

GRAY PANTHERS OF SAN FRANCISCO



THE POLITICS OF FOOD

Brie Johnson

Communications Director, Straus Family Dairy and Creamery

Tuesday, November 17, 12:30 PM

Unitarian/Universalist Center, Murdock 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, November 4 & December 2

Civil/Human Rights Comm. 11:00 AM
Wednesday, November 11 & Dec. 9

Newsletter Committee 12:00 Noon
Thursday, November 5 & December 3

Program Committee 1:00 PM
Wednesday, November 11 & Dec. 9

Health Committee 1:00 PM
Tuesday, November 10 & December 8

Book Club 10:30 AM
Monday, November 23 & December 28

October Meeting—Rethink Afghanistan

Why are we in Afghanistan? What are our aims? Are they realizable? Should we stop or leave? How can we get out and what happens then?

These are the questions behind Robert Greenwald's timely film featured at our October meeting. "Rethink Afghanistan" discusses them in depth with clear on-site reporting and a reasonably balanced presentation of the pros and cons. Its showing at our October meeting was followed by a spirited discussion led by meeting organizer GP member Howard and Iraqi Vets against the War Nathan. Audience consensus—out of Afghanistan, bring the troops home (surprise!). A DVD of the film is available at the office.

Obama Demo—Union Square



A big crowd blocked Geary Blvd. and Powell St. and filled Union Square across from the St. Francis Hotel on Thursday, October 15, some hoping to

see President Obama, most of us just wanting to get a message to him: fight for a progressive program and we will back you. The crowd was mixed "tea party" people, curious observers, lots of single payer advocates, environmentalists, peace advocates. Too bad our president chose to spend all his time with the moneybags and couldn't spare a moment to greet the people whose votes elected him.



November Meeting

The Politics of Food:

The Straus Dairy in the Bay Area

The politics of food is a huge topic. The connections we used to have to our food sources—something so basic and important—have dramatically changed in the past 30-50 years. From a progressive perspective, these changes are disastrous. Food production is now industrialized, controlled by alarmingly few corporations and supported by government food and water policies that adversely affect us and the environment. We're now part of a global food system.

To understand a piece of this in more manageable terms, we're taking a look at the dairy industry in California, which now produces one quarter of the nation's milk and over a million pounds of cheese daily. Cheap feed and water subsidies from both state and federal policies encourage mega-dairies.

The organic movement has grown over past decades, supporting food production that ensures the health of the land, animals, family farmers and consumers. Partly due to its growing demand, not even the organic label is safe; Dean Foods now controls 40% of conventional and 60% of all organic milk produced. Aurora Organic Dairy supplies organic label store brands to Safeway, Walmart and Trader Joe's. Both Horizon (Dean) and Aurora have been sued over their failure to comply with organic standards on their industrial dairy farms. The USDA has ignored these violations.

Our speaker, Brie Johnson, is the communications director for Straus Family Dairy & Creamery, one of the Bay Area's many examples of the organic model with products widely available to all of us. Albert Straus began the only organic dairy west of the Mississippi in the early nineties. With about 300 milk cows, he's maintained a sustainable regional dairy and processor upholding the integrity of organic milk standards. Straus continues to develop a sustainable model of energy independence, reusable packaging and land stewardship.

As consumers, we vote with our wallets and can support local sustainable agricultural models. We can also pay attention to the ongoing struggles to produce good quality food, especially local food and food safety issues.

Vote November 3!!!

GP Board's Say on Municipal Election

Prop A: This amendment to the City Charter attempts to provide stability to the City's now chaotic budget process. The Controller, who is appointed by the Mayor for a 10-year term, would propose a set of long-term financial policies which must be approved by the Mayor and the Supervisors. Once adopted, they would be binding, and the City could not adopt any budget the Controller deemed inconsistent with those policies—although the Supervisors could suspend them for one year with a 2/3 majority vote. The proposition also calls for a two-year budget plan and fewer public hearings, reducing opportunities for public input and influence. The GP Board's response to increased executive power and decreased public input? **Vote NO.**

Prop C: Calls for repeal of Prop H, passed in 2004, which requires the stadium be named Candlestick. The GP Board objects to further commercialization of public institutions. **Vote NO.**

Prop D: Calls for a "Mid-Market Special Sign District" between 5th and 7th Streets, which would be exempted from the ban on new advertising signs approved by the voters in 2002, and puts regulation under the nonprofit Central Market Community Benefit District. This is a no-brainer. Anyone who has walked Market Street between 5th and 7th in recent years knows the LAST thing it needs is more tacky advertising. **Vote NO.**

Anti-War March October 17

Folk singer Faith Petric and her guitar, surrounded by a lustily singing honor guard of Gray Panthers, opened the end-the-wars and bring the troops home rally in San Francisco. Around 2000 demonstrators applauded a well-organized, tightly run program of speakers and music and marched from UN Plaza along Market Street, 4th Street to Mission, and back on 7th Street to UN Plaza, demanding the US get out of Afghanistan and Iraq, bring the troops home, and spend the money on human welfare not warfare. Where were the rest of you? (Thanks to Barbara, for organizing our participation and chauffeuring Faith.)



Our Very Own Elections No campaign funds needed.

Nominations are now open for members of the Board of Directors of the SF GP Network.

Our by-laws stipulate a Board of up to 25 members. Directors are nominated for a two-year term and may serve two consecutive terms. After 4 years on the Board they are not eligible to serve for at least one year. The Board determines policies, actions, and affiliations, approves meeting plans, oversees the newsletter, and selects the officers for each year. Elections are held at our December party and are usually by acclamation, but only members are eligible to run and to vote.

Nominations can be made by calling or e-mailing the office.



! Non Sequitur by Wiley, October 14, 2009

Corporate Social Responsibility

A corporation is an artificial person and as such, has the constitutional rights of an individual; it is an entity independent from the shareholders and has all the protections that a person would have, other than the Fifth Amendment protection against producing books and records.

Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) in the United States is self-regulating corporate behavior. In theory, the corporation is part of the community and has an ethical responsibility to contribute to the health of the community and avoid harming it. Some may view CSR as being at odds with the goals of a corporation, which are to take full advantage of all opportunities to increase profits for the shareholders. Others may view CSR as a corporation's moral and ethical obligation, giving back to the local and global community that gave to the corporation in terms of providing labor and skills and purchasing products and services. Still others may perceive CSR as good public relations. Whether or not we eat Big Macs, we all recognize Ronald McDonald. Most of us know that Ronald McDonald helps the families of sick children.

However, this article is not about theory, but about practice. No laws or regulations govern CSR. Each corporation determines its own CSR programs. In practice, the bottom-line and the shareholders are the focus of a corporation, and CSR may or may not play an important role in the corporation. A corporation *should* have a legal obligation to do no harm. Unfortunately many corporations with CSR programs do significant harm.



In Peru, Chevron is fighting for oil against the indigenous population's desire for land. The government of Peru supports Chevron because it wants the oil and

blames the indigenous people for deaths of police defending the government's position. Chevron, while bringing in huge profits to its shareholders, significantly harms both the earth and the people living on it in Peru. Still Chevron has a CSR program.

In Thailand, Chevron launched a long-term CSR project to encourage students to develop their

schools in an environmentally responsible manner, which would boost student awareness of environmental issues. Chevron is cooperating with Chulalongkorn University to develop a master's degree program in petroleum geology by providing \$10 million over the next five years. Although this is termed CSR, the reality is that the program is to provide Thai experts for Chevron.

The Ronald McDonald CSR image is positive, but we know that the beef that we eat is destroying the rainforest. Rainforests cover approximately 6 percent of the earth's surface. McDonalds is the largest seller of beef. Large parts of Central American rainforests have been decimated for cattle ranching and sugar cane. McDonalds clears trees in the rainforest so that their beef will have grazing land.



McDonalds is not the only corporation destroying our environment. We look at McDonalds because it has the most visible CSR image: Ronald McDonald. We notice the contradiction in what McDonalds does, McDonald the destroyer, and Ronald McDonald, the caretaker for families of sick children.

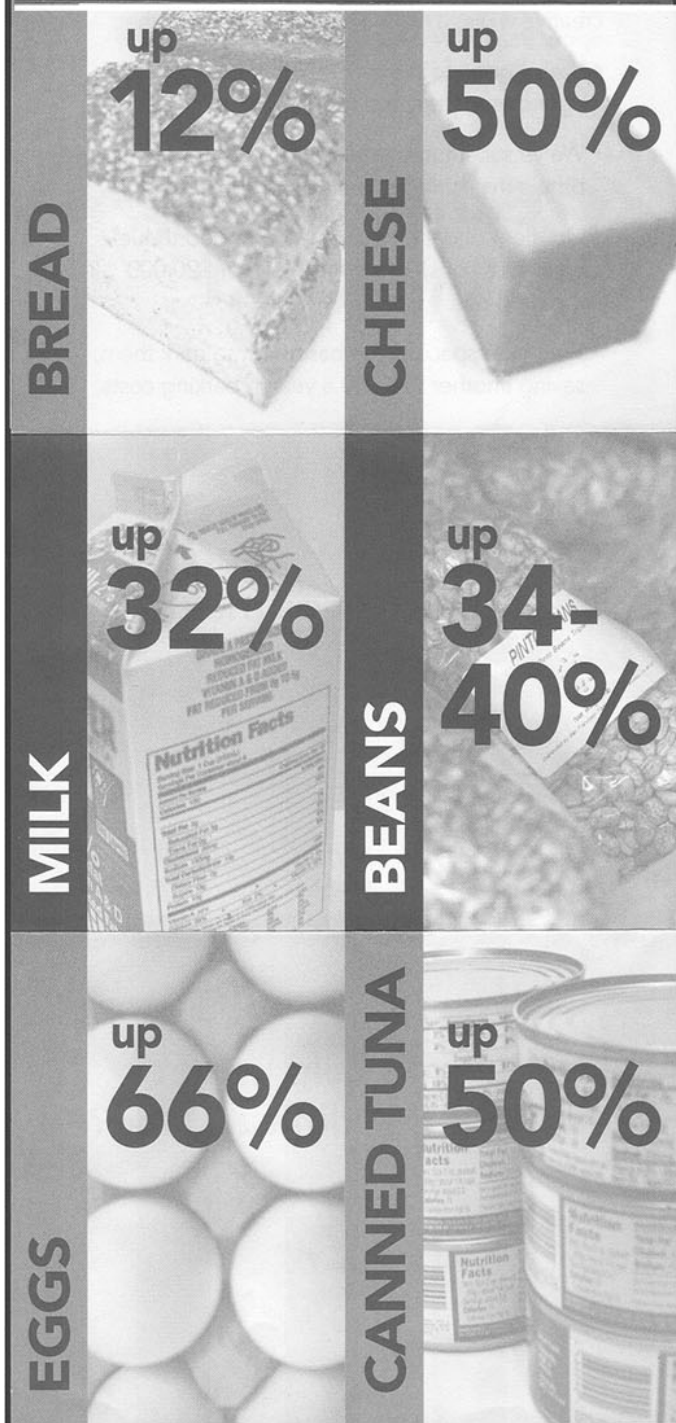
When I read an article such as this, I ask myself what can I do? You might already have some ideas. Listed below are our nine suggestions:

1. Avoid eating at McDonalds
2. Ask your friends not to eat at McDonalds
3. Eat less meat
4. Educate yourself about the rainforests
5. Realize McDonald employees are not unionized
6. Educate yourself about unions
7. Question advertisements
8. Question CSR programs
9. Become a knowledgeable and engaged consumer and citizen

When you have accomplished all nine suggestions, you'll understand the globe needs help and you have the ability and the skill to help reduce some of the ailments that plague the rainforests. When you get that far, you'll find others to work with to make a positive impact on our planet.

The article was submitted by a SFGP member and edited for length by Newsletter staff.

Ouch!



Graphic courtesy of Project Open Hand.

You Are What They Feed You!

The way food is grown, controlled and marketed affects everything from cost to rising numbers of children with diabetes to environmental pollution and the waste of water resources. Lobbyists for agribusiness, an interlocking of chemical companies and a conglomerate of corporations, secure hundreds of billions in government subsidies to control research in universities and insure massive mono crops—chemically dependent farming. Every pound of food grown by agribusiness methods means a loss of six pounds of healthy soil. 500,000 tons of Monsanto and Dow petrochemicals are dumped on our food yearly. World food prices rose 80% last year, largely due to corporate speculation and hedge fund bidding on land leases in Africa, India, and Latin America. Corporate agribusiness farms replace small farms, displacing farmers. In India this has caused 200,000 farmers to commit suicide. One billion people are starving world-wide, not for the lack of food, but because corporate controls and speculation encourage exporting for profit rather than producing for local consumption.

The documentary, “Food, Inc.,” exposes the tragedy of this corporate controlled food system through the story of a Mexican-American family, agonizing in a supermarket, not having money to buy fresh organic fruits and vegetables for the family. They resort to buying drive-in fast foods, trapped in the cycle of eating these so-called cheap foods as they must spend most of their income for the father’s diabetes medications. But a higher price is ultimately paid with the myriad of problems caused by chemically grown, GMO, toxic foods. Foods are artificially cheap only because of government subsidies supporting agribusiness. From 1995 to 2005, \$164.7 billion in subsidies went to unhealthy, unsustainable farming.

Solutions must go beyond local involvement toward supporting sustainable farms and raising living standards for farm workers worldwide. The entire food system would transform globally by ending dependency on oil: no petrochemical fertilizers, no diesel farming equipment, drastically reduced carbon footprint, and an end to stock market speculation on oil pricing. We need food grown to feed people, not for the benefit of corporate food profiteers.

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

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Call the office for membership information.

Labor Donated **NOVEMBER 2009**

Actions and Events

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

Sunday, November 1, 2:00 PM

Radical Theater Revisited, a panel discussion
in connection with 50 years of the Mime Troupe
Main Library, Lower Level, Koret Auditorium

Sunday, November 1—Wed, November 11

Mon-Thurs: Noon-10 PM; Fri: Noon-6 PM;
Sat: 9 AM-6 PM, New Leaf Art Exhibit, Out of the
Closet and On the Wall, work by LGBT Bay Area
senior & disabled artists. LGBT Center,
1800 Market at Octavia, Room 301

Monday, November 2, 7:00 PM—11:00 PM

Dia de los Muertos, procession and outdoor altar
exhibit by artists at 24th and Bryant,
walk to Festival of Altars, 26th & Harrison

Thursday, November 5, 8:00—10:00 PM

Support Indigenous Resistance: Benefit for Black
Mesa, screening of "Broken Rainbow" story of
Dine resistance to ongoing colonization.
Bound Together Books, 1369 Haight Street
\$5-\$10 suggested donation

Friday, November 13, Noon—7:00 PM

Saturday, November 14, 10:00 AM—7:00 PM

Sunday, November 15, 11:00 AM—6:00 PM

Green Festival, Concourse, Brannan @ 8th

Friday, November 13, 7:00—10:00 PM

"Crisis in Honduras" an Eyewitness Account.
Israel Salinas, Sec'y Gen'l of United Workers
Federation of Honduras and leader of the National
Front against the Coup. ILWU local 3, next to
AT&T Ballpark, corner 2nd and King,
4 Berry Street

Friday, November 20, 7:00—10:00 PM

"Last Chance for Eden" film and discussion with
director Lee Mun Wah on racism and sexism
Grace Cathedral Wilsey Conference Center,
1100 California Street.

