

# *GRAY PANTHERS OF SAN FRANCISCO*

## **What happened to Sanctuary City? Attacks on immigrants and youth, US & SF**



### **General Membership Meeting**

**Tuesday, September 16, 12:30—3:00 PM**

**Unitarian/Universalist Center, 1187 Franklin (near Geary)**

**Bring a snack to share.**

#### **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, September 3 & October 1**

**Middle East Study Group 11:00 AM  
Tuesday, September 9 & October 14**

**Newsletter Committee 12:00 Noon  
Thursday, September 4 & October 2**

**Health Committee 1:00 PM  
Tuesday, September 9 & October 14**

**Book Club 10:30 AM, Monday, September 22  
*Dust Tracks on a Road*, by Zora Neale Hurston**

## Sacramento Bee Obituary for Joan Lee



Joan Lee, a prominent Sacramento political activist and advocate for seniors who was a state and national leader in Gray Panthers, died Saturday at age 80.

....Ms. Lee was active for many years in Gray Panthers, an advocacy organization for seniors seeking social and economic justice. She led the

Sacramento chapter and was legislative liaison for Gray Panthers California, a statewide coalition. She served on the group's national board in Washington.

She was ubiquitous in public and in the press as a grassroots organizer on progressive causes and issues important to seniors. She carried signs at rallies, registered new voters and collected petition signatures. She buttonholed community leaders, politicians and news reporters on universal health care, access for disabled people and workers' rights.

—excerpted from an obituary by Robert D. Dávila, *Sacramento Bee*, July 30, 2008.

Representing the SF Gray Panthers Network at the packed memorial service August 15 were Sonia, Michael and Mitzi.

## National Convention News

The National Convention of Networks of the US Gray Panthers is held every four years to determine policy and program guidelines for the next four years. The convention's theme this year is Turn America Around and will include special sessions on "Taking Action on Climate Change" and "Confronting Military Recruitment in Schools."

Our SF Board of Directors has nominated Michael Lyon for the Maggie Kuhn Leadership Award, to be presented at the National Convention.

"When you least expect it, someone may actually listen to what you have to say."—Maggie Kuhn

## September Meeting Sanctuary City - What does it mean?

We will discuss attacks on immigrants and youth nationally and in San Francisco, what a Sanctuary City is, what protections it gives to the people who live and work in it, why the Board of Supervisors declared San Francisco a Sanctuary City, the recent one-sided inflammatory articles in the *Chronicle*, what we can do and to support our proud sanctuary status. Join us.

## The Minutemen

Why were the Minutemen in our Sanctuary City on July 30, holding a rally on City Hall steps? This was a provocative act, deliberately not publicized until less than 24 hours before it occurred to minimize public protest against their vicious racism. Nevertheless, protesters far outnumbered the sparse supporters gathered to hear them. The city police were there, ostensibly to protect free speech, but the free speech they protected was that of the hate purveyors, not that of the protesters. In the ensuing melee one protester was arrested and charged with battery on a police officer—he (Dee Allen) supposedly spit at an officer, which he denies doing, in any case not hitting the officer. There is no corroborating evidence.

Dee has no criminal record. He is currently out on bail and is being defended by the Public Defender's office (Jeff Adachi is its head). The National Lawyers' Guild is keeping a watchful eye on the proceedings. Battery on a police officer is a misdemeanor, punishable by up to a \$2000 fine and/or six months in jail. The case is set for trial on October 2.

Why is the District Attorney's office prosecuting this case on the flimsiest of evidence? People have a right and indeed a duty to protest against the xenophobic Minutemen being in our city peddling hate and violence against our neighbors and us. You are urged to call the misdemeanor department of the District Attorney's office, 553-1266, and the Public Defender's office at 553-1671 and request them to get charges against Dee dismissed as unjustified and a waste of public money.



## SFGP Voices Will Be Heard at National Convention

From September 25-28, hundreds of Gray Panthers will gather in Detroit for our national convention. Our San Francisco representatives—Barbara, Inda, Virginia and Winslow—will argue for national adoption of six policy resolutions already passed by the San Francisco Gray Panthers Board.

Three of these resolutions were discussed in earlier newsletters. They call for (1) rights for all immigrants regardless of legal status; (2) inclusion of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights in state constitutions; and (3) single payer healthcare and HR 676. The remaining three resolutions are summarized below. Links to the text of these resolutions are on our website <http://graypantherssf.igc.org> (scroll down to “Recent Posts”), or you can call the office and request copies by mail.

### Join the Media Reform Movement.



Argues: A democracy cannot function without an informed electorate. We are not getting adequate background on urgent local and national issues. Attempts are being made to curtail public access to the media and monopolize the airwaves—especially by ending Network Neutrality. Corporate media increasingly spread racist, misogynist, xenophobic and homophobic fear and hatred. Our resolution calls for (1) raising the issue of the skewed corporate media with all candidates for major local and national office; (2) acting with media reform groups; (3) demanding inclusion of C-Span 1 & 2 at all levels by all television providers; and (4) encouraging media reform groups to connect with other progressive organizations.

**Repeal the PATRIOT Act.** Argues: The PATRIOT Act and associated measures have weakened and/or abrogated First Amendment rights of free speech and peaceable assembly; Fourth Amendment prohibitions against unreasonable search and seizure; Fifth Amendment rights to due process and prohibition of indefinite incarceration without a trial; Sixth Amendment rights to prompt and public trial; and Eighth Amendment protections against cruel and unusual punishment. Our resolution cites as evidence widespread wiretaps, secret searches, internet surveillance, and arbitrary designation of domestic organizations as terrorist groups. It calls for Congress to repeal the PATRIOT Act and all associated measures which institute domestic terrorism in the name of fighting international terrorism.



### Repeal the 2003 Medicare Modernization Act (MMA).

Argues: Medicare Part D has endangered seniors and disabled people, disrupting their access to medicines with restrictive formularies and confusing information, and forcing many to buy drugs at higher cost, while drug companies make windfall profits. The MMA is designed to entice and later coerce healthier Medicare recipients into private plans, leaving the sickest and most expensive patients in traditional Medicare, which will then fail. The MMA is also designed to encourage and drive wealthier seniors into private care, leaving poorer seniors in Medicare, which will then suffer the usual cuts of safety net programs. Finally, out-of-control health costs and rising numbers of both uninsured people and medical bankruptcies among insured people demonstrate the need for equal, comprehensive, quality, accessible healthcare for all without the costs, interference or bureaucracy of insurance companies. Our resolution calls for nationwide activity by the Gray Panthers to repeal the entire Medicare Modernization Act, and for improving Medicare’s benefits and extending them to everyone residing in the United States.



“Do a double-blind test. Give the new drug to rich patients and a placebo to the poor. No sense getting their hopes up. They couldn’t afford it even if it works.”

## DPH and Lennar Corporation Choose Private Profits Over Public Good

The twisted affairs of Lennar Corporation, the nation's third largest builder and a major player in the development at Hunters Point Shipyard, took another turn on July 14, when the Department of Public Health disclosed that Lennar demolition had released almost 140,000 particulates of asbestos six weeks before. The Health Department did not inform residents or suspend Lennar's work, both required by California state law when particulate release exceeds 16,000. The *SF Bay Guardian* reported, "Amy Brownell of the Department of Public Health told the *Guardian* that the violation...did not trigger a work suspension because there was no work planned at Lennar's site May 31 or June 1, which was a weekend." (*SFBG*, July 30, 2008).

The asbestos release happened on May 30, only days before the June 3 election on which Lennar had spent \$5 million to support Prop G, giving the developer control of Candlestick Point and the shipyard, and to defeat Prop F, a grassroots community initiative requiring affordable housing in at least half of the units Lennar plans to build. Residents and community activists believe Lennar withheld the information to avoid any negative response by voters that might have defeated Prop G.

For almost two years, activists have called for a Department of Public Health hearing on the environmental impact of Lennar's work after the corporation reported that asbestos dust hadn't been monitored or contained during operations on the Parcel A construction site. Public Health Director Mitchell Katz has attempted to trivialize the danger on numerous occasions. At an October 2007 Board of Education meeting attended by GP Convenor Michael Lyon, Katz argued against testing children for past asbestos exposure, saying there was no contamination on the ground floor of the Parcel A construction site (although plans called for ground floor occupancy by businesses, not residences, out of concern for toxics in the soil) and that asbestos does not cause asthma; he failed to mention it aggravates asthma, and does cause mesothelioma, a form of lung cancer.

The National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health notes, "Excessive cancer risks have been →

←demonstrated for all fiber concentrations studied to date. Evaluation of all human data provides no evidence for a 'safe' level of asbestos exposure."

In June of this year, Bayview Hunters Point residents and workers, alleging that their pre-school and school-age children suffered headaches, skin rashes, and respiratory ailments during this period, filed suit against Lennar and two consulting firms, charging them with public nuisance, negligence and environmental racism.

Lennar has taken a major hit in the current economic downturn, and there now is some question whether they can ever complete the Hunters Point Shipyard project. They already have filed for bankruptcy in a similar project at Mare Island. If Lennar were to pull out of the San Francisco project, it would leave behind a partially completed clean-up and hundreds of residents exposed to asbestos whose lung damage might not show up for many years. The time for the Department of Public Health to protect San Francisco residents is long past. We need an immediate investigation of past and present asbestos exposure of Bayview Hunters Point residents and an end to Lennar's cavalier disregard for the public's well-being.



At a hearing to discuss the findings of the African-American Out-Migration Task Force, recently called by Supervisor Chris Daly, Bayview Hunters Point residents accused Lennar Corporation of trying to push blacks out of the neighborhood, the last majority-black area in the city. This would not be the first time the City and the Redevelopment Agency have been accused of driving out minority populations.

## Stealth Privatization of Social Security

Both major parties' candidates insist they are against privatizing Social Security, but a closer look at the policy-making think tanks behind them suggests both candidates would push for more gradual privatization and benefit cuts, and their plans would have bipartisan consensus in advance.

“[Taking Back Our Fiscal Future](#),” a report co-authored by the liberal Brookings Institution and the conservative Heritage Foundation recommends “Congress and the president enact explicit long-term budgets for Medicare, Medicaid, and Social Security that are sustainable, set limits on automatic spending growth, and reduce the relatively favorable budgetary treatment of these programs.”

The Brookings Institution's June, 2008 piece “[Bridging the Social Security Divide: Lessons From Abroad](#)” also advocates bi-partisan compromise on Social Security reform. It would (1) increase Social Security payroll tax revenue, (2) require employers to set up private retirement accounts for individual workers and apply the additional payroll tax revenues to matching funds for the private accounts of low and medium income wage earners, (3) gradually diminish the guaranteed benefits paid by traditional Social Security so the private accounts become the major source of retirement income, (4) invest the current Social Security Trust Fund in private securities, and (5) set up an emergency bipartisan congressional commission on anticipated shortfalls, which would



←rapid approval to presidential proposals for benefit cuts and tax increases, with no amendments allowed.

Some hope Obama will preserve benefits for working-class retirees, but his economic team is heavily tilted to corporate and banking interests, The Brookings Institution, and economists allied with Robert Rubin, Clinton's Treasury Secretary, who promoted NAFTA, decimated social programs, and helped to deregulate financial institutions. McCain, besides attacking Obama's higher payroll tax, says nothing coherent on Social Security except he wants a bipartisan plan.

These leaders will not preserve or expand Social Security on their own. That will only be done by massive populist pressure. Strikes, demonstrations, and marches gave us Social Security in 1935. We need them again! Please call the office, 415-552-8800 to help begin.

## Companies Avoid Paying Uncle Sam

The details. Two-thirds of companies in the United States paid no federal income taxes between 1998 and 2005, a new report from Congress says. Not only that, the report from the General Accounting Office says about 68 percent of foreign companies doing business here also avoided corporate taxes during the same period. About 25 percent of those companies not paying taxes are considered to be large corporations, which means they had at least \$250 million in assets or \$50 million in receipts.

—*San Francisco Examiner*, August 18, 2008



## Gray Panthers of SF

1182 Market Street, Room 203  
San Francisco, CA 94102-4916  
415-552-8800  
graypanther-sf@sbcglobal.net  
http://graypantherssf.igc.org

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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      **September 2008**

## Actions and Events

### **Saturday, August 30 through Monday, September 1, 1:30 PM**

San Francisco Mime Troupe: *Red State*  
Music at 1:30, Performance at 2:00  
Dolores Park, Free

### **Saturday, September 6, 11 AM—5 PM**

“Power to the Peaceful” concert  
Michael Franti and Spearhead  
Speedway Meadows, Golden Gate Park, Free

### **Thursday, September 11, 10 AM—12 Noon**

Candidates Forum—meet local candidates and  
hear about local ballot measures  
Senior Action Network General Meeting  
St. Mary’s Cathedral, 1111 Gough Street  
Lunch \$1.50

### **Friday, September 12, 3:30 PM—6:30 PM**

Axis of Friendship: Light a Candle for Peace  
in opposition to the bombing of Iran. We will  
gather at Civic Center Plaza from 3:30-6:30 pm.

### **Tuesday, September 16, 1:00 PM**

New Deal Film Festival: “The New Deal: Putting  
America to Work; the NRA, TVA and WPA”  
North Berkeley Senior Center, 1901 Hearst,  
Berkeley (at Martin Luther King, Jr. Way)—4  
blocks from Downtown Berkeley BART. Free.

### **Tuesday, September 23, 1:00 PM**

New Deal Film Festival: “Cradle Will Rock”  
See Sept. 16 announcement.

### **Tuesday, September 30, 1:00 PM**

New Deal Film Festival: “Building the Safety Net:  
Social Security, Programs for Black Americans,  
Preventing Foreclosure and other Public Pro-  
grams.” See Sept. 16 announcement.

