

# Intersections

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**FREE**

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## Towards a Free Health Clinic in Olympia

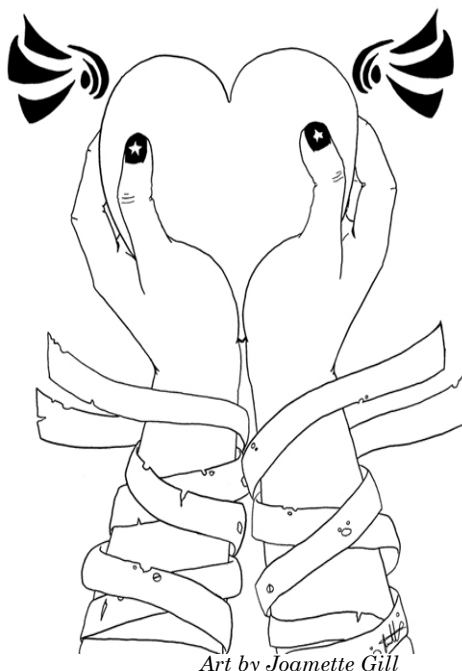
### *Anarchism in Action*

On May 21st, the Olympia branch of Common Action hosted a forum on health care with the hopes of someday establishing a free or affordable medical clinic in the downtown Olympia area. This forum came at a much needed time when the only other free clinic in the area, the Neighborhood Free Medical Clinic in Lacey, had shut its doors, and other clinics that serve low-income populations had so many patients that they were forced to turn people away.

The economic crisis and the trajectory of global capitalism in the last 40 years has affected access to health care. Traditionally, many people in the United States had health insurance coverage through their employers. However, with the changing economy of the post-WWII era as well as the exporting of manufacturing jobs overseas, this has become less and less true. The economic crisis has affected even the middle class, which previously survived booms and busts of the business cycle. As it deepens, more and more Americans lack jobs and health insurance.

Fundamentally, we believe that everyone has the right to affordable and accessible health care, and the knowledge it takes to prevent illness and disease. However, the economic events of the last year and the failed promises of politicians including Barack

Obama have shown us that in order to make this a reality, we need to come together as a community, and do it ourselves from the bottom up.



Because of this need, a group has been working toward developing a vision for a free clinic in Olympia. The project is an example of creating the world we want to see in the here and now: a world based on cooperation, mutual aid, solidarity, and direct democracy.

To make this a reality, we must create spaces for people to meet their needs for health, safety, and a sense of belonging and empowerment. We will need to focus on health at every level, from the individual to the societal level. To achieve a healthy world, we must also heal ourselves

and our communities, and we must challenge corporate and state power over our lives.

From its inception, the free clinic project has been an exercise in grassroots and direct democracy, uniting diverse groups of people from throughout the Olympia community. As the project evolves and grows, Common Action members will continue to be involved and push for a clinic that not only meets immediate needs, but also helps people to empower themselves and others.

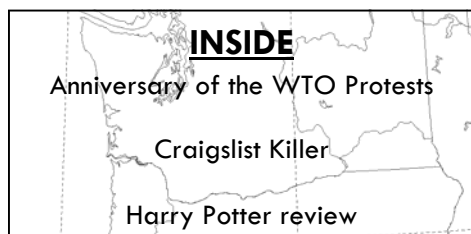
What is the Common Action vision for the clinic? First and foremost, the clinic must be accessible to all members of our community. This means that it must have evening and weekend hours for people balancing the demands of work and family. The clinic must also be accessible to marginalized groups such as the houseless, women, people of color and those who identify as LGBTQQ.

Oftentimes, the allopathic medical paradigm disempowers people and separates us from our bodies, giving us the idea that only highly trained and educated professionals know how to treat our ailments. This paradigm has disproportionately affected marginalized groups.

Two examples are forced sterilization and a refusal to treat transgendered folks among many practitioners.

Therefore we must recognize the value of allopathic medicine, but we must also move beyond its limitations,

*Continued on page 3*



# Fifty Thousand Deep

## The WTO Protests Ten Years Later

by Joshua Neuhouser

Though I was barely a teenager when it happened, I can remember it all clearly, if I want to. I remember the curfew in downtown Seattle, the State of Emergency, the deployment of the National Guard to my hometown. I remember huddling around my family's television set, even though (or perhaps because) the local channels gave up on reporting and simply showed streaming footage from Westlake Center. And so we watched as protesters were shot point blank in the back with rubber bullets and newscasters hiding from the police under their vans. In the time that followed, I remember the Infernal Noise Brigade, who formed during the World Trade Organization protests and for years later remained the city's best band.

The WTO was created in order to regulate the global economy in such a way that nothing – not human rights, not unions, not the environment – would interfere with corporate profit. And so when the WTO came to Seattle, they were challenged in the streets by environmentalists, by anarchists, by unions, by groups of Asian immigrants who were tired of seeing their homelands overcome by foreign-owned sweatshops. The widely publicized marches and street battles were also supplemented with strikes by taxi drivers and longshore workers.

But after Seattle, something happened. South American anti-globalization activists spent most of their energy occupying abandoned factories or farmland and turning them into worker-run cooperatives, as the workers at Republic Windows and Doors threatened to do earlier this year. But up north, the movement got stuck on what was called “summit-

hopping”: whenever groups of powerful men gathered together to plan the fate of the world – whether it was through the World Trade Organization, the International Monetary Fund, or the Group of Eight – protesters would also be there in order to draw attention to the lack of democracy at the summit and disrupt the meetings.

This restricted participation in the movement to people who had the means to travel across the country in order to protest. Even sympathetic journalists began referring to it as a McMovement: you saw the same faces but at different places, and what was fresh and exciting in Seattle began to seem stale and familiar in Montreal, Genoa, and Miami. So while South American anti-globalization activists built mass movements that have significantly changed the face of the continent, their First World counterparts shadow-boxed with those in power, and the attention they grabbed in Seattle quickly faded after September 11th.

A lot has changed in the ten years since the protests. The WTO itself has collapsed, as Third World leaders, emboldened by the movement, refuse to have their actions dictated to them by the developed world.

The American government itself had less need of organizations like the WTO, and turned invasion into its weapon of first resort in advancing its economic interests. So after years of war that have done little but bankrupt the country, it's become



easy to romanticize the 90's. Next to the slaughter in Iraq and Afghanistan, we've forgotten Clinton's little wars in the disintegrating communist bloc. And in the face of the current recession, it can be nice to pretend that the dot-com boom had, in fact, trickled down to the rest of us – even though blue collar jobs were disappearing overseas while the rich printed monopoly money. Ten years ago, people were so upset with the state of America and the state of the world that they took to the streets of Seattle to voice their anger. Since then, life has gotten so much worse that a return to that same Democratic Party status quo feels like relief. But it's still not too late to take the path offered, but not followed, after the WTO protests.

And they call this a riot? Naw man, I call it an uprising. 50 thousand deep, and it sound like thunder when our feet pound streets.

**Stay tuned to [www.seattleplus10.org](http://www.seattleplus10.org) for upcoming events celebrating the 10th anniversary of the WTO in Seattle!**

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#### *Other upcoming events:*

Econvergence: Northwest Regional Gathering on the Economic and Environmental Crises  
October 2-4 in Portland, OR  
[www.econvergence.org](http://www.econvergence.org)

Seattle Anarchist Book Fair  
October 17-18

[www.seattleanarchist.org](http://www.seattleanarchist.org)

Common Action will be hosting panels on Anarchism and Anti-Racism, Science Fiction and Transformative Justice. Check it out!

*Intersections* is a publication of **Common Action**

**<http://www.nwcommonaction.org>**

Common Action is a regional anarchist organization in the Northwest United States with members representing the cities of Seattle, Tacoma, Olympia, and Bremerton.

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# Muggle Reviews: Fixing Fantasy

by Ariel Wetzel

When I was a young teenager browsing the bookstore, I initially passed up a new book called *Harry Potter and the Sorcerer's Stone*. When I finally read the novel a few years later, the quirky characters and richly imagined world of Hogwarts sucked me in like any good fantasy does. I appreciated the epic proportion of J.K. Rowling's imagination, and eagerly waited to see how the struggle between Harry and the villain Voldemort would unfold. It was easy to identify with Harry because I was accustomed to accessing fantastical worlds through the eyes of the typical hero, a straight white male.

While reading and watching the Harry Potter stories can be quiet pleasurable, they (like all media) teach subtle messages about how masculinity, whiteness, capitalism, and heterosexuality shape relationships. These messages are revealed when looking at what the directors of the Harry Potter films chose to emphasize and omit in their translations.

For example, in the latest film, *Harry Potter and the Half-Blood Prince*, a good thirty minutes of the movie develops romantic relationships amongst Harry's teenage cohort at the expense of several plot-developing flashbacks and side-characters present in the novel. While I was pleased that sexuality in teenagers was presented as normal, the courtships were always between boys and girls. In *Half-Blood Prince*, Harry develops feelings for Ginny, a talented witch, athlete, and fighter. Ginny's brother Ron (Harry's best friend) is initially over-protective of his younger sister, but by the end of the film

grants permission for his sister to date Harry. The romantic relationship is a bonding moment and exchange between two men.



In contrast, there is only one acknowledged homosexual character in Harry Potter, Professor Dumbledore, the headmaster of Hogwarts and Harry's mentor. Dumbledore's sexual orientation is only revealed "off camera" by J.K. Rowling after the release of the final novel. It is great to know that one of the most powerful wizards happens to be gay as well as a talented teacher and mentor, but he's never allowed to have an explicit, "on camera" romantic relationship in the way that heterosexual characters are. Perhaps the final films, the two-part movies that will retell the final Harry Potter book, will develop the romantic back-story between Dumbledore and the dark-wizard Grindelwald.

Even casual Harry Potter fans lament the cutting of their favorite scenes and characters in the pared down movies. The loss I find most unfortunate is that

of racial diversity. It is unfortunate the lead characters in the books are all white, but a number of side characters of color get to be real characters with heroic moments and human flaws. In the films, characters of color are condensed into stereotypical, token background characters or omitted all together. Rowling also creates and challenges a culture of racism amongst the "pure blood" wizards by having Harry be a hero of mixed wizard and Muggle (non-wizard) heritage.

Some things seem missing in the Harry Potter franchise all together. While there are clear class divisions between rich and working class wizarding families, where are the poor people? How does the economy function? We've got hints at an exploitative side of wizarding society with the revelation of house-elf slaves cooking and cleaning for wealthy wizarding families, but Hermione's Society for the Promotion of Elvish Welfare (S.P.E.W.) club turns into a joke that mocks her legitimate objections to slavery. S.P.E.W. is left out of the films all together.

On the bright side, the previous film, *Harry Potter and the Order of the Phoenix*, features youth agency and anti-authoritarianism as Harry forms a rebel group to challenge a corrupt government and its propagandist press. As Rowling herself said in one interview, "You should question authority and you should not assume that the establishment or the press tells you all of the truth."

## Oly Free Health Clinic *Continued from page 1*

and give people the knowledge to listen to their bodies and prevent future disease and illness. There is talk of nutritional workshops and counseling, a lending library, and a community garden as approaches to broadening the scope of services beyond traditional allopathy.

Also, if we want the clinic to be a truly democratic institution, there must be widespread community involvement and support in the project with an emphasis on building connections between existing community institutions and groups. Furthermore, those who use the clinic must have a stake in decision-making. In the traditional hierarchical non-profit structure, educated professionals determine services and people in need

passively receive them. However, Common Action wants people who use the clinic to be active members of this project who have a say in what happens at the clinic.

One way of doing that is to encourage clinic users to volunteer as "payment" for their treatment. Volunteering could include many different activities such as doing street outreach, speaking about the clinic at a church or community group, doing paperwork, sending out mailings, answering phones, or cleaning up at the clinic. This type of work would help people to feel like they are fundamentally a part of the day-to-day operations of the clinic and that they have a stake in its

existence beyond their own individual needs.

Furthermore, it is evidence that when we come together, we can find real and lasting solutions to our problems that work better than those imposed from the top by politicians, bosses or corporations. In an era when we have seen an upsurge in faith in these top-down solutions with the promise of "real change" from Obama and his supporters, projects like the Olympia free clinic are particularly powerful in demonstrating the importance and necessity of collective action. To get involved, or to learn more, contact [olyfreehealthcare@riseup.net](mailto:olyfreehealthcare@riseup.net).

# Craigslist Killer

## An Excuse to Attack Sex Workers

by Greg A

Julissa Brisman had been working as a bartender when she realized two years ago that she needed to stop drinking. "I woke up April 14th and said no, I can't do this anymore," she wrote in her journal. She quit her job bartending and started going to Alcoholics Anonymous meetings. Her family was proud, and Julissa was determined to stick with it, getting a tattoo with the date of her sobriety.

Two years later, on April 14th, 2009, Julissa was beaten and shot to death in a Boston hotel room. Her murder sparked a media frenzy. She had been working as a masseuse and was targeted through her online ad in the erotic services section of Craigslist. The media couldn't resist the "Craigslist Killer" spectacle of murder, sex, and the internet.

But coverage quickly segued from real violence against sex workers to the nebulous threat to "our communities" from illegal prostitution. Many state Attorneys General, including Rob McKenna from Washington, used this media hype to mount their latest attack on sex workers. They pressured Craigslist to remove the ad category and require strict verification to place adult ads. McKenna applauded the changes, hoping they would help "fight sexual exploitation to make our communities safer."

Jessica Bloom from Sex Workers Action New York countered that "removing the erotic services category from Craigslist does not help prevent violence against escorts and other sex workers." These restrictions, in fact, further endanger sex workers by limiting the ability to screen potentially dangerous clients.

Spread magazine defines sex worker as "any adult who explicitly exchanges her or his own erotic labor for money, services, or goods." It includes prostitutes, but also workers with a wide range of jobs with or without sexual contact. Sex workers are

mothers, daughters, and brothers in our community and are entitled to full rights and safety as workers and human beings.



Many believe that the sex industry is inherently coercive and that sex workers must be saved by criminalization. Others believe sex workers freely choose to break the law and deserve any consequences they may suffer. But this is a false dichotomy. Under capitalism, no worker is fully free to choose to work or not to work, the industry they work in, their working conditions, their hours, or their pay. At best we choose from what is available largely based on accidents of birth.

But whether sex workers freely chose their line of work or not, criminalization does little to further the stated goals. Rather than protecting those who have been coerced into the work, illegal status forces them to rely on their

exploiters. Rather than reducing violence, illegal status gives a wink and a nod to those that would kill, rob, or rape sex workers knowing the crime won't be investigated. Rather than build respect for women, the marginalization of sex workers creates a yardstick that all women are measured against, with disrespect and violence for those that fall short.

Decriminalization is a better answer. In Rhode Island, indoor prostitution was decriminalized in 1980. Two days after he killed Julissa Brisman, the Craigslist Killer attempted to rob an exotic dancer at a Rhode Island hotel. The man was chased off by the dancer's husband who had been nearby to provide security. In other states, such aid can be prosecuted as a felony. In this case, decriminalization may have saved the dancer's life.

Sex workers, like workers in all industries can also organize to improve conditions. Many help each other with security by sharing bad client lists. Dancers at the Lusty Lady in San Francisco successfully fought to unionize as documented in the film, "Live Nude Girls Unite!" Sex workers are organizing a co-op brothel in Vancouver for the 2010 Olympics, drawing the ire of both anti-prostitution groups and for-profit escort services.

Well-meaning or not, the criminalization of sex work does nothing to empower those who are vulnerable. But through decriminalization and self-organizing, sex workers can protect themselves and take charge of their lives and working conditions. When sex workers stand strong and free from legal persecution and violence, we all stand stronger.

For more resources for sex workers and allies:

<http://www.spreadmagazine.org/>  
<http://www.sexwork101.com/>

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