

# GRAY PANTHERS OF SAN FRANCISCO



**February Meeting  
Managing Health Care  
February 18, 12:30 –3PM  
Unitarian Universalist Center  
1187 Franklin @ Geary**

## GRAY PANTHERS COMMITTEE MEETINGS & EVENTS

All meetings and events take place at 2940 16th Street 200-4, *unless otherwise noted*

**Board Meeting Wednesday, February 5,  
12:30, Main Library, Stong Room, 1St  
floor.**

**Book Club Monday, February 24,  
10:30 AM –Noon,  
Celtic Café, 142 McAllister,  
(between Hyde/Leavenworth)**

**Newsletter Committee Thursday, Febru-  
ary 6, 12:00**



**SF City-Wide Tenants Convention, Saturday, February 8, 1:00-4:00 PM.**

**NEW LOCATION: Tenderloin Elem. School, 627 Turk (at Van Ness)**

**Fight evictions, Ellis Act and gentrification of our city**

## January Meeting

We discussed our plans and actions for the coming year. These include: Single Payer, improving Medicare, protecting social security, prison justice, taking back our city, stopping the Warriors complex— (8Washington on steroids), protecting pensions, and celebrating Redstone Building 100th anniversary.

### Gray Panthers in Action

The Redstone Tenants Assoc. met to discuss the status of proposed developments at 490 Van Ness, and 16th & Mission— more gentrification of the Mission. We also began planning for the September celebration of Redstone and its labor history. More updates in future GP newsletters.

We also attended the Western Regional Advocacy Project (WRAP) conference held in SF to promote the Homeless Bill of Rights.



The Health & Human Services Network of California, a coalition working for strong health care and human services, held a press

conference to respond the Gov. Brown's inadequate budget. Brown boasted in his budget message about a "budget surplus in the billions; but don't spend it." Instead he wants a "rainy day fund" and plans to make this a constitutional mandate. California, a state with 95 billionaires, has the nation's highest level of poverty. MediCal, with a recent 10% cut, has the lowest rate of reimbursement in the nation. Since 2009, services to seniors, disabled, children & families have been cut by \$15 billion, and 1 in 4 of our children live in poverty. The coalition calls for: *Restore* cuts to CalWORKS; *Restore* eliminated Medi-Cal benefits; *Cancel* the pending Medi-Cal provider rate cut; *Restore* \$200 million in childcare funding; *Restore* senior renter's rebate; *Restore* Multipurpose Senior Services Program (MSSP) funds for Medi-Cal eligible seniors for nursing facilities.

## February Meeting

Michael Lyon will give us an overview of what is going on with our healthcare and clear up some of the confusion. More than you ever wanted to know about our dysfunctional healthcare system.

### Our Recycling Centers

It took many years of lobbying by California Against Waste and other environmentalists, for Sacramento to pass what is known as a "Bottle Bill". This bill passed in the State Legislators in 1986, requiring all supermarkets in California to have recycling centers within a specified area around the store.

This legislation worked beautifully until now with an influx of techies, many of whom were opposed to these centers. They saw recycling centers as hangouts for the less privileged in our society. The new million dollar condos sprouting up also were disturbed as owners could see these centers from their windows (for instance, Whole Foods condo project across from Market Street Safeway).

These new residents and building owners hope that closing recycling centers will diminish recycling theft from bins set out for Recology pickup. That hasn't happened. What has happened is that the same people who pilfered recyclable have now to walk miles with their goods to the Bayshore Buy-back Center.

When people are poor they are going to find a way to support themselves either legally or illegally. Having a monetary outlet selling recycling materials is far preferable than being hit over the head to take one's purse or wallet. The recycling centers are also job opportunities lost. Safeway at Market lost three paid staff and HANC lost 10 paid staff

Some of us that are complaining today may find ourselves in the same situation for which we are condemning others. Our present economic situation is slowly reducing our standard of living and marginalizing more and more of us. It is disturbing to note that we have become a people lacking compassion for others and relies on a system whose whole purpose is to criminalize and marginalize people we deem unworthy to live amongst us.

## From War on Poverty to War on Poor

We mostly remember Lyndon Banes Johnson as the escalator of the Vietnam war - “Hey, hey, LBJ, how many kids did you kill today?” Yet fifty years ago, in response to political movements of the times, another side of President Johnson authorized the Great Society and the War on Poverty. In the early '60s, 86% of the population felt the government should be fighting poverty. On January 8, 1964, President Lyndon Johnson with his State of the Union address outlined the Great Society program, a proposed \$20 trillion War on Poverty. This initiated a scale of social programs not seen since those of the '30s under the Roosevelts. In 1964, the Civil Rights Act banned discrimination based on race and gender in employment and ending segregation in all public facilities; in 1965, the Voting Rights Act banned literacy tests and discriminatory ways of denying suffrage to African Americans. Also in 1965, the Medicare Act was passed to offset the costs of health care for elders.

Johnson signed the Economic Opportunity Act of 1964; created *Job Corps* to provide vocational training, *Head Start*; a preschool program, to help disadvantaged students arrive at kindergarten ready to learn; the *Elementary and Secondary Education Act* to provide major funding for public schools; the *Higher Education Act* to allow more students to attend college under Pell Grants; and *Volunteers in Service to America* (VISTA) to provide aid to people in impoverished regions. The Economic Opportunity Act gave the federal government authority to bypass states and send funds directly to local governments, a way to bypass the southern states, with 51 House & Senate members voting against the act.

### More Great Society Actions

The *Immigration Act* ended discriminatory quotas based on ethnic origin, *Omnibus Housing Act* provided funds for low-income housing, *Air and Water Quality Acts* were made stronger, *Wilderness Protection Act* saved 9.1 million acres of forestland from industrial development, and the *National Endowment For the Arts and Humanities* was created. Many of us took part in these programs because we wanted to make changes and create a greater society. We continue today to fight poverty and protect our social safety nets.

## Time for Another War on Poverty

In 1962, Bayard Rustin & A. Phillip Randolph called for a march on Washington, D.C., for jobs and freedom. In August, 1963, more people than ever before demonstrated in D.C. The nation's poverty rate was cut in half from 21% in 1959 to 11.1 % until 1973. Today, poverty has reached unacceptable heights, with 150 million people near poor or persistently poor, the highest numbers in over 5 decades. In the last 12 months, 2.6 million more people ended up in poverty, the largest increase since the U.S. government began calculating poverty figures in 1959. One out of six of us seniors lives below the federal poverty line. Almost 45,000 people die every year for lack of healthcare. *This is what class warfare feels like.*

Juxtapose this crisis with the levels of wealth and resources controlled by the richest 1% or less. The millionaires and billionaires living in our city complain of crossing paths near poor and homeless people on the way to exclusive, Mid-Market NEMA condos. These condos offer 65” flat TV screens, a saline lap pool, a solarium and full concierge service. The people who work there cannot afford to live there. People in 42.5% of all SF households are rent burdened—paying more than 30% of income on rent. David Campos calls SF a city divided between those who live in prosperity and those who struggle to stay here. *This is what class warfare looks like.*

Gov. Brown boasted in his budget program message about a “budget surplus in the billions; but don’t spend it.” He means, don’t restore the cuts to programs for seniors, people with disabilities, families and children. He wants to waste those billions on a pipe line dream to take water to Kern County for agribusiness and fracking!



## The Tech Takeover of Mid-Market

San Francisco provides a tax break to companies that locate on Mid-Market and surrounding areas. The purpose is to change the area from its current “seedy” mix of residential area, small businesses, art centers, and vacancies to a “productive” commercial business street. That aim is being realized. The area is full of new high rises housing tech companies and luxury condos. Gentrifying SF. Is this the way the people of SF—once the shining progressive beacon of the Pacific Coast, if not the whole country—want our city to go?

The City levees a company payroll tax which was 1.5% in 2013 and is 1.35% this year. Why did it go down? If we are so awash with money, how come all the social services are starved? Companies that take advantage of the tax break can cap that tax at the amount they pay when they first qualified. So if Twitter, for instance pays a set amount in January 2014, that fee amount is the amount they will pay for the next 6 years, no matter how many employees they add, or how rich they get on stock options. The city treasurer estimated that breaks cost the City \$1.9 million through the end of 2013. In return the companies had to agree to provide unspecified community benefits, and there is no monitoring system in place. Examples include \$500,000 of computers and software from Yammer, a Microsoft company, to Larkin Street Youth Services—but the Youth Services can’t use them with their current network, and Twitter donating \$75,000 to community services last year and promising donations of \$388,000 in 2014.

In the late 1940s, The City leaders used the same justifications about the Fillmore, which was a busy bustling lively multiracial district for The City. They called it *redevelopment*, and banished the African-American to the outskirts of town. That’s why redevelopment has become a dirty word—they certainly don’t use it for Market Street.

The results of all this are not limited to the Mid-Market area. They are making SF a city too expensive to live in; incredible rents, inflated property values, increased eviction. This may be what the Chamber of Commerce and their elected mayor—remember the “Run Ed Run” campaign want—but is it what the rest of us want for our city?

## Costs associated with the ACA



Of the many criticisms of the Affordable Care Act, the fact that it does nothing to control health care costs remains front and center.

Philip Caper of Maine All Care says “Americans pay far more than other industrialized countries both in ways that are obvious and ways that are not so obvious. The obvious include health insurance premiums, out-of-pocket copays and deductibles, and payments for healthcare products and services that are not covered by insurance. Out-of-pocket payments are increasing every year as insurers shift more of the rising cost to their customers, and employers shift cost to their employees. Dr. Caper calls the less obvious costs “opportunity costs.” Caper says, “If you pay for healthcare, you can’t use that same money to pay for other things, so, for example, unionized workers no longer really bargain for increased wages or better working conditions because their health insurance costs are increasing every year. So they’re paying more and more each year just to stay where they are as far as healthcare is concerned. Therefore healthcare is actually suppressing wages.” Caper gives an example from his home state of Maine: “There’s a town in Central Maine where the healthcare for the employees has now reached a level of \$18,000 per employee. And that means that town can no longer invest in other critical items such as road and bridge maintenance, such as their schools, their libraries, the judicial system. So these are some of the many ways we’re paying for healthcare.”



## No New Jail For SF

## New CA Laws January 2014

SF City Jails #3 and #4 will disappear after the demolition of the seismically unsafe “Hall of Justice,” and many SF officials want a new jail. Unlike the state and most cities, SF’s policies have reduced the jail population to 65% of capacity for the last two years, so sufficient space would already exist after closing these jails. In fact, proposed new sentencing, community alternatives, and pretrial diversion could reduce the jail population by another 500, allowing the currently-unused CJ6 in San Bruno to remain closed.

The projected cost, \$600 million including financing, could give \$20 million in services each year over the 30 years required to repay the jail debt. The billion-dollar Housing Trust Fund could be expanded 60% to provide housing to very-low income people being displaced. We could renovate and upgrade over 7,000 low-income apartments. 600 of the City's poorest families could live in subsidized apartments for 30 years. Mental and medical health programs which had been cut for years could be restored and expanded. All of these programs are more effective outside of jail walls and can keep people out of jail in the first place.

A large proportion, probably half, are in jail because they cannot afford bail before trial. The proportion of jailed African-Americans in SF is 10 times that of the general population. People on low, fixed incomes are disproportionately made homeless by rent increases and evictions and vulnerable to arrest for violating Sit/Lie laws, vehicular housing, and potentially sleeping in parks at night. Homeless seniors and people with mental health and substance abuse issues are also more likely to be profiled for citation and later arrest in newly-gentrified business areas. Simple justice demands we find other alternatives than building a new jail to perpetuate old injustice.

People and groups against the jail rebuild include the ACLU, National Lawyers Guild, Coalition on Homelessness, California Partnership, Critical Resistance, California Coalition for Women Prisoners, Chief Probation Officer Wendy Sills, and DA George Gascon. San Francisco has made remarkable progress in reducing its jail population. Now is the time to move forward, not back.

SF Gray Panthers supported and /or campaigned for these laws:

**Trust Act:** Law enforcement agencies will no longer be allowed to detain undocumented immigrants and turn them over to ICE) based solely on their immigration status.

**Domestic Workers Bill of Rights:** Nannies and care givers will receive overtime pay for working more than 9 hours a day or 45 hours a week;

**Minimum Wage:** \$8 now, \$9 on July 1st, \$10 in 2016.

**Abortion Access:** Nurse practitioners, certified nurse mid-wives, and physicians’ assistants can perform first trimester abortions.

**Wrongful Convictions:** Under state law those who have been wrongful convicted and have been exonerated are eligible for \$100 per day for each day they were incarcerated. This law makes it easier and less expensive to claim that compensation.

**Undocumented Drivers & Lawyers:** New regulations allow them to get licenses.

**Fracking:** The state will develop regulation on fracking and study its risks. Environmentalists demand a fracking moratorium now.

### Past Februaries

1898: Battle Ship MAINE blown up in Havana leading to the Spanish-American war.

1903: Western Federation of Miners strike for an 8 hour day.

1913: The 16th Amendment to the Constitution ratified, authorizing federal income taxes.

1937: National Lawyers Guild founded.

1942: 120,000 Japanese-Americans were ordered interned in concentration camps.

2012: Black teenager Trayvon Martin murdered in Florida by George Zimmerman.

### Present February

“Women form the core of movements. They organize, as did Ella Baker. They lead, as did Elaine Brown. They do the work. *Mumia Abu Jamal*

“When the Pentagon spends \$700 billion, and the Pentagon admits that they lost \$2.3 billion; there is no dearth of money, it is a question of political will.” *Cynthia McKinney*

## 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.

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## Actions and Events

**Sunday, February 2, 2:00 PM, SF Main Library, WILPF presents Jackie Cabasso, Western States Legal Foundation, speaking on International Hafa Conference, advocating a Middle East without nuclear weapons or weapons of mass destruction.**

**Monday, February 3, OWL BOARD MEETING, 4:00-6:00 p.m. 870 Market Street, Room 1185**

**Friday, February 7, 2:00-4:00PM, SDA, 1360 Mission St, 4th floor, Movie "The Science/Fiction of Human Enhancement," a thought-provoking film on bionics, technology in human beings**

**Saturday, February 8, SF City-Wide Tenants Convention, 350 Rhode Island St, 1:00-4:00PM**

**Saturday, February 8, 1:00-6:00PM, Mission Cultural Center 2868 Mission St, Conference Stop VEOLIA Privatization in SF \$10 Sliding**

**Monday, February 10, 7:30PM Davis Symphony Hall, The Crappy Awards.** A satirical protest against the Crunchies Tech Awards.

**Thursday, February 13, SDA General Meeting 9:00AM-Noon, UU church at 1187 Franklin**  
*Topic: Housing Crisis*

**Saturday, February 22, 518 Valencia 16<sup>th</sup> St. Help Protect SF Healthcare Security Ordinance (HealthySF) Speakers David Campos, Paul Kumar**

**Saturday, March 1, 7PM, 2940 16th St., fundraiser for Living Wage Coalition, David Rovics, political folk musician in concert.**

