

# GRAY PANTHERS OF SAN FRANCISCO



Women demonstrating against the Mubarak regime at Civic Center, San Francisco

## ISSUES FACING WOMEN OF ALL AGES

Panel Discussion

General Membership Meeting

Tuesday, March 15, 12:30—3:00 PM

Unitarian Universalist Center

1187 Franklin (near Geary)

Bring a snack and your activist stories 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, March 2 & April 6

Newsletter Committee 12:00 Noon  
Thursday, March 3 & April 7

Civil/Human Rights Comm. 12:30 PM  
Monday, March 7 & April 11

Health Committee 1:00 PM  
Tuesday, March 8 & April 12

Program Committee 1:00 PM  
Wednesday, March 9 & April 13

Book Club 10:30 AM  
Monday, March 28 & April 25

## February Meeting

When Hene Kelly spoke to our February general meeting, her topic was how to counteract the lies about Social Security, how to protect its future, and how to fight the attack on the safety net which protects all our people.

The discussion that followed centered on what to do and how to do it. Many of the articles in this issue of the newsletter are reports of just that—what to do and how to do it. Your input is needed.

## Strengthen Social Security

*The following Letter to the Editor appeared in the San Francisco Chronicle on January 31.*

In the State of the Union address, while speaking at length on deficit reduction, President Obama referenced a bipartisan solution to strengthen Social Security.

The program deserves far more robust support. For 75 years, Social Security has been America's most successful anti-poverty program. It is the most fiscally responsible part of our federal budget, paying entirely for itself and adding nothing to the deficit. The funds surplus is expected to reach \$4.3 trillion by 2023, and the program is able to pay full benefits through 2037.

About 85 percent of Americans oppose Social Security cuts. There is no reason it should be part of any deficit reduction program.

Yet the program faces threats from Congress. John Boehner calls for cuts in benefits and an increase in the eligibility age, delaying benefits for future recipients and unfairly burdening America's most vulnerable populations. Some seek to privatize the system, putting it into the hands of Wall Street, the very people who created our current economic crisis.

President Obama appears to oppose these ideas, and as vice chair of the Gray Panthers national board, I urge Congress to lift the cap on taxable income, guaranteeing the benefits promised to current and future beneficiaries.—*Brooke Hollister*

## Women's Rights Here and There

In Egypt, we see women's rights hopefully advancing (see page 4) while here at home we see attempts, both nationally and at the state level, to reverse the historic advances in women's rights that have been made in the United States in recent decades (see page 3).

In honor of International Women's Day, join with us at the March monthly meeting for a panel discussion of these issues—with audience input. Women of all ages are under attack.. What to do? How about: STAND UP FIGHT BACK.

## Bowles! Simpson! Stop Using Deficit as a Phony Excuse to Cut Social Security!



Monterey, Feb. 21, CARA, Raging Grannies, the Monterey Labor Council, Gray Panthers, SAN and others confronted the lies of Deficit Commission Co-Chairs Alan Simpson and Erskine Bowles, with speeches, chants, songs, and leaflets challenging them to answer some questions:

If they're talking about reducing the deficit, and their Report admits that Social Security does not contribute to the deficit, why are they even talking about Social Security? Why would they cut benefits for half of future US retirees? Raise their retirement age? Make their COLA not match real inflation? And why would they speed up cuts to Medicare? Freeze Medicaid payments to States? Why raise taxes on working people and lower them on corporations and the rich? Why would they limit the revenue the government can raise?

These proposals are in Congress now. We need Wisconsin all over the United States now!

## Save State Services for Seniors, Disabled

Gov. Brown's plan for a June ballot to extend \$12 billion in temporary taxes to help solve a \$26 billion budget shortfall is better than Schwarzenegger's all-cuts budgets, but it is not enough to save vital services for California's seniors, people with disabilities, and kids. It still eliminates the Adult Day Health Centers that allow frail seniors to live at home instead of nursing homes; cuts CalWORKs welfare for kids in poverty after four years; and limits doctor visits and prescriptions for Medi-Cal patients.

California needs more new revenue than the \$12 billion from extending temporary taxes. California is the only oil-producing state that doesn't tax drilling. An oil severance tax would raise \$1 billion from producers, not consumers. Reinstate a 11% income tax on the highest earners. Eliminate the corporate tax loopholes passed in 2009. Require enterprise zones and other corporate tax breaks to demonstrate job creation. Eliminate corporate property tax loopholes. Brown's excuse for extending only existing temporary taxes is that ballot measures for new taxes would require a 2/3 vote of legislators, but budget hawks are pressing to require the 2/3 vote for extending existing taxes, anyway. We need to push for the revenues we really need from business and the richest.

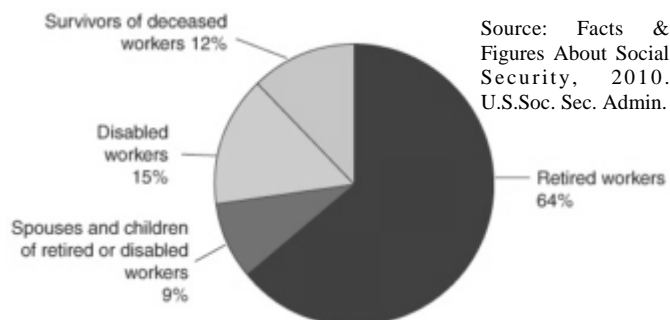


CARA, Gray Panthers, Raging Grannies and others demonstrate at the Federal Building on January 26 against the privatization of Social Security, for raising the cap on income subject to Social Security tax, and for jobs programs for the unemployed.

## Talk to Your Kids About Social Security the *other people* who get Social Security

The official name of Social Security is actually The Old Age, Survivors, and Disability Insurance Program. It is an *insurance* policy for retirees, their survivors who are spouses and children, and people who become physically or mentally disabled. It is both life insurance and disability insurance. Like any insurance policy, you pay for it in advance and when you need to collect it, it is paid back to you in monthly benefits. Social Security pays more benefits to children than any other federal program—over six million kids. It sends a monthly check to more than eight million disabled workers (30% of workers are disabled before they get old enough to retire). One in every six families gets a Social Security check. More than a third of these are NOT retired workers.

Who benefits: widows and widowers; minor children; disabled of any age; seniors, including spouses and ex-spouses.



Source: Facts & Figures About Social Security, 2010. U.S.Soc. Sec. Admin.

Social Security is America's Family Protection Plan.

## House Blocks Family Planning Funds

On February 18, the House voted to defund Planned Parenthood and the entire Title X budget which helps pay for birth control, screening and treatment for STDs, breast and cervical cancer screening, prenatal care, sex education, and vasectomies for men. About 4.7 million Americans get care from clinics funded by Title X. The amendment, authored by Rep. Mike Pence (R-IN), will end preventive care and birth control for poor women if left intact.

Pence portrayed this as a victory for anti-abortion forces, but according to Cecile Richards, president of Planned Parenthood, no federal funding has gone to abortion in 30 years. Rep. Barbara Lee (D-CA) called it a "war against women."

## Report from Cairo

Feb.12, 2011. My friend Amal in Cairo was jubilant when I talked to her this morning. She had gone to the airport last night (Cairo is 10 hours ahead of us) to pick up her grandson from Seattle, and moments before his plane arrived, the news came through: Mubarak had resigned! They drove directly to Tahrir Square. All the way there, horns were honking, people hanging out of car windows cheering and waving flags. The Square was packed, not an inch of space, young people and old, Christians, Muslims, rich and poor, all hugging and dancing and chanting and cheering.

“We did it! And with no violence on the part of the demonstrators,” Amal said. “At the Presidential Palace, where Mubarak’s special guards were lined up, people kept talking to the soldiers, giving them flowers, kissing them. The soldiers had tears in their eyes. They turned their guns around. Egyptians abhor violence.”

She said there were three things we wouldn’t have heard on the mainstream media: 1) Not a single Christian church in Cairo was damaged. 2) On the day the pro-democracy demonstrators were attacked, a line of Christians stood between the water cannons and the Muslims at prayer. 3) That Coptic Christian church bombing in Alexandria on New Year’s Eve that killed 23 people and was blamed on Islamic extremists? The ex-Minister of the Interior admitted instigating the bombing. “You can’t blame me,” he said, “I was just following orders.” It was an effort to sow dissension between Christians and Muslims and evoke the specter of al Qaeda.

This morning, someone called Amal and said she was going down to help clean up Tahrir Square. “It brought me to tears,” my friend said. “Cairo is one of the dirtiest cities in the world,



Christians protecting Muslims at prayer, Tahrir Square, January 28. NevineZake

garbage in the streets, nobody ever picks up anything. For people to want to clean up, it means they’re taking ownership, they believe the streets belong to the people again.” —Susan Lyon



San Franciscans support pro-democracy protest in Egypt

## How to Make Revolution

Unions striking, doctors, lawyers marching, unemployed people, middle-class people, parents, children—people make revolution. Women and youth hold leadership roles joining throngs of people in Tahrir Square to demand an end to the Mubarak regime. During weeks of revolt people set up their own neighborhood patrols, brought food to the Square, set up medical stations and media coverage. Spontaneous discussion circles continued day and night and as ideas emerged they were taken to the stage to be voted up or down. An under thirty generation that has never known equality or freedom used their technical savvy to spread rebellion and counter the state-controlled media lies. On Feb. 11th, the people’s first demand was met—Mubarak resigned. A world of possibilities of social, economic and political change opens up in the Middle East.

The US dictated Egypt’s role in the Middle East, and since 1978 has sent \$35 billion in military hardware to prop up Mubarak (who siphoned off at least billions for himself). We can support the revolution by demanding an end to US military aid to Egypt, and insisting that our government stop trying to control Egypt and the Middle East. The course of revolution which started in Tunisia and has sent hope to all people is not certain today. But the role, and people’s control, of media is pivotal in any resistance and must be protected.

In response, here in the US, Senators Collins and Lieberman have introduced a bill to give the president authority to use a “kill switch” on the internet in cases of “national emergency.” Does our government fear the voice of the people? Would demonstrations in DC be “a national emergency?”

*We the people must control our social media.*

## Wealth Tax Anyone?

This article is abridged from an editorial in *The Nation* magazine, December 13, 2010, by Len Friedman, Professor of Constitutional Law at Hofstra Law School:

“Is it really necessary that the poorest among us give up benefits or pay more sales taxes to reduce the deficit, rather than have the richest make a fair contribution?...One obvious place to look is at the wealth of the top five percent of the population....The top 1% of the population now owns 35% of the total wealth of the nation. (They owned 29.5 in 1979.) The next 4% own 27% of the total wealth. So together, the top 5% own 62% of the total wealth of the country.



“What does this mean in actual numbers? As of March 31, the total net worth of all American households was \$54.6 trillion, according to studies made by the Federal Reserve Board. The top 1% consists of about 3 million households, each with a net worth of at least \$8.3 million. The total net worth of that group is 35% of \$54.6 trillion, or \$19.1 trillion....Wouldn't that amount be an appropriate target for a federal tax?...Many European countries have a wealth tax—that is, a tax on the total net worth of each household which must be paid not just at the time of death but annually....

”Suppose such a wealth tax were imposed on the top 1% of households. It would raise \$191.1 billion each year (1% of \$19.1 trillion), a significant attack on the deficit. If we extended the tax to the top 5%, we could raise \$338.5 billion a year....So what would a wealth tax mean?...If a very rich person had a net worth of \$10 billion, he or she would have to pay 1%, or \$100 million, each year to the government. In the face of the nation's stark financial problems, our richest Americans can afford this modest diminution of their wealth. And they certainly would have no right to complain, since it was previous government actions that enabled them to accumulate it.”

Instead we have the abominable tax law passed in December that continues all the Bush tax cuts for the rich. Let's change it.

## Wisconsin Workers Rock Capitol

An estimated 55,000 public employees and their supporters packed into the Wisconsin State Capitol on February 19, the sixth day in a massive protest against



Governor Scott Walker's bill to end collective bargaining on benefits and working conditions for state employees. “Kill the bill,” “Workers' rights are worth the fight,” they chanted, from school teachers to fire fighters to janitors.

Wisconsin was the first state in the nation where public employees won collective bargaining rights, and Walker's bill, if successful, is seen as a prototype for states across the country suffering budget shortfalls from the financial sector melt-down that they hope to recoup from salaries and benefits of public employees. Ironically, Wisconsin was not among them until Walker took office, according to Josh Healy in *The Progressive* (2-18-11):

The state legislature's fiscal bureau estimated the state would end the year with a \$121 million balance. Walker claims there is a \$137 million deficit — but it is not because of an increase in worker wages or benefits. According to the *Capital Times*, it is because “Walker and his allies pushed through \$140 million in new spending for corporate and special-interest groups in January.”

As of this writing, Gov. Walker is refusing to budge and has threatened to call out the National Guard. Fourteen Democrats from the State Senate have fled the state to deny Republicans a quorum, and the governor has sent state troopers in hot pursuit. The workers are standing firm and calling for solidarity demonstrations across the country.



We salute the workers of Wisconsin and all who support them. The financial sector should pay for its own recklessness, not the public or public employees.

## 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

**MARCH 2011**

## Actions and Events

**Thursday, March 3, 7:00 PM—11:00 PM**

**Friday thru Sunday, Noon—11:00 PM**

San Francisco Green Film Festival on living  
sustainably on the planet, film showcases, panels  
and workshops, networking & special events  
Landmark Theatres. One Embarcadero Center,  
Info: sfgreenfilmfest.org or 415-742-1394

**Tuesday, March 8, International Women's Day**

Wear a yellow flower  
Mothers March Against Poverty and Violence  
Gather 24th & Mission. 4:30 PM  
Info: 626-4114

**Thursday, March 10, 9:00—Noon**

SAN Monthly Meeting,  
Unitarian Universalist Center,  
1187 Franklin/Geary, Lunch \$2.00  
Info: 415-546-1333

**Thursday, March 10, 1:00 PM**

CARA CAT monthly meeting, ILWU HQ,  
1188 Franklin, between O'Farrell & Geary

**Thursday, March 10, 7:30 PM**

*Film Showing: The History of Struggle in Egypt  
Nasser 56*, the period in 1956 when Nasser seized  
the Suez canal, with discussion of the historical  
significance of the recent popular uprising in  
Egypt. ATA, 992 Valencia/21st, Info 821-6545

**Saturday, March 19, 11:00 AM—3:00 PM**

Day of Action to Resist the War Machine  
Nationwide demos on the 8th Anniversary of the  
Invasion of Iraq. "No to War & Colonial  
Occupation" Meet and march in solidarity with  
UNITE-HERE Local 2 to boycotted hotels  
UN Plaza. Info: ANSWER office 821-6545

**Saturday, March 26, 10:00 AM—Noon**

OWL Monthly Meeting, Business Meeting @ 10  
Program @ 11, 870 Market Street

