

GRAY PANTHERS OF SAN FRANCISCO



TRAVELS WITH EARL

**Gray Panthers member Earl Gilman
talks about his recent
trip to Peru and Chile, including
an interview with
political prisoner Lori Berenson**

**Tuesday, June 16, 12:30 PM
Unitarian/Universalist Center
Fireside Room, 1187 Franklin (near Geary)**

GRAY PANTHERS COMMITTEE MEETINGS & EVENTS

All meetings and events take place at 1182 Market, Rm. 203, unless otherwise noted.

**Board Meeting 12:30 PM
Wednesday, June 3 & July 1**

**Civil/Human Rights Comm 11:00 AM
Wednesday, June 10 & July 8**

**Newsletter Committee 12:00 Noon
Thursday, June 4 & July 2**

**Program Committee 1:00 PM
Wednesday, June 10 & July 8**

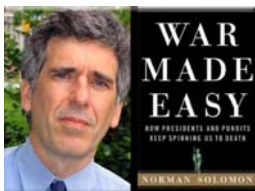
**Health Committee 1:00 PM
Tuesday, June 9 & July 14**

**Middle East Study Group 11:00 AM
Wednesday, June 17 & July 15**

Book Club: 10:30 AM, Monday June 22 & July 27

Solomon Speaks at the U-U

In Norman Solomon's May 3 talk to members of the Gray Panthers and the Unitarian Universalist Forum, co-sponsors of the event, he framed his evaluation of Obama's first 100 days in the context of the wars in Iraq, Afghanistan and Pakistan.



Solomon showed an excerpt from his recent film, "War Made Easy," in which Martin Luther King discussed the "madness" of militarism that allows a nation to sacrifice its people for war and war-making. King spoke about the Vietnam War, but in Solomon's view, little has changed: while spending \$2 billion a day on the military, Obama cannot keep the promises he made for reform of healthcare, housing, education, transportation, energy supply, etc., and therefore the nation cannot move forward.

In Kosovo, Solomon said, NATO bombed for 78 straight days. It was widely considered a "perfect war," even by many anti-war activists, because no American lives were lost. Today, we have "clean war": young 'pilots' in Nevada sending unmanned drones at human targets in Afghanistan and Pakistan, then going home to tuck their children into bed. It's all one big video game.

While there are vaguely hopeful signs of modulation of belligerency toward Iran and slightly more favorable trends toward the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, Solomon was not sanguine about the future. He served as an Obama delegate to the 2008 Democratic National Convention in hopes that grassroots pressure could move Obama in a progressive direction. Now he sees Obama's skill at finding and occupying the center of political gravity as an obstacle to progress, and progressives need to stop giving him a pass, especially on war. "As I said last time I was here," Solomon recalled, "the best way not to get disillusioned is not to have illusions in the first place."

In a recent article, Solomon wrote, "...in the real world, individual heroics are a fool's gold when compared to the genuine value of building political movements." Another way of saying this: Obama will not save us. We are the change we've been waiting for.

Travels With Earl

Steinbeck had *Travels With Charley*. This month we have *Travels with Earl*. Our GP member Earl Gilman just came home from six weeks in South America, mostly Peru and Chile. Who and what he saw and how he got there are not quite the same as going with Grand Circle Tours or Elderhostel. Come journey with Earl for a different view of some of our South American neighbors.

Lots of New Faces at General Meeting

Our general meeting this month was a follow-up discussion of Norman Solomon's talk at the Forum on May 3. In a nice bit of reciprocity, a number of regular Forum people came to our discussion.

There was quite a range of opinion about the Obama administration so far. Many were disappointed that he is ramping up the war in Afghanistan and Pakistan, that his government is replete with Wall Street sympathizers, that his efforts to expose and prosecute people responsible for the torture policies have been insufficient, and that so little stimulus money has gone to job programs and help for people being evicted or foreclosed.

Others pointed to Obama's reversal of Bush's policy to deny funds to international family planning groups that included abortion, to his support for green energy, and to his efforts to reach out to other countries...and, they counseled patience—the new administration is young.

While most seemed to agree that progressives need to keep up the pressure if they hope to see changes, some felt that significant change simply is not possible under capitalism, and pointed to increased public support for socialism as the best hope.

All in all, a lively and interesting discussion, and we hope the new people will join us again!

Congratulations SF Labor Council...

...for reaffirming your support for dropping the charges against the SF 8 in spite of the SF Police Officers' Assn. ultimatum: rescind or we withdraw from the Council. The case against the eight black men accused of killing Sgt. John Young in 1971 was suddenly revived two years ago.

Is Care-Not-Cash a Success?

A May 3 *Chronicle* article on Mayor Newsom's Care-Not-Cash proclaimed, "SF Making Strides to Solve Homeless Problem. 83 percent reduction in people receiving checks who are homeless." A new member was outraged. "Are we to be happy that there has been a 5/6th reduction in money for homeless people? How does this relate to abatement of human suffering? Why does the *Chronicle* or Newsom feel that it's a great accomplishment?"

Most General Assistance (GA) recipients got their checks reduced to \$65 monthly, but only one in three or four got any kind of housing. And "housing" increasingly means a shelter bed.

The increasingly inadequate number of shelter beds are reserved for those GA recipients because every shelter bed occupied by a GA recipient represents a big savings for the City.

If you don't qualify for GA, such as being undocumented, or are receiving any other benefits (like most seniors and people with disabilities), you start standing in line at 4 AM to get a bed, and even then you'll be turned away an average of six times a month. You're not allowed to use your bed until 8 PM, so you're on the street all day. The drop-in center where you can rest or use the bathroom is being closed as part of the budget cuts.

If you get a bed, it's supposed to be yours for a week, but some are one-night-only beds that belong to other programs but aren't being used that night for some reason. So if you're unlucky enough to be assigned a one-night-only bed, you're back on the line the next morning at 4 AM hoping you'll get a week-long bed.

The number of families needing shelters doubled from 2007 to 2008. At the same time, the city has reduced family shelter beds by 20 percent, and the waiting list is now more than four months long — meaning families are waiting for shelter longer than they can actually stay in it.

Around 3 AM on even the coldest of nights, a City water truck makes its rounds through the Tenderloin, hosing down doorways where homeless unable to get a bed are sleeping. And this is what Newsom and the *Chronicle* call success.

Youth Train for War at Home & Abroad

People opposed to increasing militarization in the US have reason to be concerned at two items in the news recently. The first is the May 12 vote by the San Francisco School Board to continue the Junior ROTC program in San Francisco high schools. JROTC has been in limbo for three years after opponents convinced the Board to phase out the 90-year-old program, then voters passed a non-binding resolution in support of it. JROTC supporters have since been lobbying the Board to rescind its earlier decision; the Board caved in.

Current JROTC enrollment nationwide stands at a high of 273,000 after DOD expanded it in the 1990s and the No Child Left Behind Act improved access for military recruiters. JROTC now operates in 1555 schools, located in every state and overseas. In testimony before the House Armed Services Committee in 2000, armed services representatives said 30%-50% of graduating JROTC members go on to join the military. Some groups opposing JROTC put the percentage much higher.

Two days after the School Board's vote, the *New York Times* ran a front page article describing a program by the Explorers, an organization for older Boy Scouts, that "is training thousands of young people in skills used to confront terrorism, illegal immigration and escalating border violence...." 35,000 high school students participate in the training, which has been shaped by agents from the Border Patrol, Homeland Security, and the FBI., where many who have gone through the Explorers' program eventually find work.

The enthusiastic support by many young people for the Junior ROTC and the Explorers' program should give us pause. It's not *just* about jobs. It's about a culture that glamorizes power and authority, especially when it's in uniform.



Whose Cost of Living?

According to the Congressional Budget Office, for the first time in over 30 years there will be no COLA for Social Security beneficiaries; possibly until January 2013! Seniors and people with disabilities have always received an annual increase of at least 1.3 percent since automatic Cost of Living Adjustments (COLA) went into effect in 1975.

Any recent trip to the grocery store, payment of your utility bills, your MUNI fare and medical bills are evidence that our cost of living has indeed gone way up. Nearly half a million seniors living alone in California lack sufficient income to pay for a minimum level of housing, food, health care, transportation and other basic expenses, according to a new policy brief by the UCLA Center for Health Policy Research and the Insight Center for Community Economic Development. The Senior Citizens League analyzed 15 key expenditures and found that people 65 and over have lost 51 percent of their buying power since 2000. The Consumer Price Index for Elderly Consumers, CPI-E, more accurately reflects senior costs. By tying the annual increase in the COLA to the CPI-E seniors would see much needed relief in their monthly checks during most years. A senior who retired with a benefit of \$460 in 1984 would have received almost \$12,014 more over the past 26 years based on the CPI-E.

At a recent San Francisco Budget Committee meeting, CARA, Gray Panthers, Planning for Elders, SAN, and New Leaf Outreach to Elders, urged Supervisors to support the Elder Economic Security Index, a more realistic measurement of the real cost of living. We urge members to call the Board of Supervisors to support the Elder Index, and call our representatives to protest freezing of Social Security cost of living adjustments.

Speak Truth to Power

**Call all of your representatives.
We need our COLA!**

**Whitehouse toll free 1-866-622-2184
Or www.whitehouse.gov**

A Taxpayer's Look at the Bailout

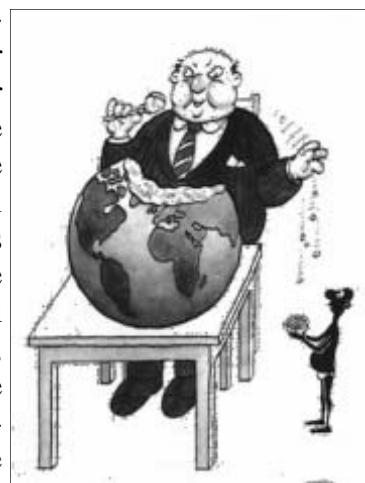
The monster bailout of Wall Street et al in our country is being paid for by taxpayers. Let's look at some of those taxpayers, courtesy of the Institute of Policy Studies, as reported in *The Nation*:

	<i>Income in 2006</i>	<i>Income tax rate</i>
<i>Most affluent 1% in 2006</i>	<i>\$1.3 million</i>	<i>22.8%</i>
<i>Equivalent group 1986</i>	<i>\$507,520</i>	<i>33.1%</i>
<i>Richest 400 in 2006</i>	<i>\$263.3 million</i>	<i>17.2%</i>
<i>Richest 400 in 1955</i>	<i>\$12.3 million</i>	<i>51.2%</i>

The richest 400 in 2006 made more than 20 times those in 1955 and had a tax rate three times lower. If our current richest four hundred paid at the rate of the Eisenhower years, the IRS would collect 35.9 billion dollars more.

That's the richest four hundred. Change that to those who make over 2 million (about 139,000) in 1955 (in 2006 dollars) they would have been taxed at 49%. In 2006 the rate was 23.2%. Another \$202 billion.

The Institute's proposals: 50% tax rate for those who make over \$2 million; reverse the Bush tax cuts for the wealthy; tax financial transactions such as stock sales; eliminate lower rates for capital gains and dividends; institute a progressive estate tax; end overseas tax havens; close loopholes on huge executive compensation taxes.



diansphere.com

Feel free to add your own. Remember—what they don't pay is paid for by the rest of the taxpayers—us. *The Nation's* comments: total increase to federal revenue— \$450 billion. Having a fair tax system—priceless.

Heard on the Bus

Last month our Newsletter had an article by one of our members who was on the Single Payer Only April 15 bus to Sacramento for the first Senate hearing on SB 810 (formerly SB 840). Another of our members on the bus was interviewing people for a report to Single Payer about why they were going. Below are excerpts from the interviews.

Claudia N. Chaufan, MD, PhD (SF), Asst. Professor UCSF, said about health care inequality, "At least this much was clear to me: health care is not a 'good' comparable to a laptop or designer shoes that you can shop for until you get the best deal...it is precisely when you most need healthcare that you can comparative shop the least."

Dr. Chaufan further elaborated on the existing situation in the US: health insurers have been some of the greatest beneficiaries of Medicare and Medicaid, the US's existing public programs, because these programs have cleaned the health care market of the sickest customers (the elderly, the very sick and the poor) and left the healthier customers to private insurers.

Barbara Sloan, (Oakland) member of CARA, said she didn't like the cuts in services and the constant increases in co-pays and fees. She thinks that many people are sold health insurance and find out the hard way that misleading statements are a routine ploy, and when problems crop up there is nobody to clean up the mess.

Roni Howard (SF) of Single Payer Now and CARA, a retired teacher, has good healthcare and is motivated to work for Single Payer Healthcare not for herself but because it is urgent for society and because she's outraged that the good healthcare that she enjoys is not available to others.

Alice Lindstrom Davis (SF), member of Churchwomen United and the Postal Workers Union, has good coverage through the Federal Employees health system, but believes in Single Payer because she thinks it is just wrong that you should be denied healthcare or have your life fall apart because of illness or a chronic condition.

Sheila Gold-Macher (Berkeley), of the Gray Panthers, thinks people are ready now. "Just show them *SICKO*," she said.

Propositions We Wanted

Rather than wasting time and money on the May 19th ballot measures, we could have voted on the following:

Our Prop 1A: Repeal the 2/3 majority vote for passage of the budget

Our Prop 1B: Revise Prop 13 taxation on corporate property while protecting homeowners

Our Prop 1C: Impose an Excess Profits tax on corporate profiteers

Our Prop 1D: Restore the original vehicle registration tax

Our Prop 1E: Return the highest bracket of the progressive income tax rate to at least 11%

Letter from 14 Members

Dear President Obama,

May 6, 2009

More than 100 days have passed, but we see no sign of economic change. We would like you to understand our view of economic change. We are not banks; we are not Wall Street; we are Main Street. We see the economy from the picture of everyday life. We see grim unemployment. You could reduce the unemployment by starting a work program. Giving money to banks has not reduced unemployment. We urge you to use your power wisely. A work project would be wise use of your power and our tax dollars.

Sincerely,

The Gray Panthers of San Francisco



Silver Tsunami at San Francisco City Hall, March 24, 2009: seniors protest budget cuts.

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.

Labor Donated

JUNE 2009

Actions and Events

Complete listing at <http://graypantherssf.igc.org/calendar.htm>.

Sunday, May 31, 9:30 AM

The SF-8 and the Black Panthers
Fight for Human Rights,
Sunday Forum at the Unitarian Center
1187 Franklin Street at Geary

Sunday & Monday, May 31 & June 1, 8:00 PM

*This Many People, Excerpts from the LGBT
Seniors Project*, a Theatre Production
975 Howard Street

Sunday, June 7, 9:30 AM

Anna Baltzer: Eye Witness Report on Palestine
MLK Room, Unitarian Canter, 1187 Franklin

Monday, June 8, 8:00 AM

Preliminary Hearing opens in SF-8 Case, Trial by
Torture, 850 Bryant Street

Wednesday, June 10, 3:00 PM

March to Defend Social Services in SF
Hallidie Plaza, Market betw. 4th and 5th Streets

Wednesday, June 10, 6:30—8:00 PM

ANWF Seminar on the Financial Crisis, Speakers
from Haas School of Business & New School
Mechanics Inst. Library, 57 Post /Montgomery

Saturday, June 13, Time & Location TBA

Save the Day for March and Demonstration
Bail Out Working People, Not the Banks

Letter From a Member to the *Examiner*

Happy 90th, Pete Seeger!

Our birthday wish for you is to ask our Uncle Sam
to “bring 'em home, bring 'em home.”

Our money can better answer our dire needs for
single-payer healthcare, housing and education—
the pursuit of happiness and the human rights we
are bound by the Universal Declaration of Human
Rights to honor.