

# GRAY PANTHERS OF SAN FRANCISCO



Gray Panthers of SF presents:

## **Muni Doesn't Stop Here**

**Tuesday, June 21, 1 PM**

A talk by Gerald Cauthen of Save Muni  
on Muni's plans for gentrification and displacement.

**Fireside Room, Unitarian Center  
1187 Franklin St, at Geary**

**Public Invited, Wheelchairs OK**

Our speaker for June 21 meeting will be Gerald Cauthen. Mr. Cauthen has extensive experience in transportation as an engineer and consultant, with over three decades designing and managing public transit projects. He is one of the founders of Save Muni.com, which focuses on accessibility, infrastructure, cost, efficiency, on-time performance, and other aspects of Muni to serve the people of San Francisco, including seniors and those with disabilities.

### **Recruiting a New Board for Gray Panthers**

We are accepting nominations for our 2016 Board until our June 21 Membership Meeting when we'll vote on the nominations. Please nominate yourself or another person you know wants to be a Board member at the June 21 General Meeting or 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. Please consider becoming a Board member.

Board members attend monthly Board meetings, currently the first Wednesday of the month at 1 PM, decide programs for Membership 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.

## June Meeting: Muni Doesn't Stop Here

Muni used to brag that no one had to walk more than two (or was it one?) blocks to get to a bus stop anywhere in the City. Is this still true since bus stops and bus lines have been cut? Come to the June meeting and find out. (See front page.)

Last month's newsletter garbled the following sentence, reproduced here: All SFMTA considers 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 measure trip times by how long it takes a patron to get to a bus stop, how long the patron waits for a bus to arrive, how long (and comfortable) the ride is, and how far to the destination the patron has to walk.

The recent proposal by MTA for an automated driverless system may also come up. Don't those high-paid planners know that the bus drivers are the heart and soul of the system, getting people safely on and off the buses under all conditions? Automated, driverless buses?? Gimme a break!

## May Meeting: Paul Robeson

We welcomed many new faces to May's membership meeting to enjoy Bonnie Weiss' excellent presentation on Paul Robeson. With his active opposition to racism, fascism, colonialism and war he pursued his quest for a universal humanity through song. We are fortunate that technology has preserved his extraordinarily beautiful voice singing those Negro spirituals and folk songs in many languages that he saw as a powerful vehicle to that goal.

The meeting concluded with an impromptu, superb rendition by Alex Bagwell of "Water Boy" that brought Robeson to life.

### Remembering Robeson Committee

A committee, Remembering Robeson, was formed to make a book of songs from his repertoire and in general to revive his erased place in history. Interested in helping? Leave a message at the office, 415-668-9572, or just come to the Gray Panther office on Friday, June 17 at 1:30 PM. See Calendar for details.

## Paul Robeson's Life Matters: Part 2

(from his autobiography *Here I Stand*)

(Part 1, in the May Newsletter, depicted his life up to 1947 before the beginning of the Cold War.)

The Paris Peace Conference in April 1949 was convened to address East-West hostilities of the Cold War. The invitation to speak before the body of international delegates became another turning point in Robeson's life. He said "it is unthinkable that American Negroes could go to war on behalf of those who have oppressed them for generations, against the Soviet Union, which in one generation has raised all people to full dignity."

He returned to the United States in June 1949, and on June 19 addressed the Welcome Home rally in Harlem: "Why did I take this stand on the Atlantic Pact -- the Arms Pact -- and its forerunner, the Marshall Plan? Let us examine the results of the Marshall Plan. We don't need to guess and theorize. Western European countries have completely lost their freedom. ... American Big Business tells all of Western Europe what to do, what it can produce, where it must buy, with whom it can trade. And, finally, with the Atlantic Pact, the western Europeans are told that they must be ready to die to the last man in order to defend American Big Business. .... But beyond this strangling of Western Europe, the real meaning of the Marshall Plan is the complete enslavement of the colonies. For how can British, French and other Western European bankers repay Wall Street? Only in raw materials -- in gold, copper, cocoa, rubber, uranium, manganese, iron ore, ground nuts, oils, fats, sugar, bananas ... from South Africa, Nigeria, East Africa, French Africa, Belgian Congo, Trinidad, Jamaica, Cuba, Honduras, Guatemala, Viet Nam, Malaya. The Marshall Plan means enslavement of our people all over the earth, including here in the United States on the cotton and sugar plantations and in the mines of the North and South. .... And the Atlantic Pact means legal sanction for sending guns and troops to the colonies to insure the enslavement and terrorization of our people. ...."

In reaction to his defense of the rights of his people and his continuing friendship with the Soviet Union, the establishment, including the NAACP, made him an object of hatred, resulting in a boycott of his speeches and concerts for ten years. The Peekskill riots in 1949 were among the ugliest in a

century.” The audience circled him to protect him from the Ku Klux Klan.

From 1950 to 1958 he was confined to the United States, his passport held up by the State Department. Robeson: “I have often reflected on the truth expressed in the words of a song that I have sung at many a concert, ‘Love Will Find Out the Way’.

... I shall always remember the concert arranged by the miners held at Peace Arch Park on the border between the State of Washington and the Province of British Columbia, May 18, 1952. 30,000 Canadians came from many miles away to hear me, to demonstrate their friendship and to protest against all barriers to cultural exchange.” Gray Panthers Gretchen and Dick Davis witnessed this event from Bellingham, Washington.

After this, Gray Panther Mitzi Raas volunteered in the summer of 1956 to drive him to the San Francisco's Sheraton Palace Hotel, where he insisted that his entourage be accommodated. He was a big man. Her car sank noticeably under his weight.

From the *San Francisco Sun Reporter*, 1956: “Whites hate and fear him simply because he is the conscience of the United States in the field of color relations. He says all the things which all of them wish to say about color relations, and the manner in which he says these things attracts the eye... of the world.”

In July 1956 when he was called before the House Un-American Activities Committee, he stated: “I came back to America to fight for my people here and they are still second- and third-class citizens, gentlemen, and I was born here of the Negro people and of working people and I am back here to help them struggle. .... The Soviet Union and the People's Democracy in China are in the forefront of the struggle for peace, and so is our President, thank goodness, and let us hope we will have some peace, if committees like yours do not upset the applecart and destroy all of humanity. Now can I read my speech?”

### **Protect our Telephone Land-Lines**

AT&T is pushing AB2395, which forces us onto cell phones, which are unreliable and don't show our location on 911 calls. Call SF Assembly Member Phil Ting, 415-557-2312, to say NO!

From the statement Robeson was not allowed to make to the HUAC Committee, 7/13/56: “....When will Dulles explain his reckless ‘brink of war’ policy by which the world might have been destroyed? And specifically, why is Dulles afraid to let me have a passport, to let me travel abroad to sing, to act, to speak my mind? ....My fight for a passport is a struggle for freedom - freedom to travel, freedom to earn a livelihood, freedom to speak, freedom to express myself artistically and culturally. I have been denied these freedoms because Dulles, Eastland, Walter and their ilk oppose my views on colonial liberation, my resistance to oppression of Negro Americans, and my burning desire for peace with all nations.”

The world had not forgotten him. His invitation to join the Stratford on Avon Shakespeare Theater, signed by 27 MPs concludes: “There was never a more vital time for free countries to uphold their professions with regard to freedom of travel as undertaken in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights especially important in the case of so outstanding an artist as Paul Robeson, who properly belongs to all humanity.”

In 1954 the World Federation of Trade Unions asked him to record a hymn called “Man” for a documentary film, *Song of the Rivers*. It had a score composed by Shostakovich, words by Brecht, and commentary by the French novelist Pozner. Robeson was invited to perform for the conference of delegates honoring the tenth anniversary of the United Nations. In the journal *Freedom* he wrote, “I’m proud that I’m one of many people whose voice is raised around the world in protest against Jim Crow and exploitation of the Negro people both here and in Africa.”

His voice had much to do with the Supreme Court ruling which outlawed segregation in U.S. schools.

And on May 26, 1957, he sang by telephone to an audience of 1,000 in London. That concert was held in connection with a conference sponsored by the National Paul Robeson Committee, a group of distinguished people in Britain.

In 1958 the Supreme Court ruled in the Kent-Briehl decision that no U.S. citizen can be restricted from travel because of political views. He traveled, performed, and was widely honored, culminating in a huge 1973 event for him at Carnegie Hall. He died in 1976.

## Recycle Or Not To Recycle

When I worked for the San Francisco Department of Social Services my boss suggested I go to a seminar on Recycling. At the seminar I had coffee at the table with a man who sat across from me. I mentioned that this kind of event would not be necessary if we did not have companies foisting all the stuff that needed to be recycled on us. Without comment, he subsequently mounted the stage and began to tell us about the importance of recycling with hints on how to accomplish it. It turned out he was a spokesperson for manufacturers of plastic and other packaging material.

I still recycle. However, now I am wise enough to know that recycling is definitely not the whole answer. Recycling puts the burden on the purchaser to figure out how to dispose of the waste. It thus leaves the manufacturers of packaging free to come up with even more over-packaging. For instance at Senior Lunch Centers, seniors were given cartons of milk. The cartons were compostable. Now the same seniors are given miniature plastic bottles of milk. They require recycling, which adds to the ultimate cost of the milk and to the stress on the environment.

Recycling even has aspects of imperialism. For instance, used electronic and automotive parts are shipped from the US to factories overseas that wreck the environment and expose low wage workers to dangerous, even lethal materials. High concentrations of lead contaminate acres of ground around battery recycling factories in Mexico. Volatile mercury is used to extract gold from incalculable tons of circuit boards in China.

How could we produce less stuff that needs to be recycled? A few ideas: Less product packaging. Produce more durable products so they will not have to be replaced as often. Have less emphasis on needing the latest product with the latest gimmicks. More lending of things like tools through libraries, to avoid buying items for use only a few times. Using material that could be composted at home instead of needing recycling.

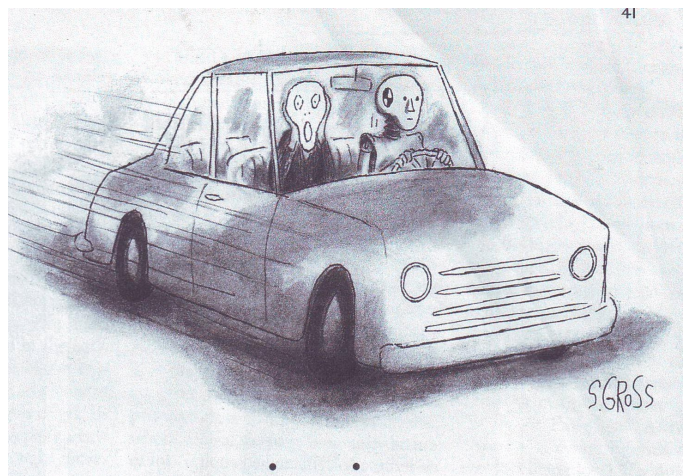
For products like electronics or vehicles, the problem is more complex since some of these

exist to solve other environmental problems. Many technological advances use increasingly toxic materials. For instance, the batteries in electric cars are more toxic. But there are solutions: Better mass transit that would reduce the need for cars. Restoring downtown shopping areas vs. car-dependent malls. Getting rid of gigantic Internet server farms devoted to porn, violent on-line videogames, etc. could reduce electronic waste.

But how might we reduce electronic waste from electronic hardware that is useful and beneficial? Paradoxically, producing only higher-power circuit boards, speedy with lots of memory, means we would not have to replace hardware as much when software advances. Eliminating patents (gasp!), would let more devices work with each other so we could buy, and dispose of, fewer devices. Developing less toxic materials for electronics is always a goal, though we are sometimes disappointed when these materials are shown to be toxic years later. We would probably have to give up miniaturization in electronics.

Ultimately, we would have to make many choices, balancing convenience with the greater good for society. But to enforce these choices, we have to be the ones who run society.

(Denise D'Anne and Michael Lyon are both on the Board of Gray Panthers and other organizations together. Both are deeply concerned about the trajectory of our environment.)



SF Examiner, 5-18-2016: "SF pitches \$149 million plan to replace cars with self-driving vehicles" Autonomous buses would be connected to each other via wireless technology to avoid collisions.

## Book Review: *The File*

By Barbara Lee

*The File*, by Timothy Garton-Ash, Fellow of St. Anthony's College, Oxford University.

Neil Ascherson of *The London Independent* says of *The File*: "By far the wisest and most penetrating study of a communist informer society ever written by an outsider." Garton -Ash also wrote of the Solidarity movement in Poland and was published in the *New York Review of Books*, the *UK Guardian*, and other prominent journals.

Germany, home to Bach, Beethoven, Goethe and Schiller, was divided after World War II between Soviet East Germany and U.S./British/French West Germany. The difference in evolving cultures attracted many journalists, many of whom pledged to inform on agencies and individuals -- as they allegedly do today.

The systematic opening of secret police records after the fall of the Berlin Wall has no precedent. The files reveal much about the Cold War, communism and the "sense or nonsense of spying."

So, fifteen years after journalist Garton-Ash left Germany, he returned to visit the East German STASI to obtain his file. In *The File* he compares the informants' accounts of meetings with his own diary of events and friends. Attempting to understand why some friends were willing to betray the friendship, he visits old neighbors and talks to those people he had held in esteem.

One of six East Germans were employed to act as informants for the State, and visiting journalists were routinely asked to inform for the STASI. So why did Garton-Ash refuse to spy for MI-5 of his native England? "What makes one person a Stauffenberg, another a Speer?"

The Gray Panthers Book Group meets at 11:30 AM on the last Monday of each month at the Celtic Coffee Shop at 142 McAllister near Hyde. (Please call 415-931-1126 to confirm date.)



## Will the Police Be Reformed?

Ex-Police Chief Greg Suhr, who commanded and defended a department riddled with endemic racism, corruption, and lack of oversight, is gone. Now people ask, can the police be reformed?

In the short term, yes, we can fight back against the immediate abuses. Suhr's firing, Gascón's Blue Ribbon Commission, the DOJ's Collaborative Review, and the daily news of police abuses would never have happened without people's demonstrations, marches, street blockages, occupations of buildings, disruptions of meetings, and hunger strikes, which prevented the City from conducting business as usual. Before these actions, many victims, largely Black and Latin, were killed by police with the City barely missing a beat. People can take credit for these actions, while also remembering and cherishing those who were killed.

Obviously, much remains to be done for even minimal justice. In recognition of community demands, the police who killed Alex Nieto, Amilcar Perez, Mario Woods, Luis Gongora, and now Jessica Williams, must be indicted and tried; the SFPD must have a full Justice Dept investigation with binding recommendations; police killings must be investigated by outside bodies; teams visiting people in mental crises must be mental health workers, not police; police must not get Tasers to terrorize people; and police must write their reports before viewing body camera footage.

Getting these changes may require these same tactics used to get this far. Suhr's firing was a big victory, but it does not mean the City's attitudes or their displacement agenda has changed.

Long-term, profound, reform of the police? Is it possible to reform an institution with roots as far back as 1704 as Slave Patrols and killing Native Americans? The recent text messages demonstrate the demonization used in war and police culture to excuse killing or enslaving the "less than human." This demonization hurts many groups not just Blacks and gays. What is needed is a new police culture (that some countries already practice) that gives dignity, respect and justice without the use of excessive force or the use of deadly weapons.

## Gray Panthers of SF

2940 16th Street, Room 200 – 3  
San Francisco, CA 94103  
415-552-8800  
<http://graypantherssf.igc.org/>  
[graypanther-sf@sonic.net](mailto:graypanther-sf@sonic.net)

Nonprofit Org.

U.S. Postage

PAID

San Francisco, CA

Permit No. 12977

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 June 2016

## Actions and Events

(Complete on-line Calendar at <http://tinyurl.com/ce2gy6enb>)

**Wed, June 1, Gray Panthers Board:** 1 PM, Main Library, 3rd Fl, Paley Rm.

**Thurs, June 1, 5:30 PM, Police Commission Meeting on Tasers:** City Hall, Rm 400. Gray Panthers opposes Tasers.

**Thurs, June 2, Gray Panthers Newsletter Meeting:** 1 PM, GP Office, 2040 16th St, Rm 200-3, by 16th St. BART

**Fri, June 3, Courage for Racial Justice:** 6-9 PM. Sponsored by Standing Up for Racial Justice, SURJ. 1187 Franklin.

**Tues, June 7, Election Day.**

**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.

**Thurs, June 16, No More Luxury Condos in Mission.** Noon, City Hall Steps.

**Fri, June 17, Gray Panthers Remember Robeson Committee Meeting.** 1:30 PM, GP Office.

**Tues, June 21, SF Gray Panther Membership Meeting: Opposing MUNI Cuts, GP Board Election.** 12:30 PM, 1187 Franklin St (at Geary), Fireside Rm.

**Wed, June 22, SF Gray Panther Newsletter Meeting #2.** 1 PM, GP Office.

**Mon, June 27, GP Book Club.** 11:30 AM, Celtic Café, 142 McAllister, betw Hyde & Leavenworth. Please call 415-931-1126 to confirm.

**Fridays, June 10 & 24: Folk Singing Group at St. Cyprian's:** 7:30 PM, 2097 Turk.