

GRAY PANTHERS OF SAN FRANCISCO



**Alternatives to Incarceration
Tuesday, April 15 Meeting
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, April 2,
12:30 at our office, 2940 16th @ Capp St**

**Newsletter Committee Thursday, April 3,
12:00**

**Book Club Monday, April 28, 10:30 AM –
Noon,
Celtic Café, 142 McAllister,
(between Hyde/Leavenworth)**



HELP! Many of us are behind on our dues. Please check the date on your mailing label, which indicates the due date. Yearly dues are \$30, more if you can, less if you can't.

Affordable Care Act

When the Affordable Care Act rolled out in October of last year, a major complaint surrounded the problems people ran into when they tried to shop for insurance using the Federal Government's website, *healthcare.gov*. In the fall, individual states that chose to set up their own exchanges did not encounter similar problems. Covered California, which is California's State Exchange for health insurance, recently ran into multiple problems that mirror the glitches *healthcare.gov* ran into in the fall. Many Californians are finding that when they go to a doctor office or medical facility that contrary to their expectation, visits are not covered under plans offered by Covered California. To hold down premiums, major insurers in California have sharply limited the number of doctors and hospitals available to patients in the state's new health insurance market. A smaller panel of providers generally yields lower rates because insurers can negotiate better discounts with providers who receive more patients. This is called network narrowing. Dr. Tarzynski is President of Physicians for National Health Plan (PNHP) California. Tarzynski says many patients are finding that the doctors they think are in their network actually are not. This is because the doctors have been excluded from the network, and the reason for this is that the networks are being fashioned narrowly by insurance companies. This is in order to expound payments to doctors and hospitals in order to keep premiums low in the paid marketplace, and that is because they want to form a competitive edge against an organization like Kaiser Permanente which has 25% of the market in the state and to take market share away from them. In order to do that, they have to drive down premiums. In order to do that, they have to pay their doctors and hospitals less, and in order to do that they have to find doctors and hospitals that are willing to take lower payments.



Many doctors and hospitals are not willing to participate on that basis so the networks are narrowed, and that's why people are finding providers they think are on their health plan are not.

April Meeting

We will hear the latest update on actions in place for alternatives to incarceration from prison justice activists. Assemblymember Tom Ammiano has proposed legislation to significantly restrict how solitary confinement is used in California prisons. AB1652 comes after massive public pressure and expert testimony exposing the California Department of Corrections and Rehabilitation's (CDCR) notorious solitary confinement and gang management policies. Many of us would agree with Prison Hunger Strike Solidarity activist Denise Mewbourne who calls for abolition of solitary confinement. (See the article in SF BayView, March 5, 2014).

March Meeting

We were enlightened and energized by our speakers from Alliance of Californians for Community Empowerment (ACCE). Ross Rhodes, who now is a dedicated ACCE Home Defender, fought off an eviction when he gained support from the organization. He reassures us we do have a voice; we can fight back with protests and with people power. After years of struggle and being shuffled among Wells Fargo administrators, Ross and ACCE spoke to State Attorney General Kamala Harris about his situation, and 30 minutes later the bank called with a fair deal loan modification.

Julien Ball talked about actions taking on loan speculators who take advantage of home owners offering short-term loans then raising the rate a few years later. He also cited Richmond's use of eminent domain to rescue home owners under threat of foreclosure. Richmond would use the practice to take over the mortgage and find mortgage resolution partners to work directly with home owners. Supportive Supervisors Campos & Avalos are exploring the use of "joint power authority" to follow the practice here in SF. Many ideas came out of the group discussion and we all agreed to work together.

Gray Panther Fund Raiser

Mark your calendar & Stay Tuned
April 26, 1:30-4 PM
At the Age Song Café 602 Hayes Street
Food Fun and Socialize with friends

Gentrifying the Mission

A developer called Maximus submitted a proposal to the Planning Commission to build 3 buildings at 16th & Mission for rental and retail space. One building would be 105 feet (10 stories) making it the tallest in the area, and the other 2 would be 55-feet. They would overshadow the neighborhood including our office, Walgreen's, Hwa Lei Market, Burger King and neighborhood activist Paula's Chile Lindo shop with a wall of glassy storefronts along Mission Street surrounding the BART plaza. The designers are the same Skidmore Owings & Merrill (SOM), who designed 8 Washington.

On March 13, several of us Redstone tenants attended a Maximus presentation of their concept designs for the area. Maximus says it has held 50 meetings in the community to generate feedback and hear our ideas. Of course, Maximus *already submitted* their design in 2013 with a trajectory of completion by 2015. Maximus claims the site is a high crime area and "people of the neighborhood were mainly concerned about crime." In reality the area currently has the Mission's highest concentration of Single Room Occupancy (SROs) hotels, 1,350, also 53% of rent controlled housing. Evidently to Maximus this automatically indicates "high crime and undesirables." Not so, says the Plaza 16 Coalition of Latino, social justice, housing rights groups who believe issues can be resolved in ways to benefit and maintain the social dynamics of the neighborhood.

Who's behind Maximus?



Mr. Rosania, Maximus main investor is part of a Manhattan real estate entity, Stellar Management, that owns 24,000 rental units in New York City, Washington D.C., Los Angeles, Chicago and South Florida. His company controls SF's Park Merced, the 2nd largest complex of its kind west of the Mississippi. Stellar defaulted on loans in 2010 on Park Merced and was bailed out by hedge fund, Fortress, run by Goldman Sachs.

Tenants Fight Back

The tremendous fight back from housing rights activists has pushed some of our SF supervisors and state representatives to propose protections for renters in the city. Sup. Campos' proposal will require landlords using the Ellis Act to pay the difference between the tenant's rental rate *prior* to eviction and what would have been the market rate for that unit for two years. Relocation payments would help displaced tenants facing dramatically higher rent costs. Rep. Leno and Ammiano have proposed reforming the Ellis Act. Ammiano's bill, AB 2405, would allow SF voters or the SF Board of Supervisors to declare a moratorium on Ellis Act evictions whenever the city's state-mandated affordable housing goals are not met. Ammiano stated, "We have to preserve what affordable housing we have." Leno's SB 1439 would close a loophole in the Ellis Act. Speculators now buy rent-controlled buildings and immediately evict long-time tenants. SB1439 would require ownership for 5 years after acquisition. About 50% of the city's 2013 Ellis evictions were "flipped" in less than a year. Housing rights activists offer our own solutions to the crisis. The recent tenants convention proposes a ballot measure to tax speculators. Speculators would pay a windfall profit tax on property sold before 6 years at 50% rate decreasing each following year.

Chile After Pinochet



On March 12, Michelle Bachelet was sworn in as President of Chile. Senate President Isabel Allende, the daughter of former President Salvador Allende, placed the Presidential sash on her fellow socialist. Salvador Allende was killed in the military coup in 1973 which replaced him with years of the Pinochet dictatorship.

The Pinochet coup was widely seen as financially backed and planned by the CIA. This is Bachelet's second term as president. During her first term in 2006-2010 during the global economic crisis, she used government funds to help the poorest Chileans and left office with an 84% approval rating.



Serve the People Not Big Oil!

On March 15, more than 3,000 Californians from every corner of the state rallied in Sacramento at *Don't Frack California*, the largest anti-fracking rally in California history. This followed months of

dogging the governor at his public events, delivering over 100,000 public comments and dropping a banner during the State of the State. SB1132 has been introduced to impose a moratorium on fracking and other extreme extraction methods until there is proof that any of these methods will not cause harm. In the midst of a serious drought, Gov Brown, who for years has taken oil industry money, talks of individuals cutting back on our water consumption, but ignores the water wasted in fracking. One fracking well requires over 1 million gals of water, and releases deadly chemicals into our water supplies. We now have verified evidence of fracking dangers—elevated levels of benzene, methane, chloroform, butane, propane, toluene and xylene. Fracking also cause cancers, birth defects, organ damage, and earthquakes!

Fracking is needed to extract natural gas from the earth. Natural gas pushed by the oil companies and the Obama administration as “clean” energy, puts huge amounts of methane greenhouse gas into our air, 30 times more potent than CO2. Aera, 6th largest oil producer in the country, fracks in the San Joaquin Valley and Ventura County. In 2013, the company spent more than \$1 million lobbying the legislature. During that year 10 bills addressing fracking were introduced and the oil industry killed all but one.

Bans on Fracking Grow

LA passed a resolution against fracking in the city areas. Other bans include Dallas, TX, Vermont, Pennsylvania, Hawaii, many towns in New York, Colorado, France, Cantabria, Spain, Bulgaria, Germany, South Africa, Patagonia, Argentina, Switzerland, Austria, Ireland, NW British Columbia First Nations people, United Kingdom, Québec, and Woodstock. Will Gov. Brown step up?

Non-Violent Student Protest Attacked



On Thursday, March 13, City College students calling for the resignation of Trustee Bob Agrella and the reversal of the

new tuition policy were beaten and pepper-sprayed by the police. The administration claims it was the *students* who were violent. For months Special Trustee Agrella has refused to meet with student representatives, leaving them no option but peaceful protest to make their voices heard.

The Agrella administration brought in dozens of San Francisco City Police escalating the situation.

In response, students attempted to open the doors to hold their planned peaceful sit-in. Allegations that students struck or assaulted officers in this process are completely unfounded: video footage clearly shows that all physical assaults were *by* police *against* students. The next day a large demonstration at City Hall followed by students packing the Supervisors’ meeting culminated with an introduction of a resolution by Sup. David Campos calling for the reinstatement of the elected City College Board of Trustees. CCSF students remain committed to non-violent protest



Fukushima No More

March 11 was the 3rd anniversary of the explosion & meltdown at the Fukushima Nuclear Plant in Japan. The plant still spews radiation into the air and sea and decommissioning is expected to take decades. Since then all Japanese nuclear power reactors have been idle. Thousands across Japan continue to protest plans by the government to restart the idle plants.

The explosion, triggered by an earthquake and tsunami, killed 16,000 people immediately. In the US sailors from the Navy’s USS Ronald Reagan and others who went to the aid of Fukushima disaster have filed a class action suit against Tepco, the Japanese company that ran Fukushima, for sicknesses due to radiation exposure.

ACCE Gray Panthers Together

ACCE, Alliance of Californians for Community Empowerment, is a direct action grassroots movement more than an organization. Raising up the voices of low income, immigrant and working families across California, ACCE organizes around issues that are devastating our communities - loss of housing, no jobs, substandard schools.

ACCE was formed as a state-wide movement in 2009 but its roots go back to the 1960's model of door-to-door community building. In 1970, ACORN, Association of Community Organizations for Reform Now, was born in Little Rock, Arkansas. From 1970 to its end in 2010, ACORN had become the nation's largest community organization of low and moderate-income families, working together for social justice and stronger communities. When *ACORN* disbanded in 2010 as a result of right-wing attacks and lies, local and state leadership built the ACORN model to create new organizations in a few states - first in Illinois as CAN, Chicago Action Now, then in California as ACCE, finally in New York as NYCC, New York Communities for Change. ACCE leadership and staff realized that as the times changed, it was no longer possible to rely on government and large philanthropy funding at the federal, state and local levels. Funds come from dues paying members. A strong emphasis is placed on education and training of members, organizers and staff. Importantly, today ACCE still has 75% of their initial group of staff and organizers with them. Another aspect of ACCE work is *coalition building*. Throughout California ACCE joins with many other groups to work on member issues: housing foreclosures and eminent domain, creating a Homeowners Bill of Rights, fighting bank injustices. In the regional East Bay they work with Public Advocates on transportation issues. Another partner is PICO. Pacific Institute for Community Organizations was founded in 1972 to struggle for justice rooted in faith-based communities. One way is to join RE-FUND CA to fight for an oil extraction tax in Sacramento for monies to better California schools, healthcare, housing. Another is to work with ACCE on Mission/Bernal Heights evictions and displacements. Since Gray Panthers teams up with ACCE in ongoing struggles, take your pick.

What's Happening at San Jose State

San Jose State University is the site of the 2005-dedicated monument to John Carlos and Tommie Smith, athletes who trained at SJSU and, as sports writer David Zirin put in *The Nation*, learned the athletic skills to go to the 1968 Olympics where they set sprint records. They also developed the political awareness to raise their fists while sharing the Olympics medal stand in Mexico City that historic day in 1968—gestures that were to become world famous.

So the University developed a history of diversity and an anti-racist tradition, but of late it appears to be cutting itself off from this tradition: there's the issue of Ron Davis, their famous successful cross-country coach since the 1960s, who, not reappointed after 40 years of service, is suing the University. Davis says he's been fired because of the color of his skin. Davis alleges they added mockery of his intelligence, communication skills and otherwise tried to belittle him.

More shocking, historically appalling: four white students whose heads appear to be stuck in Civil War racism and WWII fascism chose late in 2013 to taunt their single black student suite mate by nicknaming him "four fifths," hanging in their shared quarters a Confederate flag, pictures of Adolf Hitler, displayed swastikas, and worst, hung a U bike lock on the young black man's neck to restrain him. These ugly actions again reveal the historic resonance of treatment of black people.

The staff timely reported the U bike incident, but SJSU President Mohammed Oayoumi laggardly appointed a task force that will report to the Special Task Force on Racial Discrimination formed to propose new policies at SJSU to prevent future hate crimes that's finally set to report about April 17, 2014.

Fortunately, students rallied late last year against racism on campus. The Santa Clara County District Attorney's Office has filed misdemeanor battery charges with a hate crime enhancement against three of the four white students. The fourth student was not charged as he is underage. (Thanks to Feb issue of SF BayView for information referenced in this article).

Gray Panthers of SF

2940 16th Street, Room 200 – 4
San Francisco, CA 94103
415-552-8800
<http://graypantherssf.igc.org/>
graypanther-sf@sonic.net

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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, April 6, 2:30 PM, 2133 University Ave, Near Downtown Berkeley BART, Berkeley-East Bay Gray Panthers movie The Cradle Will Rock. Info 510-595-9696.

Saturday, April 26 10AM, People's Earth Day Action Protest against Cancer & Pollution, Martin Luther King Jr. Park 5700 3rd St at Carroll Info greenaction@greenaction.org.

Saturday, April 12, 3-5PM, Single Payer Potluck, St Mary's Cathedral, 1111 Gough@Geary Healthcare Minus Insurance Industry. Bring dishes by 2:30PM. 415-695-7891 Parking

Thursday, April 10 Senior Disability Action General Membership meeting, 9:30AM-Noon, UU Center, 1187 Franklin/ Geary. **\$2 Lunch at noon.**

Friday, April 18, Save the Post Office, 7:30, 1924 Cedar@Bonita. Berkeley Fundraiser \$5-10. No one turned away.

Saturday, April 19, Earth Day, UN Plaza 10AM to 6PM, Free presentations, speakers, music.

Tuesday, April 22, Community Living Campaign Gathering and Networking Session, begins at 10:00 a.m. First Unitarian Universalist Center, 1187 Franklin Street, San Francisco.



Saturday, April 26 Noon, Civic Center, Tenants Rights Rally to Stop the Speculators. Stop evicting seniors & people with disabilities! Save Our City!

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