

# The Retiree **ADVOCATE**

The Monthly Publication of  
PUGET SOUND ADVOCATES FOR RETIREMENT ACTION  
"Uniting Generations for a Secure Future"

Vol XXVIII, No 10



October 2012

**Chicago Teachers  
write history  
on the picket line.**

-- See page 7

## Meet Pam Crone, PSARA's voice in Olympia

PSARA is very excited to have retained Pam Crone as our session lobbyist for the 2013 legislative session.

Pam, a PSARA member, is a highly respected Olympia lobbyist who is known for her integrity, her passionate advocacy, and her wealth of knowl-



**Pam Crone**

edge about the legislative process.

Pam, besides being a mother and grandmother, is a lawyer/lobbyist. She has represented clients in Olympia for the last 12 legislative sessions. Her current clients include Legal Voice (formerly the Women's Law Center), Washington State Coalition Against Domestic Violence, Cedar River Clinics, WithinReach and the Community Health Plan and Network of Washington. She has also worked with Puget Sound SAGE and the Washington State Labor Council.

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## Election 2012: Clear choices

*By Jeff Johnson*

Every four years leaders exhort us that this is the most important election of our lifetimes. Today I am not entirely convinced that this is true. However, what is certain is that the political choices in front of us could not be more clear.

A question to ponder for another time is how could we possibly have come to a time of such stark contrasts? Mitt Romney and Rob McKenna are champions of the low political road. They espouse policies that Republicans have dreamed about for forty years - reduce the size of government, cut regulations for business, and weaken the voices of unions, women, senior citizens, students, immigrant workers, and the poor.

For them the American people are the cause of deficit and debt and so they must accept austerity policies as the medicine for curing our economic ills. It's bad enough that they laud the 1% as the "job creators," but the disdain they and their party show for working people is beyond the pale. We all make gaffes when we speak, but accusing nearly half the population of being entitlement junkies who can not be taught personal responsibility lays bare the soul of Mitt Romney.

Romney may be avoiding policy specifics, but the Ryan budget and the Republican National Platform are clear. The goals are to silence unions through a National Right to Work Law, end Medicare as we know it, cut Social Security and privatize it, eviscerate environmental, labor, health and safety standards, and continue to heap tax incentives on the wealthy.

President Obama and Jay Inslee have a different vision - a high road vision. This vision, while not fully articulated, focuses on job creation, a fairer revenue system, and a goal of shared prosperity. There is a recognition in this vision that refunding the common good is how we begin rebuilding the working and middle class. So we have less than 40 days till the election. Forty days to convince our families, neighbors and friends which path to choose.

Washington's labor movement has set some priorities and goals for election 2012. Reelect President Obama, because hope is important... *Continued on page 3*



**Jeff Johnson**

**Legislative**

**Conference**

**Saturday, Nov. 10**

**W**e urge PSARA members to participate in our annual Legislative Conference on Saturday, November 10, from 10 am to 12 noon at UFCW Local 21 on 5030 First Ave. South, Seattle. (See flier insert)

We will analyze the 2012 election. In addition, we will propose, discuss and adopt the PSARA legislative agenda for the 2013 legislative session

A light breakfast will be served. Ample parking is available.

Pam Crone, PSARA's new legislative lobbyist and a PSARA member will talk about prospects for the session. Also speaking will be Teresa Mosqueda, Legislative and Policy Director for the Washington State Labor Council and Chair of the Healthy Washington Coalition, and Susie Levy,

*Continued on page 2*

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For up-to-date information about PSARA and issues important to all of us, go to the PSARA web site: **www.psara.org** Read the Advocate on line, post your comments on our blog, engage in discussions with other PSARA members or visit PSARA on Facebook.

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## Need to reach us?

Here's a directory of Puget Sound Advocates for Retirement Action email addresses:

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**Chuck Richards & Tom Lux:**

[govrelations@psara.org](mailto:govrelations@psara.org)

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**Will Parry:** [pscsc@qwestoffice.net](mailto:pscsc@qwestoffice.net)

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Web Master, **Reed Wacker:** [info@psara.org](mailto:info@psara.org)

Or phone our office at (206) 448-9646.

If necessary, leave a message and your

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## The Retiree ADVOCATE

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## Meet Pam Crone

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Pam is also a teacher and is currently the Distinguished Policy Advocate in Residence at the Seattle University School of Law. She taught at the University of Washington Law School Unemployment Insurance Clinic during the 1999-2000 school year and the Child and Youth Leg-

islative Advocacy Clinic in 2008-2010. Prior to lobbying, Pam was the Attorney Director of the Unemployment Law Project. She began her professional life teaching children with developmental disabilities.

We are very excited to have a daily advocacy presence in Olympia and are particularly excited that the voice speaking for PSARA will be Pam Crone.

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## LEGISLATIVE CONFERENCE

Continued from page 1

Washington Community Action Network organizer and staff person for the Caring Across Generations campaign.

After adoption of our 2013 legislative agenda, we will organize by legislative districts to plan appointments with legislators before the session begins on January 14.

This year's Legislative Conference is scheduled for a Saturday morning to reach a wider audience of PSARA members.

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## Two October presentations

You won't want to miss the upcoming opportunities to attend one of Mark McDermott's presentations about the history of the fight for economic and social justice in the U.S.

Mark will be making a presentation prior to the M.L.King County Labor Council meeting on Wednesday, Oct 17. The presentation is from 5:45-6:45 p.m. at the Seattle Labor Temple, 2800 First Ave., Hall 1.

On Oct. 25, from 1-3 p.m., he will be presenting his "Reclaiming the American Dream" workshop at the Green Lake Library, 7364 E. Green Lake Dr. N, Seattle. Space is limited so please RSVP to Susan Levy at [sjlevy.01@gmail.com](mailto:sjlevy.01@gmail.com) or Edie Koch at [treasurer@psara.org](mailto:treasurer@psara.org)

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## The humble coupon

On the inside back page of each issue of *The Retiree Advocate* our readers will find a modest coupon.

Now, we never, *ever* have enough space for all the important news and comment we'd like to cram into our newsletter. Never! So why do you suppose we take up precious space, issue after issue, with a lowly little coupon?

Because, dear friends, this unpretentious coupon is a monthly reminder – a little kick in the ribs, you might say.

You will note that we place it where it can be clipped out without cutting into any of our editorial material. That's just a sneaky way of encouraging you to clip it out – and once you've clipped it, to use it.

Our humble coupon has multiple uses. You can use it to join PSARA. You can use it to renew your membership. You can use it to send a gift membership. You can use it to send a modest (or if you're rich, an immodest) contribution to PSARA.

Wow! All those uses for the humble coupon! But that's not all.

Especially during this election season, the lowly coupon can be a key to completing our 2012 Membership Drive.

After you've read this, we expect a river of coupons (and checks for \$15) to flow into our office mail box. So break out the household scissors and start clipping. Only three months to finish the drive!

# Murray, Cantwell oppose cuts in Social Security



Senators Patty Murray and Maria Cantwell

Senators Patty Murray and Maria Cantwell joined 27 other Democratic senators in signing a “Dear Colleague” letter opposing any cuts in Social Security as part of a deficit reduction package.

The letter was organized by Senator Bernie Sanders, Independent of Vermont, the founder of the Senate’s Defending Social Security Caucus.

“Social Security is not the cause of our nation’s deficit problem,” the senators wrote. “Not only does the program operate independently, but it is prohibited from borrowing.”

On January 2, automatic cuts of 9.4 percent in military spending and 8.2 percent in domestic spending are scheduled to go into effect under “sequestration.” Social Security is exempted from sequestration, but alternative budget reduction plans are sure to be debated in 2013.

Looming over all budget deliberations is the work of the Simpson-Bowles commission, which gives a thin patina of bipartisanship to proposals for watering down Social Security’s cost-of-living formula and raising the normal retirement age to 69. Ominously, President Obama has indicated support for Simpson-Bowles as a starting point for deficit talks.

The senators’ letter is something of a firewall, serving notice that any attack on Social Security in the name of deficit reduction will encounter the firm opposition of a major bloc of senators.

# Election 2012: Clear choices

Continued from page 1

and because we have too much to lose. Elect Jay Inslee Governor of Washington State. Jay understands the dignity of work and workers, knows that government plays a real role in growing the economy, and that the common good is what defines our civil society. Elect Bob Ferguson Attorney General. Bob will be a fearless fighter protecting consumers, the environment, workers, seniors, and veterans from those who would try to exploit them.

We need to send back to Congress people who share our basic values. In the open Congressional seats we want to elect Susan DelBene in CD 1, Derek Kilmer in CD 6, and Denny Heck in CD 10.

Our state senate has been our Achilles heel over the last few years. The self described “road kill” caucus has adopted a “blame the victim” approach to public policy. We need to regain a philosophical majority in our state senate. To do this we need to elect Bruce Lachney in Legislative District 2, Mark Mullet in LD 5, Tim Probst in LD 17, and Maureen Judge in LD 41.

We also need to protect key members of our state house and make some strategic pick-ups. Three strong labor and progressive incumbents are under attack: Tami Green in LD 28, Hans Dunshee LD 44, and Roger Goodman in LD 45.

We also need to protect an open seat in LD 28 by supporting Eric Choinere, a former member of the Communications Workers of America and a current University Place City Council member (his opponent is a lawyer for the Evergreen Freedom Foundation).

We have the chance of strengthening our State House by electing several labor champions. Dawn Morrell is a union nurse running in LD 25, Bud Sizemore is a union firefighter running in LD 47, and Mary McNaughton is a union nurse running in LD 44. These candidates share our fundamental values and will be fierce advocates for progressive change.

We also have two longer-shot candidates that we are supporting in Eastern Washington because of their strong values and their courage to run in such red districts: Denny Dellwo in LD 6 and Jay Clough (a union electrician) in LD 8.

The only way we accomplish these goals and get these candidates across the finish line is by getting volunteers to walk with us and to phone bank with us. We phone bank four times a week and we have one super walk left to do in each of the eight targeted regions of our state in October.

We need your help. To volunteer or to view volunteer options please contact the Washington State Labor Council Field Mobilization Director, Lori Province, lprovince@wslc.org, or go to [www.wslc.org](http://www.wslc.org). May our choices be correct.

*Jeff Johnson is president of the Washington*



*(My plans for this month's column were changed when Chaya Burstein, the first political cartoonist for the Retiree Advocate and my mother-in-law, died on Saturday, September 15. I want to share with you what her oldest grandson, Jacob, wrote about his grandmother. – Robby Stern)*

# Chaya Burstein, author and artist

By Jacob Burstein-Stern

**C**haya Burstein, author and illustrator of fifteen books, was also a mother, grandmother, painter, activist, feminist and all around adventurer.

Born in Queens in 1923 to Russian immigrant parents, Chaya early in life got involved in a Socialist Zionist organization. There, as a sixteen year old, she met and began to date her future husband and fellow adventurer, Mordy Burstein (at fifteen years old, a younger man to boot!).

While Mordy served in the South Pacific during World War II, Chaya put her artistic talent to work as a draftsman. In the places she worked, she was the only woman.

In 1948, Chaya and Mordy embarked for Palestine. In preparation for the trip, they assisted survivors of the Holocaust in a displaced persons camp in Marseilles. They smuggled themselves into Israel to found a kibbutz that still thrives today. During that time Chaya worked as a carpenter and was elected the first secretary of the kibbutz.

When Mordy was accepted into engineering school at the University of Missouri, they made the difficult decision to return to the states so that Mordy could earn his degree under the G.I. Bill. They would not return to Israel for almost thirty-five years.

Once their three kids were old enough to attend school, Chaya took a course on illustration at the School of Visual Arts in New York. Armed with a portfolio, Chaya went to Harcourt Brace hoping to secure work as an illustrator. Instead, she was told she should write stories to accompany her illustrations.

Chaya's mother Rivka lived with the family. Chaya listened to the stories of the old country and out of these conversations came her first book, "Rifka Bangs the Teakettle," which told the story of her mother's growing up in a shtetl in Russia. Over the next forty-one years Chaya wrote and illustrated fifteen books while raising three children and earning a Masters degree in Middle East History.

Two of those books, "Rifka Grows Up (1976)" and "The Jewish Kids Catalog (1982)," won the National Jewish Book award.

Chaya's books chronicled many aspects of Jewish life, from Jewish festivals and ritual to history and politics. She began her writing career with a fictionalized account of her own mother's childhood and ended with an illustrated history of the Jews.

In between she wrote and illustrated cookbooks, catalogs, modern and ancient histories and Bible stories, seeking to make the complex, tragic, and infinitely rich experience of the Jewish people engaging and understandable to children and adults alike.

Through her literary output, Chaya far exceeded the social norms of women of her generation, but Chaya was never con-

cerned with social norms and she certainly wasn't content with achieving only one of her lifelong dreams.

After leaving Israel in 1950, Mordy and Chaya had yearned to return and continue the life they had begun all those years before. In 1985, at the ages 62 and 63, they returned to Israel to become founding members of a community in the Galilee.

For twenty years, Chaya and Mordy helped to transform a cluster of trailers at the top of a barely paved mountain road into a thriving community. While continuing her literary work, Chaya played a vital role in shaping the burgeoning community. She also found time to do a great deal of literacy work within both the Jewish and Arab communities.

In 2005, Chaya and Mordy made the difficult decision to move back to the states. Their hearts very much remained in Israel, and they were deeply troubled by the difficulties their beloved country was facing. But health concerns and a desire to be close to their family, now settled in Seattle, prevailed.

Their small garage at their Northgate home became an art studio. They could often be found working there together, Mordy on his woodcarving and Chaya on her paintings and the drawings and text for her final book.

In late 2011, Chaya was diagnosed with arteritis, a rare nerve disease that would ultimately take her life. But the years before the disease struck, and the months after, were times of prodigious output. In April of 2011, her paintings were featured in an exhibition at Temple Beth Am, one of the largest reform synagogues in Seattle. In the summer of 2011 she completed her final book, "The Amazing History of the Jews." It was published early in 2012, just before the disease took away the use of her hands.

On the early evening of Saturday, September 15, in her own bed with all her family gathered around her and singing to her, Chaya passed on from this life.

True to who she was at the end of her long and extraordinary life, Chaya was thankful, humble, wholly aware of the world around her -- and contrary. We are inexpressibly grateful for the legacy she has left and will miss her deeply even as her spirit lives on in her writing, her art, and the extraordinary humanity that defined her time on earth.

*(Jacob lives in Los Angeles. He is an organizer with UAW, a writer & a PSARA member.)*



Jacob Burstein-Stern

# A victory for the union – and for the children

By Will Parry

Chicago's 29,000 union teachers and support staff returned to the classroom September 19, having wrung critical concessions from a bitterly anti-union administration in a solid seven-day strike that heartened labor across the U.S., even as it focused national attention on struggling urban schools.

Chicago Teachers Union President Karen Lewis termed the strike “absolutely” a victory for the city’s 350,000 schoolchildren as well as its teachers.

The victory was not complete. Strike settlements rarely are. But the teachers won a pay raise averaging 17.6 percent over four years, while frustrating the merit pay demand of Chicago Mayor Rahm Emanuel. The settlement also protects seniority pay increases and holds the line on health insurance costs.

The agreement limits the role of standardized test scores in evaluating teacher performance. It gives laid-off teachers better rehire opportunities and gives all teachers new protections against intimidation by supervisors. During the term of the agreement, an additional 600 art, music and physical education teachers will be hired.

The union gave ground on the length of the school day and school year, extended at Emanuel’s insistence.

The settlement was the fruit of the union's democratic policy of outreach and involvement, a policy reflected in the 800-member bargaining team, representing teachers, paraprofessionals, clinicians and support staff from every Chicago school.

The union’s approach was also expressed in its active work with parents and others in the community to prevent school closures, a burning issue especially in heavily minority communities.

The city’s teachers work in schools where four of every five students are minorities as well as low income. Eighty percent of these students qualify for free lunches. Many come from neighborhoods plagued by gang violence. Yet funding for anti-violence efforts, as well

as for basic social services, has been cut back because of the city's financial crisis.

In this environment, Emanuel sought to judge teacher performance by standardized test scores. The union fought this approach, arguing that external factors – poverty, violence, homelessness – directly affect student performance.

When the contract was presented, the bargaining team delayed the vote for two days so that every clause could be scrutinized.

“As we went through the contract, basically article by article,” Lewis said, “one of the things that got the absolute most applause of the night was lesson plans, that teachers could do their own lesson plans...”

“It’s things like (the imposition of lesson plans from above) that are making our lives absolutely insane,” Lewis said.

“We’ve been micromanaged into doing things that we know are harmful for children.”

The union’s ranks held firm throughout. When the Illinois legislature pushed through a bill requiring a 75 percent vote to authorize a strike, the union got a 90 percent vote.

Underlying the solidarity of the membership's support for the strike was a subterranean seething at the administration's unfairness and blindness to the reality that teachers face day after day in the classroom.

Given this rank and file unrest, a week of picketing, meetings and downtown rallies and marches was a bracing lungful of democracy. The courage of Chicago's union teachers has added a proud new chapter to the struggles of organized labor for a better world.

## Advice to the media

By Rachael Levine



Rachael Levine

I am very disappointed in those in the media who continue to talk about “seniors” being relatively well off compared with those who are without any adequate income. No doubt having income from any source is more desirable, but these repeated assertions feed the notion that somehow all seniors are living the life pictured in the AARP magazines.

Herewith, my advice to the media:

When you talk about “seniors,” talk about the difference between those with private income from investments, pensions and savings – and those whose food and roof depend upon Social Security.

Talk about those who retire in relatively good health – then talk about the many for whom multiple health problems

begin to demand costly medical attention.

Talk about those who could – and those who could not – afford the AARP's Medicare Advantage plan that's been a great boon to insurance companies, but that ran into big problems in overpaying providers.

Talk about the need for health care for all to lower medical costs for all – including seniors.

Talk about those who may have retired with their mortgages paid off, but who cannot afford the repairs and upkeep, insurances and taxes that make it possible to remain in their homes.

Talk about the differences between those who worked all their lives in caregiving, construction, food preparation, teaching, farming, fire fighting, fishing – and those who picked up a briefcase or opened a computer to begin their workday. Then consider whether raising the age of retirement for all workers is an acceptable way to “save Social Security.”

*Continued on page 9*



# Help make history!

## Vote to approve Referendum 74!

By Mike Andrew

It's not everyday that you can help make history just by mailing in your ballot, but when we get our ballots this month we'll have an opportunity to do just that by voting to approve Referendum 74.

Referendum 74 asks voters to approve or reject the state's Marriage Equality Act, which allows gay and lesbian couples to marry. Although the legislature passed the law, and Gov.



Mike Andrew

Gregoire signed it into law on February 14, right-wing opponents of equality challenged it in an initiative campaign and now voters must decide if the state should allow marriage for all committed couples.

PSARA has endorsed marriage equality, and PSARA volunteers participated in a phone bank for Referendum 74 on September 19.

In Maryland too, the legislature passed and the governor signed a marriage equality law, but the measure was challenged by right-wingers and is on the November ballot.

In Maine, voters overturned their state's marriage equality law in 2009, but now Equality Maine has succeeded in putting a measure on the ballot to restore marriage rights to gay and lesbian partners.

All three ballot measures are ahead in polling. If one or more of them passes, it will be the first time in US history that voters – instead of courts or state legislatures – have approved laws allowing all couples to marry, regardless of their sexual orientation.

Because we are in the Pacific time zone, Washington may not be the first state to do so, but if Referendum 74 is approved, we will be among the first

group of states to enact marriage equality by a vote of the people.

While Washington already has laws that give rights to gay and lesbian couples, and the Obama administration has issued directives that ensure fairer treatment of same-sex couples when they encounter federal agencies, they still face many obstacles that married opposite-sex couples do not.

Even where gay and lesbian couples are allowed “domestic partnership” rights, as in Washington, or “civil unions” as in some other states, these arrangements are still “separate but equal” institutions that do not give committed same-sex couples the full recognition that marriage does.

And while Washington accords same-sex unions concluded in other states the same status as in-state domestic partners, these “separate but equal” arrangements are not necessarily transferable to other jurisdictions, so a couple in a Washington domestic partnership, let's say, may find that in Missouri they have the same legal

status as total strangers.

That's why equal rights for gay and lesbian couples is a critical civil rights issue.

PSARA joins the Washington State Labor Council, Martin Luther King County and Pierce County Labor Councils and many unions, community organizations, and religious groups representing both Jewish and Christian faith traditions in supporting marriage equality.

On the other side are national organizations like NOM (National Organization for Marriage) – labeled a “hate group” by the Southern Poverty Law Center – and a collection of traditionalist true-believers and local Republican politicians.

Approving Referendum 74 will be a huge blow to their efforts to keep gay and lesbian couples on the fringes of society, and an equally huge victory for equal rights for all families.

Help make history this year. Vote to approve Referendum 74.



Photo by Garet Munger

**OUTREACH: PSARA activists contacted hundreds of union families at the big annual Labor Day Picnic in Seattle's Woodland Park**

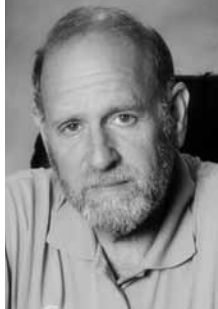
# The Yesler Terrace rebuild: A 'risky' venture

By Robby Stern and Will Parry

The Seattle Housing Authority, (SHA) has been authorized by a unanimous vote of the Seattle City Council to move ahead with a 30-acre, \$300 million redevelopment of the Yesler Terrace housing project that first opened in 1941.



Will Parry



Robby Stern

Councilmember Nick Licata, the Chair of the City Council's Housing, Human Services, Health and Culture Committee, has outlined the terms of the agreement in a response to concerns that were raised by the Seattle/King County Advisory Council on Aging and Disability Services. The Advisory Council had asked the City Council to delay the decision given the many concerns that had been expressed by low-income housing advocates and that had not yet been addressed. PSARA joined with the Advisory Council in asking for a delay in this momentous decision.

At issue is the continuation of affordable housing for a long-established and very diverse community of 561 households whose average income is about \$14,000 a year. The challenge is to maintain the integrity of the existing Yesler Terrace community in the midst of what is planned to be a dense, mixed-used neighborhood including office buildings and retail spaces, with a population of about 5000 families, over half of whom will be living in

more expensive market-rate housing.

The agreement between SHA and the city requires the replacement of the 561 low-income units within the immediate Yesler Terrace neighborhood. Every Yesler Terrace resident has been given a certificate entitling them to return, although the return of some residents may be delayed, possibly for years, because of the time required to replace all 561 units.

SHA has been working with the city and the Yesler Terrace Review Committees since 2006. A series of meetings and two public hearings earlier this year led to the agreement on redevelopment.

The SHA hopes to use \$145 million from property sales to private developers to rebuild the 561 units of low-income housing. Relocation of the residents could take as long as twenty years.

Councilmember Licata has acknowledged that this is a "risky" venture. He worked to create as many safeguards as he could get. The city's own land use consultant, Matthew Gardner, stated that the project is "unprecedented and untested anywhere in the U.S."

Placing some of the lowest-income earners in our city in the same housing project with some of the highest-income earners will require a level of empathy and community that we simply have not seen from many of the one percenters. It is predictable that the genuinely well-to-do who occupy the prime real estate will demand changes that will negatively impact the low-income residents.

Also of serious concern to low-

income housing advocates is SHA'S plan to divert millions of dollars from Seattle's voter-approved low-income housing levy to the Yesler Terrace rebuild. Advocates say the levy was supposed to be dedicated to adding new low-income housing units, not to replacing existing units.

The controversy led to the resignation of a member of the Seattle Housing Authority Board of Commissioners, Yusuf Cabdi. "Yesler Terrace is a clear example of how the agency is moving away from its commitment, and engaging in very risky projects that will cause irreparable damage to affordable housing stock in the city of Seattle," Cabdi said.

Inevitably, the cherished gardens

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## The challenge is to maintain the integrity of the existing Yesler Terrace community.

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of the mostly immigrant residents will not survive the redevelopment. There will be much pain associated with this plan, most of it borne by the low-income residents of Yesler Terrace.

At the same time, it must be acknowledged that the SHA and City Council faced a daunting problem. The infrastructure of Yesler Terrace was clearly aging and in need of major work. The sharp reduction in federal funds for low income housing had presented a major challenge.

We know that low-income housing advocates will remain vigilant and critical as this project moves forward. The low-income residents of Yesler Terrace must not be treated with the arrogance and disdain that many of our PSARA members have reported they experienced while living in SHA housing projects.

# Let's win the elections! Then what?

By Mark McDermott

Today we are constantly reminded that the 2012 national elections are the most important elections in our lifetimes. They may be a decisive turning point in our nation's history.



Mark McDermott

Each time, we wanted sweeping reforms that would ensure steady progress toward expanding the American Dream of greater opportunity, fairness and security for everyone. We also wanted an expansion of political democracy and rights that would help ensure greater opportunity for the people's voices to be heard in the great public debates on the road forward. Unfortunately, we won a broad reform agenda only once: 1965-68 with the passage of the Great Society under Johnson and some major victories in the first few years of Nixon.

The last three great reform moments under Carter, Clinton and Obama did not

produce the broad sweeping reforms we wanted and needed. Why didn't they? Equally important is what were the progressive movements doing that hindered our ability to win sweeping reform agendas after we helped win big electoral victories?

These are uncomfortable questions as I must engage in difficult self-criticism and deep and constructive criticisms of the movements that I have been a part of for decades. If we are unwilling to do deep collective self-criticism of our collective work over the past decades, we will not learn from our mistakes of the past and will continue to repeat them. This is critical and very uncomfortable work. We cannot assert that we don't have time for self reflection because the current struggles are too important.

I am tired of what I call the "Pity Party" discussions among progressives and people concerned about our country. I confess that I have participated in hundreds, if not thousands, of these discussions over the years that

sound like this: "We elected (insert name of choice) and the Democrats. They promised (insert issue of choice). They didn't deliver. They blamed the Republicans. Pity us. It is so unfair." I want to limit these conversations to a five minute maximum and then shift to what each of us and we collectively are willing to do in the short- and long-term to regain the offensive toward a better future.

The elections will create new opportunities and challenges. Some things will remain the same: Corporate America is determined to dominate the

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## The last three great reform movements under Carter, Clinton and Obama didn't produce broad, sweeping reforms. Why not?

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country. The Republican Party serves their corporate masters. The Democratic Party has many progressives fighting for change and a corporate wing that sabotages many key reforms (see three previous reform moments). We have many movements fighting for a better future. The country is deeply divided while the vast majority of Americans are struggling with ongoing economic challenges. These are the facts on the ground.

We progressives have major choices here. Are we willing to do the deep critique of our own work over the past many years? Are we willing to clarify our vision anchored in deeply held values, create a comprehensive agreed-upon agenda, and organize ourselves more effectively across our many movements so we can be more effective in the long-term struggles ahead? We must say yes. The next articles will explore these questions.

*(Mark McDermott is a member of the PSARA Executive Board and the organizer of economic and social justice workshops now being sponsored by PSARA.)*



# Worker rights the issue at Pomona College

By Mike Andrew

Peaceful liberal arts school Pomona College, in Claremont, California, seems like an unlikely place for a nasty unionization fight involving intimidation, gag orders, firings, and implied threats to deport union activists. And yet that's what's going on there.

On March 1, 2010, dining hall workers at the school turned in petitions signed by more than 90% of their colleagues requesting the freedom to choose to form a union without intimidation or interference from the College. Along with student and alumni allies, they formed an organization called Workers for Justice.

"When we first went public with our request," Pomona workers say in a statement on their website, "President David Oxtoby pledged publicly that there would be no intimidation of dining hall workers.

"Despite that pledge, the Pomona College Board of Trustees and administration have created a climate of fear on campus."

After he received the workers' petition, Oxtoby changed his tune, publicly questioning whether a union is necessary, and asserting his right to hold anti-union meetings.

The college's dining hall management then threatened Christian Torres, a cook with six years of experience, that he would never get a promotion if he kept wearing a union button. The NLRB's General Counsel has charged dining hall managers with an unfair labor practice in the incident.

Over the summer of 2011 the college instituted a gag rule prohibiting dining hall workers from talking to non-employees while they are in the dining hall, even when they are on break. This rule effectively bans workers from talking to students in the dining halls.

During the week of November 6 the community responded to the gag rule by sending more than one thousand emails to President Oxtoby and members of the Pomona College administration. The NLRB also charged the school with a violation because of this policy.

The very next day, November 7, Pomona informed 84 members of its faculty, staff and students that it had investigated their immigration status and found defects in their documents.

The college administration gave workers – several of whom have been working at Pomona College for decades – a mere three weeks to correct the discrepancies, and fired 17 people when they did not meet the deadline, including 16 dining hall workers.

The Board of Trustees and the administration were not required by law to conduct this investigation, and did so without prompting from any federal agency.

"Just as faculty assert their right to academic freedom, we assert our right to debate and decide this question free of pressure from our employer," Pomona workers say in a statement.

"We call for neutrality from the administration, board of trustees and our managers, not from the College as a whole. In fact, we invite and welcome the College community, including faculty, students, staff, alumni and all members of the community except those who have direct power over our livelihoods – the administration, board of trustees, and our managers – to participate in the discussion about unionization."

Pomona alumni answered the call on the weekend of August 18-19 with a new initiative – a video series titled "What

Pomona Taught Me." This collection of video testimonies documents how their experiences at Pomona led them to support the workers' struggle for justice at their school.

Videos can be viewed on their Facebook page or on the JusticeAtPomona.org website.

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## Advice to the media

Continued from page 5

Talk about those who lived in poverty in childhood, and who may never have escaped an environment of substandard housing, environmental hazards, limited or no medical care, poor nutritional choices, and an ongoing, endemic indifference to the well-being of their children and grandchildren.

Talk about those who share their Social Security income with children who can't quite meet their mortgage payments, or with grandchildren who need help to stay in school; or who provide a roof over the heads of these children and grandchildren.

In the light of these realities, Mr. and Ms. Media, reject the complacent view that all "seniors are relatively well off." Then join the campaign to "scrap the cap" on Social Security withholding taxes as a way to improve the lives of all who depend on a monthly Social Security check.

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**To Suscribe, go to . . .**

**<http://www.psara.org/membership.pdf>**

# Meetings and Events

## **Making the American Dream Real for Everyone:**

5:45 p.m. to 6:45 p.m., Wednesday, October 17th, Seattle Labor Temple, Hall One, 2800 First Avenue, Seattle (before the Martin Luther King County Labor Council Delegate Meeting). Mark McDermott will be providing his popular presentation about the history of the fight for economic and social justice in the U.S. Sponsored by PSARA & the Martin Luther King County Labor Council.

**PSARA Executive Board Meeting:** 1 p.m. – 3 p.m., Thursday, Oct. 18, Central Area Senior Center, 500 30th Avenue S., Seattle. All PSARA members are welcome.

## **PSARA Phone Bank for Marriage Equality, R – 74:**

5:30 – 8:30 p.m., Monday, Oct. 22nd, UFCW 21, 5030 1st Ave, Seattle, 98134. Help make Washington the first state in the country to establish voter-approved Marriage Equality. Please volunteer for this PSARA staffed phone bank. RSVP to adminvp@psara.org or call (206) 448-9646.

**Please check the address label on your Retiree Advocate. See the date on the label? If that date is printed in red, it's time to renew your membership. Your prompt renewal saves us the cost of mailing reminder letters.**

**“Reclaiming the American Dream”:** 1-3 p.m., Thursday, Oct. 25, Green Lake Library, 7364 E. Green Lake Dr. N, Seattle. Mark McDermott will present his interactive popular education workshop. Anchored in a long historical lens, the workshop explores different periods of American history in which economic growth is shared broadly or when economic growth is concentrated primarily among the wealthy. Identifying the root causes of the shifts from a broadly-based prosperity to other periods of explosive growth in income and wealth inequality, the presentation brings hope for a more positive future. Space is limited so please RSVP to Susan Levy at sjlevy.01@gmail.com or Edie Koch at treasurer@psara.org

**PSARA Legislative Conference:** 10 a.m. – 12:00 noon, Saturday, November 10, UFCW 21, Joe Crump Hall, 5030 1st AV, Seattle, 98134. Learn what can be anticipated for the 2013 legislative session. Discuss PSARA priorities for the legislative session, and join with other PSARA members from your legislative district to advocate with your legislators for PSARA's legislative priorities. Light continental breakfast will be provided. RSVP to adminvp@psara.org or call PSARA office, (206) 448-9646

Puget Sound Advocates for Retirement Action  
2800 First Avenue, Room 262  
Seattle, Washington 98121  
(206) 448-9646

## **We are blushing!**

### **Editor, Retiree Advocate:**

I enjoy your newsletter. I particularly appreciated Will Parry's August comments regarding gun violence in America. I keep looking for someone besides Sarah Brady or Michael Moore to call these gun people out. The political cowardice on this issue is staggering. Mr. Parry is correct. We can pray and raise our hosannahs to the sky...and then just wait for the next blood bath.

Until the NRA is put in its place, and the Second Amendment is revisited with the aim of making it comport to 2012 instead of 1776, we will remain awash in firearms. Thanks again, Will!

*Henry (Hank) Thompson,  
Seattle*