

# The Retiree **ADVOCATE**

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

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January 2020

Indigenous Just  
Transition Assembly  
By Jeff Johnson

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## Seattle Premiere of *Our Island's Treasure*

Join us Saturday, January 11, 2:00 p.m.

321 16th Avenue S, Seattle

PSARA's Race and Gender Equity (RaGE) Committee is proud to host the Seattle premiere of the award-winning documentary *Our Island's Treasure*, filmed and directed by Kaiya Yonamine.

An Okinawan American high school student based in Portland, Kaiya will join us to present her film and discuss it with PSARA members and friends.

*Our Island's Treasure* documents the resistance of Okinawans to the expansion of a US military base on their island, and the complicity of the Japanese and US governments in ecological devastation that accompanies construction of new military facilities.

Thousand-year-old coral reefs are jeopardized by dredging and landfill work, as are native marine mammals like the dugong, which is currently listed as vulnerable to extinction.

Okinawan culture is also at risk, as the island is turned into an outpost of the US military machine.

For RaGE Committee Co-Chair Bob Shimabukuro's personal reflections on the devastation of Okinawa, read his article "Taking It Personally" on Page 6.

Please join us on Saturday, January 11, at 2:00 p.m., 321 16th Avenue S, Seattle. Snacks will be provided.



Film-maker Kaiya Yonamine

## Don't Miss PSARA's Lobby Day February 6 in Olympia

Join PSARA for our 2020 Lobby Day on February 6 at the Washington State Labor Council office, 906 Columbia Street SW, in Olympia.

This annual event has proven to be very successful in past years as we've won long-term care legislation and advances towards universal health care in our state.

Our Legislative Agenda for 2020 is on Page 7 of this issue. We're focusing on six major topics: housing and homelessness; health care; a fair and transparent budget; retirement security; climate justice; and economic justice.

As you can see from our Legislative Agenda, we have big goals. But we can make progress with our personal advocacy.

It's important for our elected representatives to hear from us in person. Please sign up today to attend PSARA's Lobby Day. This year, we are able to provide transportation to members who need it.

When we get down to Olympia, we'll be briefed by our lobbyist, Pam Crone, and then go to visit our elected representatives. Appointments will be made by PSARA. All you need to do is know your legislative district.

To attend Lobby Day and take part in this critical advocacy work, you must pre-register.

We need to know who will attend, which legislators you will be seeing, and whether you need transportation to and from Olympia.

To reserve a place, please RSVP to [organizer@psara.org](mailto:organizer@psara.org) or call 206-261-8110.

When you register, please indicate your legislative district and whether you need rides. Seats on the buses will be on a first-come-first-served basis, so don't delay.

## The Retiree ADVOCATE

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# Support for Reparations Study Bills

We, the Grandmothers for Race and Class Equality (GRACE) offer our wholehearted support for passage of HR 40/S 1083, otherwise known as the Commission to Study and Develop Reparation Proposals for African Americans Act.

As a diverse group of female elders committed to righting the wrongs resulting from a system of white supremacy, we are clear that the legacy of slavery continues to shape and define life in this country. We believe that telling the whole truth about our history would be not only beneficial but essential if we are to fully understand past and present travesties and move forward as a nation.

Four hundred years ago in 1619, 350 people from the kingdom of Ndongo, now Angola, were aboard a Portuguese slave ship called the São João Bautista enroute to the Spanish colony of Veracruz when it was attacked by two English ships, the White Lion and the Treasure. These two ships captured "20 plus" of the Africans and brought them to the English colony on the coast of what is now Virginia where they were traded to the colonists for food. The English colony in Virginia a few years later made slavery legal and 385,000 Africans were eventually shipped to what is now the US and sold into slavery.

For the next 250 years approximately 4 million Africans and their descendants were enslaved and their rights, culture, language, and ability to benefit from their own labor were systematically and brutally denied though they brought technological innovations and labor which built the wealth of the colonies and England. It is on the backs of enslaved people that the industrial revolution was built.

Even after slavery came to an end, exploitation, brutality, and unfair treatment continued in the form of Jim Crow laws, lynching, separate and unequal practices, land robbery, unfair housing and home loan policies, inequities in education and health care, mass incarceration, and more which continue to today. Generation after generation of African Americans have been deprived of the opportunity to accumulate wealth due to governmental policies and laws, even as they contributed substantially and indispensably to the nation's prosperity.

We therefore call for the passage of HR 40 in order that we as a nation may more fully understand the consequences of and potential remedies for these atrocities. Elsewhere in the world, reparations have been effective in providing some compensation for grievous wrongs committed by nation states. The specifics of US reparations are still to be determined, but we feel strongly that we must at the very least set the record straight and, as Ta-Nehisi Coates says, reconcile "our self-image as the great democratizer with the facts of our history." We believe that the establishment of this commission is the best means of encouraging a national reckoning and determining appropriate remedies, and we fully support passage of HR 40, most recently sponsored by Representative Jackson Lee and endorsed by 119 Members of Congress, and S 1083, currently introduced by Senator Cory Booker and co-sponsored by 16 Senators, as necessary first steps.

Sincerely,

Valerie Bystrom, Jonis Davis, Sharon Felton, Wadiyah Nelson, Marcella Pendergrass, Bobby Righi, Mary Ann Sole, Helen Taylor.

*Members of GRACE (Grandmothers for Race and Class Equality)*

*Editor's note: All are also members of PSARA.*

# Getting Rid of Donald Trump Is Not Enough

By Mike Andrew

As I write this, the House Judiciary Committee has voted articles of impeachment against Donald Trump. By the time you read it, the House may have approved the articles and sent them on to the Senate for trial.

No one believes the Republican-controlled Senate will convict Trump and remove him from office. But even if they did, it would not be enough to bring the country to the place where we need to be.

That's because Donald Trump is the symptom, not the disease itself.

I'm sure you've noticed that next year, 2020, is a presidential election year. We have to recognize the very real possibility that Trump will be reelected. And that won't be pretty.

But even if the Democratic nominee is elected, that person – whoever it is – will be under enormous pressure from the donor class, from the business community, from the not-so-liberal media to make some kind of "grand bargain" with the Republicans.

In fact, you can already hear some Democratic candidates talking along those lines.

"We have to bring the country together," they say. "We have to reach across the aisle and get things done." "We can't overreach." "We have to be responsible and cut the deficit."

Whatever the particulars of the bargain they would strike with the Republicans, you can bet that the billionaires won't be on the chopping block.

No. We will be on the chopping block. The planet will be on the chopping block.

## What does that mean for PSARA?

In the next two years we have some urgent tasks. During the presidential campaign we have to do everything we can to ensure that our issues are at the center of the political debate – Medicare for All, expansion of Social Security, a Green New Deal.

We need every candidate for every federal office to address these things. And it's up to us to make them.

PSARA doesn't endorse candidates, but just between us there's no better way for

a Democratic candidate to win the election than to go out and talk about things that would really make a difference in ordinary people's lives.

Would Medicare for All make a better life for people? Would expansion of Social Security make a better life for people? How about a Green New Deal? You bet they would.

Even if the Democratic candidate doesn't want to talk about those things, it's up to us to make them talk about those issues and keep them at the center of politics.

And then, whatever the outcome of the election, we'll have to keep talking about those issues and make sure our elected officials deliver the goods.

That's a tall order. To do what we need to do, PSARA has to grow. Over the next two years, we need to build membership, and we need to build relationships with other organizations and communities, so that we have the resources and the influence to put our issues at the center of politics in a presidential election year and to keep them there afterwards.

In particular, we need to pay attention to immigrant communities, communities of color, and women – the people who are most impacted by retirement insecurity.

At our December 12 membership meeting we elected new officers and new members of our Board. When the new Board meets in January, the first item on the agenda will be a discussion of how to build PSARA's membership.

But all our members have a role to play. You can invite other people to join. Or if you have ideas about how to build our membership, shoot me an email, or phone me, and let's talk about how to do it.

If you want PSARA to come talk to your union, your faith group, your community group, let me know – we have prepared presentations on retirement security, climate justice, and Medicare for All – or we can just come and chat about projects we can do together.

We have big tasks ahead of us, but working together we will succeed.

You can email Mike Andrew at [organizer@psara.org](mailto:organizer@psara.org) or call 206-261-8110.

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## The Barbed Wire

By Barbara Flye



# PSARA's Winter Potluck and Membership Meeting a Smash Hit!

Text by Michael Righi, Photos by Garet Munger

Seventy-five PSARA members gathered December 12th at First Baptist Church in Seattle for a noontime get-together. Members came from King County, the South Sound, Whidbey Island, and Sequim/Port Angeles. Lots of casseroles and coffee. Much schmoozing and meeting new members. We heard from our activist committees, and elected new officers and executive board members. There is much to do: if you want to help, get in touch with the office or other PSARA members.



## We Do What Must Be Done

Janet Stecher, retired Director of the Seattle Labor Chorus, ended our meeting with a beautiful song expressing our spirit. We all joined in for the chorus.

*I learned as a child  
there are two ways  
to see,*

*The world as it is and  
the way it should be...*

*Some people do, do, do what must be done...*



The 2020 election matters, that is obvious. It also matters at local and state levels. We heard from a panel of three dedicated activists: Cherika Carter from the Washington State Labor Council, Aaron Ostrom of Fuse, and Sharon Maeda just retired from low-power Rainier Valley Radio station KVRU.

They talked strategy for the upcoming election. Cherika will be helping to build and train a labor slate of candidates for the state legislature. Aaron emphasized the critical importance of voter turnout – even folks who consider themselves environmentalists have low turnout rates. Sharon and the radio station have worked to educate people, in particular new immigrants, about democracy vouchers and how and why to vote.

All emphasized the importance of registering voters and of turnout in next year's election. They called on everyone in the room to gear up for 2020. The *Advocate* will keep us all informed as campaigns develop.



# A Big PSARA Thank You to Outgoing and Newly-Elected Officers!

*Photos by Garet Munger*



**O**utgoing Co-Presidents Tim Burns (left) and Jessica Bonebright (center) with outgoing Membership Co-VP Bobby Righi (right).

We're grateful that all will remain part of PSARA's leadership team. Tim will return to his former post as Chair of PSARA's Government Relations Committee, Jessica will join Maureen Bo as Co-Administrative VP, and Bobby will remain as a Co-Chair of the Climate and Environmental Justice Committee.



**S**teve Bauck conferring with Linda Peterson. Steve hands off his duties as Education Committee Chair to Linda and takes on the position of Outreach Co-VP.



**V**anetta Molson (left) will join Steve Bauck as Outreach Co-VP. Already jumping into her new role, she hands out material at PSARA's December 12 Potluck and Membership Meeting.



**P**am Lux (above) leaves her post as Government Relations Committee Chair to take up a new position as PSARA President.

We also wish to thank our remaining officers and chairs whose terms expire next year: Admin Co-VP Maureen Bo, Membership VP and Fundraising Chair Karen Richter, Secretaries Andrea Sawczuk and Mike Warren, Treasurer and Climate and Environmental Justice Committee Co-Chair Tom Lux, Race and Gender Equity Committee Co-Chairs Frank Irigon and Bob Shimabukuro, and Climate and Environmental Justice Committee Co-Chair Bob Barnes.

Thank you also to our continuing Board members.

# Taking It Personally

By Bob Shimabukuro

About 6-7 years ago...

Dr. LC: I think you have adult onset ADHD.

BS: Adult onset? Have had it all my life. Had to concentrate in school so hard to remember stuff.

This year, a week after July 10, I was notified that I had symptoms of Alzheimers.

PSARA members (including RaGE members): "This Keiro thing? Isn't it something PSARA should get onto?"

"Stay out of it," I answer, "it's really a community issue."

\* \* \*

Congratulations to Community-2Community on their 15th birthday.

Rosalinda Guillen:

1. We believe that another world is possible, and we are active participants with other popular people's movements. We strive to reclaim our humanity by redefining power in order to end settler colonialism, capitalism, and patriarchy in their external and internalized forms.

2. We need to welcome and honor those who have helped us because that is the way to build/create the community we want to live in, and we need to acknowledge all the people who support us, so that they will continue to carry on the work.

3. Rosalinda called all the people who had supported her all these years to step forward. It's important, she said. And urged maybe a dozen more to come up to the stage...

Alice Ito: Reconnecting the dots

a. "You can accomplish a lot if you don't have to take credit for it, but...

b. if you don't take credit for it, someone else will."

I've always thought about line b. Rosalinda answered it with clarity. While Rosalinda didn't ask Alice to get up on stage with her, she mentioned Alice three or four times as one of the people who had helped C2C get started. So how could I not support this group? Rosalinda had said we need the group to help keep the true history alive and send the fake history (of which there is a lot) down the tube.

Over the last 6 months, I have learned that one of the most powerful tools in the treatment of any disease/sickness is simply having a good support group, exercising, and a strict rigid diet. So when I thought about it, I thought I should have goals. One of them was to get strong, so that I could travel to Okinawa, to visit the country of my dad and uncle, and grandparents on my mother's side.

But also, during the past six months my younger sister had to go to the hospital again. My younger brother and sister-in-law were in a bad car accident. And Toki Nesan who had stopped playing tennis is now taking care of Ann again, because Ann's fiance is taking care of his older brother.

And then I saw on television a little of the rebuilt Shuri Castle burning down, and I thought I won't be alive when they finish the third. So I moped about it until I realized that I was supposed to be writing about who should, could attend the upcoming event PSARA has planned for January 11, 2:00 p.m.



*Malaekahana at low tide  
Photo courtesy of Bob Shimabukuro*

Well, everyone should, obviously. But only if you bring good vibes. Because I'm taking this personally.

This young woman Kaiya has not only made a movie about the Okinawan resistance, she has made a statement about coalition action. She's at the head of a lot of marches in Portland, and she looks like she's having a good time doing it.

If you were connected with the Brass Ring Theater you would be interested in attending, because Sam was the only sibling that had visited Okinawa. He was in the MIS in the Philippines during the War in Vietnam.

"Hey Bob, I got to see Shuri Castle, and there really was a Gosemaru, and all that stuff, so Dad wasn't just making it up."

*Continued on Page 10*



# **PSARA 2020 Legislative Agenda**

PSARA opposes cuts to programs that provide vital services to seniors, children, and low- and moderate-income families. We support efforts to pass progressive revenue measures that achieve the goal of funding education and protecting essential social service programs.

## **Housing/Homelessness:**

PSARA supports changes to the landlord-tenant laws (SB 5600/HB 1453 and SB 5733/HB 1656) which presently allow for unjust evictions, and extra charges to tenants, all of which can push low-income people, including seniors, into homelessness.

PSARA supports increases in case management and other services to transition from homelessness into permanent housing.

PSARA supports repeal of the 1981 law that prohibits cities from enacting rent control.

## **Health Care:**

PSARA believes that comprehensive, affordable health care is a fundamental human right. People over 50 pass away earlier without health care. Access to comprehensive and affordable health care is also a key issue for racial and immigrant justice. Health care coverage has proven to dramatically decrease racial inequity. We will support legislation that furthers the goal of universal health care coverage in Washington and advances racial and immigrant justice.

PSARA supports Health Care Coverage for Young Adults legislation (HB 1697/SB 5814), to extend Apple Care to low-income residents from age 19 to 26 who are currently ineligible due to immigration status and require the state Health Care Authority to seek federal funding to defray state costs associated with this coverage.

PSARA continues its ongoing support for the Washington Health Security Trust, a publicly-funded, privately-delivered health care coverage plan (HB 1104).

PSARA supports efforts to control prescription drug costs.

## **State Budget:**

PSARA supports a capital gains tax as the best way to move Washington towards a more progressive tax system.

PSARA supports the elimination of tax exemptions that do not have a demonstrated public benefit.

PSARA supports requiring the legislature to adopt a transparent budget listing tax exemptions and their impact on the budget.

## **Retirement Security:**

PSARA supports efforts to create a state social insurance program to enhance retirement security.

PSARA supports improving and enhancing the Long-Term Care Trust Act.

## **Climate Justice:**

PSARA supports the Green New Deal and all efforts to achieve environmental justice to counter the disastrous effects of climate change, including SB 5489 to address environmental justice and create a task force.

PSARA supports HB 1110 for a clean fuel standard for Washington State.

## **Economic Justice:**

PSARA supports efforts to create a State Investment Trust (State Bank).

# A Lump of Coal

## Trump Gives Us a “New” NAFTA

By Michael Righi

The North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA1994) between the US, Mexico and Canada was sent to a Democratic Congress by Bill Clinton and approved 25 years ago. It has led to the loss of at least 800,000 jobs in the US, as corporations have moved to the US/Mexico borderlands, setting up “supply chains” that take advantage of low wages and minimal environmental regulation in Mexico.

US agribusiness, backed by federal subsidies, flooded Mexico with corn, driving prices down and farmers off their small plots of land, into the cities or onto trains heading north. Wages in both the U.S. and Mexico stagnated. Trade policy made the rich richer.

NAFTA1994 was designed to enhance the power of large corporations. The deal further protected the rights of investors into Mexico, even giving them, in Chapter 11, the right to sue the Mexican government for any regulations that threatened corporate profits. NAFTA1994 became the corporate model for trade agreements since then, particularly in the way it put handcuffs on regulation by governments.

### NAFTA2019

Now the Trump administration has signed a new agreement he says is “the biggest and best trade agreement in the history of the world.” They are calling it the USMCA (US, Mexico, Canada ...I prefer CAMUS).

So what’s different? A couple good things first: Big Pharma wanted 10 years of patent protection for biologic drugs, and Trump put it into the deal he negotiated a year ago, but sustained pressure on our elected officials forced them to strip that out. The Chapter 11 rights for corporations to sue governments (as a US toxic waste firm did, and won, when a town in Mexico refused

them a permit), have been taken out. Except US fossil fuel companies -- they get a special right to sue Mexico!

What about jobs? Despite what Trump will claim, NAFTA2019 will not “bring back jobs.” An example of a change: In the old agreement, cars had to have 62.5% of their value produced in the US, Canada, or Mexico to avoid tariffs. Now, it is 75% or they have to pay a 2.5% tariff. There are a few other minor changes; what this does is leave the basic NAFTA1994 system in place.

Wages in the US are six times higher than in Mexico. Mexican “ghost unions,” unions organized by companies with no input from workers, help to keep it that way. A worker at a Mexican Honda plant reported, “They made me join a union I never saw. What does that union do for the workers? Practically nothing,” he says. “It’s on the side of the company. It takes no notice when we ask for higher salaries and it lessens the benefits we get.”

### Labor Enforcement

Unions have been demanding enforcement provisions of labor rights in trade agreements. Clinton stuck a labor annex into NAFTA1994, pretty words with no way to enforce them. We have some more words in NAFTA2019, which may help Mexican workers form independent unions. There are provisions for panels to investigate labor rights violations. (Some Canadian unionists have argued for considering US right-to-work laws a labor rights violation.) We will have to monitor what happens in practice.

In early 2019 tens of thousands of Mexican workers went on strike and blocked factory gates of dozens of multinationals. Ordinarily, the Mexican government would call in the army, but President Lopez Obrador did not. The



Michael Righi

workers won wage and hours victories, and they continue to struggle against the companies and the company unions, keeping a wary eye on the government.

However, on the other side of Mexico, in Guerrero, leaders of Los Mineros, an independent union supported by the Steelworkers Union at a Canadian-owned mine, have been killed, and another leader, Oscar Hernandez Romero, is missing. Also missing is any government effort to stop the murder of trade unionists. So the situation for union rights is uncertain at best.

### Trump and Trade

The two most egregious parts of NAFTA2019 are two new chapters and one missing chapter. One chapter, “Good Regulatory Practices,” grants corporations rights to review regulations, get early notice, participate in drafting them, and to file appeals!

*Continued on Page 10*

# Indigenous Just Transition Assembly

By Jeff Johnson

*“The creator has entrusted us a sacred responsibility to protect and care for the land and all of life, as well as to safeguard its well-being for future generations to come...Indigenous prophecy now meets scientific prediction. The earth is out of balance. The plants are disappearing, the animals are dying, and the very weather – rain, wind and fire itself – reacts against the actions of the human being. For the future of the children, for the health of our Mother Earth, Father Sky, and the rest of Creation, we call upon the people of the world to hold your leaders accountable.”*

Circles of Wisdom: Native Peoples/ Native Homelands Climate Change Workshop held in Albuquerque, New Mexico, November 1998

Several weeks ago, I was invited, as a representative of the Labor Network for Sustainability, to attend the First Indigenous Just Transition Assembly, at Haskell Indian Nations University in Lawrence, Kansas.

Over one hundred Indian activists from all across Turtle Island (North America) attended this first ever Assembly - American Indians, Alaska Natives, and First Nations people from Canada.

Haskell Indian Nations University provides Associate and Bachelor degrees to about 1,000 students a year. The students come from 145 Sovereign Nations, the top 10 of which are Navajo, Cherokee, Oglala Sioux, Muscogee Creek, Cheyenne River Sioux, Choctow, Prairie Band Potawatomi, Comanche, Kiowa, and Seminole Nations. The University is on the grounds of a federal land grant boarding school created in 1884 for the forced assimilation of Indian children into the dominant culture. It is said that some of the buildings remain haunted to today. The University offers studies in Environmental Science and Sustainability, Indigenous and American Indian Studies, Business Ad-



ministration, and Elementary Teacher Education.

The Assembly was open to Haskell University students, and the goal is to incorporate Indigenous Just Transition principles and thought into the University curriculum.

It was my great honor to attend this Assembly and I would like to share a few of my thoughts with you.

## Just Transition

When labor talks about a Just Transition, we usually talk about creating good family wage jobs for workers who will lose their fossil fuel-based jobs in the transition to a clean renewable energy economy. And rightfully so. Making sure workers, their families, and their communities are not left behind in the transition is fundamental to justice.

When community talks about a Just Transition they usually talk about making sure that fence line communities, those communities most negatively impacted by carbon pollution, have access to decent jobs in the clean energy economy, don't suffer negative cost impacts from the transition to clean energy, and gain improved health outcomes in their communities.

In Indian Country, Just Transition is this too but so much more. Indigenous Just transition is seen as a fundamental part of the physical, spiritual, and cultural healing process: Healing from centuries of genocide, land theft, white Christian supremacy, and colonial oppression.

Healing from the harm done to traditional languages, culture, and food sovereignty. Healing from internalized and lateral oppression, where indigenous people were taught to see themselves as inferior and helpless without the colonial culture and economy. Healing from the imposition of individualistic/capitalist values over tribal/community values. And healing from the imposition of institutions and a form of democracy which encouraged the US Government and corporations to come onto reservation lands to exploit and plunder natural resources, leaving behind toxic remains.

A Just Transition for Indigenous people is deeply rooted in recapturing their spiritual connection to the world and traditional languages, knowledge, values, culture, and food sovereignty.

*Continued on Page 11*

## Taking It Personally

Continued from Page 6

And according to Leslie, at a later date, Sam jumped right on stage, and started to sing,

*OKINAWA, where the wind comes whistling down the plains  
Where the waving wheat can sure smell sweet*

*When the wind comes right behind the rain*

*OKINAWA every night my honey lamb and I  
Sit alone and talk and watch a hawk making lazy circles in the sky*

*We know we belong to the land  
And the land we belong to is grand  
And when we say Ay yipyyiki yea  
We're only saying you're doing fine OKI-NAWA  
OKINAWA, O-K-I-N-A-W-A, OKINA-WA*

And again, if you knew Sam, you might be interested in this:

Sam was an atheist but I figured I must not be. I used to have dreams about Sam more often, but rarely until a few weeks ago. It was more like he'd come visit, stay

for a while, we'd talk and then he'd say, "Gotta get back, bye."

After a long absence he appeared again the past month.

"What's going on?" he asked.

"This is what Malaekahana looks like at low tide, now."

He looks at the photo, and says, "Nothing I can help you with. I'm dead." And goes off somewhere.

But I know what needs to be done. Our children (and grandchildren) are doing fine. They're trying to find answers.

What us old folks should be doing is protecting the story line. Because that's the part that's so easily lost if we don't protect it. This country has a bull sh\*t story line that hasn't changed for 400 years. We need to alter it.

People like Kaiya should be celebrated. And listened to. Please come if you can. Kaiya has things to say.

Let's catch a breath, then keep moving.

*Bob Shimabukuro is Associate Editor of the Retiree Advocate and Co-Chair of PSARA's RaGE Committee.*

## A Lump of Coal

Continued from Page 8

Another chapter, which the media insists on characterizing as "modernizing the agreement," allows the digital giants -- Amazon, Facebook, Google -- to gather whatever data they want, avoid taxes, and be free of lawsuits when their activities harm society.

The missing chapter is the one on climate change. There is not a word. We need cooperation, transfer of climate technologies, penalties for fossil fuel companies driving the crisis, encouragement for communities to innovate and try out policies, exemption from trade challenges to environmental policies, and rights for countries to use tariffs to keep out climate-damaging imports.

Trump's rhetoric aside, he and his cronies are promoting a corporate agenda. NAFTA2019 simply locks in climate change and inequality. Trump adds in racism to his trade rants. He identifies "Mexicans" or "China" as the enemy, when it is multinational corporations doing the outsourcing, moving profits to offshore havens, paying the low wages, burning up the planet.

NAFTA2019 deepens corporate power. We have to fight for a different vision, one that protects the planet and combats inequality.

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

## Senator Cantwell Joins Expand Social Security Caucus

By Robby Stern

On September 13, 2018, Sens. Bernie Sanders (I-Vt.) and Elizabeth Warren (D-Mass.) and Reps. John Larson (D-Conn.), Terri A. Sewell (D-Ala.), and Debbie Dingell (D-Mich.) announced the founding of the Expand Social Security Caucus along with 16 senators, including Sen. Patty Murray and more than 130 House members including Reps. DelBene, Larsen, Kilmer, Jayapal, Smith, and Heck.

At the time, Senator Sanders stated "We are here today to say very loudly and very clearly that at a time when millions of seniors are trying to survive on \$12,000 or \$13,000 a year, our job is not to cut Social Security. Our job is to expand Social Security so that everyone in America can retire with dignity and respect."

Senator Warren added "Social Security is a lifeline for seniors and Americans with disabilities. We won't let it be cut by one cent – and instead we will fight to expand it. The rich and powerful have rigged our economy to make themselves richer, while working families face a massive retirement crisis. If this government really works for the people, it should protect and expand Social Security."

The caucus is committed to expanding Social Security. In 2017, Social Security lifted 22 million Americans, including more than 15 million seniors, out of poverty. Before Social Security, nearly half of the nation's seniors were living in poverty.

In November of this year, Sen. Maria Cantwell announced she is joining the Expand Social Security caucus. While there is, as yet, no agreement on a particular piece of legislation (the Social Security 2100 Act has the largest number of co-sponsors at this time), commitment to preservation and expansion is significant, particularly if the Democrats take control of the House, Senate, and White House in 2020.



Senator Maria Cantwell

# Indigenous Just Transition Assembly

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## Challenges

Activism in Indian Country has to overcome dominant culture protocols of white evangelical patriarchy and misogyny, which have created lateral violence and internalized oppression. Staggering unemployment, poverty, and dependence on federal programs has exacerbated a sense of helplessness, compounded by a learned behavior of conflict avoidance.

Activism has to overcome the breakdown of traditional governing practices and the primary role of women in tribal affairs with patriarchal leadership focused on assimilation, power, and the modification of life.

And then there are the realities of many tribes being dependent on fossil fuel jobs.

With the impending closure of the Navajo Generating Station in November of this year, the Kayenta Coal Mine, the primary energy source for the power company, was closed this past August. With the closure of the generating station the combined unemployment will be 750 direct jobs, held mostly by Navajo and Hopi Nation members. The estimated annual revenue loss to the Navajo nation is between \$30 and \$50 million.

To compound the tragedy, there are few jobs in this northeast corner of Arizona and there is no Just Transition plan in place. Further complicating the situation is the Navajo tribal council decision to invest millions of dollars in three failing coal mines in the Powder River Basin of Wyoming.

## Opportunities

Inspired by the work of the indigenous Environmental Network and hundreds of young Indian activists at Standing Rock and other fossil fuel fights on indigenous land, there is a growing Indian movement to recapture native languages, culture, food sovereignty, democracy and an effort to educate about the "New Red Deal." (See "A Red Deal," by Nick Estes, *Jacobin*, August 6, 2019.)

Many tribes at the Assembly talked about food sovereignty programs based on regenerative agricultural processes, seed saving, and educating about healthy traditional foods and diets.

Activists in the Navajo Nation are pursuing an effort to get the utility company to set aside a portion of their energy credits for renewable energy.

As the assembly was happening, two female teenage native Alaskan youth proposed a resolution at the Alaskan Federation of Natives (AFN) Convention. The resolution declared a state of climate emergency and called for a climate action leadership task force within AFN that would advance indigenous voices and advocate for strong climate policies to ensure the survival of future generations. The resolution passed. It passed over an attempt to include an amendment to include non-renewable resource development.

It is instructive and inspiring to hear the words of these native youth leaders:

"I am an indigenous youth. We are not here to fight with our own people. We shouldn't have to worry about our future generations, about our children and grandchildren... This is important, this is our life, this is our future.

"We call upon our leaders to support the survival of our future generations, ways of life, traditional lands, intact ecosystems, emotional, Spiritual, and mental well-being due to Climate Change."

Note: The Alaska Federation of Natives (AFN) is the largest statewide Native organization in Alaska, which includes 191 federally recognized tribes, 171 village corporations, 12 regional corporations, and 12 regional nonprofit and tribal consortiums.

## Hope

During the Just Transition Assembly a ceremonial fire burned outside the Hall day and night. It served as a place to share thoughts. Every morning we would begin with prayer songs and stories. We began with the spirit that binds us.

While it is clear that Mother Earth is sick, what is equally clear is that we need to heal her for seven generations and repair the sacred hoop that connects us all.

*Jeff Johnson is a retired President of the Washington State Labor Council and a PSARA Executive Board member.*

## To Renew or Donate

PSARA Education Fund

321 16th Avenue S, Seattle WA 98144

- Basic contribution: \$20
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# Meetings and Events

**PSARA Climate and Environmental Justice Committee:** 10 a.m. – 11:30 a.m., Thursday, January 2, Washington State Labor Council office, 321 16th Ave. S, Seattle. All are welcome.

**PSARA Government Relations Committee:** Noon – 1:30 p.m., Thursday, January 2, Washington State Labor Council office, 321 16th Ave. S. All are welcome.

**West Seattle Hot Topics for Seniors & Senior Wannabes:** Noon – 1:30 p.m., Wednesday, January 8, Southwest Library, 9010 35th Ave. SW, Seattle, (35th & Henderson). Topic: Consumerism vs. the Planet. Brown bag lunch.

**PSARA Southend Committee:** 1 p.m., Thursday, January 9, Burien Library, 400 SW 152nd St., Burien. Join us as we plan activities in South King County.

***Our Island's Treasure:*** 2:00 p.m., Saturday, January 11, Washington State Labor Council office, 321 16th Ave. S, Seattle. Seattle premier of award-winning documentary.

**PSARA Fundraising Committee:** 11:00 a.m. - Noon, Monday, January 13, Washington State Labor Council office, 321 16th Ave. S, Seattle. All are welcome.

**PSARA Education Committee:** 2 p.m., Tuesday, January 14, Washington State Labor Council office, 321 16th Ave. S, Seattle. All are welcome.

**PSARA Race and Gender Equity Committee:** 11 a.m.–Noon, Thursday, January 16, Washington State Labor Council office, 321 16th Ave. S, Seattle. All are welcome.

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

**PSARA Lobby Day:** 1:00 – 3:00 p.m., Thursday, February 6, Washington State Labor Council office, 906 Columbia Street SW, Olympia. To attend please email [organizer@psara.org](mailto:organizer@psara.org)

**Save the Date! Forum on the Lessons of the Black Panther Party:** 2:00 p.m., Saturday, February 22. More information to follow.

***Want a full-color electronic version of the Retiree Advocate? We can email you the Advocate instead of mailing a hardcopy, or you can have both! To get your electronic Advocate, just email [organizer@psara.org](mailto:organizer@psara.org) and let us know.***