

# *GRAY PANTHERS OF SAN FRANCISCO*

## **CELEBRATE 40 YEARS of the Gray Panthers: Education, Advocacy and Activism**

**Potluck and Fundraiser for Political Prisoners  
Lynn Stewart and Mumia Abu-Jamal  
featuring Jeff Mackler with an update  
and Faith Petric with MUSIC!**

**Saturday, July 17, 12:00—2:00 PM  
Gray Panthers Office  
1187 Market Street, Room 203**

**Bring food or a beverage 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, July 7 & August 4**

**Program Committee 1:00 PM  
Wednesday, July 14 & August 11**

**Newsletter Committee 12:00 Noon  
Thursday, August 5**

**Civil/Human Rights Comm. 11:00 AM  
Monday, July 12 & August 9**

**Health Committee 1:00 PM  
Tuesday, July 13 & August 10**

**Book Club 10:30 AM  
Monday, July 26 & August 30**

## Eye-Opening Talk at June Meeting

Catherine Tactaquin, Executive Director of the National Network for Immigrant and Refugee Rights (NNIRR) gave a powerful talk on the almost unspeakable abuse of immigrants and their families, particularly the undocumented. It will get worse.



Over 350,000 people are deported each year, breaking apart families and orphaning 80,000 children born in the US. Border violence kills 5,000. Privatized immigration detention is the fastest growing sector of the prison industry. NNIRR sees little hope of decent immigration reform for years to come, because legalization must be balanced with increased enforcement to gain Senate support.

She does think we can significantly push back on ICE detention and deportation practices, the militarization of the border, and border violence—all expanded under Obama. Locally, we need to demand San Francisco opt out of the Secure Communities Program requiring that the fingerprints of *anyone* booked be sent to ICE. She will keep in touch with us. More info at [www.nnirr.org](http://www.nnirr.org).

## CARA Convention

CARA (California Alliance for Retired Americans) is holding its seventh annual convention on October 12 and 13 at the Oakland Hilton Airport Hotel. We are a community organization member of CARA and our co-convenor, Michael Lyon, represents community organizations on the CARA Board of Directors. We are entitled to two voting delegates at the convention and can submit three resolutions for consideration. Last year we presented one resolution to the convention on a Heads Up Alert on the threat to Social Security and Medicare, which was adopted by the delegates. Delegates and resolutions will be discussed at our July Board meeting. We welcome your input.

## Bail Out the People

The Bail Out the People coalition, of which we are a member, hosted a showing of videos on the WPA at our office on Saturday, May 22. This was followed by a discussion of what a present day WPA-type program could do to combat unemployment and rebuild the nation's infrastructure.

## July Party/Potluck/Fundraiser 40 Years of Activism

July marks the 40th birthday of the founding of the Gray Panthers by our Maggie Kuhn. So we will be having a party on July 17. In line with our long-time activism, we are using the festivities to support two friends who are, but we think shouldn't be, in jail with their lives at risk.

Many of us have been privileged to meet Lynn Stewart, who violated a jailhouse rule to give out news to friends and supporters of her client, Sheik Omar Abdul Rahman. This infraction was considered minor by the Clinton administration, but in the hysteria generated by 9/11, the Bush administration decided to throw the book at Lynn, a lawyer who had spent her life defending outcasts, the politically unpopular, the poor.



Mumia Abu-Jamal, still practicing journalism from his jail cell, has been in prison under sentence of death since 1982 after a trial marked by faulty testimony, coerced witnesses, a bigoted judge—the trial has become an international scandal. Several books in the GP library outline the case.

Come, bring your favorite dish, and celebrate in the best Gray Panther style at our office, 1182 Market Street, Room 203, 12:00 to 2:00.

## August with the Mime Troupe?

As usual we will not have a membership meeting in August. Some of us will picnic together at Yerba Buena Gardens, Mission Street and 3rd, for the Mime Troupe presentation on August 22 at 2:00 PM, Come join us.

## CA Democracy Act—Lakoff Petition

Many of us collected signatures to put the above petition on the June ballot in an effort to end the 2/3 vote requirement now existing. It read in its entirety. "All legislative actions on revenue and budget must be determined by a majority vote." Because of time and funding constraints, we didn't get enough qualifying signatures and the petition was withdrawn. A second petition is in the works.

## Let Gaza Live

Was the Israeli military's deadly attack on the Gaza Freedom Flotilla also an attack on Gaza by proxy? Since Hamas won a majority of Palestinian governmental seats in 2006, Israel has held Gaza under a punishing siege. When rival party Fatah, with US backing, failed in an armed attempt to overturn democratically elected Hamas in 2007 (which the media persists in describing as Hamas "taking over" Gaza in a coup), Israel tightened the blockade, prohibiting import of a long list of items and forbidding exports. The Gaza Freedom Flotilla was one in a series of attempts to challenge the blockade.



So how did matters reach this point? Israel's current government is led by the rightist Likud party, increasingly allied with the rigidly orthodox religious ultranationalist fundamentalists. Before 2005,

some 8,000 Israeli settlers lived in 30% of Gaza, with 1.5 million Palestinians (80% of them refugees) living in the remainder of this tiny strip of land. In 2005, Israel withdrew all settlers from Gaza, characterizing the move as a unilateral sacrifice for peace. In fact, it permitted relentless isolation of Gaza and removed any impediment to the massive assaults of 2008/2009. Israel maintains a vise-grip intended to pressure the people of Gaza into ousting Hamas.

The assaults of 2008/2009 and the violent invasion of the Gaza Freedom Flotilla have shocked the world. It's high time we demand that President Obama give substance to the words of his 2009 Cairo speech and back up his calls for a settlement freeze by convincing Congress to stop the \$3 billion/year flow of military aid to Israel. We must urge our congressional representatives to hold Israel accountable by investigating possible violations of the US Arms Export Control Act. Our officials, the media, and the public need to recognize that critique of Israeli policy does not amount to anti-Semitism; they must transcend fear of that label, cease to be misled by Israel perennially casting itself as the victim, and no longer sustain impunity for Israel.

## Saluting the Drivers

*Following is a letter to the editor of the San Francisco Chronicle published June 15, 2010.*

The San Francisco Gray Panthers salutes the Muni drivers who resisted the pressure of downtown business, the mayor's office, the *Chronicle* and the *Examiner*, and some supervisors in rejecting the concessions the city is trying to force down their throats.

Muni service cuts, fare increases and financial problems are not caused by drivers' greed or the riders' fare evasion; they are caused by downtown business refusing to pay for the service Muni provides in bringing them customers and workers.

We recognize that the same forces that attack Muni drivers and riders are also attacking the city services we need to survive—health and human services, housing and nutrition. Thoughtful city workers in other unions should support the drivers because the drivers' refusal to make concessions and their crucial position in the city's economy could make the city think twice about demanding more concessions from them. This could save jobs and services.

We demand: no service cuts or fare increases for San Francisco's poor, seniors, minorities and immigrants. Make downtown business pay for the services they receive. Drivers and riders should unite to demand more public transit, not less.

Michael Lyon, San Francisco Gray Panthers

## More About Muni

Muni bus drivers' base pay is \$28 per hour, which amounts to \$58,000 a year. In 2009, 13 top brass in the police department made from \$235,960 to \$516,118 per year; 17 top brass in the fire department made from \$236,373 to \$294,123 per year. Maybe the bus drivers aren't the main problem. Also, why is Muni still budgeting millions for a 1.7 mile central subway, money which could be used to save the current Muni system?



## Risking Lives for Profit

How in the world did a company like BP with a long and well-documented record of safety violations, neglected maintenance, suppression of worker safety complaints, outdated equipment, workplace accidents and oil spills, ever manage to get federal government permission to drill a well 5,000 feet below the surface of the ocean?



AP Photo/Charlie Riedel, East Grand

BP wasn't blamed for the *Exxon Valdez* disaster, but in fact the company had a controlling interest in the Trans-Alaska Pipeline from which the oil came and was supposed to have oil spill containment equipment on hand when the ship ran aground and spilled 10.5 million gallons into Prince William Sound. No containment equipment was on hand, though BP submitted a large number of false reports to the contrary.

The falsified inspection reports in 2002 from the Carson refinery in California, the Texas City refinery blast that killed 15 workers in 2005, the Prudhoe Bay Alaska pipeline spill of 200,000 gallons when corroded pipes burst (despite warnings since 2001)—these are only the high points of BP's malfeasance. Since the Deepwater Horizon disaster in April that killed 11 workers and continues to spew millions of gallons into the Gulf of Mexico, there has been yet another BP spill on May 26 of 100,000 gallons at Delta Junction on the Alaska pipeline that hardly made a ripple in the media.

In a June 11 column in the *New York Daily News*, Juan Gonzalez writes that the federal Minerals and Management Service (MMS) has recorded 330 significant (greater than 2100 gallons) spills since 1964—nearly half in the past ten years, the majority of them BP's. And here's Rolling Stone political correspondent Tim Dickinson's take on it:

...the disaster in the Gulf was preceded by ample warnings—yet the administration had ignored them. Instead of cracking down on MMS, as he had vowed to do even before taking office, Obama left in place many of the top officials who oversaw the agency's

culture of corruption. He permitted it to rubber-stamp dangerous drilling operations by BP—a firm with the worst safety record of any oil company—with virtually no environmental safeguards, using industry-friendly regulations drafted during the Bush years. He calibrated his response to the Gulf spill based on flawed and misleading estimates from BP—and then deployed his top aides to lowball the flow rate at a laughable 5,000 barrels [410,000 gallons] a day, long after the best science made clear this catastrophe would eclipse the *Exxon Valdez*. (“The Spill, the Scandal and the President,” June 8, 2010)

And this is *really* scary: BP has another deep-sea oil drilling operation, Atlantis, still in operation off the coast of Louisiana, that's 2000 feet *deeper* than Deepwater Horizon. It's one of the largest oil platforms in the world. Congressional documents show it lacks required engineering certification for up to 90 percent of its “subsea components.” It's capable of drawing 8.4 million gallons a day from the seafloor. 26 congressional members signed a letter asking the Obama administration to close it down, but no action was taken as of mid-June.

Since his 2009 confirmation as Interior Secretary, Ken Salazar has had full authority to reform MMS—the agency was created by the Interior Secretary—and though he has taken action against some of the more egregious violations of ethical standards (cocaine parties with the oil execs), has made no real policy changes. “...the administration knew that it had this rot in the middle of the process on offshore drilling,” says Rep. Raul Grijalva, chair of the House subcommittee on public lands which oversees the Interior Dept., “—yet it empowered an already discredited, disgraced agency to essentially be in charge.” In April of 2009, that agency, after less than a month's study, approved BP's application to drill in the Gulf without a comprehensive environmental review.

The spill has been far-reaching and devastating, especially to marine life and fishing and isn't over yet. Visiting the Gulf, Obama, like Fujimori during the Peruvian cholera epidemic, lunched on crab cakes and shrimp salad to prove the seafood is safe. Fujimori did recover from cholera quite nicely, and we trust our President will suffer no long-term effects either. Unlike the fish.

## Stop Pinching Our Pensions

Worker retirement benefits are being blamed for the economic crisis in Greece, across Europe and



Britain, and here in San Francisco. Good defined benefit pension plans and Social Security should be the right of everyone. But instead, a commission has been appointed by

Obama to attack Social Security and Medicare and companies continually try to force workers out of defined benefits into 401k stock market plans. Workers create far more value from our labor than we ever receive back in wages and benefits.

Not so long ago, defined benefits were standard for all organized workers in private and public sectors. Often government workers are guaranteed defined benefits as compensation for a lower pay scale than that in the private sector. For many years San Francisco City workers agreed to pay a higher percentage of their retirement benefits as part of the bargaining process in exchange for a small cost of living increase. This percentage increase was to be lowered at a later date that never came.

During the dot com boom years, and other prosperous times, monies were contributed to an established city fund to compensate for years when the city faced lower revenue. For many years the city contributed little or no money to the city retirement costs. Now many front line city workers and MUNI workers are scapegoated and bullied by Mayor Newsom into giving back pay increases, not getting cost of living increases, and making larger retirement contributions. Those \$100,000 plus retirement packages given certain city employees are not the reality for the vast majority of city retirees, but only for a few top managers.

People struggling daily to pay rents and buy food are propagandized with the lie - *huge burden on taxpayers caused by out of control retiree pensions*. Why vilify workers? Instead ask why is it that CEOs earn 300 times as much as the average worker? Why burden those of us already paying through cutbacks in our quality of living, while those not paying a fair share continue the litany of No Taxes?

## A New Strategy To Fight State Cuts?

The Governor of California, the world's eighth largest economy, proposes, among other things:

Completely eliminating welfare for one million kids. Completely eliminating state-assisted child-care. Cutting Medi-Cal to 6 prescriptions a month and 10 doctor visits a year. If you're poor, go die.

Democrats are finally refusing the worst cuts and proposing revenue increases, including oil drilling taxes, more alcohol taxes, higher income taxes on the rich and stopping \$2 billion in corporate gifts.

As usual, these measures require a 2/3 vote, and no Republicans will vote for more taxes. In previous years, this has led to an impasse which would progress until the State stopped issuing checks. Ultimately, our side would be starved into accepting budgets with drastic cuts and no new revenues because we could not survive without paychecks for our workers and health and welfare services for our elderly, poor, young, or disabled residents.

But this year, Assembly Democrats are proposing borrowing almost \$9 billion, using this money to fund State paychecks and services until a budget is agreed on. A simple majority is enough. Yes, it just kicks the structural deficit can down the road, but it also gives us time to fight for taxing corporations and the rich without letting state workers and vulnerable people needing services be held hostage. Strong actions would be needed to force this borrowing plan through, and then to force through taxes on the rich and corporations. CARA plans to go into Central Valley towns getting people to pressure local legislators to say "No revenue, no budget," to save local schools, hospitals etc.

### A People's Victory

Prop 16 defeated 52.5% to 47.5%

Prop 17 defeated 52.1% to 47.9%

Even in a low turn-out primary election commonly assumed to be dominated by more conservative voters, voters rejected PG&E and Mercury Insurance's self-serving, heavily financed propositions. San Francisco is PG&E's home—and 67.8% of San Francisco voters said NO. Every Bay Area county voted NO.

## 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 **JULY-AUGUST 2010**

## Actions and Events

### **Saturday, Sun. Mon., July 3, 4 & 5, 2:00 PM**

San Francisco Mime Troupe opens its 51st season with "Posibilidad or Death of the Worker" Dolores Park, Church and 18th. For complete summer schedule: 285-1717 or info@sfmt.org

### **Wednesday, July 7, 3:00 PM**

LABORFEST: 3 short films, including "AFT on the Move." Little Roxie, 3117—16th St. (free).

### **Thursday, July 8, 11:00 AM**

LABORFEST: SOMA Yerba Buena Gardens Walk. How union tactics changed redevelopment plans. Meet in front of St. Patrick's Church, Mission between 3rd and 4th (free).

### **Sunday, July 12, 2:00—4:00 PM**

Support 21st Friendship Caravan to Cuba As it passes through San Francisco Temple United Church, 65 Beverly Street

### **Sunday, July 25, 9:30 AM—4:00 PM**

LABORFEST BookFair, Mission Cultural Center, 2868 Mission (free). Includes Cal Winslow, "Labor's Civil War in California: The NUHW Healthcare Workers' Rebellion" at 3:00 PM in the Main Gallery and Ralph Schoneman, "Repression, The Working Class and the Lynn Stewart Case" at 3:30 in the Small Gallery.

### **Friday, July 30, 7:00 PM**

"Hotel Voices" a Theatre Project written and performed by SRO residents with Bindlestiff Studio, a LABORFEST presentation \$10 no one turned away for lack of funds

### **Friday, August 6, 8:00 AM**

Hiroshima, 65 years—Time to Retire the Bomb Action at Lawrence Livermore Lab, Vasco Road and Patterson Pass, Livermore; Tri-Valley CARES More Info: (925) 443-7148.

**Thursday, July 1 to Saturday, July 31 LABORFEST 2010 at various venues**  
**For complete schedule: [www.laborfest.net](http://www.laborfest.net). Meets every day and most events are free.**