

GRAY PANTHERS OF SAN FRANCISCO



The Obama Plan: Don't Call It Healthcare Reform

Talks and Discussion at the Gray Panthers General Meeting

Tuesday, October 20, 12:30 PM

Unitarian/Universalist Center

Fireside Room, 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.

Board Meeting 12:30 PM
Wednesday, October 7 & November 4

Civil/Human Rights Comm. 11:00 AM
Wednesday, October 14 & November 11

Newsletter Committee 12:00 Noon
Thursday, October 8 & November 5

Program Committee 1:00 PM
Wednesday, October 14 & November 11

Health Committee 1:00 PM
Tuesday, October 13 & November 10

Book Club 10:30 AM
Monday, October 26 & November 23

State-Wide Meeting

Featured speakers at the September quarterly meeting of California Gray Panthers networks were Judy Lear at the morning session and Jodi Reid in the afternoon.



Judy Lear, holding up her United Nations ID card.

Judy is convenor of the New York GP networks, chair of the GP National Board, and a member of the GP delegation to the United Nations. The Gray Panthers are an accredited non-governmental organization (NGO) to the UN, where we specialize in women's and aging issues.

The more than 4000 NGOs at the UN represent civil society and give "shadow" reports that monitor and critique official government reports. It was a great pleasure to have Judy with us.

After lunch, Jodi Reid, executive director of California Alliance for Retired Americans, discussed proposed future education by progressive forces in California. Suggested strategy would focus on replacing at least five obstructionist assembly members so that the Assembly would not be stymied by the 2/3 rule—an objective hopefully more quickly and easily attainable than repealing the 2/3 rule on budget matters. Most of our members live in urban districts already represented by progressive legislators, so if we choose to participate it would be perhaps in education issues in neighboring counties—à la our efforts a few years back around Social Security with ex-Rep. Pombo.



Jodi Reid of CARA

Networks present at the September meeting: Sacramento, Marin, Berkeley, San Francisco, South Bay (LA). Reporting in absentia—Southern Alameda. Berkeley will host the next meeting in January.

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

—Maggie Kuhn

ANTIWAR RALLY & MARCH
TROOPS OUT NOW
Afghanistan, Pakistan & Iraq
Saturday, October 17
Assemble UN Plaza, 11:00 AM
Rally, UN Plaza, 1:00 PM
Sponsored by October 17 Antiwar Coalition

October Meeting on Healthcare Reform

It's clear now that business and government want healthcare "reform" to control costs, not provide everyone with comprehensive affordable healthcare. Yet they are unwilling to do the real things that could control costs: eliminate private insurance, put doctors on salaries, and negotiate drug prices and hospital charges. How then, do they plan to save money? And if Medicare savings are to finance half the cost of health reform, what will be the effects on Medicare? These and other questions will be the topic of the October General Meeting. Join us on October 20!

Report on September Meeting

One-sided fiery emotion moves a lot of people to action, especially those already committed. Evenhanded, well organized, factual presentation is more likely to convince those seeking answers.

The program on Deir Ibzi'a, one bit of the Palestinian West Bank under siege by Israeli forces and settlements, presented by Gray Panthers member Arla Ertz at our September meeting, was definitely in the latter category. A clear, coherent slide show depicted first the countryside, the agricultural economy, and the crops, and then the water problems, pollution, erosion, and oppressive surveillance that have resulted from the ever-growing Israeli settlements on Palestinian land on the hilltop overlooking the village—a microcosm of what is going on throughout the West Bank with encroaching Israeli settlements and the "annexation wall." Arla also described the Palestinian non-violent demonstrations resisting Israeli occupation, actions rarely or never reported in the mainstream media.

Joel Frangquist of Jewish Voice for Peace followed with a brief overview of the peace movement within Israel.

ObamaCare takes form: Race to the Bottom vs. Our Aspirations



In spite of recent news that 45,000 die each year in the US from lack of insurance, it's clear that business and government want healthcare "reform" to control their costs while protecting and stabilizing the insurance, drug, and hospital industries. It's not about providing everyone with comprehensive, affordable healthcare, let alone *equal* healthcare! It's about forcing everyone to buy private insurance, with little assurance the insurance will cover them, or be affordable. It's déjà vu of the bank bail-out; insurance companies will clean up. And forget undocumented workers.

Reducing healthcare costs for government and corporations is top priority. The House's HR 3200 says *half* of the \$1 trillion 10-year cost would come from savings in Medicare. Obama's health speech said *most* of his \$900 billion plan would come from savings in Medicare and Medicaid. And Max Baucus' Senate Finance Committee plan doesn't require *any* payment from companies that don't offer insurance, unless the workers qualify for the skimpy government assistance.

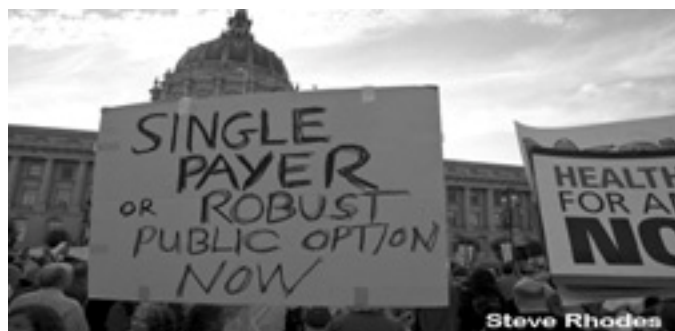
Business and government are unwilling to do the things that could *really* control costs: (1) eliminate private health insurance with its outrageous profits and administrative costs (single payer), (2) negotiate drug prices and hospital charges, and (3) put doctors on salaries so their practices are no longer businesses with built-in incentives to either over-treat us or under-treat us.

So how *do* they plan to save at least \$400-500 billion over ten years? Obama talks about eliminating the overpayments to HMO-based Medicare Advantage plans, which is good, but CBO estimates this will save only \$150 billion. Obama talks about preventive and primary care, compar-

ing drugs and treatments for effectiveness, systematic care of chronic disease, and electronic medical records. These would give better care, but don't save much money, say knowledgeable experts.

Other suggested Medicare savings include an independent agency to set doctor and hospital rates; and encouraging or forcing doctors, hospitals, and nursing homes into accountable care organizations that would receive lump-sum payments for patients' procedures like hip replacements or cardiac surgery, and be rewarded for cost savings and meeting care standards. HR 3200's Medicare-friendly provisions, like eliminating major cuts scheduled for Medicare doctors, eliminating co-pays and deductibles for preventive care, reducing the Part D doughnut hole, and increasing Part B and D premium assistance, may be lost as Senator Baucus' cheaper plan becomes the center of negotiation. However, without single payer, negotiated drug and hospital prices, and salaried doctors, the Medicare savings these plans need would require ending Medicare's "entitlement" status; its budget would no longer grow automatically as enrollment increases. This is a major threat.

Even as Obama, Baucus, and Pelosi assure us that single payer is off the table, people continue to demand it. Obama officials, who organized the huge Sept. 2nd City Hall rally for the public option, were openly hostile to the many people with single payer signs, asking some to move so as to "not block the view." But the people whom the Obama officials brought to the rally loved the single payer signs, and cheered the people carrying them (including Gray Panthers).



Whatever private-insurance-based plan is chosen, it will neither provide care nor contain costs, as the Massachusetts plan shows. Meanwhile we must demand the plan include the Kucinich amendment so states can have their own single payer plans. This struggle will continue.

FAMILIES FIRST

SHUT DOWN CORPORATE TAX GIVEAWAYS

A Matter of Priorities.

California is facing a record-breaking budget shortfall and legislators need to make some tough decisions about how to move the state forward. **Some decisions though, shouldn't be that tough.**



Each year, California gives away more than \$50 billion in tax breaks to individuals and wealthy corporations. If we close just some of these tax loopholes, we can protect public safety and maintain lifesaving programs for some of the state's most vulnerable residents. The decision to keep these loopholes open and make cuts instead isn't inevitable. **It's a conscious choice, and voters should know whose interests their legislators are defending. The choices are up to them:**

Legislators can completely eliminate CalWORKS, the state's successful welfare-to-work program that helps support families as they get training and get back to work. *State savings: \$1.3 billion*

OR

They could close the "research and development" tax break for corporations, milked by drug companies who spend the millions they save in taxes on lobbying to keep drug prices higher. *State savings: \$1.3 billion*

Legislators can completely eliminate Calgrants, which help make college a reality for low-income California students and help train our next generation of workers. *State savings: \$173 million*

OR

They can close the loophole that lets wealthy corporations and individuals dodge taxes on their real estate deals. *State savings: \$174 million*

Legislators can eliminate assistance for victims of domestic violence AND wipe out mental health services for special education students. *State savings: \$72 million*

OR

They can put an end to the loophole that benefits high-rolling technology companies by excluding high-end computer programs from the sales tax. *State savings: \$74 million*

Legislators can risk public safety and private property by laying-off 1,700 firefighters from CAL FIRE, the state's last line of defense against major fire disasters. *State savings: \$118 million*

OR

They can close the giveaway that lets 138,000 companies a year avoid paying even the minimum corporate tax of \$800 a year. *State savings: \$123 million*

Legislators can stop funding state parks, closing them to the public and endangering wildlife, historic treasures, and public lands AND virtually eliminate in-home supportive services for the elderly and disabled, potentially sending tens of thousands of patients to nursing homes unnecessarily. *State savings: \$684 million*

OR

They can get rid of the tax loophole that lets giant multinational corporations shelter their profits in offshore tax havens like the Cayman Islands. *State savings: \$700 million*

Legislators can eliminate the Healthy Families program, leaving 900,000 kids uninsured AND take funding away from services for the seriously mentally ill AND cut off access to life-saving medication for low-income HIV/AIDS patients. *State savings: \$513 million*

OR

They can end the loophole that subsidizes Wal-Mart's low-wage, no-benefit jobs through the enterprise zone program, which non-partisan analysts have consistently said provides no economic value. *State savings: \$497 million*

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Don't let Sacramento politicians claim there are no alternatives to cuts.

Closing corporate tax loopholes can save some of the state's most important programs. It's all a matter of priorities.

For more information: www.workingcalifornia.org

Update on Mumia and the SF 8

On April 6, 2009, the US Supreme Court refused to consider an appeal from Mumia, on death row. The ongoing fight to save him, and win a new trial, is now proceeding on three fronts.

First, Robert R. Bryan, Mumia's lead attorney, has filed a Petition for Habeas Corpus in the Pennsylvania Court of Common Pleas, opening a new case based on what is considered by Bryan to be new ballistics evidence.

Second, citing the Supreme Court denial and many instances of withheld evidence, Mumia's international support network spearheaded by Pam Africa of MOVE is circulating a petition to Attorney General Holder calling for a federal civil rights investigation into the case. (<http://freemumia.com/civilrights.html>) The original trial has been deemed unfair by the European Parliament, Japanese Diet, Nelson Mandela, Amnesty International and many other civil rights groups and individuals.

Third, The Mobilization to Free Mumia Abu-Jamal (MOBE) is working to bring the campaign to the attention of the United Nations for action.

Newly discovered crime scene photos taken by press photographer Pedro Polakoff, which the Philly DA's office knew about back in 1981 and ignored/suppressed, indicate that the police were manipulating the evidence at the crime scene, and that the scenario presented by the prosecution at the original trial would have been physically impossible. And on and on. The Gray Panther library contains J. Patrick O'Connor's new book *The Framing of Mumia Abu-Jamal* and other material. The state of Pennsylvania must not be allowed to "fry the nigger," (the words of Judge Sabo on the eve of the original trial.). MOBE is planning a series of Mumia events. Watch for dates and places.

The vindictive and unwarranted case against the SF 8 has unraveled for lack of evidence. Charges have been dropped against five of the eight and two have pled no contest to lesser charges. The one remaining jailed member of the SF 8 is Francisco Torres and we need to continue supporting him until this whole case is but a bad memory. Next court date is October 9th, 9 AM, 450 Bryant.



Why Afghanistan?

In a nod to reality on the ground, the Obama administration put clearing al Qaeda from Pakistan high on the list of 46 benchmarks for tracking success in the war in Afghanistan. There are 68,000 US combat troops, 40,000 NATO troops, and 74,000 mercenaries in Afghanistan, with more expected to come. If al Qaeda has moved to Pakistan, why don't the troops follow them?

One answer, rarely talked about in the US media, is—you guessed it!—oil and natural gas, this time in the Caspian Basin, and a planned pipeline that would carry natural gas from land-locked Turkmenistan through Afghanistan to Pakistan, where it could be shipped to the West. To accomplish this, a strong centralized government willing to make deals with the West is needed, hence the attempts to prop up Hamid Karzai with US/NATO military assistance against the Taliban and war lords and with fraudulent elections.

Will this plan succeed? Probably not, given the Afghan opposition. Taliban attacks increased 59% in the first five months of this year over the same period last year. Death tolls are rising. Billions of dollars have already been spent. Bruce Riedel, a 30-year CIA veteran and adviser to four presidents, said, "Anyone who thinks that in 12 to 18 months we're going to be anywhere close to victory is living in a fantasy."

NO MORE ENERGY WARS!

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

ADDRESS SERVICE
REQUESTED

Call the office for membership information.

Labor Donated

OCTOBER 2009

Actions and Events

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

Sunday, October 4, 1:00 PM

Noam Chomsky, Crisis and Hope in the Age of Obama, dialogue w/David Bacon, Antonia Jubasz & Steve Williams,
UU Church, 1187 Franklin/Geary, \$20/\$15

Monday, October 5, 11:00 AM

Supervisors Public Safety Hearing to support legislation to restore Sanctuary City by preventing undocumented youth from being turned over to ICE unless found guilty of a felony.

Also attend the Supervisor votes on the legislation

Tuesdays, October 13 & 20, 2:00 PM

City Hall

Thursday, October 8, 9:00 AM

SAN General Meeting "Senior Economic Summit" Food, Music, Dancing, "Meltdown" a participatory workshop on economic crisis with 20 seniors, lunch with elected officials, **1:00 PM** Keynote Address by Norman Solomon, UDHR Reprise
UU Church, 1187 Franklin/Geary

Friday, October 9, 9:00 AM

Court Hearing for Francisco Torres, last member of the SF 8 behind bars. Free him now!
Hall of Justice, 850 Bryant, Dept 22, 3rd Floor.

Saturday, October 17, 11:00 AM

Anti-war Rally & March, Troops out of Iraq, Afghanistan & Pakistan, money for human needs
UN Plaza, Market/5th/6th

Sunday, October 25, 5:00—7:00 PM

Zoya, member of RAWA, the Revolutionary Association of the Women of Afghanistan, on the war, its effects, especially on women, what to do
Presented by WILPF of SF
Friends Meeting House, 65—9th Street

