

# *GRAY PANTHERS OF SAN FRANCISCO*

**Hit the Streets on June 19th  
for  
Universal Single Payer Health Care**

**Health Care YES  
Insurance Companies NO**



**Rally at the National  
Convention of America's  
Health Insurance Plans**

**12 Noon  
Moscone Center West  
Howard St. at 4th St.**

## **GRAY PANTHERS COMMITTEE MEETINGS & EVENTS**

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

**All members are welcome.**

**Board Meeting 12:30 PM  
Wednesday, June 4 & July 2**

**Middle East Study Group 11:00 AM  
Tuesday, June 10 & July 8**

**Newsletter Committee 12:00 Noon  
Thursday, June 5 & July 3**

**Health Committee 1:00 PM  
Tuesday, June 10 & July 8**

**There will be no regular membership meeting in June. Instead, come to the June 19 rally (see page 1).**

## **No Human Being Is Illegal**

That's what Brian Cruz's T-shirt declared as he led a lively and very informative discussion of immigration and labor at our May meeting. Cruz, an SEIU and immigration activist, presented a brief history of legal and illegal immigration since the 1990s, and talked about the ambivalence of organized labor, the devastating effect of NAFTA on Mexican farmers driving more people north to the US, and the effect of 9/11 and Homeland Security in equating undocumented with criminal and felonious. He summarized Congressional attempts to balance the need for workers with the demands for human rights and with the raucous cries of illegal (with its overtones of criminal and terrorist—remember that the heinous crime in this case was sneaking across the border).

Then Brian segued into a fascinating story of the SEIU, their national leadership's policy of "partnering with employers" leading to sweetheart contracts, top-down control, consolidation of union locals and weakening of local influences and impact, and subsequent antagonism with California Nurses Association—once allies.

The meeting finished with a critique of the resolution on immigration that the SF network has drawn up for submission to the national convention. We have printed said resolution in the May 2006 newsletter, copies are available at our office, and it is reproduced in full on our website <http://graypantherssf.igc.org>. We welcome your input.

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**"Breakable bones, a tendency to bleed when cut, vulnerability to germs and viruses. These are all preexisting conditions."**

## **Protest the Insurance Companies' Convention in SF: June 19th, Noon Moscone Center West, 4th & Howard St.**

On June 19, hundreds of people from all walks of life will demonstrate in San Francisco at the national convention of health insurance companies. For years, these companies have bankrupted us, denied us health care, and ripped apart the social safety net. Now they want to force themselves down the throats of our 47 million uninsured.

We demand single-payer health care: equal, comprehensive, low-cost, accessible health care for everyone. It would be delivered by today's doctors, clinics, and hospitals, but paid for by a single, publicly-accountable government-operated agency. No insurance companies! In California, it's SB 840. Nationally, it's HR 676.

Inside the convention, executives of America's Health Insurance Plans will meet with top political and policy advisors of both parties to create "universal health care" by forcing everyone to buy private health insurance. Everyone pays unaffordable premiums, deductibles, and co-pays. Poor people get worse care. Government spends billions to (barely) help poor people pay their premiums. It's welfare for insurance companies and Katrina-care for us.



Outside, at our demonstration, nationally-recognized advocates and legislators for single-payer health care will speak, along with health workers, victims of insurance abuse, long-time union members with no healthcare, seniors for whom Medicare is not enough, and people driven into poverty by health care costs.

National attention will be focused on this convention because of the health care crisis, so this is a rare opportunity. Everyone knows somebody who has been hurt by insurance companies or the lack of healthcare. SF Gray Panthers is one of several groups involved in the planning of this demonstration. Call 415-695-7891 for more information.

**Health care YES!  
Insurance Companies NO!**

## The People Are United!

The first week in May, Gray Panthers joined in a united front with people from unions, grassroots organizations, immigrant rights groups, and students walking out of classes.



Raging Grannies

We stood with hundreds in Justin Herman Plaza, May Day, for the ILWU rally celebrating the closure of 29 ports from Long Beach to Seattle in protest against the war on

Iraq. Truck drivers—many immigrants and not union members—joined in protests, refusing to make deliveries. ILWU’s shutdown was also honored by brave dock workers in Iraq who protested there in solidarity. This was an historic action of workers joining together to stop war. People from this demonstration then joined immigration rights groups in Dolores Park and later marched to Civic Center.

## Stop ICE Raids



In an arrogant affront to immigrant rights marchers on May Day, Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) raided several taquerias

in the Bay Area over the weekend, arresting many Latino workers. In response, progressives marched and rallied to protest at ICE headquarters in San Francisco on May 5.

## Juneteenth

On June 19, 1865, the Union Army landed on Galveston Island and took possession of the state of Texas from the Confederacy. General Granger read General Order No. 3, which enforced the emancipation of Texas’ slaves. Juneteenth is a celebration of this event, and of the great struggle for the abolition of slavery. We salute the slaves who fought for their freedom, and the abolitionists who supported their fight. All of us who struggle today for a decent life—for an end to racial and gender discrimination, for healthcare, education, jobs and housing—stand on their shoulders.

## Yes On Prop F

Our grassroots support for Prop F is so strong that Lennar has made a deal with the Labor Council. Rather than retaining the Prop. F-mandated 50% low-income housing, the “deal” calls for 32% affordable housing, and with no mention of retaining first choice for Bay View residents. However, Lennar has made promises in the past that were never carried out. Last year the SF School Board with the neighborhood, parents, students, and environmental justice organizations called for an independent health study. Neighbors had complained of exposure to asbestos when Lennar began work near Muhammad University of Islam, a school for Muslim children from all over the city. Lennar did not inform the neighborhood of possible harm before grading in the area began. Residents were exposed to dangerous levels of asbestos. Lennar claimed that the level of exposure is too small to cause problems, yet the EPA states that there is **no safe level of exposure to asbestos**, and even small exposures to asbestos have been known to result in adverse conditions years later. The San Francisco Department of Public Health ignored and denied repeated requests to have children at the school and in the neighborhood tested. There have been at least two lawsuits filed against Lennar and its contractors, one alleging that the corporation graded and excavated asbestos containing materials without informing the community as is required by law and another alleging that three employees were demoted by Lennar after voicing concerns about asbestos exposure. Information from [www.asbestos.com](http://www.asbestos.com)

Lennar, a developer with a portfolio of over \$1.3 billion, made a sweetheart deal with the city and the Redevelopment Agency to purchase four parcels of the old shipyard for \$1 and to receive \$82 million from the defense budget for monitoring the cleanup of these parcels. The Hunters Point Shipyard contains radioactive waste, lead and asbestos. Why do we trust Lennar, to manage such a complex superfund site? Hunters Point in San Francisco, with some of the best weather and beautiful views, is also predominantly an African American neighborhood. Developers have been salivating over the possibility of developing this area for decades. Residents of Bay View Hunters Point see this as another gentrification scheme like the Fillmore.

**Yes on Prop F NO on Prop G.**

## NAFTA and the Moth

Public outrage continues to grow over plans by the California Department of Food and Agriculture (CDFA) to periodically spray a pheromone pesticide called Checkmate across the Bay Area landscape for up to five years, ostensibly to eradicate the Light Brown Apple Moth (LBAM), which CDFA claims is a threat to California agriculture. A number of entomologists oppose the program on the grounds that LBAM has undoubtedly been endemic in California for decades and that, in any case, spraying of pheromones would not eradicate it. Twenty-one California cities, San Francisco among them, have passed resolutions opposing the spraying without further study of health and environmental effects; no less than three bills have been introduced in the Assembly and one in the Senate in response to the plans.

The Environmental Protection Agency (which, among other things, recently opposed California's higher CO2 emission standards, deregulated some volatile organic compounds that contribute to smog and ozone levels, and fired a staff member worried about flame retardants) "believes use of these pheromone products, including aerial application over residential areas, presents negligible risks to human health and the environment..." and thus was able in good conscience to give Checkmate an emergency exemption from the usual requirements for studies of long-term health risks and environmental impact. But what's the emergency? CDFA has stated repeatedly that LBAM has not damaged any crops in California.



If we don't spray, Governor Schwarzenegger says, "There will be billions of dollars in lost revenue."

Many people are now wondering whether the real emergency is trade policy. Mexico and Canada have invoked NAFTA rules which allow the quarantine of agricultural products from California counties where LBAM has been

found. Without an eradication program, California's agricultural exports could take a nose dive, and so could corporate profits. Environmental and health risks pale in comparison to the economic risk to Big Ag.

## Our Voices Are Heard!

SF Gray Panthers sent letters to Senators Boxer and Feinstein and House Speaker Pelosi requesting that they hold hearings and enter into the Congressional Record the testimonies of Iraq and Afghanistan veterans. On May 15, under the leadership of our California Representatives Maxine Waters, Barbara Lee and Lynn Woolsey, that hearing took place in Washington. Once again, vets told of the horror of war. The women of Congress moved between anger and tears as they stood in witness to the words of the young soldiers. When one veteran told of being disqualified from the GI bill funds for college, because he had attempted suicide, a determined and angry Maxine Waters declared, "You're going to get that GI fund money for college!"

The Iraq Veterans Against the War organization has become veterans' greatest support as the Bush administration continually puts up roadblocks for returning soldiers. A General Discharge designation is now grounds for denying college funds. The highest number of veterans ever returning from war with diagnoses of Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) are now likely to be told they have something not as serious, as orders have gone out to cut down on these cases. Testimony after testimony told of killings of innocent civilians and the practice of "drop weapons," placing a rifle by the body of a slain Iraqi and labeling him as an insurgent. In fact, veterans testified that they saw many more innocent people die at the hands of our military than at the hands of the so-called insurgents.

During a break in the hearings, Representatives returned to the House session in progress to speak out against the war budget, and to separate money for domestic programs from war funds.



"You want medical care from the government? Try joining the Army!"



## “60 Years, No Time To Celebrate”

In response to Israel’s 60th anniversary celebrations, 20 Jewish activists were arrested, demonstrating Jewish opposition to Israel’s 60-year-old policy of dispossession, and highlighting the often-silenced struggle of Palestinian refugees. For over two hours, 30 Jewish activists and supporters in the main atrium of the Jewish Community Center (JCC) disrupted San Francisco’s anniversary event. Meanwhile, outside over 30 Jewish and Palestinian supporters held a rally to call attention to the ongoing Israeli policy of apartheid against the Palestinian population. With banners reading, “Jews in Solidarity with 60+ years of Palestinian resistance,” activists declared the anniversary, “No Time to Celebrate.”

“As Jews of conscience, acting in solidarity with 60+ years of Palestinian resistance, we’re here today to promote an ‘Independence’ that does not depend on an ethnically or religiously exclusive state or on the displacement of indigenous people,” said Eric Romann, International Jewish Solidarity Network (IJSN) organizer. “What we want is joint liberation, not isolation.”

Israel at 60, billed as an educational symposium, celebration and exhibit, was the official Jewish community’s Israeli birthday recognition. It was held at the JCC on May 8. Chief sponsoring organizations were the JCC and the Jewish Community Relations Council (JCRC), supported by, among others, the New Israel Fund, the Israeli Consul General, and American-Israeli Public Affairs Committee (AIPAC), the pro-Israel lobbyists.

Some of the demands the activists presented to JCRC were,

- To stop claiming that anti-Zionism and criticism of Israel are anti-Semitic;
- To acknowledge that they do not speak for the full organized Jewish community—that Jewish voices criticizing Israel and Zionism are legitimate voices of dissent within Jewish communities and should get equal consideration;
- To stop targeting non-Jewish organizations (particularly those serving communities of color in the Bay Area and beyond) that criticize Israel and/or express solidarity with Palestine, i.e., by intimidating them into silence.

## Standards of Care Adopted

After two years of discussion, the Board of Supervisors adopted Standards of Care legislation ensuring homeless shelter residents rights to:

- Dignified and respectful treatment
- A safe environment free of violence
- Toilet paper, hand soap, and dryers
- Clean sheets and blankets
- Pillow and towels
- Fresh drinking water
- First aid kits
- Reasonable accommodation for meals
- A nutritionist in the system to plan meals
- Eight hours of sleep
- Daytime access in 24-hour shelters
- Electricity for charging cell phones
- Access to free local calls
- Materials in Spanish and English
- Trained staff who wear badges
- A disaster plan
- Public notice of meetings
- Access to free laundry
- Minimum seven-night stays

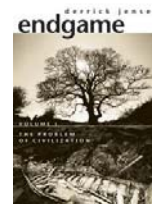
This is wonderful news for some of our most unfortunate San Franciscans—those who can make it into a shelter. But isn’t there something sad about a city needing to LEGISLATE such basics as toilet paper and fresh drinking water?

Sadly, also, Buster’s Place is still closed.

## Check Us Out!

The Gray Panthers Library has a new acquisition: *Standing Up To The Masses*, by David and Amy Goodman, (autographed by Amy).

This is on top of our already stellar collection of books, magazines, newspapers and videotapes. Books like: *Endgame* by Derrick Jensen, *Blackwater* by Jeremy Scahill or, more happily, *Tell Me a Riddle* by Tillie Olsen. Newspapers like: *The Bay View National Black Newspaper*, or *The Hightower Lowdown*. Tapes like: *Salt of the Earth* or *Maggie* (that’s OUR Maggie). Check out (and bring back) or read/view here. Comfy chairs.



## 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

**June 2008**

## Actions and Events

### **Thursday, June 5, 10:30 AM-11:30 AM**

Vigil/Ritual "Honoring our Covenant of  
Compassion During SF's Current Budget Crisis"  
Sister Bernie Galvin and others  
S.F. City Hall, South Light Court

### **Monday, June 9, 2:00-5:00 PM**

Town Hall Meeting on City Budget Cuts  
Koret Auditorium, Main Library

### **Thursday, June 19, 12:00 Noon-1:30 PM**

Protest at the convention of America's Health  
Insurance Plans (AHIP)  
Moscone Center West, Howard Street at 4th Street

### **Sat/Sun, June 21-22, 11:00 AM-7:00 PM**

Juneteenth Celebration  
San Francisco Civic Center Plaza

**NO MOVIE NIGHT THIS SUMMER.**

### **Saturday, June 28, 12:00 Noon-7:00 PM**

San Francisco LGBT Pride Celebration  
San Francisco Civic Center Plaza

### **Sunday, June 29, 12:00 Noon-7:00 PM**

San Francisco LGBT Pride Celebration & Parade  
San Francisco Civic Center Plaza

**June Primary Election**  
**Your Vote Is Important**

**Our Board Recommends:**

**Prop. 98—We Hate 98—NO**  
**Prop. 99—Fine with 99—YES**

**Ordinances**

**F—F Is Fine**  
**G—G is God-awful**