

GRAY PANTHERS OF SAN FRANCISCO



Adapted from *The Nation*, January 26, 2009

Revival of the Labor Movement in America: Are We Ready?

Panel Discussion: Earl Gilman, SFGP member, former chapter president SEIU, Local 535
Kay McVay, California Nurses Association
Denis Mosgofian, past president GCIU, Local 4-N, Teamsters Union
Michael Rubin, SEIU Member Activists for Reform Today (S.M.A.R.T.)

General Membership Meeting
Tuesday, March 17, 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, March 4 & April 1

Program Committee 1:00 PM
Wednesday, March 11 & April 8

Newsletter Committee 12:00 Noon
Thursday, March 5 & April 2

Book Club: 10:30 AM
Monday, March 30 & April 27

Health Committee 1:00 PM
Tuesday, March 10 & April 14

Middle East Study Group 11:00 AM
Wednesday, March 18

More Money Matters

State budget. City budget. Gray Panthers budget. At the February Board of Directors meeting we discussed our own network financial situation. Thanks to generous bequests from late GP members and friends, the most recent from the estate of Celia Yanish, we have not been distracted from our core programs by a pressing need to raise money, but those funds are soon going to need replenishing. So we are inviting you, our members and supporters, to help us figure out how to keep solvent.



Our first suggestion won't cost you an extra penny?

Many of us have contributed at work more or less willingly to the United Way and still do if we are retired. *Earmark that contribution for the Gray Panthers.* And get your friends and coworkers to do the same. As a 501-C3 non-profit organization we are eligible for United Way funds.

Another painless but small scale income source is the Community Thrift store. Collect all that good stuff around the house that you don't use or will never re-read and take it to the store on Valencia and 17th Street and marked for the GPs # 111—we get a percentage of what they sell. If you need help transporting it, let us know.

An untapped possibility so far as our network is concerned is foundation grants. If any of you are experts in grant writing, we need your help. Our loosely affiliated California GP has a grant from the Wellness Foundation for organizational building from which we have gotten a minimum amount and hope to get more. We need something like that on a local level.

What we really would like is a major donor who would give our so-deserving organization a modest chunk of money like \$25k or \$50K to keep us solvent for the next few years. Any ideas?

Of course we welcome your contributions at any time and in any amount and since we are not Wall Street or the auto industry, we need your advice on how to keep afloat.

March GP Meeting: Are We Ready?

If you believe that a revitalized labor movement must be part of any “change” in our future, come to our March General Meeting. We have a great lineup of labor people for our panel: Earl Gilman, SFGP member and former chapter president of SEIU Local 535, Labor Council delegate, and involved with the Liverpool Dockers and Chilean Bank Workers Union, will offer a worldwide overview of labor, including NAFTA; Kay McVay will speak on positive changes in the California Nurses Association, which is deeply involved in the struggle for universal single payer health care; Denis Mosgofian, past president Local 4-N of the Graphic Communications Conference (GCC) of the Teamsters Union, will talk about labor and the current economic crisis; and Michael Rubin from SEIU Member Activists for Reform Today (S.M.A.R.T.), the workers' organization formed to oppose SEIU's undemocratic tactics, will discuss the urgent need for rank-and-file members to take back their union. Should be a terrific meeting. Please join us.

February GP Meeting on Budgets

Jenny Friedenbach, (Coalition on Homelessness) spoke on SF's budget crisis on behalf of the reconstituted Coalition to Save Public Health. She described the City's plummeting revenues from real estate transfer, tourism, and sales taxes; the mayor's devastating mid-year budget cuts—of which the Health Department took the lion's share; and the likelihood of up to 25% more cuts to discretionary funds, which make up about a sixth of the \$6 billion budget. The people's response, in efforts to protect the most vulnerable, has been to identify fat in the budget (e.g., the mayor's large public relations staff), to increase revenues in a special election to authorize various tax increases, and to change how rainy day funds are distributed.

Jodi Reid from CARA, spoke on the dreadful State budget. She said the budget battle will continue, because the legislature's “solution” depends on (1) passing five measures in the May 19th special election, including a suicidal spending cap that would permanently freeze State spending at today's low levels even though the over-65 population will double, and (2) maintaining current revenue levels, which is unlikely. More coming soon.

Breaking Loose from the Neoliberal Vision

"This is the second independence, the true liberation of Bolivia," said President Evo Morales of the new constitution approved by 61% of voters January 25, 2009.

Latin Americans have struggled for 500 years against invasion, looting of their natural resources, colonialism, and a neoliberal economic model imposed by the United States, the international financial institutions and their corporate allies. This model spread poverty and led to repression of ordinary people by military trained in the US.

In differing Latin American countries, this neoliberal vision has led to privatization of government-managed resources like gas and basic services like water, telephone, and social security. In 2000, privatization of the Cochabamba Bolivia water system (by a Bechtel subsidiary) led to sharp rises in water prices and confiscation of wells and irrigation canals built by individuals. Collection of rain water became illegal and the company was guaranteed a 15% profit even though it provided limited, inefficient service. Demonstrating in the streets, the people forced Bechtel to cancel the contract, and international pressure forced Bechtel to drop its \$25 million suit against Bolivia in the World Trade Organization's court. Now their constitution makes water a 'right' not a 'commodity' to be sold to those who can afford it.

"For the first time in the history of Latin America, and in the world, basic services, water, electricity, telephone are now a human right, they will be a public service not a private business," Morales said of the new constitution.

This constitution also grants autonomy to Bolivia's indigenous (62% of the population) and Afro-Bolivian communities, establishes broader access to basic services, education and healthcare, limits the size of large land purchases, expands the role

of the state in the management of natural resources and the economy and prohibits the existence of US military bases on Bolivian soil. It recognizes the Andean Pachamama (Mother Earth) as equal to the Christian God.



**Town Hall Meeting on SF budget crisis and
how to combat plans for devastating cuts to
Health and Human Services
Monday, March 2, 6 PM
U/U Center, 1187 Franklin, at Geary**

Stop Cuts to Medi-Cal!

Over 200 people protested California's renewed attempt to make a 10% cut in payments to doctors, pharmacies, clinics, dentists, and adult day health centers that provide care for Medi-Cal patients. Dozens of patients, many in wheelchairs, gave moving testimony that the cuts would either kill them or destroy their quality of life.

The Feb. 18 protest was initiated by SF Gray Panthers, and co-sponsored by California Disability Community Action Network, SAN, Healthcare Action Team and SF Independent Living Center.



Bill Carpenter

Doctors, pharmacies, and clinics say they cannot accept more Medi-Cal patients if these cuts take place. California is already near the bottom in payments to providers and the number of providers.

Last summer, Medi-Cal patients, pharmacists, and SF and Sacramento Gray Panthers successfully sued against these cuts and blocked them, saying they would damage patient care for the state's poorest. Today, California is appealing the Court ruling, in order to re-impose the cuts and recover the money they lost from the earlier ruling. Today's ruling won't be available soon, but lead attorney Lynn Carman says the judges' questions to the State were unsympathetic, if not hostile.

The State is pressing other devastating and permanent cuts to Medi-Cal, including: (1) eliminating eligibility for many poor people and immigrants; (2) eliminating dentistry, optometry, speech therapy, and mental health care; and (3) higher costs for the aged, blind, and disabled. Some will be postponed with Federal stimulus money, but the State will try to re-impose them in future years. Prepare to fight! More of us will need Medi-Cal!

Mumia's Life in the Balance

Today Mumia is both closer to a new trial *and* closer to death than he has ever been in over 30 years of unjust imprisonment. The US Supreme Court has agreed to review a petition submitted by lead attorney Robert R. Bryan, in which the central issue is racism in jury selection in the original trial. At the same time the Court has also agreed to look at a petition presented by the prosecution, which is seeking to overturn last year's victory in which the US Court of Appeals ordered a new jury trial on the question of the death penalty. As his lead attorney has pointed out, what occurs now in the Supreme Court will determine whether Mumia will have a new trial or die at the hands of the executioner in the State of Pennsylvania.

Activism is needed, also money and support. You can write Mumia at AM 8335, SCI-Greene, 175 Progress Drive, Waynesburg PA, 15370. Checks can be made out to The National Lawyers Guild Foundation (indicate Mumia on the bottom left) at Committee To Save Mumia Abu-Jamal, PO Box 2012, New York, NY 10159-2012.

In Our Library...

"A complex and compelling read that rivals established TV hits while tackling real life injustice." —*Booklist*.

Available to check out from the SF Gray Panthers library.



Great News for Dee!

The bogus charges of “battery of a police officer and obstruction of justice” that have bedeviled our friend Dee Allen for more than six months for supposedly *spitting at a police officer* have finally been dismissed. It probably didn't hurt that supporters, including Gray Panthers, packed the courtroom at every hearing. Also Dee stood firm and declined to accept a plea bargain that would have left unjustified black marks on his record.

We rejoice that this absurd travesty and misuse of the courts is over. Stay tuned and ready to fight another battle here, to free the SF 8.

A Review from the Book Club

The Declassified Eisenhower, by Blanch Wiesen Cook.

General Dwight D. Eisenhower understood that democracy was maintained by winning, not only on the battlefield but with public opinion. He supported the 1942 Psychological Warfare Board and was convinced that “public opinion wins most of the wars and always wins the peace.” Propaganda informed readers of *Life* and *Time* magazines of military and diplomatic events during WW II. The book documents the differences of opinion within the Grand Alliance against facism. Author Cook exposes the lie that WW II was a “good war.”

War hero Ike did not agree that using the atom bomb against Japan was necessary—to no avail. Many Republicans, who called New Dealers “socialists” and Russians “Reds” considered Eisenhower too progressive. During Ike's presidency, the GOP destroyed New Deal liberalism and revived the fervor of the Cold War.. Keynesian liberalism, considered by many the salvation of capitalism during the depression of the 30s, was attacked as “Communist-inspired.”

In 1948 Ike declined the offer to become the GOP presidential candidate and instead chose the role of President of Columbia University. The academic life and playing golf with financiers and CEOs laid the groundwork for his 1952 campaign. The decade of the 50s and the Cold war proceeded downhill, from the abrogation of civil rights with the McCarthy hearings to the overthrow of established democracies in Iran, Guatemala, Belgian Congo. No offers were made to hold talks with Dr. Mosadegh, Pres. Arbenz, Fidel Castro or President Lumumba, even though President Eisenhower had once insisted that talks were essential for peace and had agreed with Khrushchev to de-escalate the Cold War in order to bring the world to the “very brink of peace.” Eisenhower had once said that people want peace “so much that one of these days governments,” and their financial directors, “had better get out of their way and let them have it.”

The book club regrets that Ike's mandate from the people for peace was lost to the interests of the military-industrial complex.

Breakthrough the Breakdown

It certainly seems that Marx was correct in his economic analysis that capitalism must expand or die! Progressive economists agree that our consumer based, capitalist economy, buttressed by imperial wars of expansion, is failing. We have been pushed and seduced into a consumer driven economy with *personal expenditures* today at more than 70% of the total economy and average family credit card debt over \$5000. Our US GDP (gross domestic product) tripled over the last 50 years. But, a truer measure, GPI (genuine progress indicator), based on socioeconomic effects like real wages, energy, standard of living, food and medical care stagnates or falls. Yet, when government spending increases, dependence on consumer spending is a much smaller portion of the total economy. In fact, many other industrialized countries committing a much larger share of government spending can support single payer universal health care, large safety nets, and other services for their societies. And consider Islamic law which renounces interest and prohibits selling assets you don't own. Lenders must commit in good faith to make manageable payments on all loans.

Another World Is Possible

We have an unprecedented opportunity to devise new economic systems not based on outrageous profit or greed, but an economy built on meeting basic needs. We can continue protesting global economic injustice, as we engage locally. Community investment banks that did not buy mortgage backed securities remain secure and now funnel profits back into local loans focusing on sustainability. We can demand and present a solution to our housing crises. We can develop more cohousing and land trusts designed to build community. Nonprofit land trusts allow people to buy or rent homes within the trust which guarantees affordability. Homebuyers have 99-year renewable, inheritable leases. Homes are sold to low or moderate income buyers and can be resold with only limited price appreciations. Community land trusts can prevent foreclosures. In a March, 2008 sample of 3,115 land trust homes, only two faced foreclosures. We also need increased land use for community gardens not costly condos. Changes are coming; it is up to us to define the benefits for all, not rewarding the few who put us into this mess.

Stimulated Yet?



We warned our law makers not to buy into the \$750 billion bail out. We again warned against capitulating to obstructionists in Congress. Republican cried socialism at any stimulus of funds for education, funds to states for health services and other social programs. While the better House version passed, without any Republicans, they held the Senate hostage crying “pork.”. They demanded more tax credits in spite of the fact that every dollar spent for food stamps and unemployment benefits produces \$1.60 in the economy, but each dollar in tax cuts yields less than a dollar. The Senate capitulated with tax cuts to wealthy individuals and businesses of nearly \$282 billion. One provision would have expanded health care services for low-income women, eliminating time-consuming and costly requirements waivers to use Medicaid funds for family planning services. Yet, dropping this provision and others persuaded only three Republicans. Sounds familiar to Californians held hostage by Republicans unwilling to pass even a regressive budget!

We are the majority; we elected Obama to carry out our mandates. Continue to voice our power. Continue to give Obama people power to carry him along the progressive road to change. Obama is taking steps away from Washington speaking to supportive crowds around the country actualizing Roosevelt's words of “Now, make me do it.”

Stimulate Your Government

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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

March 2009

Actions and Events

Monday, March 2, 6 PM

Town Hall Meeting on SF's budget crisis and Newsom's plans for devastating health/human services cuts. Supes and Dept. Heads present. Unitarian Center, 1187 Franklin St, at Geary Blvd.

Saturday, March 7, 3 PM

Panel discussion: "What Governor Schwarzenegger Needs to Know about Healthcare Reform"
Single Payer Now, 474 Valencia

Sunday, March 8, 12 Noon-1:30 PM

Code Pink 100th Anniversary International Women's Day Events, Gather in Parking Lots at Ends of Golden Gate Bridge, March to Center

Monday, March 9, 5:30 PM

Coalition to Save Public Health meeting
350 Rhode Island (User rear entrance of building on Kansas St. betw. 16th & 17th Sts)

Wednesday, March 11, All Day

Important Call-in Day to your Congressperson
Ask she/he to co-sponsor HR 676 (Single Payer)

Thursday, March 12, 9 AM

Senior Action Network General Meeting on the SF budget crisis, U/U Center, 1187 Franklin

Saturday/Sunday, March 14/15, 10 AM-4 PM &

11 PM-4 PM, 14th Annual Bay Area Anarchist Book Fair, County Fair Building, 9th & Lincoln
Speakers, Entertainment, Books, Free.

Saturday, March 21, 11 AM-1 PM

Anti-war Protest the 6th Iraq War Anniversary
Assemble at Justin Herman Plaza, the Embarcadero March to Civic Center for a Rally
ANSWER, World Can't Wait & many others
"We Need Jobs and Education, Not Wars and Occupation"