

GRAY PANTHERS OF SAN FRANCISCO



Public Power Under Attack

Speaker: Eric Brooks from Community Choice Energy Alliance

—PG&E's campaign to preserve its monopoly, including Prop. 16

—Clean PowerSF, public power for our City

General Membership Meeting

Tuesday, April 20, 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.

Board Meeting 12:30 PM
Wednesday, April 7 & May 5

Civil/Human Rights Comm. 11:00 AM
Wednesday, April 14 & May 12

Newsletter Committee 12:00 Noon
Thursday, April 8 & May 6

Program Committee 1:00 PM
Wednesday, April 14 & May 12

Health Committee 1:00 PM
Tuesday, April 13 & May 11

Book Club 10:30 AM
Monday, April 26 & May 24



Gray Panthers at March 20th Anti-War March

March General Meeting

When Angela Chan of the Asian Law Caucus spoke to a large group at the general membership meeting, she encouraged us to call Mayor Newsom (415) 554-6141, and City Attorney Herrera (415) 554-7700 to demand that they restore due process to youth. In July 2008, Mayor Newsom decided not to implement the sanctuary policy voted into law by the Board of Supervisors. So, as in the years of slavery, families are being torn apart, and children deported, even if the charges against them are dropped. Now Juvenile Hall holds even innocent youth for 48 hours till they can be picked up by Immigration Customs Enforcement, ICE.

Schools are showing 0% tolerance in calling police; a kindergarten boy was taken to Juvenile Hall; a 15-year-old girl is facing deportation for a fight with her sister after school—no weapons or injuries. This marks the 21st anniversary of the San Francisco Sanctuary Ordinance, and in the past year, 167 youths have been referred to ICE, in defiance of that policy. Crucial protections against racial profiling are being dismantled. (More on the Sanctuary Ordinance on page 4.)

FYI: Wellpoint is the Nation's largest health benefits company. Its net income for 2009 was 4.7 billion dollars; adjusted net income, after all the loopholes available to large corporations, was \$2.9 billion, up from \$2.5 billion in 2008. Its California subsidiary is Anthem Blue Cross, which just recently raised its premiums by as much as 39%.

Public Power Under Attack

In the early 1900s, the initiative process was seen as a way for the people to fight back against big corporations and money-dominated legislatures. In those days, the bad guys were Big Oil and Railroads. Among the bad guys today is our own PG&E, and the wily bad guys have taken over the initiative process for their own ends.

The latest round in this battle is being waged over Prop 16, PG&E's attempt to forever end the possibility of public power in California. Who will win? Come to our April meeting with Eric Brooks of Community Choice Energy Alliance.

Hail and Farewell, Howard Zinn

A celebration of the life of activist Howard Zinn, people's historian extraordinaire, at the Unitarian Universalist Church on Sunday, February 28, started off with the Gray Panther Growl, led by one of the organizers of the event, our own Barbara Lee, followed by Gray Panthers member Faith Petric, singing "Where Have All the Flowers Gone," heartily joined in by the audience. This was preceded by lunch catered by the Faithful Fool and followed by a showing of the Zinn film, "You Can't Be Neutral on a Moving Train." Many Gray Panthers were there to honor Zinn, a true modern American hero.

Our office library will soon have a DVD of the film and a copy of *A People's History of the United States* available to borrow.

UDHR Players

Long time Gray Panther Bea Goodman continues her activism even though age and physical disability have recently led her to move to the Rhoda Goldman Retirement facility. At her urging, the RG activities director invited the Gray Panthers to speak to the residents about the Gray Panthers and to present our program on the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. Barbara, Caty, Audrey, Rhoda, Bea, Stella and Mitzi participated in telling a small but appreciative audience about the Gray Panthers and dramatizing the UDHR and its ramifications. We urge those of you who live in retirement facilities to talk to your program directors

March Forth!

At the huge March 4th protest at Civic Center against cuts to education, the possibility for uniting students, seniors, youth, unions, and antiwar activists ignited us all with the spirit of the student youth movement. Student movements of the past have often provided the core of resistance. The strength of this unity will grow as more of us bring in our energy and support. As Gray Panthers we need to speak out against these attacks and guard against pitting funding of senior issues against student needs. Gray Panthers can act out our slogan, "Age and Youth Together." Students and seniors should join their voices on campuses and in Sacramento to protest these cuts.

Public education should prepare youth for living in a democratic society founded on social justice. Threats to public education are not only financial, but ideological. The Texas Board of Education "approved a social studies curriculum that will put a conservative stamp on history and economics textbooks, stressing the superiority of American capitalism, questioning the Founding Fathers' commitment to a purely secular government and presenting Republican political philosophies in a more positive light" (*NY Times*, 3-12-10). Efforts by Latinos to include their contributions were rejected. The Obama Race to the Top includes a controversial program promoting charter schools, which are more racially segregated and have not shown significant student performance improvement compared to public schools. AND these charter schools also employ non-union teachers.

Better Solutions

Passage of an oil severance tax with money dedicated directly to education could alleviate much of the funding problem. Assembly Member Tom Amiano's bill to revise the commercial taxation parts of Prop 13 would take us back to the California Master Plan that guaranteed residents a tuition-free education in public universities and colleges. The California Democracy Act initiative, if placed on the ballot, would stop the tyranny of a 2/3 strange hold on the legislature.

As student organizers said of the massive March 4 demonstrations, "Today is a good start; tomorrow it is time for us to claim our future."



Gray Panthers at March 4 protest of education cuts. Photo by Mary Swope

Massive Rally for Immigrant Rights

With all media eyes on passage of the health care reform bill on Sunday, March 21, a huge rally in Washington, DC for immigrant rights passed almost unnoticed, but the numbers far exceeded even the organizers' expectations.

An estimated 200,000-500,000 immigrants and their supporters marched through the streets of the capital and rallied on the National Mall, calling for an end to family-destroying ICE raids, "education not deportation," and a path to legalization for every undocumented immigrant.

Carrying signs reading, "You need us as much as we need you," and "No Human Being Is Illegal," marchers expressed disappointment and frustration at the Obama administration's slow pace on an immigration reform bill, and hope that immigrant rights issues would come to the table now that the health reform bill has passed—a bill that prohibits undocumented immigrants from buying health insurance.



Photo by Associated Press

Nydia Velazquez, Chair of the Congressional Hispanic Caucus, addressed the vast crowd, saying, "We stand here to say to the Republican leadership in the Senate, to the Democrats in the Senate and also in the House, and to President Barack Obama, we want immigration reform now."

Sanctuary City?



Berkeley High School students protest against ICE arrests. Photo by Riya Bhat-tacharjee

A 13-year-old boy had a fight with another boy after school one day in January and took \$0.46 (46 CENTS) from him. He later apologized to the boy, who was unhurt, and returned the money, but the boy's parents reported the incident to the police. The police booked the 13-year-old into Juvenile Hall on suspicion of assault, robbery and extortion, declaring it a felony. Juvenile authorities reported the boy to immigration authorities as ordered by Mayor Newsom. Unfortunately for all concerned, the boy's mother, now married to a US citizen, had not yet gotten her legal residency, although she had applied for it, and was declared an illegal immigrant. ICE promptly ordered the boy, his mother and his 5-year-old brother deported. Because the father was savvy enough and brave enough to go to legal aid agencies for help, the resultant publicity raised such a stink that the deportation order has been put in abeyance for six months while Washington investigates.

As we reported in our December Newsletter, in 1989 San Francisco approved an ordinance that bans the use of city funding or city employees to aid immigration authorities. Last August the Board of Supervisors adopted the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child as San Francisco law. That resolution included a stipulation that undocumented youth must be found guilty of a felony before being reported to ICE. The Mayor's order was in direct violation of the 1989 and the 2009 laws. In October the Board overrode the Mayor's veto of legislation reiterating the policy of reporting undocumented youth to ICE only *after* conviction of a felony. The Mayor's office says the Board's law is in violation of federal law.

A Gray Panthers representative spoke before the Board of Supervisors Rules Committee hearing considering what to do now, urging the Supervisors to maintain San Francisco as a Sanctuary City. What will the Board do? Call your Supervisor and tell him that you as a citizen of SF are proud that we are a sanctuary city and urge him/her to make

Some Things to Think About on April 15

Taxes are governments' way of financing the activities that have been delegated to them by their citizens to promote the common good. Essentially there are two kinds of taxes on individuals, progressive and regressive. Progressive taxes are based on ability to pay: the more money you make and have, the higher your tax rate. Prime example, the income tax. Regressive taxes assess everyone at the same rate, a flat tax. Like the sales tax or the social security tax. There is also non-individual progressive taxation like corporate income tax and property tax, the more the value the higher the rate. Interestingly, the progressive taxes are honeycombed with loopholes to help the rich pay less. There are far fewer loopholes in the regressive taxes, and those few also help the rich pay less.

In 1955 (Eisenhower) the top income tax rate on the richest 1% was 91%. In 1965 (Nixon) 70%. In 1986 (Reagan) 50%. Now: 35%, the lowest since 1932. These are official rates *before* the loopholes kick in. In the 1950s, corporate taxes accounted for 35% of the federal revenue. In 2004, 7.4%.

One of the major loopholes that significantly benefits the rich is the capital gains tax. According to IRS data, in 2007 America's wealthiest households reported their highest income and lowest tax rates on record. Rich families in 2007 reported roughly 2/3 of their income from capital gains. In 1992, the capital tax rate was 28%, reduced in the Clinton era to 20% and in 2003, under Bush, to 15%. So for the top earners, 2/3 of their income is not taxed even at the supposed rate of 35% but only at 15%. That is only one of many loopholes.

The Democrats elected a president and a sweeping majority in Congress in 2008 to change the country's direction. What could that mean in tax policy? Reinstate the 70% rate. Close the individual and corporate loopholes. Don't extend the Bush tax cuts of the past ten years due to end in 2010, like the cuts in capital gains and dividend taxes and the elimination of the estate tax. Institute an excess war profits tax, like the ones in force during WW I, WW II, and the Korean War, without loopholes. Enact a wealth tax, as many European countries have. Just for starters.....



Opt Out of PG&E! NO on PROP 16!

CommonSenseSF, a front group backed by PG&E, is stepping up its propaganda with yet another expensive mailing in support of Prop 16. Could it be because we are close to winning a real choice, Power for the People?

Prop 16 is a ballot initiative to create a constitutional amendment requiring 2/3 voter approval before local governments could provide electricity service to new customers or establish a community choice electricity program using public funds or bonds. Supporters of public power have a court challenge to Prop 16. The basic premise of the suit is that PG&E is using our rate payers' funds to conduct their campaign against public power. Our rates are already the highest in the country, and now PG&E is seeking a rate hike of 20%. Is this to pay for the estimated \$35 million they're spending in support of Prop 16?

As Joseph Goebbels said, "If you tell a lie big enough and keep repeating it, people will eventually come to believe it." For example, the statement that our bills will be 24% higher with public power. The fact is that PG&E rates are 20%-40% higher than rates in cities with public power. Los Angeles, serving 3.8 million people with public power, had no rolling blackouts like those experienced under deregulation and has rates 16% lower than PG&E's.

When our Board of Supervisors gives final approval of CleanPowerSF, we will finally have a choice of reliable, renewable, affordable energy.

CleanPowerSF will:

- provide at least 50% of CleanPowerSF's energy from renewable resources and energy efficiency within ten years;
- ensure stable rates for reliable electricity;
- provide for greater local control of your electricity supply;
- improve consumer protection and consumer choice.

Come to the April Gray Panthers general meeting to hear Eric Brooks speak on PG&E's attempts to defend their monopoly and answer questions about the campaign for public power in San Francisco.

Member Opinion: Health Reform?

First single-payer was off the table. Then a public option anyone could use was off the table. Then the Medicare buy-in was off the table. And negotiated drug prices. And cost controls. And .. And...

Most of us are angry, and whipsawed back and forth between pessimism and optimism. The health bill is a gigantic bailout for insurance, drug, hospital, and doctor industries, forcing us onto private insurance, while at the same time forcing down the value of that insurance, making us pay more out-of-pocket, and taking \$500 billion from Medicare over the next ten years. Our optimistic side says maybe 30 of the 50 million uninsured will get insured in four years, though many won't be able to afford it and will choose to pay extra taxes instead. Many of our children can barely keep a roof over their heads, maybe they'll qualify for Medicaid, though Obama wants to cut Medicaid costs. And what if this awful health bill had failed? What then? These thoughts drive us nuts.

It has been a very bitter pill to see how marginalized we are. Deep down, we hoped or expected that once business realized the cost of insurance-based healthcare was unsustainable, our day would come, our plan of removing insurance companies would be taken seriously. We were wrong.

The truth is we do not have a movement that's capable of mounting a serious threat to the functioning of the economy or government, through strikes, sit-ins, or occupations. We do not have the General Strikes that forced the government to cough up Social Security. Nor the emerging sit-ins and marches against Jim Crow racism that forced them to cough up Medicare and Medicaid. We cannot expect different results until we have the kind of movement that can, and will, stop the gears for long enough to inflict serious pain.

Is healthcare more of a human right than food, when a quarter of US children are food-insecure? Is healthcare more of a human right than housing, when families with kids wait for months for shelter beds in San Francisco? What about education?

We need to stop asking for our needs to be on the table. We need to kick the table over.

Gray Panthers of SF

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ADDRESS SERVICE
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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

MAY 2010

Actions and Events

Sunday, April 4, Noon—3:00 PM

Homes Not Jails Rally, March and Building
Occupation. People's Rights Before Property
Rights. 24th and Mission

Saturday, April 10, 11:00—1:00 PM

*Diet For a Hot Planet: the Climate Crisis at the
End of Your Fork and What You Can Do About It*
talk by author Anna Lappe (Daughter of Frances)
Ferry Building, Port Commission Room, Suite 50
CUESA 291-3276 x106 for info

Sunday, April 18, 3:00—6:00 PM

Sins Invalid presents Poemsong for Liberation: a
Poetry workshop with Vanessa Huang & Leroy
Moore. Brava Theatre, 24th at York. Free
"Explore and Write Poetry of Necessity."

Sunday, April 18, 10:00—3:00 PM

Literacy for Environmental Justice celebrates
grand opening of the EcoCenter at Heron's Head
Park. The public is invited for ceremony, food,
and entertainment. 800 Innes Ave. BVHP

Saturday, April 24, 10:00—Noon

Owl docent-led tour and potluck lunch at the
WPA-designed Aquatic Park Bathhouse, now the
Maritime Museum & Senior Center. Bring food.
Van Ness and Beach, 4-hour free parking or bus.
989-4422 for info.

Sunday, April 25, 2:00—4:30 PM

Celebrate People's Earth Day, Performance by
Kairos Theater, Women's Building, 3543—18th
\$10—\$50 Environmental Justice Benefit for
BVHP and Kettleman City

Until May 6th...

A tribute to Oscar Romero, archbishop of San Sal-
vador assassinated in 1980 for his work as a libera-
tion theologian. Photo exhibit by Karen Ande at
the San Francisco library.

