

GRAY PANTHERS OF SAN FRANCISCO

No Membership Meeting in July



August Picnic with the Mime Troupe

Sunday, August 16

Meet and Picnic at 1:00 PM, Enjoy the Show at 2:00

Yerba Buena Gardens, Mission and Fourth Street

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, July 1 & August 5**

**Civil/Human Rights Comm 11:00 AM
Wednesday, July 8 & August 12**

**Newsletter Committee 12:00 Noon
Thursday, August 6**

**Program Committee 1:00 PM
Wednesday, July 8 & August 12**

**Health Committee 1:00 PM
Tuesday, July 14 & August 11**

**Middle East Study Group 11:00 AM
Wednesday, July 15 & August 19**

Book Club: 10:30 AM, Monday July 27 & August 24

Our June Meeting—a Look at Peru



Communal cooperation versus liberal modernization—that is how speaker Earl Gilman characterized the ongoing struggle of the indigenous peoples of the Amazon in South America. He talked specifically about Peru, where

a mass mobilization of the native population has blocked, at least temporarily, expropriation and exploitation of vast communally owned lands by international oil companies, lumber interests and mining conglomerates operating through the Peruvian government under the aegis of Free Trade. The battle on June fifth between the army and the demonstrators, described by the government as “terrorists” (surprise) and “greens”(!) may topple the government of weak social democrat Alan Garcia. If so, the ensuing election will probably see ex-army general Humala as the progressive candidate, a man who patterns himself after Hugo Chavez and is supported by the indigenous people.

Earl described the ongoing, continent-wide debate among progressives over whether social progress and socialism can be achieved peacefully ala Chavez or will eventually cause armed conflict.

Earl also visited Lori Berenson, the American woman imprisoned as a MRTA revolutionary by the since-discredited Fujimori government. While in prison, she married a Peruvian revolutionary ex-prisoner and now has a month-old child. She will be eligible for parole next year after 12 & 1/2 years in prison.

This report barely skims Earl’s fascinating discussion. For further information about Peru and the Amazon, go to www.nodirtygoals.org, www.mountainvoices.org and www.amazonwatch.org.

More about our Southern Neighbors

Mauricio Funes of the FLMN took office as the first leftist president in El Salvador’s history, dedicating his administration to Monsignor Romero’s

Our August Picnic

Let us enjoy the lovely SF summer together and gather to witness the latest Mime Troupe show. In a faraway village, a couple, Jeneeba and Filiji, fall under a magic spell called “credit” and lose their dowry, Bamusa the goat. Filiji sets out for the distant Walled Street to retrieve Bamusa and is forced to battle with the demons who stole his future. Will Filiji retrieve Bamusa? Will Jeneeba and Filiji reclaim their future? Will the village cast off the spell. Is the world of credit and debt too big to fail!

For those who don’t want to sit on the ground, Yerba Buena Gardens has benches and walls to sit on. Let us eat together first, starting at 1 PM and enjoy our own treasure, the SF Mime Troupe.

Held Hostage by the Health System

Dr. Marcia Angell's May 23, 2009 Boston Globe article, ["Held Hostage by the Health System."](#) brings up a number of points not usually heard in arguments for single payer: (1) Whether we like it or not, cost containment is becoming a more important driver than the uninsured in healthcare restructuring, (2) measures that would improve health outcomes, like electronic records, case management, preventive care, and comparative effectiveness studies won’t save much money, (3) What’s needed is not only abolishing health insurance companies, but eliminating profit in providing healthcare, such as doctors, hospitals, clinics etc., (4) When doctors are businesspeople and you pay them per patient, there’s an incentive to under-treat us, (5) When doctors are businesspeople and you pay them per procedure, there’s an incentive to over-treat us, (6) The only way to remove these dangerous incentives is to have doctors on a salary, to have them as workers, not businesspeople.

Her comments also inspire other interesting questions, like: If it’s not OK to profit off healthcare, is it OK to profit off food, housing, education, water, and other necessities of life?

Wedding Bells

for two SF Gray Panthers on June 4th at City Hall! Members Inda and Winslow met at one of our meetings last year. We wish them much happiness.

Bad Budgets and Beyond

A look at both State and City budgets shows the situation is very severe: a \$24 billion State shortfall and a \$438 million San Francisco shortfall. You can also see there's a severe crisis by looking at what are essentially death-sentence cuts being seriously considered: no renal dialysis and breast or cervical cancer treatment for Medi-Cal recipients over age 65, and eliminating home care for 90% of IHSS patients.

A big part of the State problem is that liberal and Democratic legislators have the attitude that they must be "responsible" and pass a budget quickly, with any lethal cuts that business and Republicans demand, so that the state doesn't go over the edge. But retirees, kids, badly sick or disabled people, or low-wage workers are already over the edge. Many are skipping meals, skipping meds and doctor visits, and late on rent and becoming homeless. This is not the time to let the "right" minority hold us hostage! It's time to say "Never!" to a cuts-only budget. A budget that does not meet our basic needs does not deserve to exist! Are you ready, Sacramento?

California's taxes on corporations and the rich are at far less than levels set by Republicans thirty years ago, and are low by national standards. The February 2009 budget alone contained some \$2.5 billion/year in corporate tax loopholes, starting in 2011. Californians are ready for taxes. A David Binder poll last month showed 75% support for both alcohol and tobacco tax increases; 73% support for oil drilling fees; 63% support for both commercial property reassessments and for a higher income tax on the highest brackets; and 59% support for limiting corporate tax credits.

Ultimately, many are saying we need to get rid of the requirement of a 2/3 vote of legislators to pass a budget. After seeing the devastating cuts and the "tyranny of the minority" in recent year's budget battles, one might think this was a no-brainer. However, not everyone sees it that way, including many people on fixed incomes who are afraid that repeal of the 2/3 rule will lead to a raise in their taxes. We will have our work cut out for us to persuade our cohorts to ax the 2/3 requirement if it is on the November 2010 ballot.

Smoke and Mirrors Economy

Our economy, cycling through boom and bust, will continue to fail as our resources are funneled into the financial sector. As jobs disappear and wages stagnate, just surviving forces us into credit debt with higher and higher interest rates. The financial sector siphons money. Wall Street is for the Rich to trade and out smart one another. The Stock Market is a gambling house full of speculators betting on future prices of goods not yet even produced! When the Stock Market is up and happy, the rest of us are in for layoffs, higher gas, food and health care costs. These capitalists forever strive to increase profits and compete to expand production. Expansion inevitably creates the boom cycle of overproduction leading to the bust with plant closures, higher unemployment, increasing homelessness, cutting of services and benefits. Again, the cycle of the financial sector manipulations.

Not with our Money: Corporate banks lie. To pass their stress tests, they manipulate the ratio of non-performing assets (e.g. loans on foreclosures) to real cash to cover losses; Wells Fargo's ratio being 40% to 5%. Bailouts stall the crisis until investors can recoup their money. CEO's enjoy their multi-million dollar retirement packages; we retirees on Social Security average \$900 a month, minus the \$98 and counting for Medicare coverage. Our economic needs are entirely contradictory to the greed of the financial sector. It is a myth that Wall Street can, or should be, saved. We can build a movement to create a different system, actually putting people's needs at the core. Gray Panthers know that *we the people* have to provide a plan for any future economic system. Start envisioning a new way!

Some Solutions:

- *Bail out People not Banks; Jobs Program*
- *Pass Single Payer Universal Healthcare*
- *Raise Social Security benefits and never privatize*
- *Institute a guaranteed annual income*
- *Institute a war on poverty; \$24 billion (1% of the bail out) could end hunger in America*
- *Pass the EFCA*
- *Support our fourth estate; essential to democracy*
- *Publicly own power and utilities*
- *Collect War Profits taxes*
- *Invest in regional economies; local banks and credit unions*

No Cuts Invest in Us



City Service workers with hundreds of people affected by the Mayor's draconian budget cuts marched from Hallidie Plaza all

the way up Market Street onto the steps of City Hall, chanting "Make the Bosses take the Losses!" The protest organized by Budget Justice, a coalition including Coleman Advocates, Coalition on Homelessness, SEIU, Immigrant Rights Defense Committee, Senior Action Network, and Planning for Elders in the Central City, was joined by SF Gray Panthers, Harvey Milk Democratic Club, Chinese Progressive Organization, homeless people, veterans, AIDS survivors and SRO residents. All poor and low-income people who seem to be *dispensable* in the eyes of the withholders!

Programs slated for cuts juxtaposed with programs to be increased epitomize the Mayor's priorities. While \$43 million from Public Health services and \$100 million from S.F. General Hospital and Laguna Honda are cut, the Mayor's Office of Public Policy & Finance increases by 29% this year. This includes his media group which no doubt aids his run for governor. Newsom increases the police investigations budget by \$7 million and decreases the Public Defender's budget by \$2 million. At least 1,200 SEIU social workers in Human Services had their hours cut to 37.5 from 40.

There have been \$8 million dollars worth of new managerial positions created since August 2008. Supervisor John Avalos came out of City Hall and shouted from the steps, "Hell No! We have a budget with a lot of blood on the floor. It's your blood, it's our blood, and all of our blood." Supervisor Daly called for justice to run like a river through city hall. His words call to mind an old Unitarian song, "There's a river of my people and its flow is swift and strong."



Newsom: these cuts are not on our table!

Ready to Escalate?

Our programs are threatened, our health and human services are cut by our governor and our mayor. State legislatures tell us, "There is just no other choice but to cut," and city officials tell us "We must all share the pain." Why should anyone be in pain in a state with the eighth largest economy in the world and with scores of billionaires living the high life here in San Francisco?

Is it time to clog the wheels of injustice? In the



past, Gray Panthers have marched right into the US Army recruiter office and demanded to be inducted. During recent Gray Panther meetings, discussions drift to our

frustrations about budget cuts at every level, and we contemplate other avenues of educating and spurring people to actions. Some suggested taking to the streets in various SF neighborhoods to motivate people in protesting the draconian city budget cuts.

We made a trial run in the West Portal district June 20th, joined by members of OWL (Older Women's League). We caravanned in six cars with our bull horn and leafleted people walking on the sidewalks. Once we ran out of leaflets, we quickly printed even more and all were snapped up. The following day, we evaluated the event. Can we plan more of these actions? Maybe the weekends of July 11 and July 18? Maybe Noe Valley and Church Street? Can we organize more effectively? Can we improve our leaflet? The month of July is a critical period in the city budget process and we

want to agitate people into actions supporting restoring cuts to our services.



Come to a Planning Committee meeting, Wednesday, July 8, at 1 PM at our GP office to discuss future actions against budget cuts

The War on MediCal

Nine years ago MediCal saved my life. I was diagnosed with thyroid cancer and could not pay for my care. MediCal covered two surgeries, two hospital overnights, and examination consultation with a prominent oncologist, and the coordinative work and monitoring laboratory work of my primary care provider.

In the course of the Bush years, MediCal has fallen on evil days. MediCal recipients are finding it terminally difficult to find doctors—specialists *or* primary care providers—to treat them; and in the medical profession and in the media MediCal is increasingly viewed as an encumbrance. The State of California proposed to cut the program in two areas: 10% deduction in reimbursement to providers and the exclusion from coverage of “optional” categories of MediCal treatment.

Cutting 10% in medical reimbursement would hasten the flight of doctors and other health professionals and cripple pharmacies, diagnostic laboratories and public hospitals. It is equally disheartening to read the list of “optional benefits”: adult dentistry, acupuncture, audiology and speech therapy, chiropractic, optometric and optician services, podiatry, psychology and incontinence creams and washes. For instance a biannual optometric examination is the only chance most people get to be screened for glaucoma, retinitis or macular degeneration. The distinction between optional and essential does not make medical sense. Who decided that—someone in the Bush administration?

It should come as good news for those who have a partiality for agitation that more than mere hand-wringing has taken place in the community of those who deplore the cuts. In April 2008 the Independent Living Center of Southern California and a coalition of other groups, including the San Francisco Gray Panthers, sued the state in federal court to block the 10% provider cuts. The suit was won but was appealed in February of this year. Attorney Lynn Carman of the MediCal Defense Fund argued that for a state to run a poverty health program, the program must measure up to federal health standards, and that further emasculation of MediCal would render it dysfunctional. The appeals court has yet to issue a ruling.

As regards the cuts in optional treatment, the Gray Panthers have filed a preliminary restraining order in a separate but complementary suit.

My escape nine years ago from a slow, quiet, and below the radar death has acquired for me visionary American themes. To be deprived of the triad of rights in the Declaration of Independence, to fail of protection of the cruel and *all too usual* punishment for being poor, to come short of equal treatment under the law: all these themes call up the words of Martin Luther King Jr. to the effect that, “Of all forms of inequality, injustice in health care is the most shocking and inhumane.”

Let us not accept the unacceptable. Let us insist on health justice for all.

Excerpted from a letter to the *Berkeley Daily Planet* by Anne Richardson, an East Bay Medicare/MediCal recipient and a San Francisco Gray Panther.

June Health Committee Meeting

Guests at our meeting were Attorney Lynn Carman, Marin pharmacist and Gray Panther member Fred Mayer and Attorney Tom Clarke, consumer advocate. Fred outlined the many problems with Medicare Part D and possible solutions. Tom described consumer class action suits against sellers of herbal or dietary supplements marketed with false claims and endorsements by doctors paid for their statements. He is currently readying action against purveyors of enteric-coated drugs coated with dibutyl phthallate, a substance so toxic its use has been banned in Europe, specifically the drug Procera. He also sounded an urgent warning about the Poison Control centers targeted by the Governor to be closed in September (as of June 16th, a legislative budget committee has saved the Poison Centers.)

What you can do: if you use or have used Procera, contact Tom Clarke at 415-479-8628. Tell your legislators (Ammiano, Ma, Leno, Yee) to save the Poison Control Centers.

Remember, the Universal Declaration of Human Rights declares Healthcare a Human Right!

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 **JULY/AUGUST 2009**

Actions and Events

Complete listing at <http://graypantherssf.igc.org/calendar.htm>.

Thursday, July 2, 7—10 PM

Friday, July 3, 10 AM—10 PM

Saturday, July 4, 10 AM—10 PM

Sunday, July 5, 10 AM—10 PM

Socialism 2009 Conference, Womens Building,
3543 18th Street

Saturday, July 4, 2 PM (Music 1:30 PM)

Sunday, July 5, 2 PM (Music 1:30 PM)

Too Big To Fail, Mime Troupe's annual
Summer show opening weekend
Dolores Park, 18th & Dolores

Sunday, July 5, 9 AM

Procession in Commemoration of Bloody
Thursday and the SF General Strike
Steuart & Market Street

Monday, July 6, 9 AM (Demo @ 8 AM)

Preliminary Hearing for the SF 8
Hall of Justice, 850 Bryant Street
Between 7th & 8th, Dept 22, 3rd Floor

LaborFest July 2-31

The 16th annual LaborFest July celebration of SF
Labor history, the 1934 SF General Strike, and
struggles of working people nationally and interna-
tionally will feature films, musical presentations,
educational trips and events at various sites
throughout the city and the East Bay and San Jose.
A schedule is available in the GP office and at
www.laborFest.net. Heads up to Gray Panthers:
Margot Smith of Berkeley GP will present her
documentary, *The WPA Murals of Bernard Zak-
heim*, and participate in a panel discussion. Our
friend Dee Allen will also have a poetry reading.

