

GRAY PANTHERS OF SAN FRANCISCO



Want to Party?

Annual Holiday Bash & Potluck

December 18, 12:00--3:00 PM

Western Parks Apartment

1280 Laguna, between Ellis and Eddy

Bring food or 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, December 1 & January 5

Civil/Human Rights Comm. 12:30 PM
Monday, December 13 & January 10

Newsletter Committee 12:00 Noon
Thursday, December 2 & January 6

Health Committee 1:00 PM
Tuesday, December 14 & January 11

Program Committee 1:00 PM
Wednesday, December 8 & January 12

Book Club 10:30 AM
No Meeting in December & January 31

November Meeting's Hot Topic

Deficits, commissions, reports. Sound dull, don't they? Not at our November meeting. What started out as a sober discussion of what will probably be in the national Deficit Commission report to be issued in early December, rapidly became a heated debate involving everyone present. Are government deficits bad? Are they really a threat to the US that has to be removed as quickly as possible? Can you really compare government finances with individual family budgets? Is the Washington hysteria about deficits a red herring to take our minds off real problems? Is it an excuse to further shred the safety net? If the concern about the deficit is real, how do we get back to a balanced budget? Who pays what taxes? Are Social Security and Medicare to blame? A wide ranging, passionate discussion ending with our activist question: what can we do about it? Among the suggestions: a speakers' bureau to reach out to community college classes; an article to the *Bay Guardian* and the *East Bay Express* on taxes; protest the *Chronicle* coverage of the Deficit Commission report and demand fair coverage; and our favorite, convene a Bay Area Peoples' Commission on the Deficit to consider governmental services and taxes from the left, perhaps led by Barbara Lee.

Hands Off Social Security & Medicare!

On November 23, CARA gave House Minority Leader Nancy Pelosi and Congressman Xavier Becerra, an ally on the Deficit Commission, a petition with 80,000 signatures saying no cuts to Social Security, Medicare, or Medicaid.



The Deficit Commission makes its recommendations on December 1. The Commission's Co-Chairs want big cuts to all these programs, plus higher middle-class taxes and lower corporate and upper-class taxes. They would respond to a stagnant economy by freezing ALL government spending at the average of 1980-2008 levels, as 70 million seniors enter Medicare and Social Security.

Tell your Congressperson and Senators NO!

Let's Party!

Well, let us keep our spirits up, election or no, and eat, drink and be merry with other Gray Panthers at our famous holiday party. Always awesome food, good conversation, and songs.

This year we return to our old stomping grounds at the Western Parks Apartments. Please join us. And bring your favorite dish to impress us. Wear your dancing shoes, at least in your imagination.

Board of Directors Election

As we reminded you last month, nominations are now open for our Board of Directors. The Board determines policies, actions and affiliations; approves meeting plans; oversees the newsletter; and selects officers for the coming year. Elections are held at our December meeting, usually by acclamation. Only members are eligible to run and vote.

Current Board member Caty is finishing the second year of her second term and is not eligible for re-election. Thank you, Caty, for your service as secretary. Ila, Joanne, Lisa, Earl, and RuthAnne are ongoing members starting the second year of their first term, and Deetje, Michael and Mitzi are ongoing members starting the second year of their second term. Marshall and Barbara are finishing their first two-year term on the Board.

Nominated to date are Marshall and Barbara for a second two-year term and Sonja, Patricia and Sandra as new and/or returning first term members. We welcome new faces and new ideas. Nominate your friends. Nominate yourself. Make your voice heard in 2011!

On the Prowl

On Saturday, November 20, several Gray Panthers attended a Congress of the People and worked on a Democracy Charter—one of several similar efforts happening around the country. We attended workshops on Jobs, Healthcare, Education, Housing, Peace, Progressive Taxation and much more. Suggestions were combined later in a plenary session.

We know where we want to go. Now: strategies and tactics to get there. Stay tuned.

Elections Reflections

National: Republicans gained 63 Representatives, took control of the House. Democrats lost 7 Senators, still control Senate. Major loss—Sen. Russ Feingold of Wisconsin, outstanding progressive.

Strange twists: 59 of the losing Democratic representatives were Blue Dog Democrats (moderate to right of center) and that should strengthen the position of the Democratic Progressive Caucus.

Hope: the progressives will fight harder and louder for social justice and peace, and be less likely to compromise “for the good of the Party.”

Tea Party: Rand Paul (Ken) Marco Rubio (Fla), Mike Lee (Utah), and Kelly Ayott (NH), were elected to the Senate. Christine O’Donnell (Del) and Sharon Angle (Nev) were not. Nikki Haley is the new governor of South Carolina and Susanne Martinez is the new governor of New Mexico. In Alaska, incumbent Senator, Lisa Murkowski (Rep) beat Tea Partier Joe Miller with write-in votes.

CALIFORNIA—STILL (MOSTLY) TRUE BLUE. Our state could not be bought. Whitman and Fiorina both lost. Texas money failed to gut AB 32, the Air Pollution Control law. Voters approved passing the budget by a simple legislative majority instead of two thirds. BUT redistricting lost, legalizing marijuana lost (did you see that more people voted for legalizing than voted for Whitman?), repealing business tax breaks lost, Proposition 22 prohibiting the State from taking earmarked local funds won, Proposition 26 raising the passage of fees on polluters from a simple majority to two thirds won. As of this writing, Kamala Harris holds a slight lead over Steve Cooley in the race for Attorney General, but some ballots must still be counted.

SAN FRANCISCO—SHOULD HAVE DONE BETTER: Good news: Prop B, penalizing City Employees for problems they did not cause, lost. Prop N, taxing multi-million real estate transactions, won. 65% of SF voters supported legalizing marijuana. Bad News: Sit-Lie won. Muni Drivers lost. Hotel taxes won’t be raised.

Observations: One-third of the 2008 US voters

didn’t vote in 2010. It is historically true that voter participation is lower in midterm elections. If the campaign had been more inspiring, offered hope of real change, would more people have voted?

Most of the progressive Congressional representatives who held fast to their principles were re-elected, in spite of massive funding of their opponents. There are, of course, other reasons for their success, like safe districts.

Locally, ranked-choice voting produced some interesting results. We supported it in the past. What do you think now?

Finally, on the November 2010 election: was it a turn to the right, as so widely and gleefully trumpeted? Or is it a repudiation of conciliation and compromise and the continuing recession? Populism is by no means always progressive—witness the Tea Party movement. If there had been a strong, unequivocal New Deal response to the recession—bail out the people before the banks—would the populism have gone left? Was it—is it—possible?

Wealth Tax, Anyone?

In line with our ongoing series suggesting a stiff tax on obscene wealth, here is some information about local incomes. But first, this observation from *Parade*: “In 1978, CEOs at the largest US companies earned 35 times as much as the average worker. Today, that figure is more than 300 to 1, according to the *Harvard Business Review*.”



Local high rollers’ 10-year income:

- Larry Ellison of Oracle Corp., \$1,840,000,000
- Steve Jobs of Apple Inc., \$749,000,000
- Terry Semel, ex-CEO, Yahoo, \$489,000,000
- John Chambers, Cisco Systems, \$393,200,000

And not local:

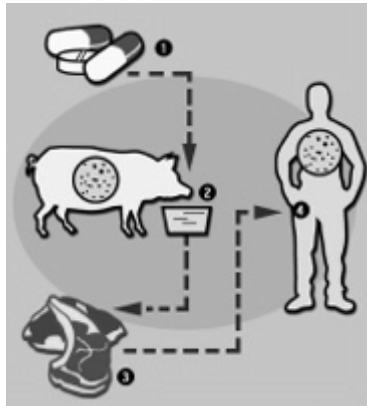
- Angelo Mozilo, Countrywide Financial Corp., \$528,600,000
- Richard Fold of Lehman Bros Holdings Inc., \$456,600,000

The Precautionary Principle and Regulatory Failures: PAMTA

Between 2005 and 2007, the Union of Concerned Scientists (UCS) surveyed scientists at nine federal agencies. The results showed extensive political interference in federal science. The UCS survey found that interference in federal science has weakened the ability of our regulatory agencies to act in the public interest. A USDA scientist commented: "Policy should be based on sound science; results of science should not be diluted or adjusted to justify policy."

Let's look at a current example of regulatory inaction. On March 17, 2009, Rep. Louise Slaughter (D-NY) introduced HR 1549, the Preservation of Antibiotics for Medical Treatment Act (PAMTA). The bill attempts to preserve the effectiveness of antibiotics to treat human illness. At the center of the debate is the use of antibiotics in animal health for non-therapeutic reasons, like growth promotion, not to treat animal illness or disease.

Pigs, chickens and beef produced in the U.S. on concentrated animal feed operations, (CAFOs) are routinely given antibiotics in their feed. By volume, an estimated 70% of the total amount of antibiotics used in the U.S. (35 million pounds), are given to livestock. Many scientists now agree that these practices are rapidly promoting antibiotic-resistance and eroding our ability to treat life-threatening infections in people.



Although these estimates were published in 2001 ("Hogging It!: Estimates of Antimicrobial Abuse in Livestock") by the UCS, little action was taken by the USDA or the FDA that have the authority to restrict the use of antibiotics in animals based on the potential risk to human health. Historically, the FDA's concerns with antibiotics in animal agriculture has been in food residues and human safety levels, not with the widespread practice of non-therapeutic use itself.

The UK banned non-therapeutic agricultural use of antimicrobials in 1969. The FDA, in 1970, proposed similar changes to ban the use of penicillins and tetracyclines in animal feed additives, but the proposal was defeated because of industry opposition. The National Beef, Pork and Chicken Councils, American Meat Institute, American Feed Industry Association and the Animal Health divisions of the major pharmaceuticals have all successfully influenced policy at the FDA and USDA. Further study of the problem has been the regulatory agencies' answer for the past four decades. The EU banned non-therapeutic use in 1998.

Momentum is now building for more stringent government action to regulate the overuse of antibiotics in animal agriculture, one of the biggest contributors to the growing threat of antibiotic resistance. The AMA has now endorsed PAMTA, although the AVMA (American Veterinary Medical Association) continues to oppose it. Government's failure to act for public health continues while new antibiotic-resistant superbugs continue to emerge. As the population ages, this complacency could take us back to an era where some infectious diseases are, sadly, untreatable.

For more information:

www.healthyfoodaction.org

www.keepantibioticsworking.org

Union of Concerned Scientists www.ucsusa.org/

US Hospitals Harbor Drug-Resistant Bugs

Nearly 90,000 people in the US die from hospital-acquired infections each year. Seventy percent of the bacteria responsible for the infections are resistant to at least one of the antibiotics most commonly used to treat them.

The latest scare is NDM-1, a gene carried by some bacteria that are resistant to even "last resort" antibiotics. A bacterium carrying this gene is the most powerful superbug around, and the gene can jump from one bacteria strain to another. It has been detected in the US, Canada, 13 European countries, and is thought to have originated in South Asia.

Curtailing the widespread, improper use of antibi-

UN and Cholera Both Plaguing Haitians

A cholera epidemic in Haiti that by mid-November had infected 17,000 people and killed over a thousand has provoked huge protests against the UN stabilization force known as Minustah. The outbreak is the first in Haiti in over a century, and many believe that UN Nepalese troops are the source of it—the last straw in a long list of grievances against Minustah by Haitian supporters of Fanmi Lavalas and exiled President Aristide, grievances that include shooting of unarmed civilians in Cite Soleil, a shantytown in Port au Prince.

"The UN has been there since 2004, to police the consequences of a coup, a coup that overthrew Jean Bertrand Aristide, who was elected with a huge mandate several years before that," said Peter Hallward, author of *Damming the Flood* about the Aristide years. "It is seen as the force that came in to pacify the people and persuade them to accept this coup that was a violation of their sovereignty."

Cholera has gained a foothold particularly among the 1.2 million people living in crowded tent cities since the January earthquake. 30-40% of these camps have no clean water and no toilets, and rapid spread of the disease, which is transmitted by fecal contamination, is feared and expected. Many camp-dwellers don't have soap to wash their hands and cooking utensils. The Pan-American Health Organization says the cholera outbreak could kill as many as 10,000 people and sicken 200,000 in the coming year. Desperately needed foreign aid promised after the earthquake that might have restored water treatment and sewage systems and helped to rebuild hospitals and clinics has not materialized, despite commitments by governments and generous donations from across the world.

In the midst of this is the presidential election on November 28, presumably overseen by these same UN troops. The largest and most popular political party, Fanmi Lavalas, has been barred from participating. Hallward says Haiti "didn't need the UN before, it didn't need the coup ... The fundamental problem here is that the coup overturned the political system, the continuity of a government that was trying to improve the situation of the people."

Maybe it's time the UN went home.

Holiday Greetings to Lynne Stewart

Our good friend Lynne Stewart is still in prison, after resentencing on July 15 to 10 years for, as one of her supporters put it, "doing her job honorably, ethically, and admirably with distinction for 30 years." The sentence is on appeal.



Let's deluge her with holiday cards and letters! Write: Lynne Stewart #53504-054 MCC-NY 150 Park Row New York, NY NY 10007

Protect Independent Media!

The news accounts of the demonstration against the outrageous Mehserle verdict illustrate the danger of corporate coverage versus independent, progressive reporting. *The Chronicle*, the *Examiner*, and MSN relied primarily on information from the Oakland police. Live coverage at the site from Andrea Pritchett of Cop Watch and as a National Lawyers Guild observer contradicts and exposes lies of the press. She kept reporting live on KPFA until her arrest. There was *no order to disperse*.

Instead the approximately 150 people eventually arrested were corralled in place and informed that this was now a crime scene and they were to be arrested. Will they get a longer sentence for protesting than Mehserle got for killing Oscar Grant? News media were permitted to leave; many did so only to be kept away and unable to witness. Helicopters circled overhead, SWAT from Hayward, an armored vehicle, police from Palo Alto, Santa Clara stood rows deep with Oakland PD to surround the protestors. The Oakland PD violated their own guidelines by pointing weapons directly at the protestors, then shouted through bullhorns several times: "Do not Resist!"

We must reply that we will always resist injustice!

Hail and Farewell Kay Och

May 17, 1916—Oct. 30, 2010

Kay was a proud member of the Gray Panthers of San Francisco, brave advocate for Peace, generous activist to the Humanist Movement and fighter for equal rights for all. Worked on the newsletter too!

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 **DECEMBER 2010**

Actions and Events

Friday, December 3—Thursday, December 9

“Saint Misbehavin’,” the Wavy Gravy movie
7:15 & 9:15 PM daily; 2:00 & 4:00, Sat., Sun.;
2:00 Wed. Red Vic Movie House, 1727 Haight.
Admission: \$9 adults, \$6 seniors and children

Friday, December 3, 3:00—4:00 PM

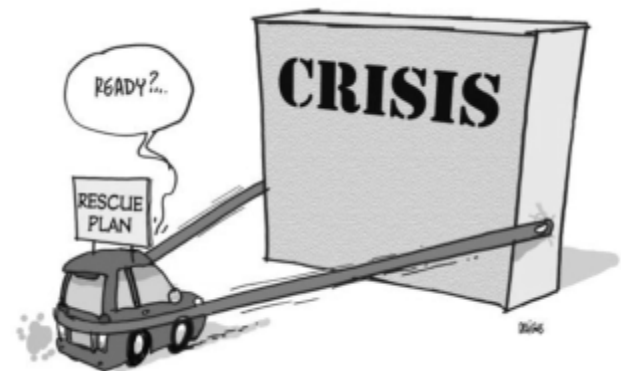
Ship of Dreams: Kanrin Maru, 150 Years of Hope,
Struggle and Friendship. Excerpts from Mary Sano
dance/theater collaborative production with music
on the 1860 voyage of the first emissaries from
Japan. Main Library, Koret Auditorium

Thursday, December 9, 9:00—Noon

Senior Action Network Holiday Party
Unitarian/Universalist Center, 1187 Franklin/
Geary

Saturday, December 11, 11:00 AM—1:30 PM

OWL Holiday Festivities & Election of new
board members, Pot Luck, Flood Building,
870 Market Street, Room 975



“Cheers to a new year and another chance for
us to get it right.”—Oprah Winfrey

