

# GRAY PANTHERS OF SAN FRANCISCO



Report-Back  
from the  
Gray Panthers  
National Convention

...also election eyes  
& nays

## General Membership Meeting

Tuesday, October 21, 12:30—3:00 PM

Unitarian/Universalist Center, 1187 Franklin (near Geary)

**Bring a snack to share.**

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### 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, October 1 & November 5

Middle East Study Group 11:00 AM  
Wednesday, October 22 & November 26

Newsletter Committee 12:00 Noon  
Thursday, October 2 & November 6

Health Committee 1:00 PM  
Tuesday, October 14 & November 11

Book Club 10:30 AM, Monday, October 27 & November 24  
Discussion on the economy—bring notes and articles.

**Please Come to Our Friend Dee Allen's  
Trial for Protesting the Minutemen!  
Thurs, Oct 2nd, 8 AM  
850 Bryant St, (betw. 6th, 7th Sts)  
Dept. 13 (2nd Floor)**

Dee was arrested on phony charges while protesting a racist Minutemen rally on City Hall Steps.

### **Immigrants and Youth Under Attack**

Advocates for immigrants, youth and LGBT rights are pushing back against ICE raids, racial profiling of youth by police, and the displacement of minority families by gentrification in San Francisco and the Bay Area. Our September meeting on these issues, our speech that day at a LGBT-sponsored City Hall rally on these issues, and our collaboration with the coalition against SF's Gang Injunction and the police Gang Task Force make us a credible part of this work. (More next month.)

Very briefly, at our September meeting, Maria Poblet, of St. Peter's Housing Committee, spoke about San Francisco's 1989 Sanctuary Ordinance, and Municipal ID program. Now, with anti-immigrant groups bringing suits, right wingers brought into the Newsom administration, racist *SF Chronicle* articles equating immigrants with drugs and murders, and a racist Minuteman demonstration on City Hall steps, Sanctuary City is largely reversed. Immigrant youth even suspected of crimes are turned over to Immigration, and the Municipal ID card is under attack by the Mayor. We resolved to lead a protest at the *SF Chronicle*.

Jose Luis Pavon, of Homey and the Anti Gang Injunction Coalition thanked elders for their presence at a demonstration demanding City Attorney Herrera meet with youth and the community, saying we added credibility and forestalled a police attack. He eloquently described the cause of violence as lack of education and job opportunities.

**Potluck Brunch with Lynne Stewart  
October 6, 11:30 AM, GP Office  
1182 Market at 8th Street**

You are invited to a potluck brunch for Lynne and Ralph to hear the latest in this civil liberties saga. Come and meet a great role model for us all.

### **October Meeting: Gray Panthers Convention and November Ballot.**

Our October meeting will have two sections. First, a four-person report from our National Gray Panthers Convention, featuring Virginia, Barbara, Winslow and Inda. Share vicariously their fun, excitement, inspiration and renewed dedication to our principles. Second, an in-depth analysis of the state and local propositions on the November ballot. Bring your voter pamphlets and sample ballots. If you vote absentee, don't mail in your ballot until you hear our discussions and recommendations. Be an informed voter—your vote counts.

### **Conventions, Conventions**

Didn't go to any? Feel left out? Here are two you can go to and enjoy.

(1) SAN—Senior Action Network—Wednesday, October 8, 9:00 AM—2:00 PM, St Mary's Cathedral, lower level. The SF Gray Panthers is an organizational member of SAN and sponsors a ten-person luncheon table. Cost of the convention is \$10 per person, including a lunch. Attend and participate in the whole convention if you can. If you can only make it for lunch, come help us fill our table and celebrate SAN's valuable local campaigns. If you can pay your own way, please do. If you can't afford it, our GP funds will cover the cost. Please let the office know your plans.

(2) CARA (California Association of Retired Americans) Sunday, October 12 and Monday, October 13, at Cathedral Hill Hotel, 1101 Van Ness. The SFGP is a community organization member of CARA and our co-convenor, Michael Lyon, currently represents community organizations on the CARA Board. We will send two delegates. Even if you are not a delegate, you can participate in the public candidate forum on Monday, from 10:00 AM to 2:00 PM. \$10 gets you lunch, free dental screening, entertainment, and—best of all—the chance to advocate your views to state and national candidates. Care about Medicare, Social Security, ending the wars in Afghanistan and Iraq, Single Payer, affordable housing, civil liberties, taxpayer bailouts of big business? This is a golden opportunity to stand up and be heard. If you plan to attend, let CARA know ASAP—510-663-4086, and tell our office too.

## What's on the Ballot?

### 34 State and Local Propositions (Help!)

This is a preliminary report for those who won't be able to come to our October meeting discussion-in-depth and to help all of us judge the propaganda bombarding us.

Board recommendations based on previous policy discussions:

STATE: Prop. 4 (Parental notification)—No  
Prop. 8 (No same-sex marriage)—No  
LOCAL: Prop. H (Energy)—Yes  
Prop. U (Bring troops home)—Yes  
Prop. V (Keep JROTC in schools)—No

CARA State Recommendations:

Prop. 1 (High-speed trains bond)—Yes  
Prop. 5 (Non-violent offenders)—Yes  
Prop. 6 (Criminal penalties)—No  
Prop. 7 (Renewable energy)—No  
Prop. 9 (Victims' rights)—No  
Prop. 10 (Alt. fuels vehicle bonds)—No  
Prop. 11 (Redistricting)—No  
Prop. 12 (Veterans housing bond)—Yes

SAN Local Recommendations:

Prop. A (Hospital safety bonds)—Yes  
Prop. B (Affordable housing set-asides)—Yes  
Prop. C (City employees and commissions)—No  
Prop. D (Pier 70 plan)—Yes  
Prop. E (City official recall signatures)—Yes  
Prop. F (Local elections in even-numb. yrs.)—Yes  
Prop. G (Retirement credit for parent. leave)—Yes  
Prop. I (Independent rate payer advocate)—No  
Prop. J (Historic preservation committee)—Yes  
Prop. K (Prostitution laws)—No  
Prop. L (Community justice center)—Yes  
Prop. M (Tenant harassment)—Yes  
Prop. N (Real property transfer fees)—Yes  
Prop. O (Telephone taxes)—Yes  
Prop. P (County transportation authority)—No  
Prop. Q (Payroll expense tax)—Yes  
Prop. R (Renaming Oceanside sewage plant)—Yes  
Prop. S (Budget set-aside)—No  
Prop. T (Substance abuse programs)—Yes

"Politics is the art of looking for trouble, finding it everywhere, diagnosing it incorrectly, and applying the wrong remedies." —Groucho Marx

## Thirties Redux?

"Everything is changing. People are taking their comedians seriously and the politicians as a joke."  
—Will Rogers

## Clean Energy Ahead?

Proposition H on the November ballot—the Clean Energy Act—calls for the city to do a study to ascertain the most cost effective and expeditious way to have 100% renewable energy by 2040. Why do you suppose that our friendly neighborhood corporate power behemoth, PG&E, is pouring out money to defeat the proposition? Because the study will almost surely find that *public power* is the most cost effective and expeditious route. Public power agencies in California and elsewhere typically have lower rates and offer much larger percentages of renewable energy than PG&E does. You may remember that the Sacramento Municipal Utility District *closed down* its polluting nuclear power plant. Ownership by the people—what a concept! "Being a utility with a board of directors elected by the public, there's more pressure there to get renewable energy in the mix," said SMUD spokesman Chris Capra. Soon, the city of Alameda will boost the percentage of renewables in its power system to 70%, with a possibility of moving to 100% shortly "if the price is reasonable." (Alan Hangar of Alameda Power and Telecom) Meanwhile PG&E is struggling to meet the state mandate of 20% by 2010.

So how will the city buy out PG&E if the mandated study *does* find public power to be the way to go? Prop H would enable the city to issue revenue bonds to be repaid by dedicated revenue streams that are identified before the issue of the bonds. The *Bay Guardian* (and thank our alternative newspaper for staying on the case for all these years), using publicly available and conservative figures, estimates that a city-owned power system could pay off the bonds in 20 years, AND lower rates for customers by 15% AND produce a surplus of \$107 million a year. Which might help to alleviate the annual budget shortfall and perennial cuts to desperately needed services. Plus make us the green city we want to be. What's not to like?

Vote YES on H.

## Oiling the Waters

These days, it's still all about oil. Recently, Russia sent a long-range tactical bomber, the TU160, to oil-rich Venezuela for "flight tests over neutral waters," and in November will send a naval squadron,



including a heavily armed nuclear power cruiser, for joint exercises with the Venezuelans. For the first time in 60 years, the US Navy's Fourth Fleet has been deployed to direct naval operations in the Caribbean and Latin America.

After supporting numerous attempts to dislodge President Morales of Bolivia and President Chavez of Venezuela, presumably to get more US-friendly leaders in that region so rich with oil, both US ambassadors have been expelled from those countries. The US government denies any hand in it, but remembering Arbenz in Guatemala, Allende in Chile, Noriega in Panama—overthrows (three of many) organized and financed by the US government, denied at the time, and since confirmed by historical record—few informed observers are convinced.

Meanwhile, on the other side of the world, military forces in Georgia, trained and supplied by US and Israeli "advisers," have attempted to regain control of breakaway territories South Ossetia and Abkhazia. Underlying this effort is another conflict about oil—in this case from around the landlocked Caspian Sea.

With the fall of the Soviet Union, major Western energy firms descended on the Caspian basin to sign deals with the former Soviet republics. But to get the oil and gas to markets in the West, they had to use a pipeline—and all existing pipelines were controlled by Russia. In the mid-1990s, President Clinton oversaw the construction of the BTC pipeline, which carries oil and gas from Azerbaijan through Georgia and on to Turkey's Mediterranean coast, where it can be loaded onto tankers headed for international markets. Because the pipeline would run through some major conflict zones, including Abkhazia and South Ossetia, Clinton decided to build up the Georgian army, awarding the



country more military and economic aid than any other Caspian country (\$302 million from 1998-2000 alone), and President Bush has continued and expanded this support.

When Vladimir Putin took over the Russian presidency in 1999, he pushed for state control over energy resources and for domination of the conduits used to export oil from the Caspian region as a way of rebuilding Russia's economy. The BTC pipeline did not fit into this plan. The Russians supported independence movements in Georgia's provinces of South Ossetia and Abkhazia, both adjacent to the pipeline, continuing the instability in the region and sowing doubt on the reliability of Georgia as a corridor for energy delivery.



SOURCE: Energy Information Administration AP

When the European Union announced plans to build a \$10 billion natural-gas pipeline from the Caspian that would bypass Russia entirely, and the US and Europe began dangling membership in NATO before the Georgians and Ukrainians, Russia was bound to respond. Georgian President Saakashvili's decision to invade South Ossetia gave them the excuse they needed. Whether that invasion was encouraged by the US remains in doubt (US military advisers were in the country at the time), but its outcome cannot have been to US liking. The Georgian army is now in total disarray, Russia has recognized South Ossetian and Abkhazian independence, and the BTC and other proposed pipelines are within easy range of Russian guns.

What lessons are normal people supposed to draw from all of this? Increase the US's military might and try to dominate the world's oil and natural gas? That strategy hasn't worked so well in Iraq. End US dependence on foreign oil and "drill, baby, drill" in the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge? Analysts say it will be no short-term help, and minimal long term. Nuclear power? Many studies indicate that once we've used up easily accessible uranium, which would happen soon if we relied on large amounts of nuclear power, it will take more energy to extract and process the less accessible uranium than can be produced by it. Pouring money into wind, solar, and wave power, combined with dramatic conservation, seem our best hope. But where's the political will? So far, it's all about oil.

## Mahmoud Darwish – 1942-2008

Mahmoud Darwish, one of the most important Arab poets of all times and a leader of the Palestinian quest for nationhood, died on August 9th. He left a body of work held in such esteem that poets have likened him to Lorca and Neruda. His poems have been put to music and are wildly popular among ordinary Arab citizens (many of whom were among the 5,000 attending his funeral in the West Bank).



Darwish was born in a small village in the Galilee to a family of modest means that was forced to take refuge in Lebanon during the 1948 war that created the Israeli state. A year later, upon returning to their village, the Darwishes found it destroyed and learned that they themselves were now classified as illegal aliens because they had been absent during the new Israeli government's census of Palestinian residents.

At the age of eight, Darwish wrote a poem lamenting the loss of his homeland that caught the eye of the Israeli military and forced him into hiding. During his school years and as an adult, he was imprisoned a number of times for the crimes of reciting his poems in public, publishing them in leftist journals, and not having the proper identity papers. As a young man, he was a member of the Israeli Communist Party, then later of the PLO. He resigned from the PLO in 1993, in protest over the Oslo peace accords, which many Palestinians feared would swallow their dream of a viable state.

In *Journal of an Ordinary Grief* (1973), Darwish set out in prose themes of loss of home and identity that were the hallmark of his poetry:

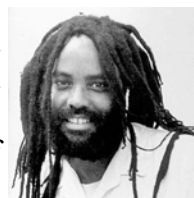
"You want to travel to Greece? You ask for a passport, but you discover you're not a citizen because your father... had fled with you during the Palestine war... You despair of the passport and ask for a laissez-passer. You find out you're not a resident of Israel because you have no certificate of residence... [You] rush to tell it to your lawyer friend; 'Here, I'm not a citizen, and I'm not a resident. Then where and who am I? ... Am I here, or am I absent? Give me an expert in philosophy, so that I can prove... I exist.'" →→

## Resolution on Mumia

In our last two newsletters we have summarized the resolutions on immigration, the Medicare Modernization Act, the Universal Declaration on Human Rights, the Patriot Act, Single Payer Only, and the Media that we have submitted to the National GP Convention in Detroit. At its Sept. meeting, our Board added this resolution on Mumia:

Whereas discussion of racism in our legal system—past, present and future—will improve the delivery of justice,

Whereas, the well-documented culture of racism in Philadelphia during the 70's and 80's is considered a factor in the conviction of Mumia,



Whereas international interest in Mumia's fate has renewed universal understanding of the irrational injustices suffered by African-Americans because of their skin color,

Be it resolved that the Gray Panthers extend their support for a new trial for Mumia Abu-Jamal.

←← Two of his major works (*Memory for Forgetfulness* and "State of Siege") chronicle Israeli sieges the Palestinian people have endured:

Lebanon 1982: "The sea is walking in the streets. The sea is dangling from windows and the branches shrivel trees. The sea drops from the sky and comes into the room. Blue, white, foam waves. I don't like the sea. I don't want the sea, because I don't see a shore, or a dove..."

Ramallah, West Bank, ten years later: "Here on the slopes before sunset and at the gun-mouth of time,/ Near orchards deprived of their shadows,/ We do what prisoners do,/ What the unemployed do:/ We nurture hope.../ Here there is no "I" – here Adam remembers his clay..."

(*Memory for Forgetfulness*, translated by Ibrahim Muhawi, U.C. Press, 1995; excerpts from "State of Siege," originally published in *Al-Karmel* (a journal edited by Darwish) and translated by Amina Elbendary, 2002, available @ <http://weekly.ahram.org.eg/2002/581/bo7.htm>)

## Gray Panthers of SF

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entitled to certain fundamental  
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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 **October 2008**

## Actions and Events

### Wednesday, October 1, 12:00—1:30 PM

Food Choices & the Environment, Panel  
Discussion, SF Public Library, 100 Larkin/ 8th

### Thursday, October 2, 8:00—10:30 AM

Trial of Peace Activist Dee Allen  
Rally at 8:00, trial begins at 9:00  
SF Hall of Justice, 850 Bryant St., Dept 13  
Support Dee, pack the courtroom!

### Saturday, October 4, 2:00 PM—5:00 PM

Depth & Distance II, Gay Senior Art Exhibit  
SF LGBT Center, 1800 Market/Octavia

### Saturday, October 4 thru Monday, October 6

The Persistent Power of Socialist Feminism  
Conference, The Women's Building, 3543 18th  
Info: 864-1278, www.RadicalWomen.org

### Tuesday, October 7, 7:30—9:00 PM

*Che Guevara: Where You'd Never Imagine Him*,  
Film, ATA 992 Valencia, ANSWER film series  
\$6 donation, Info: 821-6545

### Sunday, October 19, 11:00 AM—3:00 PM

Social and Economic Justice for All: living Wage,  
Universal Health Care, Affordable Housing,  
Quality Public Education, Progressive Taxation  
11—Assemble at 16th and Mission  
12—March down Mission Street  
1—Rally, 24th and Mission

### Friday, October 24, 1:00 PM—6:00 PM

### Saturday, October 25, 10:00—3:00 PM

Bazaar at The Redwoods Community of Seniors  
Raffle, Books, Sewing, Art, Crafts, Plants, etc.  
40 Camino Alto, Mill Valley

