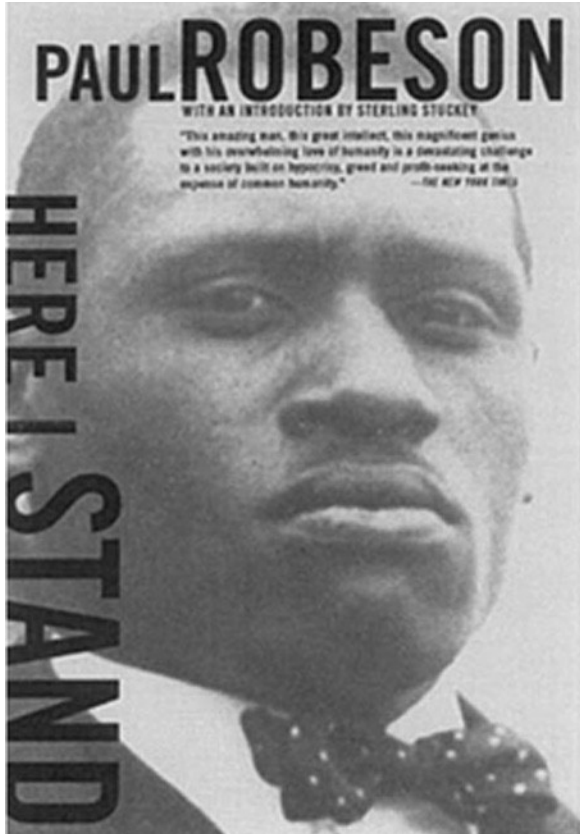


GRAY PANTHERS OF SAN FRANCISCO



Gray Panthers of SF presents

***Celebrating & Honoring
Paul Robeson***

Tuesday, May 17, 1 PM

A talk by Bonnie Weiss,
of the Bay Area Paul Robeson
Centennial Committee,
with two Robeson videos,
and a discussion of further plans.

Fireside Room, Unitarian Center
1187 Franklin St, at Geary

Public Invited, Free, Wheelchairs OK

Bonnie Weiss, of the Bay Area Paul Robeson Centennial Committee, will talk about Paul Robeson, and the importance of gaining broad public recognition of the life, career and legacy of this 20th century Renaissance man. She will show two films, *Paul Robeson: Tribute to an Artist*, narrated by Sidney Poitier, 1979, winner of Academy Award OSCAR for Best Documentary (Short Subjects), and *Our Paul: Remembering Paul Robeson*, 2007, actors Ruby Dee and James Earl Jones and filmmaker William Greaves discuss their relationships to Paul Robeson and the importance of his enduring legacy. We will also discuss possible Gray Panther projects we could do to celebrate and publicize Paul Robeson.

Recruiting a New Board for Gray Panthers

We are belatedly accepting nominations for our 2016 Board, starting now and ending at our June 21 General Meeting when we'll vote on the nominations. Please nominate yourself or another person you *know* wants to be a Board member at the May 17th or June 21 General Meeting. Or you can call our office at 415-552-8800. As usual, when the new Board first meets it will elect Convener, Secretary, and Treasurer from among themselves.

Board members attend monthly Board meetings, currently the first Wednesday of the month at 1 PM, decide programs for General Meetings, decide on activities and campaigns of Gray Panthers, and carry on the day-to-day functioning of Gray Panthers. All members are welcome to attend Board meetings, and participate in discussions.

April Membership Meeting

After snacks and socializing, our meeting began with some beautiful songs sung by Francisco Herrera, a long-time participant in the Freedom Song Network and an even longer-time activist in the Mission/Excelsior community. He accompanied himself spectacularly with his guitar, inviting us to sing along -- an excellent, warm introduction to our scheduled discussion of where we've been and where we're going.

The Gray Panthers was founded in 1974 by Maggie Kuhn, whose main concerns were ageism (she was forced to retire at 65), sexism, workers' rights, and health care ("doctors no longer pay house calls," she mourned!) In her book, No Stone Left Unturned (a copy is available in the GP office as well as the SF Public Library), Maggie Kuhn tells the story of her life in service to others, how she founded the Gray Panthers with five other women, and specifically how to go about effecting social change. Perhaps her best-known motto: "Speak your mind -- even if your voice shakes. Well-aimed slingshots can topple giants." This implies her corollary advice: "When you seek a change, go to the top".

We shared these ideas, along with an execution of the Gray Panthers "growl", and remembered various actions we have taken here in San Francisco -- for example, the time we shut down the Army recruiting office by entering and demanding we be allowed to join the military "in order to get health care" -- in keeping with Maggie's edict to do something outrageous every day.

From such reminiscing we turned to the subject of what issues/concerns we might want to pursue now. Thanks to the input from everyone in attendance, these included: forced retirement (ageism in general); access to universal health care; protection/expansion of Social Security; Mumia's health issues in prison (write letters); prison system reform in general, including family visiting rights; countering anti-Muslim hatreds and Patriot Act in general; anti-eviction, including possible defense of GP member whose home is threatened; air pollution issues, chemtrails and cloud-seeding in particular; pharmaceutical industry outrageous overcharging for prescriptions; getting money out of

politics (national and local); Muni cutbacks (specifically, effect on riders of eliminating bus stops) and SFMTA over-reach in general; find one issue and be consistent; Prop. 30, petition to extend tax on wealthy; developing/producing a Paul Robeson songbook; continue connections with other groups and issues; join Silicon Valley De-Bug, a media and organizing collective; better wages for domestic workers; investigating and making public the past records of police recruits (new and old); immigrant rights; racism in any and all of its forms; Living Wage Campaign - Fight for \$15; rights of homeless in San Francisco (neglect of needs, mistreatment by police and Public Works); spread the word about Taurine, an amino acid, for atrial fibrillation; water issues, such as 1) campaign to reduce use of bottled water and 2) undesirable fluoridation by City & County of S.F. (*n.b.* the Precautionary Principle); toxic chemical use in parks and public buildings by City (again, the Precautionary Principle); media watch, e.g., ageism, biased views in general; time-banking to share skills and resources; age and youth together, working with schools on many shared issues.

Needless to note: we've got our work cut out for us. Many possibilities -- and so little time, as they say! Thanks to all who participated. We will have to give careful consideration to the tactics we will engage in so as to 1) succeed in our goals and 2) attract new members as well as inspire participation by present members. Anyone who has further thoughts or suggestions for specific actions they would want to support should let us know. Come to the next board meeting, where we will continue this discussion, hopefully to select some course of action(s), on Wednesday, June 1, 1:00 pm at Main Library. Or leave a message at the office: 415-552-8800.



Gray Panthers speaking at Black Lives Matter occupation of City Hall over police killings of Blacks

Paul Robeson's Life Matters: Part 1

(From his autobiography, Here I Stand.)

Paul Robeson gave his life and his career to the cause of equality, human rights and peace through music.

Robeson's roots were in a religion that reveals African influences through musical creativity that allows no break between the sacred and the secular. Born and raised in New Jersey, among other children of former slaves, home was theater and social center. His father, Rev. William Drew Robeson, taught him selflessness and integrity by the example of his life and work; he flatly rejected Booker T. Washington's concept that Negro education be limited essentially to manual training. He firmly believed that the heights of knowledge must be scaled by the freedom seeker: "Neither the promise of gain nor the threat of loss has ever moved me from my firm convictions."

At Rutgers he excelled in debate, football and academics. To finance his law studies at Columbia University he took up acting, and in 1925 he appeared in Eugene O'Neill's The Emperor Jones and All God's Chillun Got Wings."

His law career at a New York City law firm ended when he quit because a secretary refused to take dictation from him. He then turned to acting in films and on the stage, as well as singing in concerts all over the world.

He wrote in Here I Stand, "The power of spirit that our people have is intangible, but it is a great force that must be unleashed in the struggles of today. That spirit lives in our people's songs --in the sublime grandeur of Deep River, in the driving power of Jacob's Ladder, and in the militancy of Joshua Fit the Battle of Jericho, and in the poignant beauty of all our spirituals."

"Like most of Africa's children in America, I had known little about the land of our fathers but in England I came to know many Africans. I came to see the roots of my own people's culture, especially in our music which is still the richest and most healthy in America. My pride in Africa, and it grew with the learning, impelled me to speak out against the scorners. I wrote articles for the New Statesman and Nation, The Spectator, and elsewhere, championing the real but unknown glories

of African culture. If African culture is what I insisted it was, what happens then to the claim that it would take 1,000 years for Africans to be capable of self-rule? In the Soviet Union I saw how the Yakuts and Uzbeks and all the other formerly oppressed nations were leaping ahead from tribalism to modern industrial economy, from illiteracy to the heights of knowledge... 1,000 years? No, less than 20."

"I felt, too, that the rapidly growing power of the Soviet Union in world affairs would become an important factor in aiding the colonial liberation movement; in New York, at the United Nations, we have all been able to see with our own eyes that on every issue that has come up the Soviet Union and other socialist countries have voted in support of the colored peoples of the world."

"I went to Spain in 1938, and that was a major turning point in my life. There I saw that it was the working men and women of Spain who were heroically giving their last full measure of devotion to the cause of democracy in that bloody conflict. ... In Spain I sang with my whole heart and soul for these gallant fighters of the International Brigade. Spain -- the anti-fascist struggle and all that I learned in it --brought me back to America. As artist and citizen, as a Negro and friend of labor, there would be plenty for me to do at home."

In 1947 Robeson was influential in persuading Henry A. Wallace to be a candidate for President on the New Party ticket. Robeson stumped the country for months building up support for the New Party.

(Part 2 of Robeson's Life Matters, in the June Newsletter, explains his stance on the Cold War and his response to the HUAC Committee.)



Paul Robeson and Civil Rights Congress picketing the White House, August 1948

SFMTA or Muni?

How is SFMTA management of Muni failing to meet bus riders' needs? Let us count the ways.

First and foremost, they have cut entire bus lines (the 26 Valencia, for example), they have reduced the length and frequency of bus lines (e.g., 2 Clement), and they have cut many stops from various bus lines (28 19th Avenue). They are now proposing reduction of Rapid (express) stops on the 38-Geary, leaving elderly, disabled, and heavily burdened parents w. small children to walk longer distances and wait for longer periods to catch a Geary bus, rain or shine.

You, dear reader and rider, need to remind them to set their routes and schedules on the basis of everyone's needs -- particularly those of patron with limited mobility. And any response they may make that such patrons can make special arrangements for vans is a no-starter. Patrons with mobility challenges are not 2nd class citizens -- and, anyway, why provide kneeling buses with wheelchair lifts if they're going to fob off disabled riders to special arrangements. (Just ask Lurilla how speedy that works!)

It's more important to have frequent and ready access to the bus than to cut the travel time once on the bus. If, in order to provide this they need to add more bus stops, more buses, and more drivers, then so be it.

Public transit is where it's at; not everyone can -- or should -- drive a car, if only because it's polluting and adds to global warming. As do paratransit vehicles, by the way. The more accessible, frequent, reliable and comfortable bus service is, the more likely it is that people will get out of their cars and cabs and Lyfts, etc., and take Muni. It's good for the environment and it's good for the people.

How about breaking up SFMTA? Too much power in too few hands. Let Muni be Muni again! SFMTA is not serving the needs of public transit well. All they consider is how fast a given bus gets from here to there, whereas the patron-friendly way to figure the effectiveness of the system is to bus stop, how long the patron waits for a bus to measure trip times by how long it takes to get to arrive, how long (and comfortable) the ride is, and

how far to the destination the patron has to walk. That's the way to measure the effectiveness of the system; not just how long it takes the bus to do its route.

And another advantage to breaking up SFMTA could be that the Muni website might become more user-friendly since now it's hopelessly frustrating to find anything. It's a complete loss. In addition, the new Muni maps cost \$7 apiece. They should be free.

Were the MTA planners to think from the point of view of the patrons they would measure the performance level of the system, not by the speed of the bus route but the time for the patron to go door-to-door. Now they measure the performance by how long it takes a given bus to go from the beginning to the end of its line. However, the performance level should be measured by the time it takes to walk from one's location, the waiting time for the bus to arrive, the transit time for the trip itself, and the time it takes to get to one's destination. And, if there's a transfer involved, the time waiting for the second bus should be included.

This means that the distance between bus stops and the frequency of buses has to be included in figuring travel time, not just how fast the bus goes from one point to another; it's how fast the rider gets from one point to another.

Please call the SFMTA to protest the elimination of bus stops. Contact Sean Kennedy, Planning Manager, at 415-701-4599.

Check Your Voter Registration!

If you intend to vote in the June primary election, which of course means voting for your preferred candidate for President, be sure that you are registered appropriately by May 23.

This June, "No Party Preference, NPP" (formerly "Decline to State") registrants can request ballots with Presidential choices for only the Democratic, Libertarian or American Independent Parties. NPP voters by mail must request partisan Presidential ballots from the SF Dept of Elections by June 1 using their special form. Contact the S.F. Dept of Elections (415-554-4375). Voters may change party preference after the June primary up to two weeks before the November election by contacting the SF Dept of Elections.

Ballot Recommendations for June Elections, From Denise D'Anne

YES – PROPOSITION A – PUBLIC HEALTH AND SAFETY BOND This is a \$350 million bond to finance the construction, acquisition, and improvement measures. These would include seismic strengthening, community mental health, emergency response and safety (fire department and facilities upgrade). It also includes funding for homeless shelters and service facilities. But 50% of the bond obligation to property tax payers can be passed onto tenants. And with the millions spent on maintaining shelters and other homeless services, the City should buy a building or buildings to house and service the homeless population.

NO - PROPOSITION B – ANNUAL SET-ASIDE FOR REC & PARK This Charter Amendment requires a 15-year set-aside to fund to provide Park and Recreational services and facilities. Two problems: Once in Charter impossible to change. Set-aside means funding no matter priority needs for other programs. And, of course most of us see the Rec and Park Department as one of the most corrupt.

YES – PROPOSITION C – CHARTER AMENDMENT FOR AFFORDABLE HOUSING The City may enact an ordinance adopting inclusionary or affordable housing obligations that differ from previous inclusionary language. The City endeavors to meet affordable housing needs across a broad range of household incomes, family sizes and neighborhood conditions.

YES – PROPOSITION D – OFFICE OF CITIZEN COMPLAINTS This an amendment of the Administrative Code to require the Office of Citizen Complaints (OCC) to investigate all officer-involved shootings. The OCC shall conduct a timely and complete investigation of an incident occurring within SF.

YES – PROPOSITION E – PAID SICK LEAVE Finally catching up with other forward-looking nations on worker benefits. It covers both public and private employers within the City and County of San Francisco. in general. The formula that takes effect in 2017 is one hour of sick leave per 30 hours of work.

NO RECOMMENDATION — DCCC ELECTION — An important election is happening in the Democratic County Central Committee, the governing body of the local Democratic Party as defined in California's Government Code and Elections Code.

NO – PROPOSITION AA – RESTORE SAN FRANCISCO BAY With 2/3 voter approval, would levy a special parcel tax of \$12 per year for 20 years. The money will be used to reduce trash, pollution and harmful toxins; improve water quality; restore habitat for fish, birds and wildlife; protect communities from floods; and increase shoreline access for public enjoyment and recreation. It appears to be ripe for abuse.

NO – STATE MEASURE 50 – TO DISCIPLINE LEGISLATORS Currently, State legislators can discipline their colleagues by a majority vote, and disciplined legislators receives full salary during the procedure. This amendment to the State constitution would require a 2/3 vote to discipline a colleague, and the disciplined legislator will forfeit salary and perks. But the 2/3 vote requirement it would make it unlikely that any legislator would be disciplined, and it is like the fox guarding the henhouse, because the legislator's bias and vendettas would come into play. We need an independent body to discipline legislators.

Bottled Water Mania

By Denise D'Anne

Just producing 29 billion of plastic bottles a year would be cause to ban this material. But worse still is the water in these bottles has dubious sources: some from streams, some from aquifers, some from lakes and at least 40% from municipal sources (such as Hetch Hetchy).

Interesting is the story of the state of Michigan's aquifers. This aquifer is used for free by Nestles, which siphons 400 gallons per minute to sell the water anywhere in the world. This at the same

time the town of Flint, Michigan, is suffering from lead poisoning in their water supply.

To make, ship and reconstitute the few plastic bottles that are recycled requires million of gallons of oil. Plastic bottles are known to leach chemical from the plastic into the beverage and when the liquid is warm bacteria start forming.

Roberto Ferdman of the Washington Post calls our blind urge to buy this product – Bottled Water Mania. The average Americans drinks about 35 gallons of bottled water per year or 270 bottles. The impact on our environment is incalculable.

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

ADDRESS SERVICE
REQUESTED

Call the office for membership information.

Printed In House May 2016

Actions and Events

(Complete on-line Calendar at <http://tinyurl.com/2gy6enb>)

Tues, May 17, Gray Panther Meeting on Paul Robeson: See front page.

Wed, May 18, Senior & Disability Action Housing Collaborative: 1-3 PM, 1360 Mission, 4th Fl.

Wed, May 18 and every Wednesday, SF Police Commission: 5:30 PM, City Hall, Rm 400. Say NO to tasers, NO to profiling and killing of Blacks and Latins in San Francisco.

Thurs, May 19, Rally for Safe Staffing in SF City Hospitals and Clinics: Noon, City Hall Steps.

Mon, May 23, Gray Panther Book Club: 11:30 AM, Celtic Café, 142 McAllister, betw Hyde & Leavenworth. Please call 415-931-1126 to confirm.

Sat, May 28, OWL-SF Meeting w. Empowered Elder Workshop: 10 AM. Your emergency medical information, hospital

stay basics, making advance medical decisions, etc. 555 Ellis, betw Hyde & Leavenworth. RSVP 415-989-4422.

Wed, June 1, Gray Panther Board Meeting: 1 PM, Main Library, 3rd Fl, Martin Paley Meeting Room.

Wed, June 8, SDA Health Action Team Meeting: 11 AM, 1010 Mission.

Thurs, June 9, Senior & Disability Action Meeting: 10 AM-12 Noon. 1187 Franklin.

Thurs, June 9, CARA SF CAT Meeting: 1-3 PM, ILWU office, 1188 Franklin at Geary, 4th Fl.

Tues, June 21, SF Gray Panther General Meeting: Opposing MUNI Cuts, GP Board Election. 12:30 PM, 1187 Franklin St, Fireside Rm.