

# GRAY PANTHERS OF SAN FRANCISCO



**AND SNACK-LUCK**  
**Bring a Snack to Share**  
**Tuesday, April 15, 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, April 2 & May 7**  
**All SFGP members welcome.**

**Newsletter Committee 12:00 Noon**  
**Thursday, April 3 & May 8**

**Human Rights Committee**  
**Call the office.**

**Middle East Study Group 11:00 AM**  
**Tuesday, April 8 & May 13**

**Health Committee 1:00 PM**  
**Tuesday, April 8 & May 13**

**Book Club 11:00 AM**  
**Thursday, April 17**  
***Untapped: The Scramble for***  
***African Oil***  
**by John Ghazvinian**

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

## Not Our Man in Havana Our Woman in Venezuela!

A welcome home party for Sonia, where the guest of honor provides the entertainment! We get to take a virtual journey to Venezuela as she reports on her 10-day trip to look at what's what in one of the recent south of the border rebels against US hegemony. Paradise found? Shangri-La? A faltering step in the right direction? A bold stride forward? A tool of the commies? A greedy dictator? Hear all about it and bring a snack to share.

### March Meeting

Who pays what and why in California taxes—and where does the money go. Among the things we learned from Emily Rusch of CALPIRG at our March meeting: Where the state of California gets its money: 40% from income taxes, 29% from sales taxes, 9% from corporate taxes. How it spends it: 49% on education, 29% on health and human services, 9% on prisons. Progressive versus regressive taxes: income taxes—the more you earn, the higher your rate of taxation, within strict limits. Sales taxes: everyone pays the same rate, no matter what their income. The corporate tax rate is 9.85%, but the law is filled with ways to lower what is really paid to the point that more than half of corporations (72%? 52%? Depending on definitions) pay \$800/year or less. Why is it so difficult to raise taxes on those most able to pay? Takes a 2/3 vote of the legislature. The Republican minority has just enough votes, voting as a disciplined bloc, to block income tax rate increases or protect corporation tax dodges.

An interesting, informative, challenging discussion—thank you, Emily and the California Public Interest Research Group—CALPIRG.



## SF Gray Panthers & CA Gray Panthers

The second half of the March meeting concerned our relationship with the other California Gray Panthers networks.

For the last two years San Francisco Gray Panthers has opposed how the California Gray Panthers operates and has opposed making CA GP a formal organization. SF GP has been asked to explain its objections and make counter-proposals.

One of our chief objections is that the focus of CA GP is legislation. Centering on legislation perpetuates the illusion that working for or against laws is what makes social change. We feel this is the illusion that holds us and so many “progressive” groups back. What made Social Security happen in 1935 were three general strikes in 1934. What dismantled overt Jim Crow and racism and led to Medicare, Medicaid, and the 1960s social programs were sit-ins, demonstrations, and rebellions in the ghettos and the army. That should be our message. Gray Panthers was born out of activism and taking militant stands on issues. GP has historically focused on making social change and raising consciousness, rather than legislation or reform.

Another problem for us is the structure of such an organization. Historically CA GP has been formed several times and has foundered each time because of never-resolved issues of consensus versus majority, the basis for network voting, a voice for not-present networks, instant decisions versus referring back, local network passivity or outright resistance to state top-down actions.

So what do we propose as a statewide entity for GP Networks in CA? We propose statewide GP organizations with formal rules for THOSE FEW INDIVIDUAL PROJECTS that we COLLECTIVELY designate as high priority... a separate arrangement for each agreed-upon activity. One such project could be Single Payer Healthcare. Another could be Property Taxation (A year from now there will be a statewide movement to undo Prop 13). Still another example could be when Social Security privatization again raises its ugly head.

What do you think? Do you agree with us? Have you another solution? Let us know.

## Heads Up! Rent Control Is in Danger!

Two propositions on the June ballot, Prop. 98 and Prop. 99, purport to address eminent domain, the power of government to take private property. In fact, Prop. 98 PROHIBITS rent control, affordable housing requirements, zoning regulations and environmental protection throughout California. Just in SF, Prop. 98 would remove rent control on 180,000 units. Prop. 99 protects residential property against eminent domain and outlaws attempts to curb rent control if it passes by more votes than Prop. 98. Remember: 98 we hate, 99 is fine.

Prop 99 prohibits governments from acquiring an *owner-occupied residence* for the purpose of conveying it to a private person or association or business. Prop 98 prohibits governments from taking private property except for public use. TAKING is the key word. TAKING is defined as...“limiting the price a private owner may charge another person to purchase, occupy or use his or her real property.” So: no action of any kind that would limit the right of a property owner to make money on his/her property. No rent control. No laws meant to mitigate burdens on tenants, such as unreasonable rent increases while looking for new housing under Ellis Act evictions or Section 8 terminations. No affordable housing requirements No prohibition of rent-gouging in any future emergencies.

Prop 98 adds a section to existing law: “Private property may not be taken...for private use.” One of its definitions of “private use” is “regulation of the ownership, occupancy or use of privately owned rental property or associated property rights in order to transfer an economic benefit to one or more private persons at the expense of the property owner.” This could include, for instance, 30-60-90 day notices of rent increases; just-cause eviction rules; condominium conversions; state and local anti-discrimination laws, etc.

In short: Prop 99 protects owner-occupied residences from government abuse of eminent domain. Prop 98 uses such abuse as a springboard to remove consumer protections in housing. The GP Board strongly recommends **no** on 98, **yes** on 99.

Prop. 98 was written by the Howard Jarvis Taxpayers’ Association, the ones who brought you Prop. 13, and financed by landlord groups.

## Support Affordable Housing

San Franciscans will have a real opportunity on the June ballot to choose between two visions for the future of Bayview Hunters Point.

One is that of Lennar Corporation, a Fortune 500 company and the second largest home developer in the nation, whose Prop G, “Mixed-Use Development Project for Candlestick Point and Hunters Point Shipyard,” calls for 10,000 units of housing, two million square feet of office space, recreational facilities, and maybe even a new 49er stadium. Lennar’s initiative suggests, but does not guarantee, that 25% of the housing should be below market rate—how much below is not specified. Despite a record of financial losses (downgraded to “junk” status by Standard & Poor in 2007) and shoddy building practices on toxic properties and landfills, Lennar has garnered support from such notables as Mayor Gavin Newsom and Senator Dianne Feinstein.

The second vision was put together by a coalition of community groups, including Gray Panthers, who collected over 13,000 signatures in 10 days to qualify Prop. F, “Affordable Housing Requirement for the Candlestick Point and Hunters Point Mixed-Use Development Project,” for the ballot. Prop. F *requires* that 50% of the new housing built on Candlestick Point and Hunters Point Shipyard be affordable to San Franciscans *who live in the affected areas*. The initiative spells it out in detail: 1/3 of the affordable homes would go to people with 80% of the area’s median income (AMI), 1/3 to 60% AMI, 1/3 to 30% AMI. Protections for current residents of public and subsidized housing are included.

Will San Francisco ultimately become a city of high-rise condos and wealthy neighborhoods controlled by private security forces and surrounded by homeless encampments? Middle and low income families, especially black and Latin, are leaving the city in droves. A once child-friendly city has a lower proportion of children than any other urban area in the country.

The Board of the San Francisco Gray Panthers has enthusiastically endorsed Prop. F and will work for its passage. Contact the Bayview Organizing Project of POWER at 864-8372 for more information.

## War Is Never an Answer

Corporate media have replaced coverage of the war on Iraq with the Presidential Caucus Circus,

but we who protested this war in 2003 maintain our demands: End the War Now; Bring Our Troops Home; Reparations to Iraqis; and as the Gray Panthers chanted “No Blood for Oil; US Off Iraqi Soil!” We marched with several thousand from Civic Center to the Mission. Earlier on the day marking the fifth year of this illegal war, hundreds demonstrated outside Senator Feinstein’s office. Daniel Ellsberg addressed the crowd before joining others in a die-in, shutting down Market Street. Ellsberg and 150 others were arrested. Hundreds also marched through the financial district, stopping business as usual and causing people to remember the crimes of war.



## Winter Soldier II

There are no more moving voices calling for ending this war than those of active duty soldiers and veterans. Iraq Veterans Against the War organized Winter Soldier hearings this March 14-16. Soldiers came forward in tears as they described what dehumanizing does to people; as they declared their sorrow for acts committed against the Iraqi people. Their words are painful to hear. These soldiers are paying our price for war. Everyone should have heard and borne witness to these testimonies. Corporate media, however, did not carry any of these truths about the human cost of war. Only independent media, *KPFA*, broadcast live the entire coverage. Go to [www.kpfa.org](http://www.kpfa.org) or [www.ivaw.org](http://www.ivaw.org) for archived transcripts. Listen and read as many accounts as you can bear, then do everything you can to end this war and bring our soldiers home now. Demand hearings in congress and that these testimonies be placed in the Congressional Record. **Call radio and TV stations; write to the newspapers; tell them to cover the story.**

**Official American death toll  
in Iraq war hits 4000 as of March 24 .  
Iraqi death toll not tabulated.**

**\$500,000,000,000+  
spent on War in Iraq...  
...in case you’ve forgotten.**

## Stop US War Funds to Israel

Over 100 peaceful but vocal protestors, including several Gray Panthers, took part in a demonstration on March 7 at the San Francisco Israeli consulate to protest the attack on Gaza by Israeli armed forces. The demonstration was called by the Middle East Children’s Alliance plus the Free Palestine Alliance and several other Arab-American organizations. There were fewer than a dozen counter-demonstrators across the street.

The demonstration took place toward the end of a five-day Israeli incursion into Gaza which killed more than 120 Palestinians, of whom one in five were children and over half were civilians, according to the Israel human rights group, B’tselem. As reported by Ha’aretz, two Israeli soldiers were killed, and rocket fire from Gaza killed one Israeli civilian during the attack.

The stated aim of the Israeli attack was to stop the launching of rockets, which was in response to Israeli “targeted liquidations” (i.e., assassinations) of five Hamas leaders.



## Chevron Refinery Exposed

Chevron, a leading war profiteer, wants to refine over a million barrels of Iraqi oil in its Richmond plant. Chevron and other oil corporations are pushing to privatize Iraq’s oil. On March 15, hundreds surrounded the Chevron plant and forced the Richmond Planning Commission to delay approval of Chevron’s upgrade. The upgrade would be necessary to process increased crude oil. The “upgrade” would cause 900,000 more metric tons of greenhouse gases.

## Update—Mumia & SF 8

For over two years Mumia’s lawyers, a group headed by Robert Bryan, have been litigating issues in the Pennsylvania Supreme Court regarding the prosecution falsely manipulating eyewitness testimony and fabricating evidence in Mumia’s original trial. Recently the court denied relief.

Robert Bryan writes, “This state ruling has no bearing on the proceedings pending in the U.S. Court of Appeals for the Third Circuit. If the federal decision is favorable, then the Pennsylvania Supreme Court judgment will be moot. Otherwise, I plan to seek relief in the U.S. Supreme Court. I will not rest until Mumia is free.

“This is a highly complex case involving issues of great constitutional significance and a voluminous amount of material. In three decades...I have not seen one more complicated....If the federal court follows the mandate of the U.S. Constitution, the decision should be favorable...

“The issues in this case concern the right to a fair trial, the struggle against the death penalty, and the political repression of a courageous writer and journalist. My goal is to win a new and fair trial for Mumia, and a jury acquittal upon his retrial. I want him to go home to his family. Nevertheless, Mumia is in great danger, for if all is lost he will be executed. We must never forget that racism, fraud and politics are threads that have run through this case since the beginning and continue today.”



Closer to home, on April 21 at 8:30 AM at the Hall of Justice, 855 Bryant, the preliminary hearing will be held for the SF 8 (now 7), former Black Panthers on trial for the killing of a police officer **36 years ago**. New Orleans police extracted confessions from some of the men under torture as part of COINTELPRO. The case was thrown out of court years ago for lack of evidence and is now reinstated. Hmm..Why?

Be there if you possibly can.

## Latin & Black Carpenters Fight Racism

“AIMCO told us they were our enemies, but when we saw how they were being screwed just like us, we realized we were brothers!” the black carpenter told the Supervisors’ hearing, and returned to his seat, where he was hugged by several Latino carpenters. This scene was repeated a number of times with both black and Latino speakers.

Technically, it was a hearing where 50 black and Latino carpenters suing AIMCO, the country’s largest apartment complex operator for racist practices during renovation of its mold-ridden apartments in Bayview-Hunters Point, were demanding the Supervisors’ support.

In fact, it was one of the most inspiring examples of workers’ multi-racial unity and determination to fight back against racist hiring, racist job assignment, racist harassment, racist wage-stealing, and race baiting. Whatever the outcome of the suit, it was a bad day for corporate capitalism and a glorious day for workers. Several Gray Panthers were there, speaking, applauding, meeting with them.

Carpenters described how AIMCO subcontractors initially hired only Latinos, whose checks they would cash, keeping hundreds of dollars. When local blacks were hired, they were harassed, called lazy and incompetent, and finally forced to race with Latino carpenters to finish a wall. Both Latino and black carpenters were forced to work as roofers, at a fraction of wages and high up with dangerous scaffolding. AIMCO subcontractors held separate meetings of Latino and black carpenters, where they were told each was the enemy of the other. As one carpenter shouted, “You could have started a race riot!” Other carpenters talked about the need to give their children examples of constructive work, and fighting exploitation and racism. Union officials have done next to nothing.

AIMCO made a pathetic attempt to say they didn’t know all this was happening. The Supervisors were rocked, and almost dumbfounded. They were told that these abuses were the norm, and will continue to be so with their redevelopment plans.

It was a day we will never forget, and we will bring more news as it comes.

## 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

April 2008

## Actions and Events

### Thursday, April 10, 10:00 AM

Senior Action Network (SAN) General Meeting,

### Thursday, April 10, 12:00 Noon

SF Community Action Team of CARA  
Both: St. Mary's Cathedral, 1111 Gough/Geary

### Thursday, April 10, 7:00-9:00 PM

*Writings for a Democratic Society: the Tom  
Hayden Reader.* Author reads at City Lights  
Bookstore, 261 Columbus, to launch book

### Wednesday, April 16, 9:30 AM

State-wide action in Sacramento  
against the budget cuts  
Bus leaves St. Mary's Cathedral, 1111 Gough St.  
at 9:30 AM. Call 510-663-4086 for reservation.

### Saturday, April 19, 11:00 AM

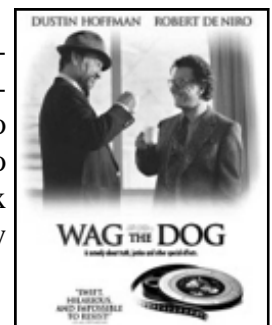
Cesar E. Chavez Holiday Parade & Festival  
11:00 AM Assemble for Parade, 24th & Harrison  
1:00 PM Program & Festival, Cesar Chavez  
School, Folsom between 22nd and 23rd Sts.

### Thursdays, all month, 12:00 Noon

Green Films Celebrating Earth Day, including *An  
Inconvenient Truth* on the 24th.  
Koret Auditorium  
San Francisco Main Library, 100 Larkin

## GP Night at the Movies Back, by popular demand... *Wag the Dog*

Before elections, a spin-  
doctor and a Hollywood pro-  
ducer join efforts to  
"fabricate" a war in order to  
cover-up a presidential sex  
scandal. Directed by Barry  
Levinson.



### Friday, April 25, 5:00 PM

Gray Panthers Office, 1182 Market, Rm. 203  
Donation \$5