

GRAY PANTHERS OF SAN FRANCISCO



Let's Talk About Taxes
General Membership Meeting
Tuesday, March 20, 12:30—3:00 PM
Unitarian Universalist Center
1187 Franklin @ 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, March 7 & April 4

Civil/Human Rights Comm. 12:00 AM
Wednesday, March 14 & April 11

Newsletter Committee 12:00 Noon
Thursday, March 8 & April 5

Program Committee 1:00 PM
Wednesday, March 14 & April 11

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

Book Club 10:30 AM
Monday, March 26 & April 30

February Meeting—Occupy in SF

Our February Meeting highlighted some of the Occupy activities in SF, especially in Bernal Heights and SF State. Occupy Bernal concentrates on foreclosure, running foreclosure workshops, providing information and advice on what to do when your home is endangered, shaming the local B of A and Wells Fargo branches at demonstrations, shouting down property auctioneers. Alberto del Rio, their spokesperson, really personalized the whole thing by describing his 2 1/2 year struggle to modify his loan which very well may end in his childhood home being sold at auction March 1 on the steps of City Hall. Ginny Jordan described WOW—Wild Old Women: how they accidentally got their name, how they organized to help people protect their homes, how they find copies of eviction lists on line and visit those people with information on how to get help.

Lalo from Occupy SF State prefaced his report with, "The culprit is Capitalism" saying the movement is actively indignant at campuses across the state, participating in the National Defense of Public Education and Social Services on March 1 at Civic Center, following that with a 4-day march to Sacramento. The Gray Panthers will table at the March 1 demonstration at the corner of Larkin and Fulton, by the Asian Art Museum.

No SB 810 in 2012

SB 810, the California Universal Healthcare Act, was not brought up for a Senate vote on January 31 because it did not have the required 21 votes for passage. Six Democratic Senators voted no or did not vote. (All 15 Republicans have always voted no). This means there will be no legislative action until Senator Leno brings it up for reconsideration in January, 2013.

This is a disappointing and unexpected setback. But we supporters of Single Payer Now will spend the coming year strengthening and broadening our efforts so that next January we will be successful.

Single Payer Now and Medicare for All activists were part of the demonstration outside the Obama speech at Masonic Auditorium on February 16.

In March Let's Talk About Taxes

In the coming year, taxes are going to be on everybody's mind and on the ballot—at least two initiatives already qualified for November and possibly as many as four will be competing for your attention and your vote. So what are these measures all about and will the Gray Panthers take action on any of them, and if so how?

It's your money. Come join the discussion at the March GP meeting.

UDHR Skit Goes to School

For the first time the Civil Liberties/Human Rights Committee presented its Universal Declaration of Human Rights program to school kids—Ms. Ruth Holsen's 8th grade civic affairs class at James Lick Middle School. Previously our many appearances have been before adult audiences. The kids listened attentively for the most part and then broke into groups to discuss the issues with the presenters. We were immensely impressed with their comments, their knowledge and sophistication. We hope to appear before many more similar audiences. Our thanks to Pilar and Ms. Holsen for their support



Let's All Go to Oakland March 6th

On Tuesday, March 6, at 7 PM Alan Simpson and Erskine Bowles will speak to the moneyed crowd at the Oakland Paramount Theatre at Broadway and 20th Street. Entry fee: \$500. Why do we care?

Simpson and Bowles were leaders of the now defunct deficit commission who strongly advocated cutting Medicare, Medicaid and Social Security to balance the national budget. Now the two of them are touring the country, taking their case to the wealthy. The Occupy Movement has shifted the public debate from austerity for the 99% to taxing the rich. But behind the scenes and in the Congress, the fight to protect the 1% and penalize the rest is alive and well. There will be a mass protest outside the theatre. Those of us going from SF will meet at our office at 6:15 and take Bart together. Wear a GP hat or other GP ID.

Occupy Spring

Despite the coordinated military police attacks on all Occupy camps around the country, the energy of this movement continues to build. From the mountains of Ravenswood, W. Virginia to the streets in the Bernal neighborhood of San Francisco, elders are joining the spirit of Occupy.

In the freezing winter, dozens of retirees in Ravenswood protested Century Aluminum for cutting over 500 retirees out of their medical insurance. After moving the plant out of the state and promising health coverage for retirees, Century terminated health benefits for retirees eligible for Medicare and followed 6 months later by terminating retirees who were not yet eligible for Medicare. The CEO however got his \$6.2 million goodbye package. Century later returned to Ravenswood and asked the state for \$20 million to reopen the plant. The state said first settle with the retirees.

WOW (Wild Old Women) of Occupy Bernal picket at BofA Thursdays at Mission & 29th. BofA and Wells Fargo account for most of the homes in foreclosure in the area in the past 3 years.

The Occupy movement encompasses the employed, unemployed, under-employed, students, retirees, homeless, veterans, teachers, nurses; people in cities and rural areas of this country. Some take direct action to stop evictions, protest police brutality, and



join with labor shutting down ports. Others organize for legislative changes. Stay tuned as Occupy from around

the country will *occupy* Washington, D.C. in April.

Help Needed to Stop Mural Destruction

Destruction of the multi-cultural Victor Jara mural on Bernal Heights Branch Library—with partial replacement by a “sanitized” new one—is still planned by San Francisco Public Library. If you want to protect it, contact Library Users, 732-2180

Occupy and the Oakland Police

The mainstream media (MSN) bombards us with stories of Occupy Oakland violence in the overwhelming attempt to distract us from why the Occupy movement has sprung up all over the country—the demand for more economic equality between the 1% and the 99%. The Occupy movement has changed the national debate from austerity in the US to jobs, from penalizing the 99% to taxing the rich, from oligarchy to populism. The Kaiser Convention Center in Oakland is owned by the City and has stood empty for years. Why are the police massively deployed to prevent the people of Oakland who own it from using it.

Speaking of the Oakland police, the same MSM that trumpets Occupy violence has relegated to the back pages Federal Judge Thelton Henderson’s threat to put the Oakland Police Department under Federal receivership for failing to clean up their act.



A little recent history: In 2000, a group of Oakland cops calling themselves the Rough Riders were found to have planted evidence, used excessive force and falsified police reports. Three years later, the City was ordered by the Federal Court to take 512 specific reform actions. “The Court remains in disbelief that defenders have yet—nine years later—to achieve what they themselves said was doable in no more than five years,” Henderson said late last month. He gave the department a March deadline to comply or be taken over after getting a report from the Federal Monitor that said, referring to the police actions at the Occupy demonstration, “We were, in some instances, satisfied...in others we are thoroughly dismayed by what we observed...I cannot overstate our concern that although progress on compliance has been slow, even those advances may have been put in doubt in the face of these events.”

This is the department praised as the protectors of the people of Oakland from the violent Occupiers demanding economic justice.

KXL Pipeline/ TransCanada/ U.S. Oil: Environmental Disasters **Second in a series. Politics Next**

If Alberta Canada's tar sands oil fields are fully developed, an area of boreal (sub-arctic) rainforest the size of Florida will be eviscerated, leaving only giant silver-gray ponds of toxic wastewater. Extracting tar sands threatens habitat for many species, e.g. caribou herds are already 70% depleted. The Canadian government has called for strychnine poisoning and aerial shooting of thousands of wolves in areas of tar sands mining.

Tracking state-by-state in the US: as if designed by a school kid, corporation TransCanada's plan for the KXL pipeline in the US cuts diagonally across Eastern Montana where the Missouri and Yellowstone Rivers meet and flow east and south. Exxon's Silvertip pipeline, buried six feet below the Yellowstone, recently sprung a leak. Rich in history and biome, these lands were populated by Plains Indian tribes (Sioux, Blackfeet, Crow), so KXL will cross Native American burial grounds, forest islands and grasslands, conservation interests, logging; the area is often leased for cattle grazing. It is rich in fauna: a rare small falcon, mule deer, antelope, elk.

As for South Dakota, KXL is to cut from the northwest corner across northern water lines subject to the Mni Wiconi Act, by which the Sioux are supposed to be consulted; so TransCanada planned the pipeline to circumvent Indian lands! At South Dakota's south central border, KXL will invade the northernmost part of the Ogallala aquifer. And the Missouri River, given to flooding, flows congruently to the planned pipeline. Keystone I is already a liability to South Dakota's major revenue sources, agriculture and tourism.

South Dakota boasts pre-Cambrian granite (think Mt. Rushmore) and is rich in gold rush country history. Black Hills are surrounded by North American grassland and species. Post WWII, federal spending caused the militarization of the economy (Ellsworth AFB) and the industrialization of agriculture. Agribusiness is key for the economy of SD: most valuable resources are cattle, corn, soybeans, wheat and hogs; related industries are meat packing and ethanol production; (SD is the 6th leading ethanol-producing state in the nation). "We need jobs but not jobs dependent on tar sands oil," said a rancher. "A spill from this pipeline would affect the drinking water supply of two million people."

In Nebraska, KXL will cross right over the Ogallala Aquifer, the vast underground water source underlying nearly the whole state. While serving people in eight states, it supplies 27% of the irrigated land in the US. The aquifer is already being overused and replenished by diminishing water from the Rocky Mountains. Atop the aquifer the Nebraska Sand Hills, grass-covered rolling dunes, form a thin, porous, permeable layer. Clean drinkable water flows inches below the surface. Sparsely populated, the main business is ranching. A rancher says, "The only two natural resources we have in Nebraska are water and wind."

Kansas has already experienced attacks on the rights of property owners who were unwilling to grant right of way to Keystone I by TransCanada. Farmers say TransCanada continues to trespass on and seize land using eminent domain. And risks are much greater to these pipelines because of the unusually high corrosive and abrasive effect of tar sands oil.

In Texas, Austin and Port Arthur held U.S. State Department public hearings about the proposal to transport up to 1.7 million gallons of tar sands oil across East Texas, that in the event of a spill could flow into their wetlands and drinking water before any automatic shutoff valve would trigger an alarm. Protesters included Tea Party, Democrats, Republicans, Libertarians and religious groups. (Strange how they are blending into one entity.) "Don't Tread On Texas." was the theme. (See Greenpeace, You Tube.)



Tar Sands Refineries in the U.S. in 2012

Nuclear Followup

One year ago on March 11, a massive earthquake and resultant tsunami knocked out the cooling power and electrical systems at the Fukushima Dai-ichi nuclear power plant, leading to meltdowns, explosions and widespread radioactive leaks. On August 3rd, top officials of Japan's nuclear regulatory agency were removed because of too-close ties between said agency and the nuclear industry it was supposed to regulate.

In the US, the state of Vermont wants to shut down the Yankee Nuclear Power Plant, which has the same design as Fukushima's. Yankee was licensed to run for 40 years, ending this month, but the Nuclear Regulatory Commission (NRC) approved its license for another twenty years, a decision challenged by the state in federal court. In January, US district judge Garvan Murtha blocked Vermont from closing the plant, saying the state is trying to regulate nuclear safety, which only the NRC can do. That ruling will no doubt be appealed, probably up to the Supreme Court. Since 2000, the NRC has approved all the 62 applications for relicensing that it has received. According to a 2007 report by the NRC's own inspector general, the NRC has been little more than a rubber stamp for the nuclear industry. The states of NY and Massachusetts are also appealing NRC relicensing of nuclear plants they wish to shut down.

California has two functioning nuclear power plants, Diablo Canyon and San Onofre, which provide 15.3 percent of California's electricity. PG&E, which owns Diablo Canyon courtesy of government loans, assures us flatly that what happened in Fukushima could never happen here. San Onofre, near San Diego, was partially closed last month because of cooling problems.

No country has yet solved the problem of long term storage of radioactive nuclear waste.



Wear a yellow acacia flower on March 8th to celebrate International Women's Day, largely ignored in the US and widely celebrated in Europe.

Victory In Longview

Bunge company caves; ILWU wins contract; scab union creeps away!
Labor solidarity, Occupy, & other wide-spread public support carried the day. (See February newsletter for Longview information).

Some of the 1%

According to Forbes Magazine, Bill Gates of Microsoft is the richest person in America, worth \$59 billion—\$59,000,000,000. Second is Warren Buffett, worth \$39 billion. Third is Oracle CEO Larry Ellison, worth \$33 billion. Also in the top ten are George Soros, three members of the Walmart Walton family, Sheldon Adelson, (major Gingrich backer) and the oil billionaire Koch brothers. The combined wealth of the top 400 people on the rich list is \$1.5 trillion—\$1,500,000,000,000—an average worth of \$3.8 billion. A wealth tax of 50% would leave each of them only \$1.8 billion.

Chevron Corporation reported its highest annual profit ever, \$26.9 billion in 2011. As of March 1, gas prices in San Francisco were over \$4 a gallon.

No Good Deed Goes Unpunished

Baltazar Garzon, the Spanish judge who forced Chilean dictator Augusto Pinochet back to Chile to face trial for crimes against humanity using the principle of universal jurisdiction for heinous crimes, was found guilty by the Spanish Supreme Court of overstepping his jurisdiction in a domestic corruption case.

In 2008 he opened an investigation into right wing atrocities committed during the 1936-1939 Spanish Civil War and the following Franco dictatorship years even though the crimes were forgiven by a 1977 amnesty. Unfortunately for him the conservative Popular Party is now back in power in Spain and it lost no time in taking revenge.

In Madrid, thousands of people rallied in his support. Spain, like Greece, is in dire economic straits, squeezing money out of their people to pay off bonds they owe to the private international banks. Maybe the Popular Party won't be in power for long. Stay tuned.

Gray Panthers of San Francisco

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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

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Call the office for membership information.

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MARCH 2012

Actions and Events

Thursday, March 1—March 29

Human Rights Watch Film Festival, 701 Mission Street., Yerba Buena Center for the Arts

Thursday, March 1, 4:00—6:00 PM

Day of Action Civic Center Rally for Public Education, Social Services, & Tax the Rich, Panthers meet 3:30 PM Fulton/Larkin

Tuesday, March 6, 7:00 PM

Oakland Protest against Simpson/Bowles (Page 2)
Foes of Social Security, Medicare & Medicaid
Oakland Paramount Theatre, Broadway & 20th St.
Near 19th Street Bart Station . SF people meet at 6 PM in front of our office to BART to Oakland.

Thursday, March 8, 10:00 AM

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

Thursday, March 8, 1:00 PM

CARA CAT Monthly Meeting
ILWU Headquarters, 1188 Franklin/Geary

Thursday, March 8, 7:30—9:30 PM

Green Fire:Aldo Leopold and a Land Ethic for Our Time, film explores how one man shaped the conservation movement in the 20th Century, Randall Museum, 199 Museum Way. Donation \$5 up.

Wednesday, March 14, 7:00—9:00 PM

Arna's Children, film tells story of theatre and education group in the West Bank, resistance, and lives trapped in the Israeli occupation, ANSWER Coalition Office, 2969 Mission/26th St. Donation \$5-10

Saturday, March 24, 1:30—5:00 PM

First Annual Howard Grayson LGBT Elder Life Conference for All Bay Area Seniors. Workshops and Resources, Entertainment, Refreshments, 30th Street Senior Center, 225 30th St. Free

