

GRAY PANTHERS OF SAN FRANCISCO

state budget cuts

EEK!!!

what to do???

General Membership Meeting
Tuesday, February 19, 12:30—3:00 PM
Unitarian Universalist Church
1187 Franklin at Geary

GRAY PANTHERS COMMITTEE MEETINGS & EVENTS

All meetings and events take place at 1182 Market, Rm. 203, unless otherwise noted.

Board Meeting 12:30 PM
Wednesday, February 6 & March 5
All SFGP members welcome.

Newsletter Committee 12:00 Noon
Thursday, February 7 & March 6

Human Rights Committee
Call the office.

Middle East Study Group 11:00 AM
Tuesday, February 12 & March 11

Health Committee 1:00 PM
Tuesday, February 12 & March 11

Book Club 11:00 AM
Tuesday, February 26 & March 25
Overthrow: America's Century of Regime Change from Hawaii to Iraq
by Stephen Kinzer

Committee for Life on the Planet
War & Peace Committee
Call the office.

February General Meeting

The February General Meeting will be a chance to examine the effects of the devastating proposed State budget cuts, brainstorm what we can do to fight them and make a plan to work with our allies.

Michael and Kay will report on a Sacramento meeting they attended to form a statewide network, with CARA and others, to fight the cuts. Participants formulated a set of principles to unite us that we will discuss at the meeting.

Cuts are unacceptable! Join us in February.



Mideast Committee

The following will be discussed as a position statement at the next meeting of the Mideast Committee on February 12. Come give us your input.

“The Gray Panthers of San Francisco urge an immediate end to the Israeli occupation of the West Bank and military control of the Gaza Strip, according to a mutually acceptable arrangement where both Palestinians and Israelis can enjoy peace and security and can coexist as equals.”

Gray Panthers Affairs

The 2008 San Francisco Gray Panthers Board of Directors had its first meeting of the year on Wednesday, January 2, and elected as convenor—Sonia; co-convenor—Michael; secretary—Catz; and treasurer—Ila. Monthly meeting days will continue to be the first Wednesday at 12:30. Meetings are open to all, but only board members can vote. 2008 board members are Kay, Virginia, Patricia, Sonia, Natalie, Deetje, Michael, Mitzi, Catz, Ila, and Rhoda.

The quarterly meeting of the state Gray Panthers networks will be on Sat., Feb. 2, in Sacramento. Call the office if you want to join our carload.

There will be a national Gray Panthers convention in Detroit September 25 through the 28. Would you like to be a delegate? Think about it.

Report on Gang Injunction Meeting

At the January 16 meeting, Chris Gauger of the San Francisco Public Defender’s office and a former gang member named Xiomara addressed a full house on the subject of San Francisco’s new anti-gang program, with both agreeing that it was overly punitive and actually counterproductive.

Under the program, young people believed to be gang members are placed on a list and are then subject to a series of injunctions making it a crime to, for example, wear a red t-shirt if a gang’s color is red, or speak to one another except at school or church (which would criminalize participation in group programs designed to help youth out of gangs). Many of the offenses listed in the injunctions already are crimes, but penalties are now increased so that gang members serve longer sentences than non-gang members.

The San Francisco plan is an adaptation of a Los Angeles plan that has seen an increase in gang activity since its inception. Both Gauger and Xiomara believe this increase arises in part from the fear and anger such injunctions foster in poor communities, empowering gangs, since they offer recognition and protection. They agree it doesn’t make sense to impose long sentences on young gang members when statistics show most will grow up to be productive, law-abiding citizens—like Xiomara, a wife and mother who works for Communities in Harmony Advocating for Learning and Kids (CHALK), an organization that helps youth get out of gangs. Gauger talked a little about the far more successful New York plan, which relies on intervention rather than injunctions.

The San Francisco plan was designed by the City Attorney’s office, with virtually no community participation. Many in the community believe that the reason for such a harsh crackdown at this time is pressure from developers who are planning gentrification in areas where gangs are most active.

In the discussion that followed, Gray Panthers expressed a desire to find ways to get the City to substitute intervention for injunctions, and for us to support organizations like Xiomara’s. For more information: http://graypantherssf.igc.org/gang_injunctions.htm. If you would like to work on this issue, call the office at 552-8800.

Vote February 5th!

Letter to the Editor Re February 5 Propositions

On the state level:

Prop 91: Gasoline sales tax revenue. This was passed in 2006. Why is it on the ballot?

Prop 92: Community College (CC). Separates CC from K-12, and reduces fee per unit from \$20.00 to \$15.00. Amends the state constitution to formally recognize the CC system as part of the public school system. Supported by the Faculty Assn. of CC, CC Trustees, and the California Federation of Teachers. Opposed by the Chamber of Commerce, Business Roundtable and CA Teachers Assn.

Prop 93: Changes legislators' term limits from a total of 14 years to 12 years, servable in the Assembly, the Senate, or any combination thereof. Supported by OWL, Sierra Club, California Labor Federation, League of Conservation Voters. Opposed by Howard Jarvis Taxpayers Assn., US Term Limits (a national group widely accused of fraud, which is a major backer of the opposition).

Prop 94-97: Four Southern California Indian casinos will pay CA an indeterminate tax for the right to increase slot machines to 7500 per casino. Negotiated with the Governor, approved by the legislature, opposed by CA Fed. of Teachers, UFW, CA Tax Reform Ass'n (the progressive watchdog).

On the local level:

Prop. A: Neighborhood Parks Bond. Financing to repair, rebuild and maintain city parks. Widely supported.

Prop. B: Deferred Retirement Option Program for police officers. Allows police to retire but continue to work full time for three more year. Supported by Police Officers Ass'n, SF Republican Assembly, Chamber of Commerce, 7 Supervisors.

Prop. C: Alcatraz Global Peace Center. Non-binding declaration of policy. SF should acquire Alcatraz from the National Park Service to make it a global peace center, a sacred environment to inspire, delight, heal and enlighten.

Our Board did not discuss this ballot. I recommend YES on 92, 93 and A; NO on 94-97 and C.

Mitzi Raas

What Hath NAFTA Wrought?

From a report in the *SF Chronicle* 12/21/07, page 18, by Jeremy Schwarz, Cox News Service.

"Mexico City. Farmers and activists here plan a series of protests as NAFTA enters its final stage on New Year's Day, when the last tariffs and quotas on corn, beans, milk, and sugar melt away.

"Opponents of the free-trade agreement warn that the final lifting of trade barriers could spark even more migration from Mexico's devastated countryside and leave Mexico dependent on the United States for corn and beans, staple dishes since the age of the Aztecs.....Mexican farm associations say Mexican farmers are woefully unprepared to face an onslaught of American corn, and decry the large subsidies that US corn farmers receive.



A peasant woman carrying cobs takes part in a protest earlier this year in Mexico City against an increase in the price of corn. (Photo: Luis Acosta / AFP-Getty Images)

"This week the World Trade Organization launched an investigation into whether the United States has surpassed international limits on so-called trade distorting subsidies for its farmers by billions of dollars since 1999....

"Since Mexico entered into NAFTA, it has lost nearly three million farm jobs and seen a huge migration from the countryside to the United States. An estimated 80% of the 400,000 Mexicans who annually migrate to the United States are from rural areas."

Last year both Costa Rica and Peru (more on Peru, page 5) signed free trade agreements (FTAs) with the US. Currently Congress is being asked to approve FTAs with Columbia and South Korea.

Wall Street

....Wall Street's five biggest investment banks paid out a record \$39 billion in bonuses for 2007, a year when three of the companies suffered the worst quarterly losses in their history and shareholders lost more than \$80 billion.

San Francisco Chronicle, January 18, 2008

On Our Table



While most presidential candidates talk platitudes of change, all across the country people are joining the impeachment movement. Cindy Sheehan has made it the center of her campaign for Representative, running against House Speaker Nancy Pelosi. Congressman Wexler and former Senator George McGovern have added their voices to impeachment and to HR 333, introduced by Congressman Dennis Kucinich and cosigned by 25 other Representatives. Resolutions for impeachment have been introduced or passed in 88 cities and are pending in 53 others. Rep. Wexler's collection of signatures for impeachment is increasing daily—210,394 as of January 21. VoteToImpeach.org, has also collected 990,885 signatures to date. Citizens in Vermont plan to make Bush and Cheney subject to arrest for war crimes if they ever enter the state of Vermont. Yet, Democratic leadership refuses to listen. Indeed, it is no coincidence that Kucinich, author of HR 333, is being kept out of the presidential debates. **Act now: Address cards to House Speaker Pelosi c/o Cindy Sheehan for Congress 1260 Mission St, SF CA 94103.**

Age and Youth Together



Last October on the steps of City Hall, Gray Panthers, Everett Middle School, and Experience Corp collaborated to celebrate Eleanor Roosevelt Day. Interested Gray Panthers will meet soon with teachers and Frances Payne of Experience Corps to discuss bringing our knowledge of history into the present lives of youth. Stay tuned, and think of ways to contribute to this exciting adventure!

Next SF 8 Hearing on February 7

On January 8, conspiracy charges were dropped on five of the brothers due to the CA statute of limitations (three years). Richard O'Neal is now free on all charges, while the other seven men are still accused of the alleged murder of SF police sergeant John Young in 1971. See back page re hearing.

Save Public Housing in New Orleans

Prior to Hurricane Katrina, over 14,000 families in New Orleans lived in Section 8 subsidized apartments or public housing, with a waiting list, incredibly, of 18,000. The hurricane and flood dramatically increased this need, yet the City Council plans to tear down 4500 units of structurally sound public housing. What's going on here?

In her recent book, *Shock Doctrine*, Naomi Klein describes how government at all levels, in league with (directed by?) private corporations, seized on the Katrina disaster to privatize New Orleans' public sector. They have been largely successful: most of New Orleans' public schools are now privately-run charters, public hospitals have never reopened and the public transportation infrastructure is in tatters. Public and subsidized housing are one of the last remnants of the public infrastructure, and they are under massive attack.

According to a fact sheet put out by Loyola University law professor Bill Quigley, the Housing Authority of New Orleans' own documents show it will cost more to demolish and rebuild the units than to renovate them. But more money is to be made from demolition and reconstruction than renovation—especially since plans call for replacement of the 4500 units with fewer than 800, with upscale condos making up the difference.

Former residents of public housing and their supporters who have been protesting the city's demolition plans have been locked out of "public" hearings, tasered, peppersprayed and arrested. Their Coalition to Stop the Demolitions is now calling for national solidarity for their efforts to save the 4500 units and for support of SB 1668, which would ensure the right to housing for New Orleansians displaced by the hurricane. Louisiana Sen. David Vitter has the bill bottled up in the Senate Banking and Housing Committee, and they are urging people to call him at (504) 589-2753. In addition, they want to hear what the presidential candidates have to say about New Orleans. Urge them to put it on the agenda!

For further information: www.katrinaaction.org, www.defendneworleanspublichousing.org, and www.justiceforneworleans.org.

Profile of a Polluter

La Oroya, Peru has the dubious distinction of being designated one of the worst places in the world to live. (1) This small city of 35,000 inhabitants, located high in the Andes, is home to a metal smelter owned by a Missouri-based corporation named Doe Run.



According to the Blacksmith Institute and Green Cross of Switzerland, 99% of the school children living in and around the Inca site of La Oroya have blood levels that far exceed acceptable limits for exposure to lead. Twenty percent were so contaminated they should have been hospitalized. These children are not being treated because there are no facilities large enough to treat such a large portion of the population. The Doe Run Corporation has been largely responsible for the dangerously high lead levels found in children's blood.

While the Doe Run Corporation turns a blind eye to the children of La Oroya, the company presented more than 5,000 special glow-in-the-dark treat buckets to hundreds of local children in St. Louis, Missouri this past Halloween. It was part of a publicity campaign to illuminate Doe Run's professed belief in the importance of safety. According to Angie Nations, Doe Run community relations manager, "We stress the importance of safety in everything we do at Doe Run, so it's fitting that we help children in the community have a safe and exciting Halloween by providing trick-or-treat tips and glow-in-the-dark buckets." (2)

Doe Run's parent company, the Renco Group, is owned by entrepreneurial financier Ira Rennert. Mr. Rennert made a big splash in the press in 1998 when he began construction of his dream house in the Hamptons, consisting of 29 bedrooms, 39 bathrooms, a 164-seat theater and a restaurant-sized kitchen with five refrigerators, six sinks and a 1500 gallon grease trap. The grounds included a sports pavilion, two tennis courts, two bowling alleys, a basketball court and a garage to house 200 cars. (3) According to the *New York Times*, "...the 63-acre spread, at the rim of the Atlantic Ocean, will dwarf the White House, San Simeon and Bill Gate's mansion."

Mr. Rennert has outsmarted not only the millionaires of the Hamptons, but the Feds as well. He evaded a \$900 million penalty for polluting, and he defaulted on \$150 million of notes issued under Lodestar Holdings, forcing creditors into bankruptcy in 2001. He is also the proud owner of AM General, maker of Humvees. (4)

While millions of well meaning people do their best to stop personal polluting, it is the big corporate polluters that are doing the real damage, not only to the environment but also to our fellow human beings. One of the things we can do as individuals is to learn more about the real polluters. There are many books currently being published on the environment, some available at the Gray Panthers office. Two interesting websites to check out are: www.blacksmithinstitute.org and www.sprol.com.



- (1) Named by Blacksmith Institute and Green Cross of Switzerland as one of the world's worst polluted places.
- (2) Press release www.doerun.com 10-29-2007
- (3) Article by Jane Gross, 8-29-98, "Millionaire's Mega-Mansion Shocks Even the Hamptons."
- (4) Forbes.com, Nathan Vardi, 7-22-02, "Man With Many Enemies."

Gray Panthers of SF

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We believe ALL people are
entitled to certain fundamental
rights:

meaningful employment
economic security
decent and affordable housing
quality health care
a life of dignity from birth to
death free from fear and abuse
a world in peace



Age and Youth in Action

Call the office for membership information.

Labor Donated **February 2008**

Actions and Events

Saturday, February 2, 3:00 PM

Healthcare Reform, 2008—Progress, Confusion or Betrayal? Speakers: Sara Rogers (Sen. Kuehl's office), Tim Paulson (SF Labor Council), Jodi Reid (California Alliance for Retired Americans), Renu Tipirneni & Erica Brode (UCSF Medical Students), Michael Lyon (SF Gray Panthers), Don Bechler (Calif Universal Healthcare Organizing Project). 474 Valencia at 16th.

Monday, February 4, 7:00 PM

An Inconvenient Truth: A Left Critique and Discussion of Climate Change, Climate Justice and Al Gore's Market-Based Solutions. 522 Valencia.

Thursday, February 7, 9:30 AM

Next court date for SF-8, eight former Black Panthers on trial for the killing of a SF police officer 36 years ago. Several were tortured into confessions by New Orleans police shortly afterwards, as part of the FBI's COINTELPRO program. Charges based on the forced confessions were quickly dropped, but were reinstated after 9/11, and they are now being tried in SF.

Hall of Justice, 855 Bryant between 7th & 8th

Wednesday, February 13, 3:00—7:00 PM

Day of Action to Save St. Luke's Hospital
Caesar Chavez at Valencia. For details, call Senior Action Network, 546-1333.

Thursday, February 14, 1:00 PM

CARA Action Team meets second Thursday
965 Mission Street, 7th Floor

GP Night at the Movies

SICKO

Friday, February 29, 5:00 PM

Gray Panthers Office

1182 Market, Rm. 203

Donation \$5

