

- **Women's Action for New Directions** meets at 7 pm Thursday, Jan. 28, at the First United Methodist Church, 1376 Olive Street, to talk about the Women for Peace: National WAND Biennial Conference Report. The conference was held recently in Washington, D.C. Speakers include Annette Rose. Free.

- **"Students of Color and Their Experience on the UO Campus"** is the topic at City Club of Eugene at noon Friday, Jan. 29, at the Downtown Athletic Club, 999 Willamette Street. Speakers will include UO undergraduates Perla Alvarez, Dante Haruna, Shaniece Curry and Gerald Jakabosky. \$5 for non-members.

- A gathering in support of **Save Kesey Square and Break Climate Silence** will begin at 3:30 pm Friday, Jan. 29, at Kesey Square downtown. Sponsored by International Association for the Advancement of Creative Maladjustment. The event, dedicated to the late peace activist Peg Morton, will focus on both Kesey Square and the Eugene Area Chamber of Commerce's silence in regard to climate change. Email davidwoaks@gmail.com for more information or to get involved.

- The Eugene Springfield **NAACP Freedom Fund Dinner** will begin with a silent auction at 6 pm Friday, Jan. 29, at Valley River Inn. The theme this year is "Moving Ahead Together" and speakers will include Benton County District Attorney John Haroldson and MRG Foundation Executive Director Sharon Gary-Smith. More information and tickets at naacplanecounty.org or call 484-1119.

- Eugene City Council candidate **Chris Wig** is meeting with Ward 1 constituents for coffee and conversation at 9 am Saturday, Jan. 30, at the The Barn Light, 924 Willamette Street.

- A vigil "in solidarity with the people of occupied Burns" will be from noon to 1:30 pm Saturday, Jan. 30, at the old Federal Building, 211 E. 7th Ave. Sponsored by the Rural Organizing Project, Showing Up for Racial Justice and CALC. Email calcpeace@efn.org or call 485-1755.

- The **Eugene Peace Choir** sings songs of "social justice and environmental sanity" at 2 pm Saturday, Jan. 30, at the Atrium Building lobby, 943 Olive Street. Free. See eugenepeacechoir.org.

- A fundraising event for the **Winneman Wintu Tribe** will be from 4:30 to 6:30 pm Saturday, Jan. 30, at Tsunami Books. A potluck and entertainment are planned. Call 344-0872.

- The Springfield-Eugene Chapter of **Showing Up for Racial Justice (SURJ)** will screen *Cracking the Codes: The System of Racial Inequity*, a film by Shakti Butler and presented by World Trust. The event from 4 to 6 pm Sunday, Jan. 31, at Hilyard Community Center, 2580 Hilyard Street, is co-sponsored by the Eugene-Springfield NAACP, Community Alliance for Lane County and the Eugene Human Rights Commission. Discussion to follow. Free, donations welcome.

- A **"Rally for a Healthy Climate and Clean Energy Jobs"** will be at noon Wednesday, Feb. 3, at the Capitol steps in Salem. Sponsored by 350 Eugene. Email oregonpledgeofresistance@gmail.com.

- Looking ahead, author **Naomi Klein** will be speaking at the UO EMU Ballroom Feb. 16 and tickets are now available through the UO Ticket Office at 346-4363. Klein is author of *This Changes Everything: Capitalism vs. the Climate*.

SAVE KESEY SQUARE ASKS COUNCIL TO LISTEN

Before the Eugene City Council meeting Jan. 25, the chants and drums of the Save Kesey Square rally could be heard from the nearby Harris Hall, growing louder as more than 100 protesters walked from Kesey Square to the Wayne Morse Free Speech Plaza while a council work session was in progress.

Zane Kesey brought out the Furthur Bus, and ralliers discussed the irony of fighting to keep a public square named after a man — Ken Kesey — who was an advocate for community and openness.

Crystal Webb of Occupy Medical, who is opposed to putting an apartment building on the square, said she thinks the City Council, city manager and Mayor Kitty Piercy underestimated the intelligence of the people and their willingness to fight for the commons.

The group chanted: "Improve the Square, Don't Lose the Square."

More than 60 citizens signed up to speak in favor of saving the square during the City Council meeting's public forum.

Ashley Wright, owner of downtown business Emerald City Pedicab, said, "So I'm a 120 pound woman on a bike working independently late at night until 3 am. I've always felt safe in Kesey Square." She said, "My band Samba Ja plays free shows, and everyone dances together here: people with a lot of money, street people, disabled or unemployed people, people too young to get into bars, people who don't want to go to bars but

still enjoy staying up late doing fun things. We need a space like that for these things."

She continues: "Selling Kesey Square is just classism. I don't want classism — I want dance parties."

After the public forum portion ended, several councilors responded.

"I want to say this: Council has no plans to sell Kesey Square, and I know many of you won't believe that and believe that the fix is already in," Councilor Claire Syrett said, later adding, "This council has not had any formal conversation about doing anything to the square."

Councilor George Brown countered with, "Regarding Kesey Square, you know we have heard talk on council: It's a failed space, it doesn't work, it's a problem space, it's dangerous — perceived as dangerous." But, Brown said, "It's not a failed space. The only thing that's

failed is our imagination if we can't figure out how to make it better."

In February, the City Council is expected to review three proposals for Kesey Square collected from the RFEI (Requests for Expressions of Interest) process in January, as well as considering public improvements to the square or taking no action. The three proposals can be reviewed at bit.ly/1OPQQiL.

See extended story with photos as eugeneweekly.com — Alex V. Cipolle

'So I'm a 120 pound woman on a bike working independently late at night until 3 am. I've always felt safe in Kesey Square.'

— ASHLEY WRIGHT, EMERALD CITY PEDICAB

SIGVANNA MEGHAN TOPKOK

The daughter of an Alaskan Native airline pilot, who flew back and forth to Alaska, and a Norwegian mother from Minnesota, Sigvanna Topkok endured family fights at home and racist comments at school, as she grew up in several towns across Oregon, from Baker City to the coast. She spent childhood summers in her grandparents' home village of Ambler, Alaska, where tribal traditions were suppressed in previous generations. "My grandmother was adopted out of the tribe," she notes. "My dad passed away in a car crash when I was 11. Substance abuse was his way of coping." Her own way of coping was to read a lot and do well in school. As a high school student in Vancouver, Washington, she took community college courses in Native American history, and was invited into the Native American Studies program at Dartmouth. "I had free tuition for low income," she says, "and the tribe paid for books. Dartmouth is where I started healing." She returned to Ambler every summer after college and spent a year in Nome with a nonprofit before starting law school at the University of Oregon. "I didn't expect to go into law," she says, "but it is the most direct way to create change. I want to promote tribal sovereignty, and especially to incorporate traditional law, how we handle conflict, to overcome problems in our community." She worked last summer as an intern with the Department of the Interior in Washington, D.C., and she expects to spend more time in D.C., to gain experience, after graduating in 2017. Eventually, she hopes to work for her tribe.

HAPPENING PEOPLE

BY PAUL NEEVEL

