come in the fight for fairness, but how far all women need to go.

Rebecca Saldaña is Executive Director of Puget Sound Sage and a PSARA member. A version of this article first appeared in Women's eNews, August 16.

Why PSARA Opposes I-732

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about our climate crisis is that it has come about because we have very little to say about how resources are used – who gets the benefits and who pays the costs. To fight this climate crisis, we have to work hard to build equality and democracy or we won't change anything. I-732 tries to solve the problems using the same structures we have been using and leaving people out of the process – the people who always pay the highest costs. We have to do better than that.

Co-signers of the Communities of Color statement which is quoted at the beginning of this article were: Jill Mangaliman, Got Green; Rebecca Saldaña, Puget Sound Sage; Mauricio Ayon, Washington Community Action Network; Rich Stolz, OneAmerica; Tony Lee, Asian Pacific Islander Coalition; Estela Ortega, El Centro de la Raza; and Peter Bloch Garcia, Latino Community Fund.

Robby Stern is President of PSARA, Bobby Righi is Administrative Vice President and serves on PSARA's Environmental Committee, Kristen Beifus is Co-chair of PSARA's Environmental Committee, Mauricio Ayon is Political Director of Washington CAN! and serves on PSARA's Executive Board and PSARA's Diversity Committee.

"Action speaks louder than words, but not nearly as often!"

-- Mark Twain --

Here at PSARA, we like action so much we even made it part of our name!

We hope the words we publish every month in the Retiree Advocate spur you to action and give you a solid analysis of the issues so we can act on the basis of a common understanding of what's needed.

One way to help is to use the handy coupon to the right to donate to PSARA or to give a gift subscription to a friend.

One Year Later

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We planned the August 8 celebration to inform our community about Social Security and Medicare. These vital programs are the platform on which seniors are and will be building their economic lives, and the expansion of these programs is vital to the future of our country. Remarkably, this was an outlier position when Will Parry first developed the phrase "Scrap the Cap."

Our August 8 celebration played a role in making this happen...not a big role, but a role. And we continue to carry it on. After our success with the expansion resolution passed by the Seattle City Council, a similar motion will come before the Martin Luther King County Council in September or October, calling for expansion of Social Security and Medicare. Once it has passed, we will bring the resolution to other parts of the state.

We have been meeting with many members of our Congressional delegation and most recently, on August 15, met with policy staff from Sen. Cantwell's Washington, D.C. office, where we communicated clearly that it is time for Sen. Cantwell to stand with us. With a couple of exceptions, the positions of our Congressional delegation are not nearly as strong as they need to be, but they are moving in the right direction. You can help them to move further by questioning them when you see them, or writing them an email and telling them that they need to be leaders and publicly and continually call for the expansion of Social Security and Medicare. Revenue to make these changes can be generated by Scrapping the Cap on Social Security's premium, increasing the Medicare payroll deduction from 1.45 percent to 2 percent. We also should make people over 50 eligible to buy in to Medicare.

We are taking the message everywhere we can. Take a look at Meetings & Events on the back page of this newsletter. Look at the number of educational workshops and forums we are planning with others. That does not include the events we are planning for October.

August 8 was very tough, but usually anything worth doing is tough. We can look back and feel good that while it was not exactly what we had hoped for, it helped bring the vital importance of Social Security and Medicare to the national stage and even provided an unanticipated platform for a critical human rights struggle in our country, the fight for Black lives.

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, Sept. 1, WA State Labor Council, 321 16th Ave. S, Seattle. This committee leads our work on addressing the issues created by the impact of climate change

PSARA Government Relations Committee: 1 p.m. - 2:30 p.m., Thursday, Sept. 1, Seattle Labor Temple, Room 226, 2800 1st Ave, Seattle. All welcome as we begin preparation for the 2017 legislative session and address local and regional issues critical to our members.

Labor Day Picnic: 11 a.m. - 3 p.m., Monday, Sept. 5, Seattle Labor Temple, 2800 1st Ave, Seattle. Come join us at the PSARA table that will be located either on Clay St. (which will be closed to traffic) or in Hall 1 depending on the weather. Please bring cookies to share. There will be hot dogs, soda, ice cream, popcorn and a raffle to benefit the Puget Sound Labor Agency. At 3 p.m. we will march to the Space Needle in solidarity with its restaurant workers who are struggling to get a fair contract from the owners of this Seattle icon.

West Seattle Hot Topics for Seniors & Senior Wannabes: Noon - 1:30 p.m., Wednesday, Sept. 7, Southwest Library, 9010 35th Ave SW, Seattle (35th & Henderson). Topic: *Planning for Hot Topics: What are your ideas about the most pressing issues of the day?* PSARA and the SW Branch of the Seattle Public Library initiate a new brown bag discussion group about current national, state, and local issues. The topics will be determined by the participants.

Green Lake Discussion Group: Noon - 1:30 p.m., Thursday, Sept. 8, The Bridge at Village Cove, 6850 Woodlawn Ave. N., Suite B, Seattle. Brown bag lunch. Topic: *Protecting, Strengthening, and Expanding Social Security & Medicare for ALL Generations.* Bring a brown bag lunch and join Robby Stern for a lively multigenerational discussion. All are welcome. There are multiple organizational sponsors. For further information contact Susan at sjlevy.01@gmail.com

PSARA Executive Board Meeting: 12:30 p.m. - 3 p.m., Thursday, Sept. 15, Washington State Labor Council, 321 16th Avenue S., Seattle. All are welcome.

Forum on Protecting and Expanding Social Security & Medicare for ALL Generations: 11:45 a.m. - 1:30 p.m., Monday, September 26, Kent Senior Center, 600 E. Smith St., Kent. Robby Stern will speak and lead a discussion about protecting and expanding Social Security & Medicare. Lunch (\$4) served at 11:45. Forum to begin around 12:15. There are multiple organizational sponsors including the Kent Senior Center.

Workshop on Protecting and Expanding Social Security & Medicare for ALL Generations: 2 p.m. - 3 p.m., Saturday, Oct. 1, North Bend Library, 115 E. 4th St, North Bend. Mark McDermott, Co-chair of PSARA's Education Committee, will lead a workshop about building the movement to protect and expand Social Security & Medicare.

Community Discussion on Voting and Civic Engagement: 2 p.m. - 3:30 p.m., Tuesday, October 4, International District/Chinatown Branch(ID/C) of the Seattle Public Library, 713 8th Ave. S., Seattle. In cooperation with the Seattle Chinatown/International District Public Development Authority we will discuss how to exercise the right to vote and questions about voting?

