

GRAY PANTHERS OF SAN FRANCISCO



**Tuesday, January 20, 2015 General Meeting
To Discuss 2015 Priorities and Actions
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, January 7,
12:30, SF Main Library, Stong Room, 1st
floor**

**Book Club Monday, January 26, Noon,
Celtic Café, 142 McAllister,
(between Hyde/Leavenworth)**

Newsletter Committee Thursday, January, 8, Noon, in the office.

Our Holiday Party

View from the beautiful AgeSong roof-top garden



Thank you AgeSong for hosting our Gray Panther 2014 Holiday Party!

Our January Meeting

Gray Panthers start each January meeting deciding priorities, resolutions and revolutions! Last year we continued work to save Social Security, Medicare, MediCal, and worked for single-payer; that will continue. We also decided to work with other organizations on prison justice, MTA safety, protecting pensions, and opposing housing speculation and evictions.

What will we emphasis this year? Some decisions have been made for us, with erosion of human rights, and with police and military weaponry used in racist killings in our cities. Bring ideas to discuss how to use our energy for changes.



We began our stand on these issues, Dec.10, on the steps of City Hall by reading the articles of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, UDHR, on its 66th anniversary. (See pg. 3) We stood up to focus attention on UDHR's basic human rights so people can demand them.

In January Past

Jan. 1, 1863 The Emancipation Proclamation freeing slaves in rebelling states in the Civil War.

Jan. 1, 1892 Ellis Island in New York Harbor opened & 20 million new arrivals to America.

Jan. 1, 1942 26 countries signed the *Declaration of the United Nations* in Washington, DC.

Jan. 1, 1959 Fidel Castro seized power in Cuba, a revolution that drove out Dictator Batista.

Jan. 8, 1964 President Johnson declared War on Poverty in his message before Congress.

Jan. 15, 1929 Martin Luther King was born.

Jan. 22, 1973 Abortion became legal in the U.S. with the Supreme Court's *Roe vs. Wade* decision.

Jan. 27, 1973 U.S. involvement in the Vietnam War ended as North Vietnamese and American representatives signed an agreement in Paris.

Jan.30, 1948 Mahatma Gandhi was assassinated in New Delhi, India.

Jan. 31, 1919 Jackie Robinson, born in Georgia, the first African American to play professional baseball for the Brooklyn Dodgers. He was chosen the National League's most valuable player in 1949, elected to the Baseball Hall of Fame in 1962.



UDHR Forever More

On Dec.10th,
Gray Panthers
and Unitarian

Universalist Center members read the 30 articles of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR) on the steps of City Hall. Supervisor Campos introduced our resolution, which passed unanimously, stating the City & County of SF celebrate the UDHR every Dec. 10th as Human Rights Day. The UDHR proclaims the inherent dignity and equal rights of all people, asserts people's civil rights, freedom of speech, freedom from arbitrary detention, freedom from discrimination, , people's rights to the necessities of life, housing, healthcare, employment, and education.

These rights need to be reiterated today and raised everywhere. Everyday families and children endure homelessness, black and brown youth are killed on our streets, seniors and people with disabilities and people with low incomes are forced from their homes by evictions or foreclosures. We need *Article 26* ("Everyone has the right to education") because youth are burdened with school loans, and black & brown youth are tracked on a path from school to prison. We need *Article 14* ("Everyone has the right to seek and to enjoy in other countries asylum from persecution") because youth from Central America are deported and placed in life threatening situations. We need *Article 9* ("No one shall be subjected to arbitrary arrest, detention or exile") because Chelsea Manning remains in prison for telling the truth of war.

Eleanor Roosevelt said, "Where after all, do universal human rights begin? In small places, close to home, so close and so small that they cannot be seen on any map of the world. Yet they are the world of the individual person: the neighborhood he lives in; the school or college he attends; the factory, farm or place where he works."

Dec.10th is also recognized as *International Human Rights Day*. At the UN in NYC, people marched chanting "Climate Justice is a Human Right". The UN Climate Conference took place in Peru. Peru places the rights of Mother Earth (Pacha Mama) into its constitution.

Taking On SFERS Board

GP members join scores of union activists, retirees, and current City & County employees to stop the SF Employee Retirement System (SFERS) Board from gambling pension funds by investing in hedge funds. Month after month we turn out to demand that zero dollars be put into these risky funds. At the Dec 3 meeting every public-comment speaker cited facts and said "No!" to these investments, except one police officer.

Over petitions with over 2,400 signatures against hedge fund investment have been given to SFERS. Many speakers suggested alternative investing, housing for retirees, a SF Public Bank, alternative to fossil fuels, infrastructure, natural resources, etc.

Wendy Paskin-Jordan, CEO, Paskin Capital Advisors, LLC, nominated for reappointment by Mayor Lee to the SFERS Board, has conflicts of interest. She has personal funds in GMO, a firm which also manages almost \$388 million of the San Francisco pension system's money. Paskin-Jordan made a business trip to New York City in 2013 to further her private business; SFERS reportedly paid for her NYC trip. The Board of Supervisors received copies of both Ethics complaints, and has delayed approving her re-appointment until January 7.

The Retirement Board is composed of 7 members; 3 elected by the active and retired members, 3 appointed by the Mayor—from *real-estate or investment firms*—and 1 designated by the President of the Board of Supervisors (currently Malia Cohen). Of the elected total, 1 is from the Police Dept., 1 from Fire Dept., and 1 for all the rest of retirees. Herb Meiburger, *the only objector to hedge funds!*

The public pension "crisis" in many cities is due to states' refusals to make required payments into funds, often in violation of state laws, or city charters. But, the real crisis lies in the theft by Wall Street. Murtaza Hussain in *The Intercept* reports Wall Street spent \$300 million in the last election to promote its plans to relocate the \$3 trillion dollars in unguarded government pension funds into privately managed, high-fee investments, money public sector workers rely after retirement.

Watch speakers at the Dec 3 SFERS Board meeting <http://tinyurl.com/kyweyzzg>

Celebrate Our Victories

San Francisco has shown the way to end abusive scheduling practices and help provide a more humane work environment for part-time workers in chain stores inside City limits. On November 18, SF Supervisors unanimously passed the "Retail Workers Bill of Rights." The City is waiting for the Mayor to sign, but there are enough votes to override a veto.

This means that more than 40,000 people in 1250 locations, almost half of all such workers in San Francisco, will have reliable work schedules. It applies to retail stores, restaurants and hotels with 20 or more employees and 20 or more locations worldwide — roughly 12% of San Francisco retailers.

- The measure requires employers to tell workers their schedules at least two weeks in advance.
- Employers have to pay a minimum of 2-4 hours pay if they change the schedule with less than 24 hours notice.
- Extra hours, when available, have to be offered to current part-timers before hiring new workers.
- If a company is sold, workers employed at least six months are guaranteed work for at least 90 days.
- Employers are not be allowed to discriminate against part-time workers over pay or promotions.

This bill was pushed by Jobs With Justice San Francisco. The law serves as a model, and could set a precedent nationally. It will also help bring many more workers closer to being organized

Meanwhile, in the East Bay, the buyer of the Berkeley Main Post Office has withdrawn their bid. Activist protests made the buyer think twice. Homeless activists occupied the PO steps and grounds in their tents for 4 weeks 24/7 in heavy rain. Tent City, August 2013, lasted 33 days until broken up by police. And the four-month occupation in front of the Berkeley Staples store, plus a national boycott against Staples so-called "postal" counters, brought a victory over dismantling and privatizing the Postal Service. A court case takes place in December with City of Berkeley as the plaintiff citing violations of law by the USPS in their attempt to sell off the people's Post Office. More at <http://www.savethebpo.com/>

Media Monopoly

On April 8, Comcast submitted a request to the Federal Communications Commission (FCC) for permission to merge with Time-Warner Cable. In addition to Comcast's official filing, the FCC heard from pro- and anti-merger experts in the Senate on April 9 and the House on May 8. Media activists and citizens are concerned about the cartel-like behavior of large utility companies. They are concerned that a merger between Comcast and Time-Warner Cable, if approved, would lead to increased prices and fewer options for both cable service and the content that providers deliver. Critics are concerned about the negative impact such a merger will have on the potential innovation that smaller companies could offer in the market if their interest is squashed.

Critics also say smaller rival companies will be unable to access the customers they need to survive. Tracy Rosenberg, Executive Director of Media Alliance, says the merged Comcast-TWC will control half of the truly high speed US internet market, half of the TV-internet bundle market, and one third of the pay-TV market. This is not good for consumers. For 37% of the country, a merged Comcast-TWC would be the only pay-TV provider. In addition, Comcast owns not only the cable network, they also own NBC Universal. This would allow Comcast to favor content that it owns on its cable network, and to charge content providers for equal treatment, as Netflix is already starting to experience.

Tracy Rosenberg says we have to keep up pressure from the public by pushing for public hearings and engaging in data discovery surrounding what the merger impact will be on Californians.

The Internet a Basic Human Right

Tim Berners-Lee, who proposed the internet in 1989, recently declared equal access to the internet can help in balancing inequality. He believes it is a right and should be available for everyone without discrimination. There are now 400 billion people in poorer countries without access. Berners-Lee also states access means no interference, such as current attacks on net neutrality, and the freedom of privacy, without data mining surveillance.

Is a New Dawn Breaking?



One of our members drove down to Merced one stormy afternoon recently to visit some friends. Merced is in the heart of the Central Valley's agricultural region, which has a reputation of extreme conservatism. But college teachers, students, and many community people were demonstrating against the disappearance of students in Mexico, racist cop killings in the US, and the "drug wars" against minority youth in both countries.

As part of #USTIRED2, Merced was one of 43 cities having such demonstrations, one for each student kidnapped and presumed murdered by the Mexican narco-police complex. They demanded an end to Mérida Initiative ("Plan Mexico," the billions of US aid to Mexican security forces), and an end to the media blackout on narco-terror in Mexico.

Many posters read "Ayotzinapa, Ferguson, Gaza" and "State Repression." Many people agreed that this was all about police and state terror against workers in both countries, and that although police killings have been common in both countries with no mass resistance, everything has a breaking point, and this seemed to be it.

In San Francisco, a member of BlackLivesMatter reported he was with a group of 20 blocking Market St at Powell, in the midst of holiday shopping crowds. People kept coming up and asking "what can I do?" and he replied "Join us!" About 200 people spontaneously joined, blocking the street.

Somebody said "They've taken everything from us, including our fear."

Taking It to the Streets

UCSF medical students hold a die-in on campus, Berkeley high students walk out of classrooms, over 200 workers and a few Representatives walk out of the Capital in D.C. with hands up, and football players run onto the field with hands up. People are marching for *Black Lives Matter*, continentally, from the day the "Grant" Juries in Ferguson & NY gave police killers a pass, no indictments.

A resolution by Sup. Avalos supported by Sups. Campos, Mar, & Kim to put SF on record against police brutality, and for protection of the right to protest, and equal justice was voted down by Mayor Lee's solid block of supervisors objecting to so-called derogatory statements of SF police. Another version will go into committee.

Supporters of slain Alex Nieto, including GP, spoke in favor of the Avalos' resolution saying that 9 months after Alex was murdered by police, we still have no identity, or explanation to the community, and calling for an independent, public inquiry into the Nieto killing. After killing Alex, Police without a warrant tried to search his parents home before telling of his death. The inclusion of references to Alex Nieto were objected to by the Lee Block, after pressure from the SFPD & POA. See <http://tinyurl.com/mpfzz4x>.



In Oakland, protestors shut down the Police Dept. and hung a *Black Lives Matter* banner on the OPD flagpole. In SF we marched from the Embarcadero to City Hall, a well-organized, peaceful march that did not need the scores of SFPD who lined both sides of Market Street, some in riot gear.

Money spent that could have gone to better services. This movement calls on us to speak out, act up, engage with each other, and become allies across communities. The youth leaders are organized, determined, not backing down, and will not accept business as usual.

We may not all be able to lie down in the but we can find ways, as elders, to stand with youth today. Youth ask us to *Educate ourselves and others, for silence equals violence.*

Gray Panthers of SF

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Nonprofit Org.

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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

Jan 2 thru 25, Terry Baum's "Hick, The Romance of Lorena Hickok & Eleanor Roosevelt"

Thurs, Fri, 8 PM. Sat, 2 & 8 PM. Sun, 5 PM.
Berkeley City Club, 2315 Durant St. Berkeley. \$20
except pay-what-you-can-Thursdays. More info:
<http://tinyurl.com/lxzrem2>

Mon., January 5, 4PM-6PM, Rally: Get The Crooks Out Of SF Employees Retirement System SFERS, Paskin Capital Advisors, LLC
655 Montgomery Street.

Wed, Jan 7, SF Supes Hearing on Re-Seating Wendy Paskin-Jordan on the SF Retirement Board. 2 PM, City Hall. More info on page 3.

Thurs, Jan 8, Senior & Disability Action Meet.
10-Noon, UU Center, 1187 Franklin @ Geary.

Thurs, Jan 8, CARA SF CAT Meeting.
1-3 PM, UU Center, 1187 Franklin @ Geary.

Fri, Jan. 9, Rally: Tear Down the Walls of Poverty. 12:30 PM, State Bldg, 350 McAllister, SF.

Tues, Jan. 20, Free MUNI for Low/Middle Income Seniors & People w. Disabilities. City Hall Rally, 11:30 AM, MTA Board, 1 PM, Rm 400.

Wed, Jan 21, Senior & Disability Action Housing Collaborative Meeting. 1 PM, 1390 Mission.

Thursday, Jan. 22, Modern Times Forum & Panel on Displacement and Homelessness.
7 PM, Modern Times Bookstore, 2919 24th St.

Saturday, Jan. 24, Greed and Genocide: the Ongoing Impacts of the California Gold Rush.

2 PM, Women's Building, 3543 18th St. *Gold*, International Indian Treaty Council

Thursday, Jan 29, Author Barbara Rhine Reading *Tell No Lies*. Three radical activists on the run. 7 PM, Modern Times Bookstore, 2919 24th St.

Check with the office for updates on the Avalos resolution and SFERS Board meetings
415-5582-8800