

South Seattle Students Perform Their Own Stories, Not Broadway's

By Marcie Sillman

(Editor's note: Donte Felder, SEE member and head teacher at Orca K-8, leads the Columbia City Youth Theater. He and two other adults helped mentor local students who wrote, directed, and produced "As Told By Us", a series of monologues, music, and dance performed at Rainier Beach High School on May 18, 19, 25, and 26. Here SEE reprints a review of the student's performance from KUOW.org.)

The end of the school year is a time for students to show off — debates, sports championships and performances abound. And for high schools around the state, it's musical theater season. At Seattle's Roosevelt High School, drama students will present "Fiddler on the Roof." You can catch a production of "The Wiz" at Franklin High School in Mt. Baker.

But you won't find Broadway standards at Rainier Beach High School. The community-based Columbia City Youth Theater is taking over the RBHS performing arts center May 18th with "As Told By Us," an evening of monologues, music and dance created by teen participants. The material is sourced from the students' lives, along with stories from community members.

Donte Felder, who leads Columbia City Youth Theater and teaches at Orca K-8 alternative school, is the driving force behind the production. He and two other adult mentors worked with the students to shape the individual monologues and the overall staging. But Felder sees himself in a backseat role.

"The students are responsible for writing, directing and producing — the whole shebang," Felder says. "Our job is to coach and guide them. Assist them in making quality decisions. Felder is concentrating on the artistic content. And Intiman Theatre's fledgling Starfish Project is providing a technical training program, in which students work on everything from scenic design to running the lights and sound system.

The Western Washington Training Program pays for members of the IATSE union to mentor Starfish participants. IATSE represents stagehands and other backstage theater artists. Mentor Tariq Sahali says he's a product of mentorship himself, and he feels it's important to pass on his skills to the next generation.

Intiman Artistic Director Jennifer Zeyl piloted Starfish last year at Franklin High School. She wanted to create a path for students — particularly students of color — to learn about what goes on backstage, and to receive the kind of training that will pave the way to union-wage jobs.

Intiman specifically wanted to identify youth of color for Starfish. Artistic Director Jennifer Zeyl explains: "Producers call me and say, 'Who are the black lighting designers in town?' Well, we don't have any, because we didn't make any."

Dance teacher and choreographer TiQuida Spellman's students have been working with Columbia City Youth Theater for several years. Spellman, a former public school physical education teacher, hopes her young dancers are inspired to pursue college degrees.

Seventeen-year-old Shayla Lockart, who performs a monologue about a teenage girl whose parents are behind bars, talks of personal and academic problems, of feeling lost and alienated. Felder tells her she needs to reach even deeper into her true emotions in order to touch the audience members.

Some of the monologues touch on racism or violence, but not all. Eighteen-year old Messiah Fagerholm's monologue is about unrequited love. "I don't hate you," he tells an unseen young woman. "I hate myself for not having the guts to tell you I love you."

Felder believes art saved his life when he was younger. In fifth grade, a teacher recognized his intellectual potential and pushed him to write a play. "She said, 'Donte, you're a great storyteller,'" he remembers. "And I said, 'No, I'm not.' She said, 'Write this play.'" Felder wrote the play and went on to earn an MFA in creative writing. Now, he wants to use his experience to help young people find their own paths.

Read the full article with pictures included here:

kuow.org/post/photos-south-seattle-students-perform-their-own-stories-not-broadways

Join the Kshama Solidarity Campaign to Unite Against Racism and Police Intimidation!

(Editor's Note: Socialist City Councilmember Kshama Sawant is facing a defamation lawsuit from two Seattle cops after speaking out against the police killing of Che Taylor, a 46 year-old father and Black man. In response, a coalition of community members have come together to launch a Kshama Solidarity Campaign. At the June SEA Representative Assembly, SEE member Jesse Hagopian introduced this New Business Item calling on the SEA to stand in solidarity with Sawant and all Black Lives Matter activists fighting against police violence and racism.)

Whereas, police violence against Black and Brown people is pervasive in our society, including the killing 82 unarmed Black and Latinx people in 2017 alone;

Whereas, the Movement for Black Lives, which took shape in the wake of the killing of Trayvon Martin, has been critical to forming a national dialogue about the extra-judicial killing of Black people by law enforcement—including the actions of football players such as Colin Kaepernick taking a knee, students leading walks outs and teach-ins, and educators participating in the Black Lives Matter At School week of action;

Whereas, there is a growing backlash—led by President Trump himself—against people who seek police accountability in an effort to maintain the status quo and silence those who seek justice for police violence;

Whereas, two Seattle Police Department officers responsible for the February 2016 killing of Che Taylor (a Black man), have launched legal attacks against City Councilmember Kshama Sawant—a vocal opponent of police brutality and a defender of Seattle's most marginalized—because she said publicly that the killing was unjustified;

Whereas, these legal threats by police officers against Councilmember Sawant, a fellow educator and former member of AFT local 1789, is an attempt to silence a women of color about police violence, and more broadly, delegitimize people of color expressing freedom of speech;

Therefore, be it resolved that the Seattle Education Association (SEA) endorse the Kshama Sawant Solidarity Campaign for her right to speak out against police brutality; and

Be it further resolved that SEA write a letter to the Martin Luther King County Labor Council Executive Board to encourage the endorsement of the Kshama Sawant Solidarity Campaign; and

Be it further resolved that the SEA will email its members to encourage them to join the campaign for its official kickoff on June 23rd, 7PM at Washington Hall, and donate to the legal defense fund (<https://www.gofundme.com/65qcf-kshama-solidarity-campaign>).

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Educators' Vision

Published By the Social Equity Educators (SEE)

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SEA Contract Negotiation Demands

(Editor's note: The Seattle Education Association, which represents over 5,000 educators in the around 100 schools in Seattle began contract negotiations recently with the Seattle Public Schools district. Below are 5 key demands that Social Equity Educators believes the SEA should prioritize in negotiations to ensure Racial Equity as well as the top 5 demands of the Paraprofessionals, SAEOPS, and Substitutes in our union. We encourage all educators to stand in solidarity with their fellow union members in demanding the negotiating team prioritize these issues. Of course, we agree with the Washington Education Association that all certified teachers should receive 15% pay raises and all classified staff should receive 37% pay increases in the first year of the contract.)

Racial Equity Demands

By Bruce Jackson, educator at Aki Kurose Middle School

(Editor's Note: The following demands arose from organizing our Black Lives Matter at School Week this past February 5-9th.)

Ethnic Studies

SEE is asking for Ethnic Studies to be a requirement of Graduation for all SPS students.

Racial Equity Teams

SEE is calling for District enforced, mandatory viewing of the EOG Toolkit, make them part of the weekly, 75-minute, early release time to be dedicated to Racial Equity, and for all Racial Equity Teams to be centrally organized through representatives from the Race and Equity Institute and the district.

Increasing the Percentage of Black Educators

We are asking for a 200% increase in the hiring of educators of color. We, at SEE, are asking for a strategic plan that recruits, retains and supports those educators. We are also asking for a Student to Teacher program that trains our diverse student population to become future educators.

Reducing Counselor Ratios and Increasing Social Worker Presence to Address Gun Violence

SEE believes that Restorative Practices, earlier and more convenient counselor intervention and a stronger Social Worker and Family Support Worker presence in every school could save young lives, so SEE is asking for a restructure of the way we count students. At-risk students, English Language Learners, and Special Education students should count at 1.5 instead of 1. This will increase the number of Counselors, Social Workers, and Family Support Workers where the need is greatest.

Restorative Justice

SEE is asking for quarterly, leveled, professional development training for all building educators as well as restorative justice counselors and practices in all schools.

Paraprofessional Contract Demands

The following demands were presented by paraprofessionals in the Seattle Education Association in the form of a petition to the Seattle School Board meeting on June 7:

- A living wage so that we can continue to work with Seattle's students and families
- Respect for our voice, role and judgement as professionals
- Investment in relevant and accessible professional development and technology

- Mentoring and opportunities to advance up a career ladder
- Safe working environments for our physical and mental health and reasonable workloads

SAEOP Contract Demands

By Lynne Hubbard, President of the SAEOP'S

- Discontinue the practice of hiring regular hourly office employees. Currently, the district is using too many hourly non-union employees to perform work that should be done by SAEOP union members.
- Hire more SAEOP members to match the increased workload. Currently, there are significant numbers of office support staff who are taking on increased responsibilities without commensurate pay increases.
- More money for professional certificates and national accreditations. It's been at least 3 contracts since SAEOP'S received an increase in compensation for these certificates and accreditations.
- We want the entire 37% pay increase for classified staff in the first year of the contract as recommended by the Washington Education Association.
- More and appropriate professional development offerings. Whenever possible, these offerings should include using district technology in order to limit, if not eliminate the need to travel for these professional developments.

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Message from the Seattle Democratic Socialists of America Anti-War Caucus

In order to counter the efforts of the US military to recruit students, the Greater Seattle chapter of the national anti-war group, Veterans for Peace, currently has a counter-recruitment presence on all Seattle high school campuses. They are allowed by Seattle Public Schools bylaws to visit campuses at the same time and place as military recruiters.

Veterans for Peace would like to establish a relationship with educators at each high school in order to improve communication between campuses and counter-recruiters. Seattle DSA's Anti-war Caucus is partnering with Veterans for Peace to expand their counter-recruitment efforts: <https://counterrecruitmentseattle.wordpress.com/>

If you'd like to get involved in counter-recruitment efforts on your campus, please fill out this short survey with your contact info: <https://tinyurl.com/SEAAntiWar>

You can also contact us directly at sdsanowar@gmail.com. Thank you for your dedication to a socially equitable education, free from militarization, for every child in Seattle.

For more information check out: socialequityeducators.org

facebook.com/socialequityeducators/

Call or text: 206.550.1609



Educators' Vision

Published By the Social Equity Educators (SEE)

SEE steering committee

Tracy Castro-Gill, Lauren Stark, Donte Felder, Jesse Hagopian, Ian Golash, Justin Vinson, and Darrin Hoop

Educators' Vision is a monthly newsletter of the Social Equity Educators socialequityeducators.org info@seattlesee.org

Mission

Social Equity Educators is a rank and file caucus of Seattle Education Association educators that focuses on democratic, anti-racist, and anti-oppression policies and practices in our classrooms, schools, and communities. SEE engages in local, national, and international social movements for liberation and radical change by building alliances and addressing the roots of institutional racism and other forms of injustice.

Points of Unity

- Organizing and bargaining for equity from the bottom up
- Anti-racist, anti-oppression pedagogy and practices
- Supporting social movements through community alliances
- Full and equitable funding for public education
- Opposing corporate education reform

SEA Contract • continued from page 1

Substitutes Association Contract Demands

By Peter Henry, Substitutes Association President; Stan Strasner, Substitutes Association Vice-President; and Justin Vinson, Substitutes Association At Large SEA Board Member

Healthcare

Currently, subs only receive health care after they've been in a single long-term job for 60 consecutive work days. We are employees of SPS and we need to be treated like regular employees. It's a matter of equity - plus practically speaking we get sick too. It's a hard job and we are more than warm bodies in front of the class.

Sick Day Parity

Thank goodness subs finally get sick leave, but it wasn't the district's decision. It was due to the voters who passed Initiative 1433. Other employees earn one sick

day per 20 days worked. Subs earn one-hour sick leave per 40 hours worked. We want parity with everyone else.

End Arbitrary and Unfair Discipline

Discipline against subs is often arbitrary. We usually receive disciplinary letters without any attempt being made to reach out to the sub to find out their side of the story. Letters result in the sub being blocked from the school. If the sub receives three letters, they are subject to a "Loudermill" hearing and may get terminated as a result. We think this is harsh and unfair.

Compensation

Subs deserve the entire 15% pay increase for certified employees in the first year of the contract as recommended by the Washington Education Association.

Electronic Timekeeping and Pay Transparency

Subs are still required to submit weekly paper timesheets to the district office. It's time to move into the 21st century and implement online timekeeping along with transparent, easy-to-read pay checks that clearly detail hours worked and the various taxes and benefit deductions.

Amazon Tax Passes in Seattle and the Billionaire Class Fights Back

By Calvin Priest and Keely Mullen

On May 14, the Seattle City Council passed a historic tax on Amazon and other big corporations to fund permanently-affordable, publicly-owned housing, under the leadership of Socialist Alternative, Democratic Socialists of America, and socialist City Councilmember Kshama Sawant.

The final bill, a \$48 million annual tax on the biggest 3% of corporations in Seattle, was the end result of a powerful campaign by housing activists and socialists over the last nine months. What we won, even though it was substantially reduced under big business pressure and Amazon's extortionary threat to take away jobs, is nonetheless a major victory and inspiring example for workers around the country - especially as it comes alongside Trump's corporate tax cuts and as Amazon demands handouts from cities around the country competing for HQ2.

Within days of the passage of the #TaxAmazon ordinance, big-business-funded groups [launched a ballot referendum](#) to repeal it, raising already more than \$350,000. In addition to paid signature gatherers, big business is being assisted by conservative NIMBY [Not in My Backyard] groups like Speak Out Seattle, who regularly employ anti-homeless and right-wing arguments, as well as by far right forces like Patriot Prayer, whose local political candidate, Joey Gibson, announced his support for the referendum.

Financial backers of the anti-Amazon-tax referendum read like a who's who of big business and the super-rich in the wider Seattle region, with Amazon, Starbucks, multi-billionaire Paul Allen's Vulcan mega-development company, and wealthy developer Howard S. Wright III

(whose family owns the Space Needle) putting up some of the largest contributions.

Labor unions, spearheaded by Working Washington, and joined by housing activists as well as Socialist Alternative, are waging a "Decline to Sign" campaign in order to try to defeat the referendum before it gets on the ballot.

Big business is enraged by the tax in spite of its modest size relative to the enormous profits they're making off the backs of Seattle workers. This is in part because our movement's victory bucks the overwhelming trend over the past decades of growing inequality: the slashing of taxes on big business and the rich, and the ongoing shifting of the tax burden to working people.

These are central tenets of the neoliberal policy consensus and have been embraced by Republican and Democratic leaders alike. The #TaxAmazon struggle points in an entirely different direction. Rather than just defending against the endless attacks on workers' living standards, working people in Seattle turned the tables on the billionaire class to score a major offensive victory!

We must continue the struggle. This system is incapable of providing quality affordable housing for all, and we need to fight for an alternative to the broken private housing market. Just to begin to seriously address the housing crisis, we need rent control and a massive expansion of tens of thousands of units of publicly-owned and operated social housing which is not susceptible to the whims of the market.

Read the full article here:

socialistalternative.org/2018/05/31/amazon-tax-passes-seattle-billionaire-class-fights/

How Arizona Teachers Got From A to Z

By Darrin Hoop, long term sub at Rainier Beach High School

(Editor's Note: On May 3, some 60,000 Arizona educators ended a six-day strike for higher pay and increased education funding. Now they are organizing for a statewide ballot initiative, the Invest in Education Act (<https://investinedarizona.com>). They have until July 5 to collect 150,000 valid signatures. If passed in November, it would tax the richest 1% of households in Arizona and raise \$690 million annually with 60% directed to pay for teacher salary increases and employment related expenses and 40% towards maintenance and operations of public schools. Below is a short excerpt of an article published which describes the settlement of the strike as well as lessons to be learned from it.)

"We have teachers who have been woken from a slumber here."--

Noah Karvelis, K-8 music teacher in Phoenix and a leader of Arizona Educators United

Over the course of about two months, a team of less than 10 rank-and-file educators--most of whom hadn't even met previously--built a rank-and-file teachers' group from the ground up that eventually spread across the Grand Canyon State and led the walkout of some 60,000 Arizona educators that ended May 3.

Primarily through the [Arizona Educators United](#) (AEU) Facebook page, educators created a network of 2,000 liaison people in at least 800 of the roughly 1,500 schools around the state.

With the support of the state's main teachers' union, the Arizona Education Association (AEA), they united teachers, counselors, librarians, school bus drivers, school psychologists, office staff, academic coaches and other staff to fight for higher pay for all school workers and increased funding for the whole public education system.

When the dust had settled, they didn't win all their demands. But they clearly won the first battle in the war to fully fund education in the state. The governor and state legislature agreed to a \$240 million increase in funding to schools. With this money, [school boards are expected to increase teacher pay by 10 percent](#).

The budget adds \$95 million in District Additional Assistance (DAA) and \$5 million in Charter Additional Assistance (CAA) to classrooms. It will be up to individual school districts to decide if this DAA/CAA money goes toward funding school supplies, technology needs, pay increases for support staff or hiring more teachers.

Another \$23 million will be allocated for building repairs, early literacy grants and technical education. Finally, and most controversially, \$38 million will be spent on "rewarding" schools that score in the top 10 percent on the AZMerit state tests.

While there are many lessons, positive and some negative, to be learned from the #RedForEd movement, there's no question that this struggle marked a step forward in the growing "red-state revolt" of educators that started in [West Virginia](#), spread to [Oklahoma](#) and [Kentucky](#), and has now reached [North Carolina](#) with yesterday's statewide action.

There are hopeful signs that the seeds of revolt are spreading to so-called blue states, like [Colorado](#), where many districts were shut down by protests last month, and [California](#), where 53,000 workers at the University of California campuses and hospitals struck for three days last week....

The enormous scope and significance of this historic strike--and those in West Virginia, Oklahoma and elsewhere--deserve continued discussion and debate, not just among educators, but all workers, whether unionized or not.

The strikes definitely didn't win everything teachers initially set out for. But it would be unrealistic to expect anything different after [a 40-year](#)

[war on unions and workers](#) by corporations and their servants in both the Republican and Democratic Parties.

Learning from these struggles should be of the utmost priority for anyone who's serious about rebuilding a fighting labor movement in the U.S. Dylan Wegela, a 7th grade Social Studies teacher in the Cartwright Education Association and a leader of Arizona Educators United, articulated the crucial starting point for the future:

"People now believe in their ability to ask for things. At my own site, teachers are talking about forming a committee to stand up and stand together against certain policies that a lot of people at my school disagree with. I think we really proved wrong the belief that you can't mobilize and be effective. It doesn't matter what the laws of the state are. If there's a cause that is just and people are motivated, you can accomplish a lot. It will change the power structure of what teachers believe they deserve and don't deserve. That's the huge lesson to be learned from our struggle."

Read the full article here:

socialistworker.org/2018/05/17/how-arizona-teachers-got-from-a-to-z

"A Marxist Education: Learning to Change the World"

By Wayne Au

Over the summer, some members of SEE along with allies will be holding a study group on UW-Bothell Professor Wayne Au's new book *A Marxist Education: Learning to Change the World*.

Haymarket Books, the publisher, describes Au's book by saying, "In *A Marxist Education: Learning to Change the World*, professor and education activist Wayne Au traces his own development as a Marxist educator, as well as the development of Marxist educational theory. Arguing that dialectical materialism is at the heart of Marxist theory, Au uses dialectics to not only analyze the relationship between capitalism and schools, but also to understand teaching, learning, and curriculum."

A Marxist Education challenges the idea that Marxism is Eurocentric, reclaims noted educators such as Lev Vygotsky and Paulo Freire as part of the socialist tradition, and integrates anti-racist and feminist struggle into an analyses of education, consciousness, and power."

If you are interested in participating, please contact SEE member darrinhood@gmail.com.

Fill out this poll with days you are available: <https://doodle.com/poll/es6b8uh2p8i-ixhn9>

Buy the book here: <https://www.haymarketbooks.org/books/1153-a-marxist-education>