

# the COOPERPOINT

The Evergreen State College Student Newspaper | Feb. 12 - Feb. 25, 2015 JOURNAL



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## HOW WE WORK:

The Cooper Point Journal is produced by students at The Evergreen State College, with funding from student fees and advertising from local businesses. The Journal is published for free every other Thursday during the school year and distributed throughout the Olympia area. Our content is also available online at [www.cooperpointjournal.com](http://www.cooperpointjournal.com).

Our mission is to provide an outlet for student voices, and to inform and entertain the Evergreen community and the Olympia-area more broadly, as well as to provide a platform for students to learn about operating a news publication.

Our office is located on the third floor of the Campus Activities Building (CAB) at The Evergreen State College in room 332 and we have open student meetings from 5 to 6 p.m every Monday and Thursday.

## WRITE FOR US:

We accept submissions from any student at The Evergreen State College, and also from former students, faculty, and staff. We also hire students onto our staff, who write articles for each issue and receive weekly learning allotments.

Have an exciting news topic? Know about some weird community happening? Enjoy that new hardcore band? Come talk to us and write about it.

We will also consider submissions from non-Evergreen people, particularly if they have special knowledge on the topic. We prioritize current student content first, followed by former students, faculty and staff, and then general community submissions. Within that, we prioritize content related to Evergreen first, followed by Olympia, the state of Washington, the Pacific Northwest, etc.

To submit an article, reach us at [cooperpointjournal@gmail.com](mailto:cooperpointjournal@gmail.com).

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### WEEKLY MEETINGS

Mon. & Thur. 5 to 6 p.m.

## COVER ART

By Rosemary Engstrom

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Illustration by RUBY THOMPSON

## Gallery Closure Should Be A Wake-Up Call

EVERGREEN'S IN SERIOUS CRISIS, WHERE IS OUR STUDENT MOVEMENT?

By Issac Scott

**E**vergreen's future is in real trouble as state budget cuts decimate programs we hold dear. Perhaps the most vivid example is the impending closure of the Evergreen Gallery, located in the library. It's been there since 1971, quietly showing off world-renowned artists and the college's awesome permanent collection, which includes pieces by Andy Warhol and Diane Arbus. Next year, it will likely be gone, with the fate of the permanent collection seemingly tenuous as well.

Evergreen's reputation is largely based on the strength of its extra-curricular programs, giving students opportunities to work on professional-scale projects in a town where such opportunities are often hard to come by. Spaces like the Evergreen Gallery, Photoland, and Media Loan consistently make it feel worthwhile to be a student here.

But there's no reason to think that closing any number of beloved college resources will be enough to prevent Evergreen's downward slide. It should be apparent that the Evergreen Gallery will not be the last precious space to disappear. The Evergreen Gal-

lery is not the problem—it's the state's tax system and its policies toward higher education.

I came to Evergreen in 2011, at the peak of the college's enrollment. Since then, 20 percent of the student body has evaporated, and the sense of excitement at the school has dampened to something closing in on numb complacency.

Enrollment hit a high of 4,800 between 2009 and 2011, and is now down to mid-90s levels, around 3,900. Since 2008, tuition rates have jumped 70 percent, while support from the state is a third of what it was then. Every quarter this year students have uni-

formly complained of dwindling class options. And by the way, what ever happened to concerts on campus, once

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**It's apocalyptic language, but I think it's apt: the college is quickly becoming a shadow of its former self.**

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a hallmark of Evergreen culture, and still a central feature of college life elsewhere? The vibrant history of our campus events is now reduced to You-

Tube videos of Nirvana playing in K apartment.

It's apocalyptic language, but I think it's apt: the college is quickly becoming a shadow of its former self.

The administration is worried about student recruitment and retention. Well, if the college doesn't have money to provide the academic and cultural resources students want, what's keeping them here? If, quarter-by-quarter, programs are slowly eroded and respected professors eliminated, why should any student invest their time and money in the college? The grandiose promise for which Evergreen stands requires—as much as we hate to admit it—a lot of

money. And without a significant and sustained movement for radical political change in the state of Washington, Evergreen's promise will wither away. It is frankly sickening to know that we may be the ones around to see it die, and that we may be too careless, too apathetic to stop it.

And we cannot put blame squarely on Evergreen's administration. Certainly, state politics and macroeconomics are the driving force behind all of these problems. Based on the documents I've seen in my reporting, throughout the economic meltdown, the college has consistently warned the state against budget cuts, lest it become unable to provide what students need. But overall, the response from the college—yes, including the student body—has been downright pitiful. Where are the protests at the state capitol demanding full funding of higher education? Where is the movement for student power? Where is "Occupy" when we truly need it here in our lives?

We pay for this college, and it's time for us to take ownership and demand a change of course.

If doubled tuition rates aren't enough to get us in the streets, what will it be? Will it be when the Evergreen Gallery shuts its doors for good? Will it be when the student media loses its funding along with most every student group? Will it be when the college picks a new president, and they announce a conservative new direction, neatly disguised as a package of "reforms?"

By that time, I fear, we will be too anemic to struggle.

If we surrender to these forces, our history will justify the very worst stereotypes of the Evergreen student body: we were always looking for fight, but when it came down to it, we were too stoned to get off the couch.



Our reporter holds a bag of legal weed. JOE BULLINGTON

## A Visit With The Green Lady

### HOW A POT SHOP THRIVES IN OLYMPIA

By Garrett Bekemeyer

Over where Pacific Avenue switches from the eastside into Lacey sits Green Lady Marijuana, a shop with the distinction of being the first recreational marijuana store to grace our dear city with its presence. The drive over was pleasant—a brisk day in February, carrying the scent of discovery, graced with the sweetness of a Sunday hangover.

Green Lady Marijuana opened in the middle of August and it's been a bumpy start—for the shop, and for the state's fledgling marijuana regulation. Now a little down the road, business seems to be booming as the system, for the most part, has been worked out.

I didn't really have a clear picture in my head of what the experience was going to be like. I was thinking I would just show up to some weird seedy shop to talk to someone a little about weed uncomfortably and leave.

I felt winds of bewilderment overtake me, as I sat in the foyer next to the grinning president of the shop and "Welcome to Paradise" by Green Day played over Pandora radio.

I started out asking Mike Redman, co-owner and president, to tell me the process of opening a recreational marijuana. He responded with a chuckle, "Planning. Lots of planning." He went on to explain how competitive it was in the beginning to apply for a shop license. Thurston County

allowed for 11 retail shops to start up, with two in Olympia's city limits.

Redman estimated around nine people applied for the licenses. The process that followed began as a land grab, with applicants renting out different locations in the hopes one would succeed in getting a license. After finding location, they had to pay a \$250 fee to apply for the license, but had to apply several times to improve their chances of getting one.

Locations weren't too easy

to come by. The exacting legal parameters for where shops can be made it difficult to find a suitable location. Stores cannot be, for example, be within 1,000 feet of schools, parks, or libraries. There were apparently no ideal spots on the westside.

"The taxes are too high," Redman said, referring to why the situation in Washington isn't ideal, compared to the system in Colorado.

Back in the summer of

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**"That looks like some decent bud!"**

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2014, Green Lady posted online about the bumpy start: the system was still trying to work out all the legal ramifications, and therefore, the supply to the shops was quite low, as licenses to growers and producers also began to be distributed. It was

also a hassle trying to delegate the overall management of the system at the state level, which ended up in the hands of the Washington State Liquor Control Board (WSLCB).

But now, with the first season of outdoor marijuana harvested, the WSLCB has declared a surplus. Prices are dropping, putting them in competition with the cheap medical marijuana prices, though they are still higher than black market rates. Redman said the current legislative session will hopefully get the steep taxes sorted out. "For the first time in 80 years, prohibition is ending. You're able to walk in a store and buy it without any type of illness." There was an infectious excitement in his voice.

After our brief whirlwind of a conversation, I asked Redman to take me into the shop and show me what's going on. "The first thing you notice is there's no smell," said the exceptionally friendly cashier/counter attendant Deon. I was flabbergasted as I scanned the room. It was so orderly and pristine. In hindsight, my expectations were foolish. Of course it wasn't going to be some dark seedy den with customers freely trying the product and being all-around questionable.

Marijuana is a serious business. There are standards and regulations they adhere to and incredible quality control—they have a lab just down the street. Deon showed me some products in the case (everything from straight doobies, to edibles, to pipes). He looked at a package and exclaimed, "That looks like some decent bud!"

It was easy to see how invested they are in their service. Deon explained the color-coded tag system that lets the customers know the chemical content (THC) of the products. It was incredible to see the idea of that seedy pot dealer you had as a kid slashed and turned into a beautiful, reputable shop. They put hard work into getting here and they deserve it. And they know their customers deserve the experience.

## UP & COMING

**THUR. FEB 12**

**Le Voyeur**

404 4th Ave E

Jason Redd, Jay Quick, Model Citizens, Coaster, DR Roks MCJD

**Student Art Gallery**

CAB 3rd floor. 7pm

"Color Story" Opening

**FRI. FEB 13**

**Deadbeat Olympia**

226 N Division St. 8pm

Skrill Meadow, Jupiter Sprites, Grey Waves

**Le Voyeur**

404 4th Ave E

DJ Pasquan, QP Lega C' Jones, Real Life Click, Ill Defined Zikki

★ **Obsidian**

414 4th Ave E. 9pm

Nudity, Survival Knife, Wulf

**SAT. FEB 14**

**Le Voyeur**

404 4th Ave E. 6pm. ALL AGES

Cornerstone

**McCoy's Tavern**

418 4th Ave E. \$8. 21+

Cancer Slug, Big Idiot, Thrust

**Olympia Film Society**

414 4th Ave E. 9pm.

Tush!

**South Sound BBQ**

619 Legion Way SE. 9:30pm. 21+

Kaminanda, Subaqueous

**SUN. FEB 15**

**Deadbeat Olympia**

226 N Division St. 8pm

Beaumont Adams, Author, Brightside

**WED. FEB 18**

★ **Deadbeat Olympia**

226 N Division St. 8pm

Sawtooth, The Loud Potions, Holy North American Motor Highway

**Le Voyeur**

404 4th Ave E

Open Mic Comedy Night

**THUR. FEB 19**

**Deadbeat Olympia**

226 N Division St. 8pm

Crack House, FCON, SuperNothing

**Evergreen HCC**

7pm. \$5

EGYHOP Benefit: Globelamp

Anna Gordon, Bryan Davis, Emmett White, Harvey Buckner

**Obsidian**

414 4th Ave E. 9pm.

Friction: FANTASEA

★ = Staff Recommended



Cleo reads at Last Word. MONICA FRISELL

## Cleo's Divine Poetry

NEW WEEKLY POETRY READING AT LAST WORD

By Cleo Divine

There is now a place in Olympia to share your written work—a place to bring that idea you've been working out and find that you might not be the only one struggling with it. Last Word Books plays host to a multi-genre reading twice a month. The work is diverse, as are the people who share it. They have different styles, attitudes, and experiences. What they have in common, is the desire to share their perspective and the thrill of doing so.

A reading does not begin with a theme, though it often ends with one. This is not the intention, but a profoundly happy accident, when the ideas of an individual connect and spark with the ideas of others. It is okay to be lost, but it is exceptional, if you have something to say about searching.

Much of what is read on Tuesday evenings, whether fictional or not, is autobiographical.

Kiana Donahue, an Evergreen alumna, reads regularly at Last Word. She writes fiction, within the vein of magic realism: "Just as frozen ground has no give, people contract in winter too, hardening and drawing their flames tight inside themselves. Maybe it was a mistake to come down in winter. I should have waited until spring, when the sap flows and our minds are less resistant to change."

Rather than expecting work to be correct or inoffensive, it is instead

understood that there be respect for the sometimes intimate work that is shared. Not infrequently, the subjects explored by readers are of a sensitive nature. The sentiment is wounded, but bright. The audience is non-judgmental, respecting the experience of those who read their work, whatever that experience may be. The ceiling for too personal, too intense, or too much, is incredibly high.

Becca Burghardi read stream of consciousness work recently for the first time at Last Word. She is a senior at Evergreen. "I am losing my ability to love. Myself. My friends. You. I am not confident this will end. But I am also not confident that it will continue. I am in stasis. Limbo. Some may say harmony. You cannot be in limbo or stasis without being balanced. Only balance causes this inability to move forwards or backwards. So I am balanced. But this balance still feels off. It's not that

there is too much weight on one side, but too much weight on both sides."

The readings are a space to share and collect stories, a place in which we recognize our own stories in the stories of others and ourselves in one another. All it takes is a line to bring you back around to a former version of yourself. Or maybe back around to a portrait of who you are today—your life, the people you know, the things you can love, the things you can't. The stories make their way into your head. You take them out into the world with you and then bring them into the compartments of your life. It is striking when another person's work can name your fear, your heartbreak, your frenzy. Then it is recognized for what it is: yours, but not yours alone.

Johnny Atlas reads true fiction regularly at Last Word and is a recent recipient of the Edward F. Albee fellowship and residency in Montauk,

New York. "We walk. We are walking together. We keep walking. Wander wander. The forest, the pavement, the sea. Watching your feet on the beach. Feeling you grab me in your arms after important questions are answered. We smile."

The writers who share their work are Evergreen students, alumni, and people who call Olympia home. It has been a warm place from the start. A place where you can say it—that thing you've been working on, thinking about, writing about. Everyone is familiar with how much it takes to risk communication, to take something made out of the stuff in your own great storehouse and bring it out for others. But this is a space where stories are received and to have this kind of exchange, is purposeful work.

The people that have read at Last Word are amazing thinkers and writers. Thank you to them and thank you to Sky Cosby and Rob Ross, the owners of Last Word Books, for giving us a space to share our work. I would like to end on some borrowed words:

The readings are open to everyone. You will find them at 7 p.m., every 2nd and 4th Tuesday of the month at Last Word Books, 411 Cherry St. The coming dates are Feb. 24th, March 10th and 24th, April 7th and April 24th. The readings include all genres: fiction, autobiography, poetry, prose, you name it. If you want to read, you can contact me at [divine.cleo@gmail.com](mailto:divine.cleo@gmail.com), or show up to a reading where you will be warmly received.



The Artesian Commons downtown is embroiled in political controversy. JAMIE NADEL

## City Plans to Limit Access to Artesian Commons

By Felix Chrome

**T**he Artesian Commons, more commonly known as “the Well,” may be seeing some changes in the near future. On Feb. 3, the Olympia City Council approved a plan for stricter management of the park surrounding the well, in an attempt curtail behaviors some see as problematic.

The plan has yet to be fully outlined, but will begin with the installation of a fence around the park and institution of regular public park hours, leaving the space open from dawn to dusk, but closed to the public at night.

The fence would divide the actual artesian well from the rest of the park, allowing the public to continue accessing water 24 hours per day, but prevent people from gathering when the park is closed.

In June 2013, the City Council decided to turn the well into a city park. Prior to this decision, the well was a common gathering space, but technically just a parking lot. They

approved a \$153,000 plan and solicited input and designs from the public.

During spring 2014, the city closed the lot for renovations and reopened it, looking mostly the same, besides some new picnic tables, and officially deemed it a city park. They later hired local artist Jean Nagai to paint a large mural, attempting to make the space more appealing, and licensed food trucks to operate from 11 a.m. to 7 p.m., Monday through Saturday.

This effort to fix up the lot is part of The Downtown Project, an ongoing plan to revitalize downtown, which the city government website

states as, “a multi-directional approach that focuses on a variety of key projects in four categories: Clean, Safe, Economic Development, and Placemaking.”

Brian Wilson, Olympia’s downtown liaison, stated, “These programs are designed to get downtown building and business owners, employees, customers, and the greater community all involved in downtown revitalization and safety efforts.”

However, it seems the creation of this park was not completely successful in meeting those goals, as the city of Olympia continues to worry about illegal and nuisance behaviors associated with the area.

Just over six months after the park opened, and after spending \$253,000, the City Council began looking at plans to close the park. In December, the Olympia Land Use and Environment Committee recommended that the park be temporarily closed as they looked at what to do with the area.

The city has since decided against closing the park completely, but their new plan would limit access to the space.

For this reason, some community members have expressed concerns about further reduction of public space in downtown Olympia, especially since the Well is known as a place that many homeless and street-dependent people tend to utilize.

The 2014 Thurston County Homeless Census found that only 56 percent of homeless individuals in Thurston County are sheltered, with most of the remaining 44 percent of homeless people staying outdoors. For these 44 percent, safe spaces are limited.

Olympia’s “Pedestrian Interface Ordinance,” and other laws, make it illegal to obstruct pedestrian traffic downtown. This includes sitting or lying on the sidewalk in a manner that could “obstruct or impede... the

free passage of any person or vehicle, or to require another person or a driver of a vehicle to take action to avoid physical contact.” The ordinance also bans sitting and lying on the sidewalk at all between the hours of 7 a.m. and midnight. It is also illegal to gather with three or more people on the sidewalk or panhandle “aggressively,” which is defined as “conduct that would likely intimidate a reasonable person.”

As a result, parks are one of the few places that homeless and street-dependent people can be without being asked to move, or threatened with fines by police. Critics worry that limiting access to the Well, or reducing open spaces downtown, is an attempt to discriminate against and push out homeless people.

The City Council minutes from 2012, when they were discussing these regulations, state that the “goal for downtown isn’t to move people out, but to create an opportunity for everyone to feel safe.” Their minutes also state that, in a presentation, “Police Chief Ronnie Roberts pointed out that many people use downtown and that congestion can create fear.”

UP  
COMING

**FRI. FEB 20**

**Deadbeat Olympia**  
226 N Division St. 8pm  
Whiskey Business, Piano  
Shoppe, Zach Senn

**Le Voyeur**

404 4th Ave E  
Big Idiot, Vile Display of  
Humanity, The Deceptives,  
Harley Bourbon

**SAT. FEB 21**

**Deadbeat Olympia**

226 N Division St. 8pm  
Dark Palms, Crystal Logic, Wild  
English

**Le Voyeur**

Vornity Showcase

**Metcalfe Manor**

2110 Amherst St. SE. 8pm  
The Jesus Rehab, Fruit Juice,  
Middleway, Joppa Mazama

**SUN. FEB 22**

**Deadbeat Olympia**

226 N Division St. 8pm  
Dark Palms, Crystal Logic, Wild  
English

**Le Voyeur**

404 4th Ave E

Superchurch

**MON. FEB 23**

**Deadbeat Olympia**

226 N Division St. 8pm  
Dionvox, Ultra Violent Rays,  
Beatrix Sky

**Obsidian**

414 4th Ave E. 9pm. \$5. 21+

Nude Beach, Divers, Box, Skull  
and the Dullards

**TUE. FEB 24**

**Le Voyeur**

404 4th Ave E. 6pm. ALL AGES  
Hungry Skinny, Crackhouse, The  
Loud Potions, Phil Taylor

**Le Voyeur**

404 4th Ave E. 10:00pm. 21+

**Obsidian**

414 4th Ave E. 7:30pm. ALL AGES  
Milk Music, GA.G, Cowboy

**WED. FEB 25**

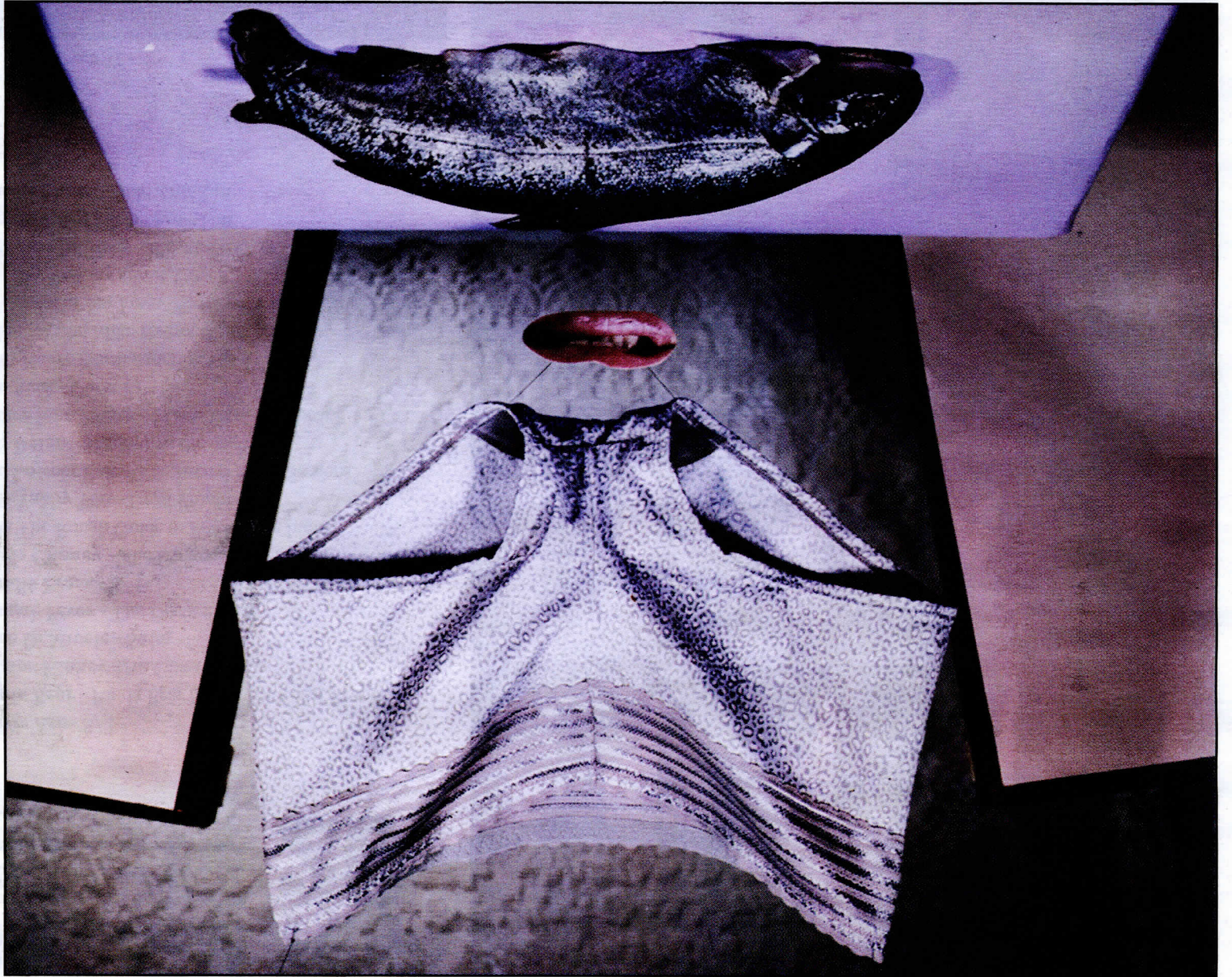
**Evergreen HCC**

7pm. \$5  
SideWalk Benefit: Trout Stream,  
Jupiter Sprites, Holy Motors

**Le Voyeur**

404 4th Ave E

Open Mic Comedy Night



"Fish Bitch" by Rosemary Engstrom

*Artist Statement*

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I am composing a hole in this saucy donut and slapping you with it.

I am coughing up your spineless strawberry and licking it so sweetly.

I am drizzling a moment through your male gaze.

I am your fish and you are my delicate lips.

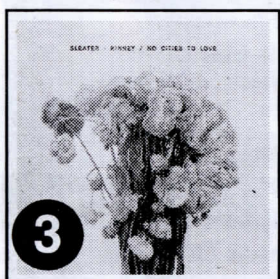
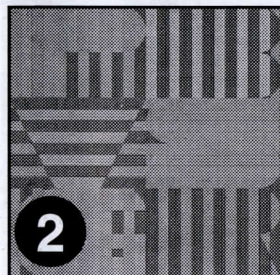
I am carving you to sniff my carousel.

Rosemary Engstrom is an instructional photography intern at TESC, working with students to help them expand their techniques in photography. She also manages the chemical and digital labs at TESC's Photoland. Rosemary's personal photographic projects are intentional scenes set up in a lighting studio, captured on film, and printed in a color darkroom.

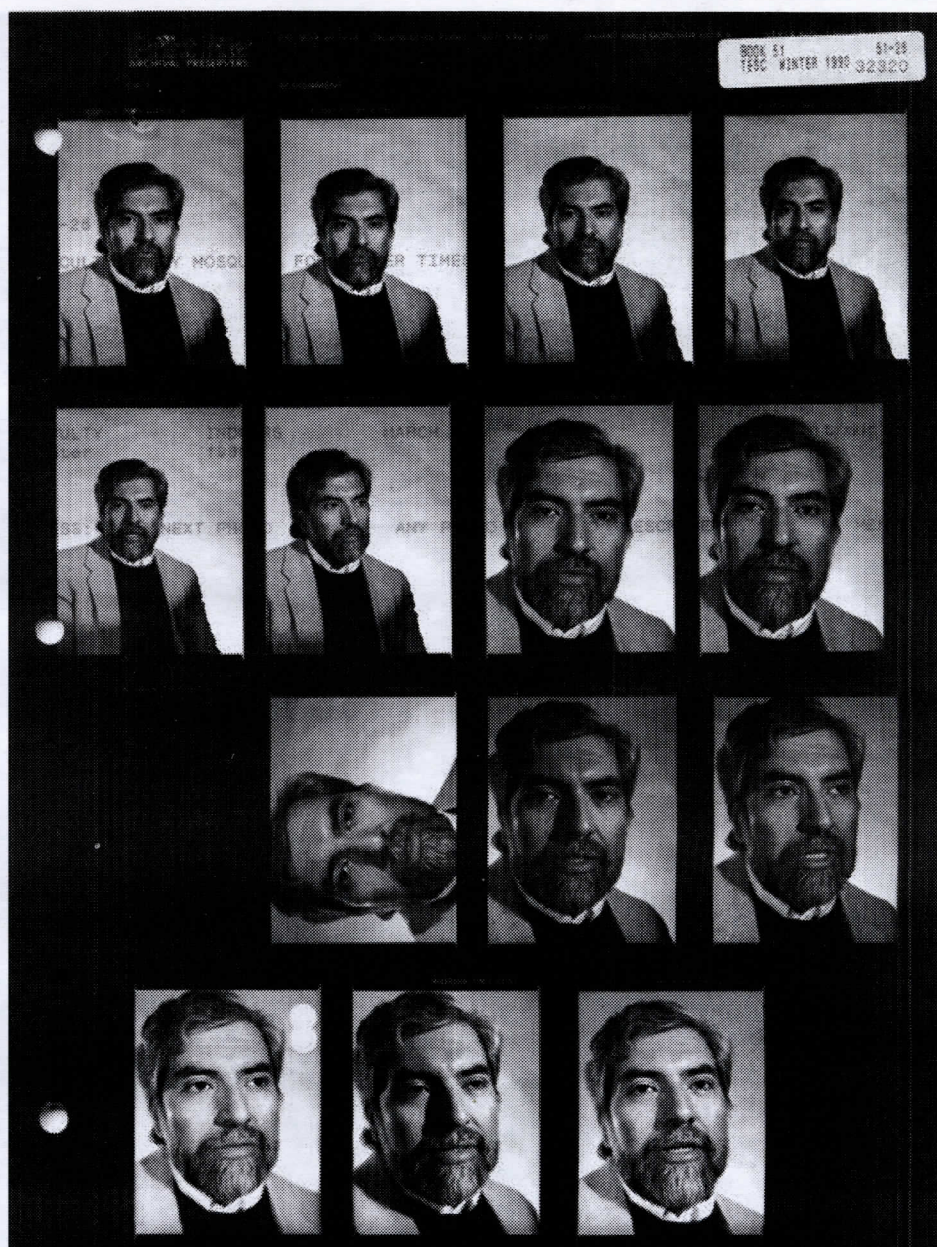
# Community

## KAOS 89.3 FM TOP 20

Albums for the week of Feb. 2



- 1 All We Are - S/T
- 2 Panda Bear - Panda Bear Meets The Grim Reaper
- 3 Sleater-Kinney - No Cities to Love
- 4 Alice Di Miciele - Swim
- 5 Dengue Fever - The Deepest Lake
- 6 Natalie Prass - S/T
- 7 Olivia Chaney - The Longest River
- 8 V/A - The Rough Guide to Psychedelic India
- 9 V/A - Yabby You - Dead Prophecy
- 10 The Lowest Pair - The Sacred Heart Sessions
- 11 Bob Dylan - Shadows in the Night
- 12 Father John Misty - I Love You Honeybear
- 13 The Acid - Ghost EP
- 14 V/A - Native North America Vol. 1
- 15 Wilco - Alpha Mike Foxtrot: Rare Tracks
- 16 V/A - Lookin' For Love: The Complete SAR Recordings
- 17 The Sky Colony - In A Dream
- 18 Supreme Jubilees - It'll All Be Over
- 19 Pops Staples - Don't Lose This
- 20 Lauren Shera - Gold And Rust



Political economy professor Larry Mosqueda will be retiring this year, after teaching for 26 years. PHOTOLAND

## Last From The Past

### LARRY MOSQUEDA RETIRES

By Zachary Newman

**A**fter dutifully teaching Evergreen students for 26 years, Dr. Lawrence Mosqueda is set to retire at the end of spring quarter. He'll only call it retirement though, because he's 66 years old and doesn't "want to work full time at 70." Dr. Mosqueda, a professor of political economy, still plans on teaching one quarter a year.

"I'll be keeping busy—I won't be doing coffee," Dr. Mosqueda said. He was in his office, which you can point out from outside by the Palestinian flag hung in the window. Dr. Mosqueda has told his class he'll take the flag down when the school takes down the Washington state flag, so he doesn't have to constantly look at George Washington, a slave owner. He's kidding—he hasn't actually gotten any flak over the flag—but he means what he says after the laughter.

Such is the reputation of one of The Evergreen State College's more famous and longest lasting professors. "He's very knowledgeable and very funny," said Mary Luther,

a current student. Dr. Mosqueda considers himself a radical, or someone who "goes to the root" of social and political problems. He won't ever suggest blowing up a bomb, but he'll show you why the United States thinks it's OK to do the very same overseas. His course "Power In American Society" is usually packed quarter-to-quarter. His reputation is one that goes hand-in-hand with Evergreen's, and often informs it. "Larry provided for me an introduction to a more radical, cranky, and dying side of Evergreen," said former student Riley Bir.

"I try to provide students the opportunity for radical analysis plus political activism,

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which is one of the stated goals of the college. It talks about sustainability, justice, and environmental issues. We should definitely do that, and not just be a job-creating place," he said. He has hope, though he won't run for president himself. Dr. Mosqueda did have the chance to be Dean, but turned it down when he realized the position wouldn't give the opportunity to talk to member of political groups, such as Olympia Movement for Justice.

**"He's received more hate comments on The Olympian's message boards than anyone, which makes me like him even more."**

**- Antonio Tapia**

Dr. Mosqueda may be retiring, but he's not slowing down. On his 40 years of teaching that young people adopt the same "to-the-root" thinking he has. "They can be people who make a difference in the world, which Evergreen says I want to do, too." He keeps in touch with students he taught 30 years ago who are doing "really significant work." More importantly, he hopes students recognize that there is always hope in the fight, whatever they are fighting.

"Things are going to happen, whether people want them to happen or not, so I want people to be active in history, and not subjects in history." Dr. Mosqueda's class, "Making A Difference/Doing Social Change" starts spring quarter. His one-quarter-a-year class starts this fall with "Political Economy of Power in American Society," which has 25 seats open to sophomores and above.

Dr. Mosqueda's "retirement" comes at a trying time for the school, which is battling with a dwindling budget. "It is really important that people become active in the future of Evergreen, a school with national implications, of environmental issues and sustainability issues," Dr. Mosqueda said. "This is actually an important time and it's important that we have somebody with some vision for the 21st century, and not just run a regional college for the state of Washington."

"Ours is a good mission statement, very

Dr. Mosqueda's "retirement" comes at a trying time for the school, which is battling with a dwindling budget. "It is really important that people become active in the future of Evergreen, a school with national implications, of environmental issues and sustainability issues," Dr. Mosqueda said. "This is actually an important time and it's important that we have somebody with some vision for the 21st century, and not just run a regional college for the state of Washington."

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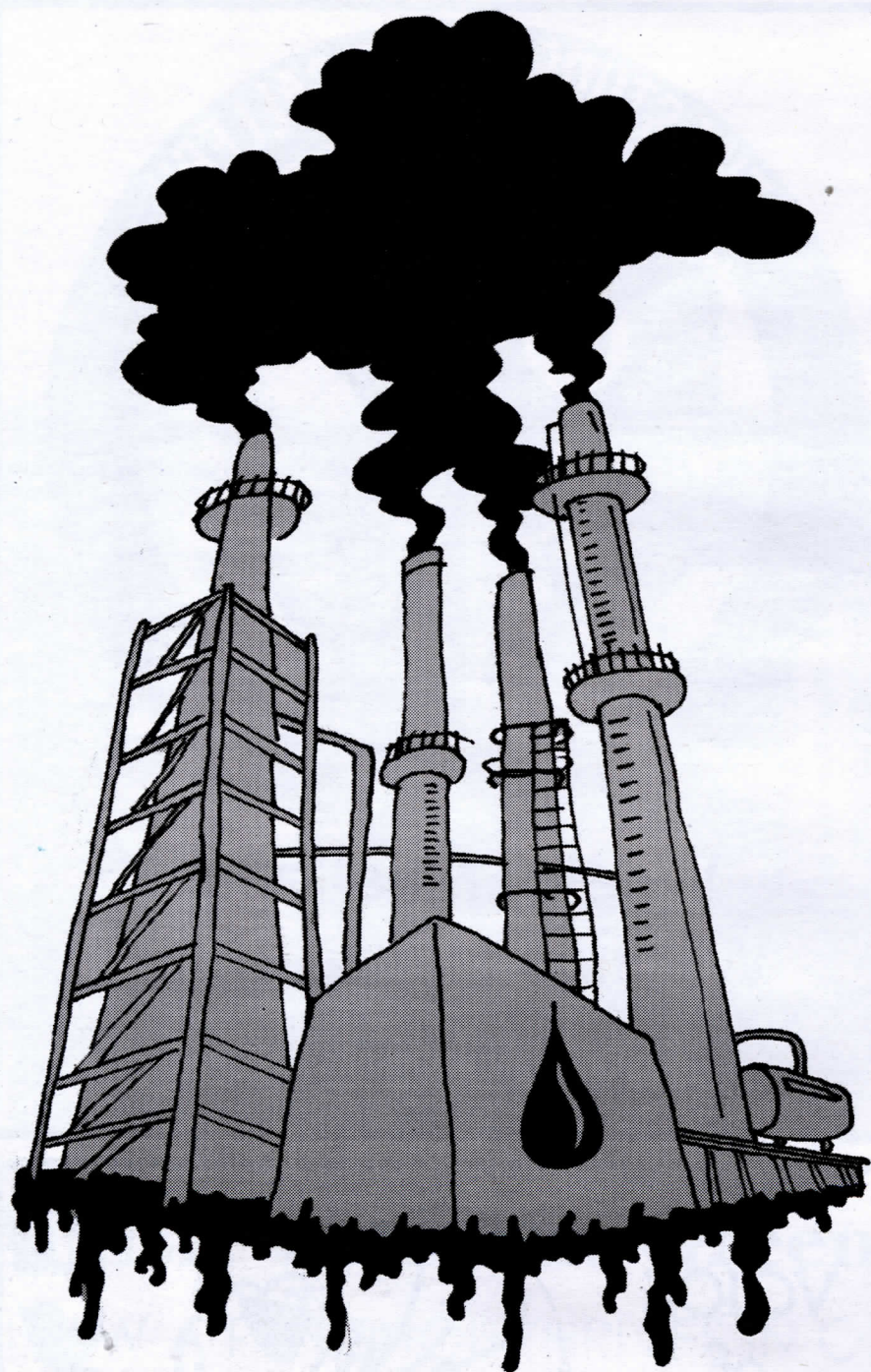


Illustration by RUBY THOMPSON

## Washington Is Poised To Fight Against Fossil Fuels

LESSONS FROM THE KEYSTONE XL MOVEMENT, AND WHAT WASHINGTON CAN DO

By Josh Wolf

**A**s massive fossil fuel proposals come to the Pacific Northwest, the region is poised to become the new focal point for environmentalists. With popular support, and political pressure, Washington could lead by example in denying construction of new fossil fuel infrastructure.

There are currently 20 large fossil fuel projects in Washington, Oregon, and British Columbia: “four new coal terminals, three expansions of existing terminals, two new oil pipelines, 11 oil-by-rail facilities, and six new natural gas pipelines,” according to the Sightline Institute, an independent non-profit research company from Seattle.

If built, these new fossil fuel projects in the Pacific Northwest would be capable of exporting more than five times as much climate-warming carbon as the infamous Keystone XL pipeline.

The comparison between Keystone XL and the Pacific Northwest’s fossil fuels is useful, not only to illustrate the massive quantity of carbon threatening

our region, but mainly because there are lessons to be learned from the Keystone XL controversy.

The Keystone XL—which would deliver tar sands oil from Canada to the Gulf of Mexico—has been the focal point of environmentalists for years. Some of the largest environmentalist groups in the U.S., such as the Sierra Club, 350.org, and Greenpeace have waged massive campaigns against the international pipeline. Most recently, on Jan. 13, thousands of people demonstrated throughout the country, urging Obama to veto Keystone XL.

Republicans controlling the House and Senate have vowed to pass a bill approving construction of the Keystone XL, while Obama said he would likely veto the pipeline.

Yet, as the New York Times reported earlier this month, the Keystone XL has less to do with the environment, and more to do with politics.

Ironically, while environmentalists have fought against it, the construction of Keystone XL matters little for climate change. “The pipeline will have little effect, [energy and policy experts] say, on climate change, production of the Canadian oil sands, gasoline prices and the overall job market in the United States,” according to energy and policy experts reported in the Times.

Whether or not the pipeline is built, the tar sands oil is going to be dug up, shipped out, and burned.

Even more ironically, if the pipeline is not built, then TransCanada “will look to the more dangerous alternative of building rail terminals,” to transport the oil using railroads, according to the Associated Press.

Since oil companies increased their use of railroads by 4,300 percent in the past five years, concern over oil-by-rail has been growing, and with good reason. In 2013 alone, North America saw more serious oil train derailments than in the past 40 years combined, including a derailed oil train explosion in Lac-Mégantic, Quebec, killing 47 people, and destroying 40 buildings.

Last July, an oil train carrying nearly 100 oil-cars derailed beneath the Magnolia Bridge in Seattle. Luckily, there was no spill or explosion.

The environmentalist group ForestEthics estimates that “25 million Americans live within the one-mile evacuation zone that the US Department of Transportation recommends in the event of an oil fire,” writes VICE News.

With 25 million Americans dangerously close to oil trains, and while environmentalists wage campaigns against the Keystone XL, pipelines may actually

be a safer, better alternative to oil trains.

So, why are mainstream environmentalist groups so focused on the Keystone XL? Because environmentalists have framed the Keystone XL pipeline to represent a clear choice for Obama: approve the pipeline to symbolize support of fossil fuels, or reject the Keystone XL and signal a shift away from fossil fuels.

Under political pressure from environmentalists, Obama vowed to reject the Keystone XL. Regardless of the pipeline’s effect on fossil fuels and climate change, environmentalists have created a landmark moment for fossil fuels in the United States.

Washington state could do the same.

With fossil fuel projects five times as devastating as the Keystone XL, Washington is poised to take a stand against climate change. And people are already organizing to ensure fossil fuel infrastructure doesn’t get built.

On Nov. 21, a group of Washingtonian politicians, environmentalists, doctors, firefighters, and labor leaders sent an open letter to Gov. Jay Inslee voicing their concerns, specifically with proposed oil train projects.

The letter to the governor represents the beginning of a statewide effort in taking a stand against fossil fuels, and signees include two Port of Olympia commissioners, the president of Washington State Council of Firefighters, the president of Washington Physicians for Social Responsibility, the president of Grays Harbor Audubon, the president of Washington Dungeness Crab Fisherman’s association, as well as city council members from Aberdeen and Spokane.

The letter states that the proposed oil train projects fall directly under the “executive jurisdiction” of Gov. Inslee, and the letter asks Inslee to deny permits of construction for the proposed oil-by-rail projects.

In addition to this diverse group pressuring Inslee to reject oil trains, 16 separate resolutions have been passed throughout Washington opposing the transport and storage of crude oil, including the cities of Vancouver and Aberdeen, according to the Washington Environmental Council.

If Washingtonians continue pressuring Inslee to take a stand against the proposed fossil fuel projects, the state may be able to save itself from oil trains, coal trains, and pipelines.

Washington needs to reject and destroy these devastating fossil fuel projects, not only for the state’s own safety, but for the national fight against climate change.



