

GRAY PANTHERS OF SAN FRANCISCO

Occupy the Office



Celebrate the Solstice Holiday Party

Saturday, December 17, 12:30—3:00 PM
Gray Panthers Office
1182 Market, Room 203 @ 8th Street & Hyde

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 7 & January 4

Civil/Human Rights Comm. 11:00 AM
Wednesday, December 14 & January 11

Newsletter Committee 12:00 Noon
Thursday, December 8 & January 5

Program Committee 1:00 PM
Wednesday, December 14 & January 11

Health, Healthcare, Environment Com.
Info: call 215-7575

Book Club 10:30 AM
Monday, December 26 & January 29

November Meeting Another Way of Doing Politics

Our November meeting took a look at Latin America, with special emphasis on Chile. But it was even more a look beyond elections at alternative paths of democracy, peoples assemblies, ways to consolidate election victories and keep them progressive. It started with the first part of a video about the Movement for Justice in El Barrio in New York City, organizing block by block with street corner meetings to listen to neighborhood people list their actual problems and what they wanted done to solve them. That was followed by a discussion of Chile pre Allende and Pinochet, post Pinochet and neoliberalism and today. This led to a summary of peoples movements in Latin America. with a special report by Antonio on El Salvador.

Strikingly like our Occupy approach, a common theme throughout was how populist leaders have to be constantly pushed to the left by mass action and not lionized as “great Leaders” but kept part of a movement.

Single Payer Now

One of the highlights of the Single Payer Now meeting on November 19th was Oregon Dr. Marc Sapir who did a modified striptease discarding his sweater, then his tie, then his shirt, to show his Mad As Hell Doctors t-shirt. He was one of several doctors who reported on the 24th annual meeting in October of the Physicians For a National Health Program (PNHP). Dr. Harold Abrons, President of PNHPCA, said there are now Single Payer bills in the legislatures of 20 states. PHNT is concentrating on recruiting more health professionals and on reforming health delivery systems. Michael Lyon described the growing opposition to massive deportation of undocumented immigrants at the APHA convention he attended. The Burma sisters of the CA Health Professional Student Alliance asked for support for their annual statewide meeting in Sacramento to lobby for SB 810.

Single Payer Now activities: participation in the December 2nd SF Day of Action for Medicare for All; January 7th annual potluck; bus to Sacramento on January 9th to lobby with the students for SB 810. For more information, call 415-695-7891.

December Party!

Expect fun, fellowship and food (always good) at our annual Holiday Fiesta at the Gray Panther office on December 17. Bring your favorite dish to share. Don't miss this great chance to look back at 2011 and prepare for what looks to be a very exciting 2012.

We will attend to one important piece of business amid the rejoicing: elect the 2012 Board. of Directors. So far nominated for the Board: Ila, Joanne, David, Earl, Ruthanne, Harriet, Harold, Lurilla, Susan, Natalie, and Caty. Nominations will be taken right up until the election. You can nominate anybody. How about you?

Come to Our January Meeting On a New Future for Gray Panthers Tuesday January 17, 12:30 PM

January's meeting, traditionally about the new year's work, is really important this year. Here's why: On one hand, we're facing an unsustainable financial situation that we all must change soon to survive. On the other hand, the Occupy movement signals a national upsurge of activism that challenges authority in the streets, and moves the political conversation beyond the confines of organized labor and the Democratic Party.

Recently, some Gray Panthers and friends met. There were old members and some very new ones. We overwhelmingly felt we should meet the financial challenge and grow. The vibrant discussion included ideas on ways to raise money from members and the public, reduce expenses, and use our organization's office, office person, and website more effectively. But the more exciting ideas were about engaging current members and recruiting new members. We all wanted to take a fresh look at how we work and narrow the focus of our actual activities, selecting and focusing on a few key issues, while maintaining the strongly progressive positions that define us as Gray Panthers.

You need to bring your ideas to this important meeting in January. And come to the December 17th Holiday party, where we all elect our new Board who will carry this forward with your help. Have a great holidays, and we'll see you soon.

Growling with the Occupiers

Lisa and Michael of the SF Gray Panthers joined the UC Berkeley protest in San Francisco.

OccupyCAL, joined by OccupyOAKLAND massed at OccupySF, at Justin Herman Plaza, to protest the Regents' long-standing policies of unloading UC costs onto students' backs, instead of raising revenues from the 1% and corporations, particularly those that benefit from UC research. Speakers emphasized that the fee hikes were excluding minority, low- and middle-income students from the state's higher educational system, re-segregating and returning minority enrollment to levels prior to pre-1960s Civil Rights gains.

The large group then marched through San Francisco's financial district, picking up more demonstrators along the way. Periodically, the marchers sat down in city streets for short speeches and chants. Stops included Wells Fargo's main office and the offices of Regent Richard Blum, husband of Senator Dianne Feinstein.

Arriving at Bank of America's main office, we swarmed into the bank, completely halting business. After 20 minutes of chanting, most of us left to avoid arrest. About 100 remained and set up a tent in the bank, effectively occupying BoA. We formed a picket line so as to line the street in the area where police would be loading the arrestees into vans—to document, monitor, and hopefully prevent, abuse of any marchers. The arrest process took longer than expected, so we sat down in the street and chanted while one line of riot police drew closer to us. An OccupyCAL organizer used call and response, (“the people’s mike”) to remind police that unfair bank practices also hurt them, that we were peacefully occupying the street, and asked the police not to attack the assembly. Amazingly, that police line filed off.

Both Lisa and I were impressed with the seriousness, courage, wide-reaching perspective, and effective organization and implementation of this movement's clear purpose and message. Both of us felt that we had been remiss in not engaging with the Occupy Movement, and hadn't been sure how we could connect with it. We found it was easy, just jump in. The water's fine.

Another Occupy in 1932

In 1932, the Bonus Army occupied Washington, D.C. Veterans of WWI came with their families by the thousands to set up encampments throughout the city - many were homeless. They came to demand a promised bonus of an *extra dollar* a day for military service. Service pay was \$1 a day from which they had to buy their uniforms and War Bonds to support the war! At its height, 65,000 people created a multiracial city together, a library, a post office, a newspaper, sharing meals, music and cultures. They were non-violent, and like occupy today, presented a functioning representation of the possibility for an ideal society. Roy Wilkins visited the camp and saw it as model for racial integration. Author Paul Dixon in *The Bonus Army: An American Epic*, states this unity of races was the primary reason behind the brutal attack on the encampment. Army Chief of Staff Douglas MacArthur put tanks in the streets, led troops with fixed bayonets in an attack on fellow soldiers and set fire to tents. Many across the country were shocked.

Though the bonus encampments existed only two months, they are a legacy of inspiration. In the depths of depression and despair of 1932,



the Bonus Army brought hope, and eventually passage of the GI Bill of 1944.

Veteran's Day, originally called “Armistice Day” in 1918, celebrated the end of World War I and an end to all war! On Veteran's Day 2011, veterans marched to honor two peacefully demonstrating veterans injured by cops, Scott Olsen and Kayvan Sabeghi. Richmond Mayor Gayle McLaughlin stated at Occupy Oakland: "I choose to honor our veterans, not only on Veteran's Day, but daily, by supporting an end to military warfare to prevent further fighting and dying in needless wars."

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i PRESENTE!



School of the Americas Watch (SOAW)

Over 5,000 people converged at the gates of Ft. Benning, GA, Nov 18 –20 for the 21st annual demand to close the SOA, the Pentagon Training School for Latin America militaries. President Obama could close it by executive order (and save \$18,000,000 a year). Among other things, SOA trained the Contras for the murderous wars in Central America. SOAW has asked the governments of Latin America not to send people to the school for training. So far, Argentina, Uruguay, Costa Rica, and Bolivia have agreed to the call. Below is a look at a few of the countries victimized by the Contra, and how these countries are doing today.

El Salvador Today

President Mauricio Funes, a moderate populist elected in 2009, set precedent when he acknowledged crimes committed by the government and the military during El Salvador's twelve year civil war. Funes memorialized the 75,000 people killed in the war which ended in 1992.

El Salvadorans have depleted resources and their efforts are constantly undermined by the conservative ARENA party, which dominates the legislature, and by the IMF, the World Bank, CAFTA and probably by the over 300 U.S. firms located in El Salvador.

Many ARENA party types, leftovers from the civil war period, are protected by amnesty laws put in effect at the time of the 1992 peace agreement.. Unusual for a woman, Zaira Navas, Inspector General of El Salvador's National Civilian Police, is actively pursuing war criminals.

Spain's Supreme Court and Human Rights organizations have accused nine former military as war criminals. They are subject to arrest unless they are in El Salvador, where they are protected by the Amnesty Law..

The Ministry of Agriculture is trying NOT to import staple foods (that can be produced by Salvadoran farmers) and to end the influx of genetically modified seeds. U.S. imports since CAFTA have

made the challenging situation in agriculture worse. The Ministry provides some 350,000 farmers (*campesinos*) with seeds and fertilizer and counsel so production can increase; and also provides beans, rice and milk to schools.

The government tried to privatize health care, but protests stopped them and today health care teams visit in rural areas. Remarkably, some property reforms gave *back* two to five acre parcels to farmers, but critics say that process could be expanded; most farmers are still not on their own land. Deforestation and soil erosion continues because farmers are clearing trees so they can produce more even though they need the wood for heat.

Surely the worst company doing business in El Salvador is the Canadian firm, Pacific Rim, which is set on mining gold using cyanide and precious water to leach the gold from the water, polluting the Lempa River, the main source of water and hydroelectric power for El Salvador.

Positive but fragile: *By legal process, through a CAFTA regulation or option El Salvador stopped the company from proceeding, because no proper environmental assessment was done.*

However in response, Pacific Rim found *another* clause in CAFTA that allows them to sue the country for \$77,000,000 for obstructing their business and to cover their losses. Activists opposing company activities have been killed/murdered.



Honduras

Staging ground for the Contras in the 80s. After his election in the late 2000s, moderate populist Manuel Zelaya began moving left. In June, 2009, the Honduras military (SOA graduates?) staged a coup, deporting Zelaya and installing Roberto Micheletti in power. The Organization of American States (OAS) promptly expelled Honduras. Months later the illegal Micheletti government held a highly dubious election, which declared Porfirio Lobo president. The US recognized it as legitimate and normalized suspended relations with Honduras, including military aid. Since then, four new US military bases have been built there, over 200 members of the resistance have been killed, a major attack on the teachers union and for privatization of schools has been mounted. Reporters Without Borders named Honduras the most dangerous country in the world for journalists after eight reporters were killed in Lobo's first six months in office. In a further attempt to legitimize the Lobo government, Zelaya was allowed to return in May. He was welcomed home by thousands of supporters, reported as the largest mass demonstration in Honduras' history. Four days later, the OAS reinstated Honduras, 32 to one. Only Ecuador voted NO, declaring that Honduras does not meet the requirements to rejoin, namely democracy, rule of law and respect for human rights.

Nicaragua—Ortega Reelected

In the 1980s, the Sandinistas threw out right wing dictator and elected Daniel Ortega president. The US funded Contras, led by graduates of the SOA, mounted a bloody nine years long revolt that eventually led to the election of three right wing governments whose campaigns were heavily financed and frequently run by the US. But in 2006, Nicaragua brought back the Sandinistas and Ortega. Their successes in reducing poverty, raising the minimum wage, providing free education, free health care and food self sufficiency led to the overwhelming reelection of Ortega last month. So the US is planning for the future, funding three US Agency for International Development (USAID) "democracy building" programs to train anti-Sandinista forces. If you see reports in the US media quoting APN, IPADE, Ethics and Transparency, Movement for Nicaragua or Grupo Fundamos, question their accuracy. These are all groups financed directly or indirectly by your tax money. More info can be found on www.nicanet.org.

“The United States appear to be destined by Providence to plague America with misery in the name of liberty.”

Simon Bolivar, 1829

He also called the USA the Colossus of the North.

Gray Panthers of San Francisco

1182 Market Street, Room 203
San Francisco, CA 94102-4916
415-552-8800
graypanther-sf@sbcglobal.net
<http://graypantherssf.igc.org>

Nonprofit Org.
U.S. Postage
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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

ADDRESS SERVICE
REQUESTED

Call the office for membership information.

Labor Donated **DECEMBER 2011**

Actions and Events

December 1—December 30,

General Collections, Main Library, 3rd Floor
Celebrate the Centennial of California Womans Suffrage, exhibit, stories, songs ,pictures, celebrate the long, long fight.

Friday, December 2, 2:00 PM—8:00 PM

SF Day of Action: Stop the Cuts! Tax the Rich! To Hell with the Super-committee!

2:00 PM Occupy the Federal Building, Mission and 7th; **3:30 PM**, Occupy Wall St. West with demos at financial centers; **5:00– 8:00 PM** Picket Hyatt Hotel, 5 Embarcadero, then rally/concert

Saturday, December 3, 10:00 AM—4:00 PM

Fukushima, The Lessons of Nuclear Power and the Media, a day-long educational conference on the Fukushima melt-down, role of the media in coverage, how this crisis impacts development of nuclear power, and the education of the public. SF State University, Burk Hall 28, 1600 Halloway. info: No Nukes Action website

Monday, December 5, 10:00 AM

City Hall Room 240, City Operations & Neighborhood Services Committee of the Board of Supervisors to hear Avalos' Resolution to bring the war dollars home

Thursday, December 8, 10.00 AM

SAN Monthly Meeting. Unitarian Universalist Center, 1187 Franklin/Geary, Lunch \$2.00

No CARA CAT Monthly meeting in December

Happy New Year!
Get Ready To Occupy
A New World in 2012

