

# GRAY PANTHERS OF SAN FRANCISCO



## **DEFICIT HYSTERIA WHAT'S *REALLY* THE PROBLEM? (IT'S NOT SOCIAL SECURITY/MEDICARE)**

**General Membership Meeting  
Tuesday, November 16, 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, November 3 & December 1**

**Health Committee 1:00 PM  
Tuesday, November 9 & December 14**

**Newsletter Committee 12:00 Noon  
Thursday, November 4 & December 2**

**Program Committee 1:00 PM  
Wednesday, November 10 & December 8**

**Civil/Human Rights Comm. 11:00 AM  
Monday, November 8 & December 13**

**Book Club 10:30 AM  
Monday, November 29. No Dec. meeting.**

## October Meeting

The Gray Panthers October General Meeting featured an in-depth discussion of the ballot initiatives, both State and local, with recommendations.

Following that, Mitzi suggested that each member make a list of initiatives that *they* would like to see on the ballot, five each for California and SF.

We got right into the spirit of writing our own and here are some of our ideas.

California: Levy a tax on extractive oil companies and use the money to fund public transit. Institute single payer healthcare. Repeal the Ellis act. Remove big money from the electoral process by not paying petition gatherers. Rewrite the California Constitution. Repeal the 2/3 requirement to raise taxes. And many more.

San Francisco: Free Muni. Institute vacancy control. Take over the electric grid and get rid of PG&E once and for all. Elect members of commissions by districts. Put solar panels or wind turbines on every rooftop. Get rid of the Redevelopment Agency. And many more.

What would *you* like to see on the ballot? Why can't we get some of the good stuff passed?

### On The Prowl

The UDHR Players performed for SEIU retirees on October 18th. Earlier in the month we also performed at Prof. Metzgar's "Changing Times" classes at City College downtown campus and at John Adams school. We are on a



roll, collecting signatures in support of our project to get the Universal Declaration of Human Rights written into the California Constitution. We are looking for other places to present our reading. If you have any ideas about where else we can go, please leave word at the office.

"Always do right. This will gratify some people and astonish the rest."—Mark Twain

## November Meeting

Do you sometimes feel as though you are living in a hall of mirrors where down is up and fat is thin? Social Security recipients face another year without a cost of living increase. Rents, utilities and healthcare insurance premiums keep creeping, or sometimes surging, upwards. Food prices also seem to keep inching up. Meanwhile wars in Iraq/Afghanistan are costing, what, a billion a day, or is it a week? The richest among us are fighting tooth and nail to retain their share of Bush tax cuts. A couple of months after the ghastly oil leak in the Gulf, drilling is back. *And they say all of the US financial problems are coming from Social Security, paid for right along by all of us with surpluses every year?* Plus Medicare/Medi-Cal. Greedy geezers! In France those spoiled brats (under "socialism") are protesting the shredding of the safety net. They seem to think that their taxes should be used for human needs.

We will be talking about all this at the next monthly general meeting. Hope to see you there.

### Senior Action Network 20 Years of Action for Social Justice

Senior Action Network (SAN) is a citywide federation of senior organizations working to improve the lives of San Francisco's seniors and all our city's residents. It is an umbrella coalition of over 150 member organizations representing over thirty thousand seniors and persons with disabilities.

The Gray Panthers is one of those organizations and was part of their 20th annual convention on October 14. Included in their convention booklet is an article by Michael on Social Security.

### Hijacked—2010

"Do you think the battle for real health care reform is over? John Geyman says, 'Not on your life!' And by the way, your life is what's at stake." (Bill Moyers speaking about Dr. John Geyman's book, *Hijacked*.) Dr. Geyman, past president of Physicians for a National Health Plan, spoke to an enthusiastic San Francisco crowd Saturday, Oct. 23 at a meeting sponsored by Single Payer Now, PNHHR, Gray Panthers and CARA.

## Clipper and MUNI

As of January, 2011, paper MUNI Fast Passes will no longer be issued. To get a Fast Pass you will have to have a Clipper card. To get a discounted Clipper card (senior, disabled, youth), you have to apply in person for a Regional Transit Connection (RTC) discounted Clipper card. You may apply at the RTC office at One South Van Ness, 6th floor. The card is free. Bring ID. They will then send you your card by mail. When it comes, be sure you register it by calling 877-878-8883. Once it is registered, if you lose or damage it you can get a new one (\$5) without reapplying and any money balance that was on your old card will be credited to your new card.

Clipper (used to be called TransLink) is a regional card that can be used on MUNI, BART, AC Transit, Caltrain, Golden Gate Transit and Ferry, and Dumbarton Express.

Okay, you have your card. Now what? You have to deposit money to cover the fares. You can set up a general account that will pay for riding on any of the above systems. Because you have a discount card, you will be charged the



discount fee, not regular fares. Supposing you want to use it only for MUNI, you can pay \$20 each month, the way you do now for a Fast Pass (and specify that it is for unlimited rides for that month). If you then wanted to take BART, you would have to add money to your account to cover that (discounted) fare.

How do you put money in your account? Online at [clippercard.com](http://clippercard.com). By phone at the number above. On AUTOLOAD, which will automatically maintain your balance. For these you will have to give your credit card or bank account numbers, or you may go to a participating retail store (Walgreen's) to use a Clipper Add Value machine.

Or if you are riding MUNI, you can ignore the whole thing and pay cash.

## What? Another Election?

Yes. Another election coming up. But this one has no political parties, no lying hype, no hold your nose and vote for the lesser evil, no frantic money raising (although we could use some of the latter). It is the election in December for SFGP Board of Directors. You are invited to become a candidate.

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 four years on the Board they are not eligible to serve for at least one year. Any SFGP member can nominate her/himself and/or any other member. This is your golden opportunity to help determine policy and actions, promote your favorite issues, and strengthen our network. Nominations can be made by calling or e-mailing the office.

### Casting Call

Long time Gray Panthers member and video producer Howard Vicini is reviving his dormant project to document the history of the San Francisco Gray Panthers network. He has recruited Chris Tche, a recent graduate of the UC Davis Media Department, to work with him to produce an hour-long film highlighting our campaigns and achievements and hopes to have the first cut available for showing to the Gray Panthers National Board meeting here in April 2011.

Howard already has interviews with several Gray Panthers in the can, done a few years ago. This is an appeal to all you steadfast, faithful Gray Panthers to think back on what you did and what we've done and come forward with your stories and what you want emphasized. Call us to once again let your voice be heard.

### Please Write: Justice for Oscar Grant!

Hundreds in Oakland demanded the maximum sentence on Nov. 5 for BART officer Mehserle, who murdered Oscar Grant as he lay face down on the BART platform. Mehserle got the minimum possible conviction (up to 14 years), but his lawyer demands a new trial and complete exoneration. Nine BART workers risked their jobs by speaking in Grant's behalf. Please writer Judge Robt. Perry, 210 W. Temple St., Dept. 104, LA, CA 90012.

## The Brave New World and the Precautionary Principle

*This is the first in a series of articles on the precautionary principle and US regulatory failures to protect health and the environment. We encourage reader participation.*

Who would have imagined that in the space of a lifetime there would be technologies connecting all but the remotest parts of the planet? But increasing evidence suggests there may be harmful effects on health from electromagnetic fields and radio frequency and microwave radiation.

With each new addition—power lines, microwaves, cell and cordless phones and cell towers, wireless internet, Wi-Fi, WiMax and more—questions arise about safety. Now PG&E is rolling out wireless SmartMeters, which the company claims are perfectly safe because they emit radio frequency radiation well within FCC standards.

But the power levels of these and other countries' standards are set thousands of times too high for human safety, according to the 650-page BioInitiative Report of 2007, an internationally acclaimed public health report on potential health risks of extremely low frequency (ELF) and radio frequency (RF) emissions. The BioInitiative Report calls for stricter regulation.

The Report presents solid evidence that ELF radiation from power lines increases the risk for childhood leukemia and possibly other cancers and neurological diseases, even though the radiation is well within current standards. In addition, there is "suggestive to strongly suggestive evidence" that RF radiation from communications equipment such as FM, TV, cell phones, WiFi etc, may cause DNA breaks, chromosomal aberrations, cell death (including brain neurons), changes in brain function including memory loss, retarded learning, performance impairment in children, headaches and fatigue, sleep disorders, neurodegenerative conditions, and more.

The European Parliament and the European Environmental Agency take these recommendations quite seriously and are implementing precautionary measures, especially for children. Unfortunately, the US government is not.

The precautionary principle weighs the risk of implementing new technology against the social benefit. For instance, many would argue that cell phones provide huge social benefit, especially in parts of the world without land lines. But people who have used a cell phone for ten years or more have higher rates of malignant brain tumor and acoustic neuromas. Is it worth it? Can the risk be minimized? We need to address these questions.

It is difficult to predict the cumulative effect of all this technology—and that to come. A child born in 2010 will be exposed to vast amounts of ELF and RF radiation. What's the effect of that? How do we even study it? When low-level radiation is so ubiquitous in the world, it's almost impossible to tease out the contribution of any one source.

Given these unknowns, it would seem prudent to err on the side of caution. Are the benefits of something like SmartMeters worth the risk—not just the risk of the meters themselves, but of their contribution to the whole? Whom do they benefit? Have the people affected had anything to say in the decision to install them?

The early warning signs for dangers of asbestos, benzenes, PCBs, tobacco smoke, and many other substances were dismissed as "inconclusive," and delay in acting cost millions of lives. We ignore the warnings on ELF and RF radiation at our peril.

### For More Information...

"BioInitiative Report," <http://www.bioinitiative.org/> (\$2 fee for 24-hour entry into site)  
TURN, The Utility Reform Network, has been following the issue of SmartMeters. <http://www.turn.org/article.php?list=type&type=160>  
EMF Safety Network,  
<http://emfsafetynetwork.org/>  
European Environment Agency,  
[www.eea.europa.eu/highlights/radiation](http://www.eea.europa.eu/highlights/radiation)  
Steingraber, Sandra, *Living Downstream: An Ecologist's Personal Investigation of Cancer and the Environment*. DeCapo Press, 2nd edition, March, 2010.  
SF Environment, *Our City's Policies: The Precautionary Principle*, [http://www.sfenvironment.org/our\\_policies/](http://www.sfenvironment.org/our_policies/)

## Education Is a Right

The National Day of Action to Defend Education was organized by students in twenty-five states. Gray Panthers joined Laney College students October 13 in a CARA rally to save Social Security and stand in solidarity with students fighting against budget cuts. Many students across the country also marched against the homophobia that has caused the deaths of LGBTQ youth. Another student protest in San Francisco will take place **November 16 to disrupt the UC Regents meeting at UCSF Mission Bay** (see back page).

Nationally, right-wing candidates call for eliminating the Department of Education! Is their idea of education, then, to allow private corporations to control public education? UC Berkeley already has a ten-year, \$500 million agreement with BP. BP is also involved in crafting the new *environmental curriculum* to be taught to over six million pupils in some 1,000 districts in California's public schools. This exposes public education not only to dangers of privatization, but places control of developing future alternatives in the fields of energy, health, and agriculture in corporate hands.

### Chart Another Course

Many public schools face closures or forced reorganization into charter schools. Over 800 charter schools operate in California today with less-experienced, non-union teachers at lower pay. They use our existing schools facilities, yet are exempt from most public school district laws and regulations, and enjoy waivers from curriculum requirements. The California Virtual Academy, which allows conversion of private homes into virtual classrooms, is an outgrowth of the charter school movement. CVA morphed from the private, for-profit corporation Knowledge Universe founded by Michael Milken! Nationally, 200,000 students are enrolled in these ersatz schools. Classes are conducted on-line by parents provided with scripts, not credentials. Students confer with an on-line teacher once a week. Oversight is left to the authorizing districts, which lack staff, and thus can't provide adequate supervision. Public education cannot be controlled by private concerns. We cannot maintain a true democracy without free and equal education for everyone.

## The CARA Convention

CARA, the California Alliance for Retired Americans, had its 7th annual convention last month in Oakland. Our resolution "Solidarity with Immigrant Workers and Families" was adopted with much support and no opposition. Michael was re-elected to the CARA Board.

A great panel on health care featured Norman Solomon, speaking on how health activists are increasingly bringing together the issues of single-payer, the war, bank bailouts, and the wealth gap. Michael Lighty, of Calif. Nurses Association, talked about how the Obama Health Plan distorts Medicare, making it more market-driven. On the Social Security panel, Carroll Estes, a nationally known expert on Social Security and elder needs (and a SF Gray Panthers member!) talked about saving Social Security and Medicare by allying with activists against the wars and against the impoverishment of workers. There was a rally on the campus of Laney College directed at younger adults with the theme of "Social Security Is Worth Fighting For!" that was well received by students.

Delegates chose priorities: national and state Single Payer; protect Social Security; change the 2/3 vote requirement for budgets and taxes; and restore benefits lost in budget cuts. Health priorities were: real drug benefits; patient-centered drug labels; and protection and expansion of Medicare. Other priorities chosen were: fairness for public employees receiving Social Security; protecting retirement benefits; and building and preserving affordable housing.



Although CARA originally came from labor, community groups like ours provide most of the growth, and SF Gray Panthers was among the very first community groups in CARA. We've nudged CARA in the progressive direction, particularly with our resolutions against the wars and the Patriot Act, and in solidarity with immigrants. CARA is an ideal partner in our advocacy on State issues. Hopefully, we will have more and broader participation in years to come.

## 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      **NOVEMBER 2010**

## Actions and Events

### Monday, November 1, 9:00—11:00 AM

Protest the Racist Arizona Law SB 1070, and demonstrate that we repudiate this law in SF Federal Appeals Court, 95 - 7th Street

### Thursday, November 4, 6:00 PM

MORE Public Transit Meeting, Riders & Drivers United. Stop fare increases, service cuts, make downtown pay. Centro del Pueblo, 474 Valencia

### Saturday, November 6, 6:30—10:30 PM

Eco-doc Film Premiere, Panel w/Starhawk & Others & Gala: "Permaculture: The Growing Edge" Madrone Studios, 12417 - 15th St. \$20 film @ 7:15, \$30 Gala w/wine & appetizers  
Info@ [www.earthactivisttraining.org](http://www.earthactivisttraining.org)

### Tuesday, November 9, 7:00 PM

Rally & Film Screening: Stop the Execution of Mumia abu Jamal. Important court date Centro del Pueblo, 474 Valencia \$5-\$20, no one turned away.

### Thursday, November 11, 10:00 AM

Senior Action Network General Meeting, MLK Room, U/U Church 1187 Franklin/Geary

### Tuesday, November 16, Time TBA

Act to Save Public Education @ UC Regents Meeting. Join student & worker protests of tuition increases, department and pension cuts UCSF Mission Bay, 3rd & South Streets

### Thursday, November 18, 9:30 AM

Court Hearing for Cisco Tores, last of the SF8 on trial, Hall of Justice, 850 Bryant

### Thursday, November 18, 6:00 PM

MORE Public Transit Meeting, see Nov. 4th Centro del Pueblo, 474 Valencia

