



The Georgia Green Party

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Ecological Wisdom • Grassroots Democracy • Social Justice • Peace & Non-Violence
Decentralization • Community Based Economics • Feminism • Respect for Diversity
Personal & Global Responsibility • Future Focus on Sustainability

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Candidates for Green Presidential Nomination Rally at Peachtree-Pine for Homeless

Ralph Nader and Stephen Gaskin Expected to Speak

At issue is the Privatized Commons and the Criminalization of Poverty in Atlanta

Two candidates seeking the Green Party nomination for President of the United States will join Greens and others at a rally decrying the privatization of public space which has succeeded in criminalizing homeless people in Atlanta. "A government that funnels our tax dollars to corporate welfare kings can at least invest in promoting healthy democracy," said **Ralph Nader**, whose candidacy is now drawing over 5% in nationwide polls. "We must build a powerful, self-renewing civil society that focuses on ample justice so we do not have to desperately bestow limited charity."

The Green Party Presidential candidates will join Homeless advocates at a rally to support the Atlanta Task Force for the Homeless in their struggle to operate the Peachtree-Pine Homeless Resource Center in the face of opposition from City Hall and the downtown business association, Central Atlanta Progress. In 1997, the Task Force acquired the old Packard dealership in Midtown Atlanta and began the work of transforming the facility to serve the city's homeless. Mayor Bill Campbell had declared it his goal to "sanitize" downtown in preparation for the '96 Olympic Games. In the year immediately preceding the Olympics, 9,500 people were arrested for their homelessness under ordinances introduced by Councilmember Debi Starnes, supported by the Democratic Mayor.

"These criminalizing policies are designed to make Atlanta safe for commerce -- for profit," said Anita Beaty, executive director of the Atlanta Task Force for the Homeless. "The cost-effective solution to homelessness is affordable housing, access to health care and livable wage jobs. These policies lead to involuntary servitude. Courts are sentencing homeless men to *community service*, for not having a place to *be*. Jail costs \$55.00 a day. Imagine the solutions that money could fund!"

Economists report that many working people no longer earn enough to provide themselves or their families with housing. In Atlanta, a worker would have to earn at least \$10.00 an hour, based on fair market rent for a one-bedroom apartment. 37% of the men sleeping at the Peachtree-Pine overflow facility are working -- many of them in labor pools for minimum wage.

"Not enough is done to look at the unintended effects of global capitalism. One of these unintended effects is insulating people who run things from the incidental cruelties that are inflicted on the homeless population of Atlanta," said *Stephen Gaskin* -- another candidate for the Green Party's Presidential Nomination. "Government tells us that there is a place for punishment. But we elect governments. Here we see another prime example of how corporations are free to inflict cruelty as organizations while their officers and employees skate free as individuals."

Georgia Green Party activists have long been active in issues of economic democracy. The state Party Platform urges that public purchasing, contracting and annuity investments be used to foster and create "broad-based ownership, an equitable distribution of wealth and income and the principles of economic democracy." The Platform also calls for livable wages, universal access to health care and those economic rights guaranteed by the Universal Declaration of Human Rights.

Nader and *Gaskin* are in Atlanta to support the Georgia Green Party's efforts to mobilize a grassroots petition drive to place their candidates on the November 2000 ballot. "Ballot access for us can not be divorced from the serious issues facing our communities," said Hugh Esco, who is leading the Georgia Party's ballot access petition efforts. "Democrats and Republicans have used their ballot access to create or at least ignore these problems. Our Party will mobilize a movement to transform and democratize the Corporate State to serve human needs with our public resources. If we were fine with the status quo, we could forgo the arduous barriers to the ballot and the debates and pay our qualifying fees like the corporate candidates."

"Economic growth has been decoupled from economic progress for many Americans," said *Ralph Nader*. "How long can the paper economy of speculation ignore its effects on the real economy of working families?"

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To contact the Presidential Candidates and their campaigns for the Party Nomination, call:
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