

A COMMUNITY ALLIANCE

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The Voice of the Progressive Movement since 1996

Alternatives to Israel's Occupation: Justice For Palestine

By Kamal Abu-Shamsieh

The Islamic Cultural Center of Fresno, in coordination with The Rachel Corrie Foundation for Peace and Justice, is sponsoring a community awareness campaign that aims at reflecting the opinions of America's silent majority on issues related to the Palestinian Israeli conflict.

Rachel Corrie, a college student from Olympia, Washington was a volunteer with the International Solidarity Movement, ISM and was killed in the Gaza Strip in Palestine on March 16, 2003, trying to prevent the demolition of the home of a Palestinian pharmacist, his wife, and three young children.

The brutal killing of Rachel represented a new phase of Israel's war crimes. Israel blocked the entry of many activists arriving into Israel's Tel Aviv Airport and denied them entry. In other instances, activists were detained and deported, while others were forbidden from entering the Occupied Territories. Two fellow ISM volunteers were targeted after the intentional killing of Rachel in Gaza Strip. Bryan Avery was severely injured in the face and Thomas Randal of Britain was mortally wounded in the head, an injury that sent him into a coma and later died.

The killing of Rachel had a chilling impact on both Palestinians resisting the apartheid policies of Israel and solidarity activists from around the Globe taking direct action in their aim to stop the daily violations of Palestinian human rights across the Occupied West Bank and Gaza Strip.

In the United States, Rachel's parents Craig and Cindy Corrie began a nationwide community awareness campaign to tell the story of their youngest daughter. The family established The Rachel Corrie Foundation for Peace and Justice to continue the work that Rachel Corrie began and hoped to accomplish, and carries out that work with her vision, spirit, and creative energy in mind. The Foundation conducts and supports programs that foster connections between people, that build understanding, respect, and appreciation for differences, and that promote cooperation within and between local and global communities. The foundation encourages and supports grassroots efforts in pursuit of human rights and social, economic, and environmental justice, which we view as pre-requisites for world peace. In addition, Cindy and Craig Corrie focused their efforts on speaking about Congressional lobbying for a just peace in Palestine and Israel and efforts in the US Congress to secure an independent investigation into Rachel's killing.

From August 18 through September 1, the Islamic Cultural Center of Fresno and a coalition of community organizations, educational institutions and peace activists are organizing a series of awareness symposiums to shed light on the ongoing collective punishment policies of Israel in its apartheid like occupation of Palestine. The awareness campaign consists of a provocative exhibit *THE U.S. SENATE READS AN EMAIL BY THE LATE RACHEL CORRIE TO HER PARENTS*. Inspired by Rachel's story, Peter Schumann, founder and director of the internationally celebrated Bread and Puppet Theater, created this large, mixed-media art installation. Six primitive life-size figures painted with excerpts of Rachel's e-mails describing the misery of occupation are juxtaposed with dozens of smaller portraits suggesting ignorant and complicit members of the U.S. Senate. Schumann is renowned for his use of simple, affordable,



or free materials to elucidate social and political themes. The exhibit's images are all on recycled corrugated cardboard, many painted with latex paint.

Schumann's own daughter had traveled to the West Bank to do human rights work. "But unlike Rachel she returned unharmed. So obviously Rachel Corrie's tragedy carried a very special weight for me," he said.

The Exhibit will be displayed at various locations in the greater Fresno area, at the following institutions;

Reedley Peace Center

A display and lecture on August 18th, at Reedley Peace Center in Reedley

Guest Speaker: Adam Shapiro, founder of International Solidarity Movement

Topic: Palestinian non-violent Resistance

Islamic Cultural Center of Fresno

An opening ceremony reception of the Rachel Corrie Exhibit on Saturday, August 19 at 7:00 PM

Guest Speaker: Adam Shapiro, founder of International Solidarity Movement.

Topic: Alternatives to Israeli Occupation of Palestine

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AUGUST 2006

COMMUNITY ALLIANCE

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The Community Alliance is an independent voice for workers and progressive groups in the Central San Joaquin Valley. The goal of this monthly newspaper is to build a powerful progressive movement that will support social, environmental, & economic justice; immigrant rights; and a living wage for all working people. We seek to expose social and political injustices and to link the diverse network of activists working in our community.

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The Community Alliance newspaper is supported by a grant from the **Vanguard Public Foundation.**

The Community Alliance newspaper reserves the right to edit all articles for space and clarity.

Letters to the Editor

The US forcibly invaded and now occupies the sovereign country of Iraq; it is solely responsible and liable for whether there is peace or continuing killing there. Obviously, the US military was and is highly unprepared for its responsibilities as an occupying force, as there is no normal life for Iraqis. The current civilian/military administration deserves to be severely criticized for its failures; NOW it appears that Iraq would be better off if the US vacated and the Iraqis created their own reorganization and reconstruction as best they can. At least it's their own business.

In India, Gandhi told the occupying British it was time they left the country. The British expressed astonishment that he expected them just to leave, and Gandhi told them that was exactly what he expected them to do. The British claimed there would be mayhem. Gandhi reminded them that at least the Indians would be in charge of solving their own problems. And the British did, indeed, just quit India shortly after he told them that.

The Iraqis already are telling the US to just quit Iraq. The ancient civilization of Iraq can and will take care of its own affairs. While there may be some “winding-down” mayhem, the agonizing, interminable killing will ease when the US leaves. It should leave immediately because it is an abject failure as an occupying/peacekeeping force, as we hear in the news everyday.

Diane Marks

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From the Editor

One of the big differences between the Community Alliance and the corporate media is how we cover stories. A great illustration of this can be seen by comparing the story about the attacks on the homeless (see page 24) with the coverage in The Fresno Bee. We show multiple government agencies intruding on public land, being disrespectful and insulting, and destroying what few possessions the homeless own. The headline in The Fresno Bee on the day after this vicious attack was “*Cleaning house, Fresno crews descend on downtown area to tidy up a haven for homeless.*” Sometimes I feel like I live in a parallel universe.

Distortion of the news, like in the example above, is a result of media consolidation and telling the story from the perspective of the rich and powerful. Only a couple of corporations own most of the media and they are able to control what the public does and does not see. That is why you see so many generals on TV telling us about political/military strategy and so few peace activists to counter balance their perspective. Perhaps if we had seen more anti-war activists and fewer generals interviewed in the lead up to the Iraq war, we would not be in the quagmire we find ourselves in now.

In 1983, when the first edition of *The Media Monopoly* was printed, 50 corporations dominated the U.S. mass media. By 1997 those 50 corporations had shrunk to 10. According to Senator John McCain, today only “five companies control 85% percent of our media sources.” The McClatchy Corporation, which owns The Fresno Bee, is a part of this trend of media consolidation - they just acquired the Knight Ridder chain, which includes the San Jose Mercury and many other daily newspapers.

I believe newspapers like the Community Alliance are like a flower breaking through an asphalt parking lot. We are working hard and against the odds of survival to bring you a perspective that the corporate press does not want you to read.

Every month we bring you articles from activists who are writing about important issues in the community. Dan Waterhouse, for example, brings us news about the Lesbian, Bi-sexual, Gay, Transgender, and Questioning community (LBGTQ). His monthly column is called Queer Eye. Peace Fresno is a frequent contributor with information about the war in Iraq and the war against our civil liberties at home. The exclusive articles from prisoners about the barbaric conditions of prisons in this state give you an insight into a world few people know about.

Right now I'm working on an article about Diebold voting machines that are used in Fresno County. As you probably know, voting irregularities created enormous problems in the 2004 Ohio elections (see the article by Greg Palast in the July issue of the Community Alliance). Is it possible that voters are being disenfranchised in Fresno County? Who are they and why does it matter? Without an alternative/independent newspaper that has the resources to do investigative reporting, this story would never see the light of day.

We are currently printing and distributing 10,000 copies a month, we have outdoor news stands all over town, deliver the paper door to door in the Tower District, have promotional ads on Air America, and have free copies available at many local businesses. We are bringing the message of peace, social and economic justice to more and more people in this community every day.



Unfortunately, we are not bringing in enough money to cover our current expenses and we will need to cut back our circulation and/or the number of pages we produce unless we get more readers to subscribe or make a donation.

We need your help as we speak truth to power, provide some hope to the poor, and give the powerful and rich in this community something to worry about. I'm asking you to make a commitment today to support this paper. If you don't subscribe, please send us a check for \$35 today. If you already subscribe, please consider becoming a monthly contributor at \$10, \$15, or \$20 a month. Alternatively, a one time donation would be greatly appreciated.

I hope you will agree that an alternative/independent press is an essential cornerstone in building a powerful progressive movement in this community. With your active support, alternative/independent media will stay alive in Fresno.

**Cindy Sheehan and Medea Benjamin read the
Community Alliance.**



The Word on the Street

By Wendy Russell

Who would you like to see buy the Tower Theatre?

Asked of random people going about their daily lives at the intersection of Olive avenue and Wishon/Fulton where I stand in the cool shade in the shadows of the historic Tower Theatre’s large building complex; the ornate Theatre itself, the Theatre’s Box Office and three restaurants here along Olive, plus another restaurant and the huge parking lot behind us; everything on this entire Tower District block is listed in the sale. Here I stand, at the intersection of a last vestige of Old Fresno waiting to ask this question of whomever came along - well, except for Susan Neville, I admit I *did* walk into the Tower Theatre’s box office to get her opinion - but for good reason; she helps run the place! A few folks that came along had no opinion, and one seemingly ageless business owner said from behind huge sunglasses that she was a Christian and would never speak against the Church (The People’s Church is mentioned as being an interested buyer) - but I hadn’t asked her to, so I wonder what *she* knows? Anyway, back to the Question of the Month: Who would you like to see buy the Tower Theatre?



“I would like to see someone buy the Tower Theatre that has the same passion for the arts as Dottie Abbate had when she was alive.”
Susan Neville
Rental Facility Agent for the Tower Theatre

That’s what cool about the Tower District; you can do all that.

PHOTO CREDIT; Wendy Russell



“I would like to see a community co-op - the Tower District - buy it and run it as a non-profit, while leasing out the rest (of the block for sale) to support the arts.”
David Bray
A Tower resident pointed out to me as one having strong opinions on everything



“I think someone should buy the Tower Theatre that appreciates the Tower District for what it is. I wouldn’t like a northside developer to buy it because it’s hard to bring the north side to the Tower.”
Christopher St. Louis
Unlocking the doors of Palomino’s, arms beautifully tattooed and dressed neatly in whites, where he works as the Sous Chef.



“I would like someone to buy the Tower Theatre that would keep it the way it is.”
Paul T., age 18, wary of giving his last name, sitting on a bus bench on Olive avenue listening to the Who on his I-Pod.

(time warps slightly as another vestige jumbles into my thoughts; the song remains the same ... what comes around goes around... yes yes I see the connections - but what does it all MEAN?)

Anyway, back to the Question of the Month - Oh how perfect! I see another Tower Theatre ‘honcho’ walking my way; Who would you like to see buy the Tower Theatre?



“I would like to see someone buy the Tower Theatre that would continue running it as we have been doing. Someone with a love of entertainment and bringing happiness to others - especially to the Tower District - like Dottie Abatte loved to do. That would be perfect.”
Claudine Carter
Tower Theatre Property Manager, dressed in sunny yellow, holding several shopping bags full of stuff, as she walked about her errands in Fresno’s high heat.

Workers Need a Living Wage

By Frances Sivak

A local living wage ordinance requires private companies that receive public monies, through either contracts or financial assistance, to pay their employees a wage that is higher than the minimum wage. This idea already exists in the construction trades. Companies must pay the state’s Prevailing Wage when they bid on public projects. (Remember that was the first thing Bush wanted to get rid of after the Katrina destruction.) A wage floor is a fairness issue. First, all contract bids should abide by the same wage scale. There should be a level playing field in the bidding process. And second, why should public monies be given to private companies who pay their employees such low wages that their families have to rely on public assistance or private charity to make it from month to month. Third and most important, to quote the Catechism of the Catholic Church, “A just wage is the legitimate fruit of work. To refuse or withhold it can be a grave injustice. . . . Remuneration for work should guarantee man the opportunity to provide a dignified livelihood for himself and his family . . .”

According to the California Chamber of Commerce website, “The minimum wage is supposed to supply an amount adequate to meet the basic needs of a single worker.” The Living Wage movement has gained momentum simply because

everyone knows that the minimum wage is not set to support a family. Living Wage ordinances are so modest they are calculated to bring families up to the poverty level. In Fresno this would be \$10.03@hour. This is only \$20,000 a year, the median income of the city of Fresno.

As expected, the Chambers of Commerce are “opposed to mandated wages by the government, and the estimated impact it will have on the greater business community.” But their concerns simply do not apply to this proposal which only includes contractors who bid on city works above \$50,000.

In fact, if they thought about it, any increase in wages is good for business as it actually stimulates the local economy.

The numbers tell the story. California’s minimum wage of \$6.75 has not changed since 2002. Since 2002 the purchasing power of \$6.75 has dropped 11.5% and continues to deteriorate. Rent alone has gone up 13% in the last three years. Sarah Reyes of the Community Food Bank sees more working families using this food program. Close to half of households include one working adult.

Reyes said “The problem is that gas, energy and rent prices keep going up. There is no decision to be made here. The budget item left to cut is the food budget.”

Rita is a single mom with a five year old daughter. She is lucky, she doesn’t pay rent. She lives with her mom. Until recently Rita worked for a temp agency for \$8.00 an hour, on assignments to City Hall. She doesn’t own a car, have a bank account or use a credit card but lives from one cashed pay check to the next. Rita said “We make it, but it was really hard if I did not have a regular assignment.” Now Rita has a

new permanent job with a company that pays \$10 an hour. Her goal is to “save up” so she and her daughter can get a place of their own.

More than 27 municipalities and counties in California have adopted some form a living wage ordinance. It is time to put Fresno on the map. The Committee has been preparing for this for over a year. It is time for Action! We are presenting ordinance proposal to Fresno City Council in August. As of this writing we don’t have the date. But will be calling on you to be present in the Chambers. At this time you can easily tell your Council member that you support this idea. The numbers will make a difference. Go to our website at www.livingwage-fresno.org. Click on the link – SUPPORT A LIVING WAGE FOR THE CITY OF FRESNO, CONTACT YOUR COUNCILPERSON NOW! - and send an email to your Council member to show support. Council Members Sterling, Boyajian, Perea, and Dages have been positive in their response.

For more information, go to:
www.livingwage-fresno.org .
Click on the link – SUPPORT A LIVING WAGE FOR THE CITY OF FRESNO, CONTACT YOUR COUNCILPERSON NOW! - and send an email to your Council member to show support!



WOMEN’S VOICES – WOMEN’S VOTES

By Patsy Montgomery

Please join the Women’s Voices – Women’s Votes Coalition as a partner in the first Central Valley March & Rally for Women’s Votes on August 19th in Fresno. Feminista/civil rights activist Dolores Huerta will be a featured leader of the march and will be joined by Nicole Parra, Cynthia Sterling and other local, regional and statewide leaders. The March/Rally will take place on the Fulton Mall with the rally occurring on Mariposa & Fulton at the Free Speech area. The event begins at 9:00 am and ends around noon.

So why march in Fresno? In 2004, 22 million single women voters failed to vote in a presidential election. An election with the potential to greatly impact their lives with steps backwards on issues that affect them and the world. Women must remember how hard our foremothers/sisters fought to give us the right to vote.

Women wait on the sidelines of our democracy because they doubt any candidate will listen to their concerns and understand the pressures they face. Women in the Central Valley face extraordinary challenges everyday, to put a roof over their heads, food on the table and gas in their cars. They struggle with sexism, bigotry, the challenges of legal status, age & sexual orientation. Women in the valley face poverty rates equal to those in Appalachia & yet women still have trouble being heard by policy makers.

We know that when women understand they have the *power* to bring about change & to elect people who will work on issues they care about *they are motivated to register and vote*. Women, who vote can make a positive impact on our nation, state & local communities.

On August 19, 2006 in downtown Fresno on the Fulton Mall, women *and* men from all over the Central Valley will join together to march and rally for Women’s Votes. The event will mark the valley’s celebration of Women’s Equality Day honoring the 19th Amendment that gave women the right to vote. The event is scheduled for 9:00 am to 12:00 pm to beat the heat. In addition to the aforementioned leaders the rally will feature women leaders from throughout the valley, young, old, gay, straight and multi-ethnic & multi-faiths.

The march/rally is a progressive non-partisan event. It will have an emphasis on social justice, environmental justice & reproductive justice issues that are particularly important to women. The vision is to bring like-minded women & men together to honor those who fought for our right to vote, *and inspire women to take the power of voting back to their neighborhoods*.

Sponsors are needed to fund transportation of women from Kern, Kings, Tulare, Madera, Mariposa & Merced counties, including women living in rural parts of Fresno county.

Add your organizations name to those who are supporting the Central Valley Women’s Voices – Women’s Votes March & Rally. For more information about the rally call or email Patsy Montgomery at 559.488.4908 x 301 or fresnopa@ppmarmonte.org

Join The
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JUSTICE ♀ EQUALITY ♀ DIGNITY ♀ FREEDOM

Women in California’s Prisons

by Bonnie Long



Women are different from men. Perhaps there is no area where this obvious and simple distinction could be more meaningfully applied than in our prisons. Unfortunately, this is not what has traditionally happened. State policies and programs designed mainly for violent

men make rehabilitation difficult for female offenders. The high security design and geographic isolation of women’s prisons reveal a serious lack of awareness of female prisoners’ issues, risks, and needs. In the policy, practice, and regulations that govern these women — whose crimes are overwhelmingly nonviolent — there seems to be little recognition of the very different nature of criminal experience for women.

It is not that the information doesn’t exist. Indeed, it is quite the opposite. There is no shortage of knowledgeable and well-done reports. In the last decade alone there have been a number of in-depth, comprehensive studies including several from the prestigious Little Hoover Commission, an independent state oversight agency. In the 2004 study “Breaking the Barriers for Women on Parole,” the Commission concluded that California’s one-size-fits-all policy is dramatically failing female offenders:

“Of the many scandals gripping California’s correctional system, the failure to reduce crime, violence, and drug abuse among parolees is one of the greatest. The costs and consequences of this failure are most onerous in the case of female offenders. In a prison system as large as California’s – and one so ridiculed for inmate abuse, cost overruns and ineffectiveness — it is easy to overlook the 10,000 incarcerated women and 12,000 women on parole.”

By abandoning the tough-on-crime, punitive stance and adopting methods proven more effective in the management of female inmates, other states have reduced recidivism, saved money, and saved lives. In this respect California lags far behind the rest of the country. In this state there are very few small, community-based correctional centers and even fewer reentry houses, even though they have proven significantly more successful at helping women become responsible, self-supporting, contributing citizens – at a fraction of the cost. Nonetheless, “the State has remained focused, almost singularly, on a policy of punishment and incapacitation designed for male offenders,” according to the above Little Hoover report.

All of our prison population has exploded (800% in the last 30 years), but none more dramatically than women. In these last two decades, female incarceration throughout the country has increased five fold. In 1990, we had approximately 600,000 women under criminal supervision in the United States – in prisons, jails, on probation or parole. By 2001, the number was over one million. In California the number of incarcerated women went from 2,000 in 1983 to 10,000 in 2003. It keeps rising; by December 2005 the figure had reached 11,404. The number of women on parole exploded even more dramatically, from fewer than 1500 in 1983 to more than 12,000 in 2003, an eight-fold increase.

Women come into prison via very different pathways than men. It is not violent behavior or violent crime that sends most women behind bars. Sixty-seven percent of women in prison are incarcerated for nonviolent low-level offenses. Ironically, more of them have been victims of violent crime — physical or sexual abuse, or domestic violence — than have been convicted of violent crime. Nor is there the level of violence *inside* women’s prisons that commonly exists at life-threatening levels in men’s prisons. Ask almost any correctional officer or administrator who has worked in both men’s and women’s prisons, and (s)he will tell you that the difference between working in a women’s and a men’s prison is like night and day. The number one difference they identify is the level of violence and, therefore, safety, for themselves as well as for inmates. Despite their relatively low security risk, female inmates are housed in high-security, expensive prisons designed primarily to minimize violence and prevent escape.

Between 1984 and 1997 California opened one new university. In that same time frame California opened twenty-one new prisons, including three for women. Today every one of those prisons is close to 200 percent capacity. Some are already significantly over 200 percent, and the prison population keeps

rising. At one time 7 percent of our state’s budget went to education and 4 percent to corrections. Today that figure is reversed; 7 percent of our budget goes to corrections and just 4 percent to education.

Most of California’s prisons are large, geographically remote facilities designed for high security, incapacitation, and efficiency of control, with features such as electric fences, razor wire, and remote-controlled cell doors.

The majority of California’s female inmates are housed in two such prisons in the remote San Joaquin Valley town of Chowchilla, far removed from their children and families. With nearly 8,000 inmates, these prisons comprise the largest gathering of incarcerated women in the world. These women are isolated and often seemingly forgotten.

The women live eight to a very cramped cell, designed to hold four, of 246 square feet — less than 31 square feet per woman. This situation violates:

- the fire and safety code
- the 60 square feet per inmate required by the American Correctional Association – Manual of Standards – Standard 4142, pg. 27
- Ruiz v Johnson 154 F2d 995 (2001) “unconstitutional to house more inmates than the design capacity”
- safety, health, and human dignity

Somehow, California has managed to create this situation anyway; extreme overcrowding exists in *every prison* in the state.

So during lockdowns, eight women must endure their confinement together 24 hours a day except for “feeding” (the term used in prisons for mealtime). And they are locked down on a regular basis. The most common reason for relegating these women to their tiny inhumane worlds is fog. Fog equals lockdown in prison. And the Central Valley has a lot of fog.

Eighty percent of women in prison are mothers of dependent children. Sixty-seven percent were single parent heads of households. Sadly, once these women are sent to prison, many of them never get to see their children. This is the hardest and most painful aspect of imprisonment for women. If you were to see these women behind the bars, you would see how tenderly they hug their children during visits; you would witness their anguish and anxiety as visiting ends and they are separated again. Or worse, you would know their

Continued on page 5

hidden pain because visiting is not ever possible for them due to distance (a 320-mile round trip average), money, state procedures, or multiple other insurmountable reasons.

And what happens to the children of these mothers who are locked away? How will they be raised? By aging grandparents on fixed incomes? By already overburdened state agencies? By themselves? Research shows that children whose parents are incarcerated are five to six times more likely to end up behind bars themselves. The result of the state’s failure to help these women eventually plays out in their children’s lives and then impacts a mushrooming cloud of future generations who may have even greater social problems and may need *more* intervention. We will all be paying the price of this situation for generations to come.

Poverty, drug abuse, and sexual or domestic violence are major factors contributing to the incarceration of many women. More than half the women behind bars report having been physically or sexually abused at some point in their lives, or many points in their lives. This pattern often gets carried over to partner relationships. How could it not? When a woman *is* convicted of a violent crime, it is most often intimately connected with this partner relationship. Due to low self-esteem, insecurity, or a desperate need to belong, or to avoid risking rejection *again*, a woman has perhaps gone along – many times unwittingly — with criminal acts she’d rarely initiate on her own. She may even have been asleep in the car when her abusive boyfriend crossed the line and killed someone, but she will be considered an accessory and will receive the same length of sentence as he does – sometimes longer. Or her crime may have arisen out of another kind of desperation – to save her life – when she finally put an end to the abusive torture heaped on her, often for years. In California before 1992, even though the killing was done in self-defense, women could not present any evidence or testimony of domestic violence and abuse. Before the “battered women’s defense” became permissible in court, a woman could not explain her reasons to the jury and the prosecution was free to negatively or sensationally speculate about her motives.

The average female inmate is a mother, a substance abuser with mental health needs, a victim of physical or sexual abuse; she is in her early to mid-thirties; she will serve thirteen months for a drug crime or a drug-related crime. When she leaves prison she will receive little or no help finding a job, housing, or counseling; nor will she likely qualify for welfare benefits or for public housing. It should come as no surprise that half these women violate their parole and end up back in prison, almost always for nonviolent behavior. Substance abuse treatment in small community-based correctional centers would provide infinitely more support, cost much less, and reap greater benefits for generations to come.

Although the average inmate is a woman in her thirties, there is also a growing prison population of elderly women, some in their eighties. Imprisoning elderly women – a population with a recidivism rate of less than 1 percent — costs taxpay-

ers \$71,040,000 each year (\$39,000 a year per inmate, doubled for older inmates, multiplied by 888 women over 50 in December 2004, according to CDCR (California Department of Corrections and Rehabilitation). That figure is based on numbers in 2004; obviously it is higher now.

There has been effort recently to improve policy and practice regarding women offenders. The National Institute of Corrections undertook a three-year project entitled “Gender-Responsive Strategies - Research, Practice, and Guiding Principles for Women Offenders” that collected and summarized research and the effective practice of gender-responsive strategies with female offenders. This outstanding work clearly shows what is needed to help women successfully navigate the criminal justice system and remain free citizens who are responsible, self-supporting, contributing members of



society. Its excellent recommendations are firmly supported by research; they have been successfully implemented in other states and, when followed, have saved money and lives.

In California, a Gender-Responsive Strategies Committee has been formed that includes the authors of the above research, a few legislators, key female prison administrators, and a whole host of experts in such fields as education, psychology, recovery, and rehabilitation. They are an exceptionally talented and knowledgeable group of experts coming together to examine the problems, brainstorm, and come up with better solutions. Sadly, many of their recommendations are being ignored.

This has been true with many of California’s taxpayer-supported, research-based, well-done reports regarding corrections. They get ignored. An in-depth 350-page report entitled “Reforming Corrections,” commissioned by Governor Schwarzenegger and authored by former Governor Deukmejian, contained a host of excellent recommendations

The physical set-up for family visiting at CIW included a trailer, three connected apartments, and a duplex. There were two barbecue pits, picnic tables, and a playground, all situated in an open, shared grass yard. Children and adults freely mingled. The kids played together; if one of them had a birthday party, there were festive hats, party favors, and cake for all. A “camera girl” attached to CIW’s canteen took many family photos. Visits lasted for three days once a month.

J.S. says, “The first thing we did was put away the food.” In those days, families brought in groceries from the outside and Match Light charcoal for a barbecue. After that, “each one of us would get a cool drink. We would all sit down at the table and have a family discussion to catch up. Each person could bring up any issue and we’d have it out there, good or bad. We couldn’t leave that table until a compromise on each person’s issue had been reached.”

J.S. reminisces, “When I came to prison, I’d never heard the word ‘heroin.’ I came in young. My probation report described me as ‘21 going on 15.’ I was taken in by the older ladies. They took me under their wings. They showed me how to be a lady and helped me grow up. Then you could get

When asked how drugs get in, J.S. pauses then replies, “My belief . . . I think the institution allows so much in. There’s too much observation: guards, cameras, binoculars and searches. I say, check the staff as they come into work.”

boxes from home with dresses, high heels, perfume, you know—girlie stuff. You could dress up and look like a woman.”

J.S. arrived at CCWF on October 1, 1990, one of the first group of volunteers who came north from CIW to prepare the prison for opening. It was a gift to her family. They lived in Merced and Fresno, so seeing her at CCWF would elimi-

that virtually have been ignored. The word *rehabilitation* was added to the name of the state department that oversees prisons, changing it to California Department of Corrections and Rehabilitation (CDCR). However, in actual practice, CDCR has gone in the opposite direction: visiting has been cut in half; education has been slashed; vocational programs have been slashed; quarterly packages sent from home have been stopped; almost all personal property is being removed; restitution (which taxes families of inmates as well as the inmates themselves) has increased and will increase again at the end of the year. For every dollar a family member sends to someone inside (so she can buy envelopes, pens, or writing paper, or pay the required \$5 co-pay to see the doctor or get her prescriptions renewed), the state will keep 55 cents.

CDCR is in the process of stripping all inmates of most of their meager possessions, including clothing, underwear, and personal towels, despite the fact that prisons don’t have enough towels to go around and sharing underwear poses health risks. The wardens of the female prisons requested that several exemptions be allowed and that gender consideration of women’s needs be included in the new policy. Several organizations, including Family Council and the Inmate Family Councils from each of the women’s prisons, supported this request and asked that specific authority for women’s personal property be delegated to those most expert in these matters, the women’s prison wardens and their immediate supervisor, the Director of Female Programs. Unfortunately, this request was denied.

There is talk of transitioning 4,500 female inmates into smaller community-based correctional centers. This would clearly be a move in the right direction. Undoubtedly, this plan will meet with fierce opposition from the powerful California Correctional Peace Officers Association, the prison guards’ union.

Assemblymember Sally Lieber has initiated Assembly bill 2066 which would codify the recommendations of the Gender Commission. This would be an excellent first step toward reform. It would help prevent all the Gender Commission’s excellent research and important recommendations from being ignored. It would support the efforts of the dedicated people who contribute their time and energy and work to bring about more effective treatment for our female offenders. We have the evidence-based research. Now we need to apply it.

The majority of the women in our prisons eventually will be released. Helping them to become responsible citizens will keep all our communities safer and relieve some of the current financial burden we all carry. Supporting our female offenders with proven reform strategies will pay dividends for generations to come.

Bonnie Long is a psychotherapist in private practice in Long Beach. She is Chair of the Inmate Family Council at Cental California Women’s Facility in Chowchilla, where her sister is incarcerated; a member of the statewide Family Council, and a member of the state Gender Response Strategies Commission. Her email is Bonnie8888@aol.com

nate major travel time and expenses. As she saw it, “It was giving back to them.” If a scheduled visitor canceled, J.S. could call her nearby family and often they could come. Sometimes she got two visits a month.

”At CCWF in the 1990s they started taking the girlie stuff. The hair dye went because they said we’d disguise ourselves to escape, but we still kept our personal clothes. Since 2004 we can’t even get personal boxes from our families. Now it’s all vendors, all gray and white, no colors allowed. We look grungy, and the violence level went up. Now we’re drab, sad, and unemotional-looking.”

In 1995 the prison began to convert the visiting apartments, one by one, to offices. “When they took the first apartment, we knew it was only a matter of time before they’d take our family visits away.” In the late 1980s there had been a flurry of publicity at CIW around family visiting. It involved Kathy Smith, imprisoned for giving John Belushi the lethal injection that killed him, and Susan Atkins, one of the Manson women. In interviews Smith glamorized prison and Atkins revealed that Atkins and her husband James were trying to have a baby. Doris Tate, mother of one of Atkins’s victims, and the Victim Services group became incensed. They started a campaign to take family visits away from ALL prisoners. Prisoners reached out for help and State Senator Richard Polanco helped halt the campaign for a number of years. But by 1996, with the public political mood shifting toward pure punishment, a bill restricting family visits was put forward at the state level. It focused on lifers, those convicted of violent crimes, and those who picked up a drug case inside prison. Family visits were outlawed for a large group of inmates.

Inhumane Treatment of Prisoners in Chowchilla

Sara Jane Olson

According to Title 15 of the California Code of Regulations for Crime Prevention and Corrections, “Institution heads shall maintain family visiting policies and procedures. Family visits are extended overnight visits, provided for eligible inmates and their immediate family members, commensurate with institution security, space availability, and pursuant to these regulations.” The key word is *eligible*. Family visits used to be available to most prisoners in the California Institution for Women (CIW) in Frontera when it was the only women’s prison in the state. They were in place at the Central California Women’s Facility (CCWF) in Chowchilla until 1996. In October 1996 the state legislature outlawed family visits for many prisoners: those with life sentences; inmates under Close A and Close B Custody, a designation limiting in-prison movement applied to 375 women at CCWF alone; and those in Administrative Segregation (prison jail) or those guilty of various in-prison offenses.

J.S., a lifer nearing 24 years in custody, entered prison at CIW in 1982. She was 23 years old, and she was told that she’d surely be released by age 36. She’s 47 now. J.S. has two sons. Her boys were two and four years old when she was imprisoned. J.S. says, “My husband considered family the number one thing.” The boys knew they would see mom at least once a month for a visit. They could count on that. She says she raised her kids in prison through family visiting.

Votes From Within The Disenfranchisement of American Citizens

By: **Boston Woodard**

Have you ever wondered about the number of people, United States citizens, who have been disenfranchised from voting in general elections due to past criminal convictions? There are many politicians throughout America speaking in favor to allow felons to vote again.

Prisoner’s rights advocates are finding support in some civil rights organizations and prominent political leaders. The argument is that this disenfranchisement composes unjust punishment to a large number of Unites States citizens.

According to the Sentencing Project and Human Rights Watch, both well-known research organizations, one in five African American men cannot vote because of their criminal records. The effort to change this madness has never been more popular.

Changing this system of voting depravation for felons has gained more support among Democrats then Republicans, a concern advocated mainly by so-called “liberals.” Many moderates on both sides are reluctant to repudiate the idea for fear of appearing racists, given the felony voting laws disproportionate effect on minorities.

Those in favor of restoring the Constitutional right to vote back to the prisoners, contend that disenfranchisement laws stifle due justice for millions of U.S. citizens after they have completed their sentences successfully. The same citizens have returned to society as very productive Americans. It will not be an easy battle.

According to John E. Cosgrove, Democrat in the Florida House of Representatives, “You probably are going to see a cautious approach to this, even among most of the Democrats.”

There are several public interest lawyers in Florida who are exploring civil rights lawsuits to challenge the constitutionality of criminal disenfranchisement laws; this mirrors efforts elsewhere. In Texas, where an estimated 4.5 percent of the adult population and 21 percent of the African American male population are disenfranchised, has eliminated a two-year waiting period that was required before a felon could apply for restoration of voting rights.

Legislation to make it easier to restore voting rights for felons in Alabama failed several years ago on a tie vote in the legislature. In Alabama, where 7.5 percent of adults and nearly 31.5 percent of African American men are banned from voting. Sponsors say they are optimistic that a similar measure will succeed very soon.

The numbers of disenfranchisement vary widely from state to state. In 46 states and District of Columbia, felons are prohibited from voting while in prison. In addition, 32 states prohibit offenders from voting while on parole and 29 bar voting while on probation. Felons are banned for life from voting in 14 states, a prohibition that can be waived only through a gubernatorial pardon or some other form of clemency. Only four states — Maine, Massachusetts, New Hampshire and Vermont — allow prisoners to vote. The practice of stripping criminals of their civil rights is rooted in ancient Greek and Roman traditions and has always been a part of U.S. law. Some scholars have pointed out that in several states those laws were honed with racist intent.

In 1993, Andrew L. Shapiro wrote in a Yale Law review article, “Many southern states tailored their criminal disenfranchisement laws, along with other qualifications, to increase the effect of these laws on black citizens.” Shapiro said that toward the end of the last century, disenfranchisement laws were often crafted to include crimes that blacks supposedly committed more frequently than whites.



Alabama State Representative Yvonne Kennedy stated, “The statistics on this issue are really frightening.... With the huge number of people disenfranchised, you’re really not open to all of the citizenry in making decisions.’

Another State Representative in Alabama, Michael D. Rogers said, “It is not asking too much for these folks to petition to have their rights restored,” who in the past had opposed efforts to ease the process for restoring felon rights.

The sharp increase in the number of disenfranchised people has prompted major civil rights groups, including Jesse Jackson’s Rainbow/PUSH Coalition and the NAACP, to make restoring voting rights for felons a priority. The effort is also supported by many national religious organizations, including the United Methodist Church, the Presbyterian Church USA and the National Council of Churches.

###

Boston Woodard is a prisoner/journalist who has written for the San Quentin News and the Soledad Star, and edited The Communicator. The Department of Corrections has pulled the plug on all three publications.

Central Valley *Progressive* Political Action Committee

Upcoming Special Events

Thursday August 24th
7 PM
CVPPAC Issues Forum
WATER

“What Everyone Needs to Know”

Confirmed speakers include
Lloyd Carter: Journalist, Attorney, Environmentalist
Steve Haze: Program Director, Millerton Watershed Coalition
Ron Pistoresi: Farmer & Chair, Madera Irrigation District
Dr. John Suen: Hydrologist & Professor of Geology, CSUF

Co-hosted by the Unitarian Universalist Social Justice Committee

This event is FREE and open to the public

Unitarian Universalist Church
4144 N. Millbrook, Fresno
½ Block south of Ashlan

Saturday August 26th
6:30 PM
CVPPAC Third Anniversary

House Party
“Fun Raiser”
\$20 suggested donation

Meet candidates for our local, non-partisan races
Live Music by Jemmy Bluestein
Refreshments provided

The Home of Howard & Chris Watkins
1785 W. Dovewood Lane
Fresno, CA 93711

RSVP
Lydia Flores

(559) 435-7360

lflores566@sbcglobal.net

www.cvppac.org

P.O. Box 5845, Fresno, CA 93755

(559) 435-7360

The next regular CVPPAC meeting will be on Saturday, August 12, at 3:30 PM at the Fresno Center for Nonviolence located at the southeast corner of Van Ness & McKinley.

Back to School . . . don't be caught short

By Scott Key

It seems that summer just started but, as temperatures continue to climb, it is time to start thinking about school. School? Already? While in years past the end of summer was marked by the Labor Day long weekend, now many schools begin by the third week in August. Thousands of students and their families have begun to fan out to local stores with their back-to-school lists of clothes, books and school supplies, hoping not to be caught short. Yet most back-to-school lists are missing an essential item — an “opt-out” form.

The war in Afghanistan and Iraq continues. Close to 3,000 service personnel have died and thousands more have been wounded. New enlistees are needed, but recruitment lags. To address this need, the Bush administration has increased the number of military recruiters and sent them out to find young people wherever they gather — shopping malls, skateboard parks, and high schools. With monthly recruitment goals to meet, the recruiters change their tactics to suit their targets. Students with multiple options after high school are reminded of patriotism and sense of duty. Students who lack opportunities for employment and further education are enticed with promises of money for college and job training (for more information on these promises check out http://www.rethinkingschools.org/archive/20_04/prom204.shtml).

Recruiters have been aided by the No Child Left Behind (NCLB) Act of 2001. As part of the Bush administration’s preparations for war, the government deepened the connection between schools and the military through NCLB. Buried deep inside this centerpiece of the Bush administration’s education policy, Section 9528 “Armed Forces Recruiter Access to Students and Student Recruitment Information” requires school districts that receive federal funds to provide military recruiters with high school student contact information (i.e., name, address, and phone number) unless the student or parent opts out of this student directory. In essence, the Bush administration has given military recruiters access to millions of potential enlistees. With this student contact information, military recruiters are able to mail recruitment materials to students, call students at home, and even visit their homes. The need for new recruits means that military recruiters are persistent. Simply saying no may not be enough. If students or parents do not want to be contacted by military recruiters, their best option is to opt out of releasing student contact information.

Through the efforts of the Central Valley Counter Recruitment Coalition, the Fresno Unified School District (FUSD) has agreed to include opt-out forms in the student information packets AND to distribute the forms to all high school students during the second week of classes. In addition, FUSD is making these forms available in English, Spanish, and Hmong and has placed them on their website at <http://www.fresno.k12.ca.us/divdept/ss/Miscellaneous.htm> (scroll down to near the bottom of the page). Parents and students now have greater access to an essential back to school item—the opt-out form. Students or parents simply need to fill the form out and return it to their high school office (or other designated place). Be sure to talk with the person respon-

sible and keep a copy for your records. FUSD then collects the forms and removes students from directories given to the military.

What if you are part of another school district? There are many districts in the Central Valley that do not have a clear policy on the opt-out option. In fact, many districts do not have an opt-out form available for students and parents. No problem. Go to the Peace Fresno website (http://www.peacefresno.org/pdf/Do_Not_Call_Military.pdf), print the opt-out form, fill it out, and turn it into your district office. Be sure to talk with the person responsible and keep a copy for your records.

While the opt-out form will help students and parents to complete their back-to-school lists, there are a few other things to keep in mind as school begins. Military recruiters use other tactics to get student contact information and to entice students to enlist. If students freely give their information to recruiters, then the opt-out form becomes meaningless. One of the most insidious methods used by military recruiters is the Armed Services Vocational Aptitude Battery (ASVAB) that most school districts give to high school students. Often, students are told that they must take the test, but this is not true. Students may refuse to take this test. But, if students are intimidated into taking the test, they must choose “Option 8, “ which denies the release of information to military recruiters. The ASVAB provides military recruiters with student contact information AND aptitude scores, which the recruiters can use to modify their messages for individual students.

The second tactic used is competitions. Military recruiters will hold a competition (e.g., most chin-ups or push-ups) with prizes such as Xboxes or CD players. However, in order to qualify for these prizes students must fill out registration cards, giving the recruiters names, addresses, and phone numbers. Most students think they are simply signing up for prizes but, by showing interest, they are signing up to be targeted by military recruiters.

Remember that military recruitment is well researched and financed. Spread the word and help as many students as possible be ready for school. If students and parents do not want to be contacted and, in many cases, hounded by military recruiters, they need to get ready to go back to school by filling out opt-out forms, refusing to take the ASVAB, and avoiding competitions run by military recruiters or JROTC units.

Instead of recruiting grounds, schools need to be places of learning that encourage students to explore all options including serving through activities that build up and strengthen others. Students and parents need to be informed about their rights and options. The Central Valley Counter Recruitment Coalition, a collection of civic and religious groups as well as many individuals who have come together to counter the aggressive recruitment of young people, is committed to providing more information and assistance. The Coalition is affiliated with Peace Fresno (www.peacefresno.org) and can be reached via email at cvcrc@riseup.net or phone at (559) 487-2515.

Scott Key is a faculty member at Fresno Pacific University. He is also a member of the Central Valley Counter Recruitment Coalition and Peace Fresno.

Counter Recruitment News

By Scott Key

As casualties mount and recruitment lags, military recruiters are taking full advantage of increased access to high school students granted through the No Child Left Behind (NCLB) Act of 2001. Section 9528 “Armed Forces Recruiter Access to Students and Student Recruitment Information” requires school districts that receive federal funds to provide military recruiters with high school student contact information (i.e., name, address, and phone number) unless the student or parent “opt-out” of this student directory.

The most popular approach has been to create “opt out” forms to be filled out and turned into districts. Fresno Unified School District (FUSD) has agreed to send “opt out” forms in the student information packets AND to distribute these forms to all high school students during the second week of classes. However, many school districts in the Central Valley do not have a clear policy on the “opt out” option nor do they have an “opt out” form available for students and parents. This means that thousands of high school students will have their contact information released to military recruiters without their permission.

Assemblywoman Sally Lieber introduced A.B. 1778 (the Student and Family Protection Act of 2006) to require high schools to place the “opt out” option on the emergency information card. Since this card is required by most high schools as part of the registration process, it would allow thousands of students and parents to choose whether or not to release their contact information. The California State Assembly passed this bill on May 25, 2006. The bill has been approved by the California Senate Committee on Education. Now, it needs to go to the full Senate for passage then on to the Governor for signature.

Join the Central Valley Counter Recruitment Coalition (contact: cvcrc@riseup.net or 487-2515) in supporting this bill. Call and/or write your State Senator to support A.B. 1778.

District 14 –
Senator Dean Flores
2550 Mariposa, Suite 2016
Fresno, CA 93721
(559) 264-3070

District 16 –
Senator Charles Poochigian
4974 E. Clinton, #100
Fresno, CA 93727
(559) 253-7122

AN INVITATION FROM JAMES FLETCHER

I am looking for a few like-minded souls to join in a “Council of Light”. The key idea is that knowledge is the path to justice, and the Council would be an agency of truth, a meeting of minds, centered upon the theme of Justice.

The Rules:

1. Only one person is to share at a time.
2. Everyone is to be treated with respect.
3. Stay focused on the topic at hand.

Questions to be addressed:

1. What is justice?
2. How does justice work?
3. What are the key elements of justice?
4. What is the value of justice?
5. How is one to live justly?

Goal:
To bring light into the world.

If you are interested, please contact me at 252-9465.

[I am a fellow believer in non-violence and the progressive movement to “Take back the earth!” I spend quite a lot of thought upon the art of revolution, the peaceful kind.]



Happy **First** Anniversary To KFPT!
Trust us...the candle on
our cake is made of Soy...
Thank you **so** much for your
support over the last year...
Cheers to the first of
MANY birthdays!



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6am-9am



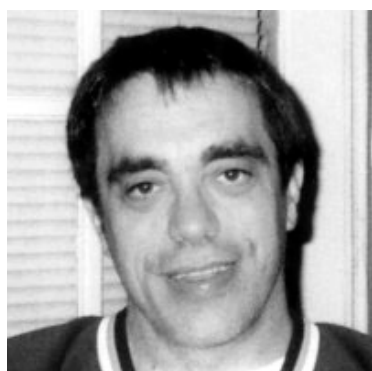
Al Franken
9am-12pm



Ed Schultz
12pm-3pm



Randi Rhodes
3pm-7pm



QUEER EYE

A Reminder of Inhumanity

By Dan Waterhouse

On a foggy June morning on top of Twin Peaks, I was reminded what can happen when groups of people are demonized.

My boyfriend and I were two of many who helped construct "The Pink Triangle" on a hillside looking down on San Francisco's Castro District on the Saturday of Pride Weekend. We all scrambled down a steep incline to help lay pink canvas out; we then drove steel spikes through the canvas into the ground to anchor it to the hillside.

After we finished, we gathered around for this year's commemoration ceremony.

According to Friends of The Pink Triangle founder Patrick Carney, "homosexuals continue to be under attack to this day, not just verbally and politically, but physically, all over the world."

That's why he feels the display is so important. People must be reminded of the hatred and prejudice of the past to help educate people and prevent it from happening again. What happened in the Holocaust must not be forgotten and must not be repeated.

"It is through the display that we hope to educate others to the lessons of the pink triangle," Carney said. He added "the same kind of thinking" exists today, as when the pink triangle was used by the Nazis to denigrate and shame gay people.

I had vaguely heard that the Nazis used different symbols to identify "undesirables" in the camps. The most infamous of those symbols was the yellow "Star of David"—used to denote Jews. But gypsies, political prisoners, Seventh Day Adventists, and gays each had their own symbols, usually in the form of a triangle.

Like most of my generation, the specter of the Holocaust is all too real to me. My father was part of "the Greatest Generation"—the men who marched off to Africa, Europe, and the Pacific to defeat the Axis of Germany, Italy and Japan. He fought his war in Europe and was one of the first Americans to see the horror that was Dachau concentration camp.

The world was stunned by what my father and his comrades found at Dachau and the other camps. But, nothing Hitler did was illegal under the laws of Germany.

Gays and lesbians were faring well in Weimar, pre-Nazi, Germany. The community was open and accepted by most Germans. To gain power, Hitler and his minions first demonized groups, like queers, then browbeat the Reichstag into passing laws illegalizing them. In a few short years, the German queer community was, legally, destroyed.

I see that history may be repeating itself in this country. Extremists are vocally attempting to demonize certain groups, especially immigrants (legal or otherwise) and gays. Political allies of those extremists then attempt to pass draconian laws, stripping away their legal rights. For example, some extremist Congressmen want to strip American-born children of illegal immigrants of their U.S. citizenship. Other extremists want to deny gays and lesbians the right to have families, to work in the jobs that any other American is allowed to—on the sole basis that we are queer.

As I sat on the tarp at the vista point on top of Twin Peaks listening to San Francisco mayor Gavin Newsom and state Assemblymember Mark Leno, the lesson of The Pink Triangle became starkly clear.

That lesson: That the price of freedom is eternal vigilance!

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Grassroots Profile

By Richard Stone

Disclosure: I'm on the Board of 3R's, Inc., the group home for adolescent girls run by Maria Rodriguez (who also goes by Rabia, her Muslim name.) My participation has been partly in friendship, but primarily because of the philosophy 3 R's embodies. The home is essentially an extension of Maria's own home, which is constantly filled with her children, grandchildren, adopted children, and other people in need of a temporary home. The girls at 3 R's are treated like family—albeit family on parole—and most of them spontaneously call Maria “Mom”.

Maria had a long employment history with groups home and treatment facilities before founding 3 R's so she could do it “her way”. She says, “This is a population almost no one wants to deal with. So many of the girls come from childhoods filled with angry, abusing and abusive adults, with drugs and incarceration commonplace, really with no homes. They are untrusting and unstable—and a lot of them run back to the streets given a little freedom after juvenile hall.”

“But,” Maria continues, “this is the population I've been led to work with. If we want this cycle of drugs and gangs and teen-age pregnancies to stop, something needs to change. I prayed a lot before deciding to take this on, and received the message that this is my vocation.”

It is Maria's understanding that girls in the criminal justice system are treated with less tolerance than males, often consigned to throw-away status. “Most of the girls have grown up at their grandparents' homes. Where are the mothers?...on the street, in jail or dead. What will keep these girls from becoming like their mothers?”

At 3R's, Maria and her staff make every effort to create a home-like environment, and to individualize both programs and discipline according to the cultural background, personality and history of each girl. “Some need leniency and patience, some need strictness. Sometimes we improvise different approaches hoping to find what will work. The girls know we go out of our way to understand them and keep them on track. So even when they run, they almost always want to come back.”

Maria is also familiar with a wide range of alternative healing methods; and when the girls are willing, they are introduced to herbal remedies, chiropractic, meditation and yoga, aroma therapy, and dietary awareness. She believes several of the girls have responded positively to these practices.

The work of running 3 R's is complex and demanding. Beside the task of carrying through treatment plans and release plans for each girl, there are the regular difficulties that arise between the girls, and between staff and clients. But additionally there is the administration involving endless regulation and accountings, including medical, psychiatric and legal oversight. How does Maria manage?

“Sometimes just my faith in the Universal Source, which I know as Allah, keeps me going. And I use the alternative treatments for myself, too. Then, knowing the work is so needed, and seeing the results, the girls who have turned their lives around. Like Antonia, who completed vocational training after she left us and has maintained her sobriety. [Ed. note I remember when Antonia first came and angrily refused even to sit in group with us.] Or Alyssa, who came depressed and virtually alcoholic, now excelling in the Marines. Or Danielle, who is employed in a County program now.”

As hard as it is to keep the group home afloat, Maria also looks at the wider context in which she works. “Sometime the girls have no families to be reunited with, so what happens when they complete with us? We need a network of other placements we can utilize. There need to be more independent living quarters, like half-way houses, with some support and supervision. We need to do “education” differently so the girls are learning about who they are and why think think and act the way they do, not just focussing on academic skills...And where are the stories in the news about the good work group homes do, not just reports of failure.”

Maria considers herself blessed with a support system including Sharon and Abid Wakeel and the rest of her Board; her family; helpful people at Licensing and Probation; and Allah. My personal experience leading a weekly group at 3 R's confirms the challenge of creating positive experiences for individuals habituated to negativity. The work of Maria and her staff might equally be considered a blessing to Fresno.

[For readers who'd like to help: 3 R's is especially in need of sturdy beds; and people to offer crafts classes or to mentor individuals, or to assist with grant writing. Dollar donations, of course, are also welcome.]



IDENTITY BOX

Place of birth: Puerto Rico, but raised in New York City
Ethnic identity: Taina and Arawak, from the island of Boricua (now Puerto Rico)
Religious identity: Moslem
Political affiliation: Peace and Freedom Party
Inspirations: “all my children and husbands”, Kahlil Gibran, the Prophet Mohammed
Motto: “Believe and receive”
Non-work related interests: sitting meditation in the dark; sewing and crafts
Unlikely pleasures: driving fast
Contact information: Cell phone 709-1988; e-mail luzrob_2004@yahoo.com

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Me, Hugo and George

by Cindy Sheehan

When I was growing up in Bellflower, Ca., I never, as a child with a good imagination, could have ever imagined that my life would take the peculiar turn that it has. I could not have foreseen giving birth to a child that would eventually be wrongfully and devastatingly killed in war or that I would be meeting with world leaders or be nominated for the Nobel Peace Prize.

Along with the Vice President of Spain, Foreign Minister of Ireland, Attorney General of Australia and countless parliamentarians from all over the globe, one of the world leaders that I have met and spent a good amount of time with on my journey is President Hugo Chavez of Venezuela. Due to the propaganda media and the ignorance of many of my fellow Americans, I have been heavily criticized for my visit. I would like to remind my neighbors all over the country that we do have diplomatic relations with Venezuela and we are not at war with that country.

On a recent appearance that I made on MSNBC's Hardball which was being guest hosted by Norah O' Donnell, she introduced me as someone who has been photographed with "dictator" Hugo Chavez. After the introduction and in a very short subsequent break, I looked at her and said: "You know President Chavez is not a dictator. He has been democratically elected to his office 8 times."

To which she replied: "We had a big discussion about that and we decided that he ruled like a dictator." That statement really shocked, yet irritated me, because I can't believe that MSNBC and Norah O'Donnell would perpetuate the myth that President Chavez is a dictator and mislead and misinform their viewers, because contrary to facts, they "decided that he ruled like a dictator."

"Then you should call George Bush a dictator." I said right before we were given the signal that the interview was beginning.

During the segment which Norah called an interview and I would like to better term as an "attack," (I gave her a hug after the attack: it seemed like she really needed one) we got on the subject of Hugo Chavez and I ended up admitting that I would rather have him as a leader than George Bush. Since this truthful admission, which comes from experience and research, my life has been threatened several times and the hate mail to the GSFP website has increased dramatically.

There are many brilliant pieces written from a more scholarly point of view defending the administration of President Chavez and trying to educate our corporate owned media-misled citizenry about the politics, economics and civil society of Venezuela. Most recently and notably an article by Jeff Cohen entitled, "Go to Venezuela, You Idiot." So, instead of writing a scholarly piece, I would like to make some personal observations about the regimes of George Bush and Hugo Chavez. First of all and most importantly and as far as I can recall, Hugo has not invaded any countries in baseless wars of aggression justified by lies. George has. As a matter of fact, instead of using "Cowboy Diplomacy" and "Bring 'em on" rhetoric, President Chavez has skillfully used his country's resources as a diplomatic tool to make friends and coerce good behavior from other countries. George uses our children in the Armed Forces to strong arm his way into other countries making enemies for the USA and leaving death and destruction wherever he goes.

Secondly, Hugo is an effective orator who can lecture on any topic for hours (believe me!). He is smart, personable, has a great sense of humor, and takes the time to get to know people on a human level. (He never called me "Mom" once the entire time I was with him—unlike George). I was with him three times in Venezuela and each time he gave lengthy speeches about American (North and South) history never

using a single note: tying our histories together with the present in very meaningful ways. On the other hand, George Bush can barely speak when he is reading from a teleprompter and looks like a deer caught in headlights when he has to speak off the cuff or answer a question that he hasn't been well prepared for. He thinks that people want to put food on their families and if he doesn't know a word, he can just make one up.

When Ms. O' Donnell called President Chavez a dictator, I bet she didn't even know that our CIA orchestrated a coup attempt against President Chavez in 2002 and in the last electoral referendum that Chavez agreed to submit to in 2004, he was re-confirmed as President with 60 percent of the vote which was certified by an international election commission headed by "left-wing, nutcase," Jimmy Carter. George Bush attained his office by two heavily tainted elections that should more rightly be called coups. To steal two elections and say and act like you have a mandate to destroy the world; to circumvent Congress at every turn with "signing statements" and just not telling them things; to wiretapping Americans without proper warrants; to reading our emails and looking at bank records without warrants; to illegally detaining people and torturing them; to insisting on staying a course in Iraq

mous countries with control over their own natural resources.

Hugo is also doing something that George would never think of doing: he is taking from the rich to help the poor. Literacy is currently almost 100% in Venezuela and social programs in health and education have dramatically improved since he took office and while the poverty rate is still high, it has made vast improvements. George is a reverse Robin Hood and even steals from our grandchildren's future to further enrich the already obscenely rich of the present. I would rather live under a President like Hugo who tries to improve living conditions in his country than someone like George who is demolishing our social structures and making the poor, poorer.

I will readily admit that I did say that I would rather have President Chavez than President Bush, but I didn't say that I would rather live in Venezuela. I am an American and I love my country which I believe is on a distinctly disordered course right now. I also believe that my country can do better and I am willing to fight to realize a vision for America where the rich share with the poor and we achieve 100% literacy and schools, day care centers, parks and clinics are built instead of prisons and the already bloated military industrial war complex.

While the world seems to be coming apart at the seams, it is also important for our main stream, corporate owned media to get their facts straight and report the news truthfully and with integrity instead of being tools for war and greed. Thousands of people are dying while the media are carrying out vendettas for Karl Rove.

Yes, I would rather have President Chavez than George Bush. But truthfully, I would rather have countless numbers of people as my president than George Bush. George Bush is an out of control criminal that needs to be impeached for his lies; removed from office for his transgressions; and imprisoned for his crimes against humanity.

George should never have been President in the first place and he has been president of my country for far too long already.

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Photo Credit: Jeff Paterson

that is killing nearly more innocent people per month than were killed in our country on 9/11; to authorizing the leak of covert agents' names; to selling our democracy to the highest bidders such as the likes of Jack Abramoff; to appointing avowed U.N. hater John Bolton to the U.N. in a recess appointment because he knew that a normal confirmation process would fail; to allowing the neocons to take over our foreign policy to the detriment of our nation; to etc, etc—I ask Norah O' Donnell and MSNBC who is the dictator here? George or Hugo?

The media is far freer in Venezuela than it is here in the US. Stations after station are hostile to the Chavez government even openly calling for his overthrow at times. Our corporate owned media are either very ill-informed about world affairs or current events, thereby keeping us ill-informed, or they are complicit propaganda tools of this administration. Heaven forbid that one of the outlets, such as the New York Times, should truthfully report that BushCo did something illegal, then the outlet will be accused of doing something wrong! Conversely, we have cheerleaders in the same outlet such as Judith Miller who conspired with Scooter Libby to out CIA agent Valerie Plame. I would love to see a segment where MSNBC show hosts are brought together to discuss such subjects as the high-jacking of our democracy and/or George's lies and war of terror on the world, instead of me.

One of the reasons that President Chavez is demonized and threatened by BushCo is that he has forced American companies in his country to pay their fair share of taxes and do business properly in Venezuela. Hugo is resisting the corporate colonialism that has characterized US forced relations with South America since the USA has been a country. And one thing that we all know, or should know, BushCo is especially beholden and subservient to the corporations.

Hugo Chavez also wants to finally realize Simon de Bolivar's vision of a united South America which can be together stronger to live more peacefully with the US and stand in solidarity against the constant meddling of all of our regimes in their affairs. North Americans should know about the despicable history of US interference in South America before they throw stones at people who want to have fully auton-

Cindy Sheehan is the mother of Spc. Casey Austin Sheehan who was KIA in Iraq on 04/04/04. She is a co-founder and President of Gold Star Families for Peace and the author of two books: Not One More Mother's Child and Dear President Bush. She is currently on Day 12 of the Troops Home Fast.

Come to Camp Casey (August 16 - September 2) to hold George accountable and stand up for peace!

Come to Camp Casey (August 16 - September 2) to hold George accountable and stand up for peace!

The Community Alliance takes pride in introducing, for your enjoyment and edification, the words of the fictitious Ms. Sammie Spade, investigative journalist for The Blade, a fictitious Valley newspaper. Over the next few months we will be serializing some of Sammie’s adventures and commentaries. Sammie will also be glad to respond to selected questions of opinion posed by her readers.

Valley Vistas

As seen by Sammie Spade

Part 1 - DIRT

So you’re doing a class assignment to interview a stranger, and you pick me. Well, my name is Spade, Sammie Spade, and I dig up dirt. Says so right here on my business card. See the funny thing is I do interviews myself, a reporter for The Blade, that little rag supported by classified ads. You know the one, selling used water beds and out-of-style cars, and running notices from people looking for that special someone who fits their fantasy catalogue: height, weight, age; hair and skin color, and of course who’ll love me for who I am.

But at The Blade we have an agenda, too—to print the news that the town’s daily gorilla-in-newsprint won’t. That’s where I come in. So I interview the welfare moms to see what’s doing at their end of town, and I talk with the lowest aides of the bigwigs to find out what they’re really up to.

Do I sound hard as nails.. .good. I need that front to do the work I do. But really I’m a softie. Just ask Pete, the mutt who showed up on my doorstep two years ago, soaked and with his tail between his legs, but his ears were still perked up, born to be a reporter’s dog. Or ask Dinah, the druggie who slept on my porch for a month before we got her into rehab. I made up a pallet and a bedside table for her, but I said, “When I get out here in the a.m. I don’t want to know you’ve been here.”

She kept her end up, and after a while we got to know each other a little. And I remember the day she said, “Sammie, I gotta do the rehab. My kid’s pregnant, and I gotta be there for her. Take me down.. .now, before it’s time to meet my source.” And, goddam, she made it through and kept clean.

Even today she comes by now and again, driving a car that’s newer than mine, chauffeuring her grandson. A couple of months back there was an article about her in the paper—yeah, theirs not ours, they scooped me on that one. Seems some service club chose Dinah as Volunteer of the Year for her work with teen girls. And in the article there was a picture of my porch. She took them by and said, “That’s where I turned my life around.” I cried when I saw that.. .you see, just a softie.

Anyway, if you really want to find out what I’m about, what I’d like to do is tell you a couple of stories. Not the stories I write for The Blade, but those that I don’t, stories with no big crisis or crime, just stories about things I’ve somehow gotten involved in that didn’t go anywhere. Stories of failure, in a way, but they tell something about me and this crazy place we live in.

Like a few years back when I tried to meet with the Mayor.. .don’t ask me which one, you’ll have to figure that out yourself. Now once in a while, writing about the garbage that goes on gets to me, and about the time I’m talking about our paper did a series on hate. There was this group hating that group, and they’re all saying, “Why can’t they just be like us and everything will be fine.”

This really got my goat. I figured out a long time ago that the last thing this world needs is more people like me. One is enough—some say more than enough, and who am I to argue. You know at the very least there’s the food. Would I want a world with just tuna sandwiches, no burritos, no chow mein, no curry? No way! And the music. And the clothes. And have you gone to a wedding or funeral at some other church than your own? Gets you to thinking about what’s the right way, or if there’s a right way.

So we do this series, and in the middle the Mayor gives this big speech about how he wants there to be peace and understanding in our city. So I think, “Now I disagree with the buzzard 90% of the time, but I agree with that. Maybe it would give me new perspective if I get to understand him a little better. Let me ask for a half-hour of his time, off the record, just so I can find out what makes him tick. Maybe I can feel kinder toward him when I write.”

So I send him a nice polite note asking just that, put it on Blade letterhead even to make it seem more official. And I wait for a response. One week goes by. Then two, and three. So I call, and they say, “We’ll check it out.” And a couple of days later this secretary calls and says they have no record of the letter, can I get them another copy? Which I do, hand-delivered. And I wait, and I wait. Two weeks later I call again. They say, “He gets lots of mail, we’ll do our best to get back soon.” So I wait.. .and call, and they say. . .but you get the picture.

I told this story to an acquaintance who does a lot of work at City Hall. He just laughed. “Don’t you know,” he says, “this Mayor only meets with people he does business with, or goes to church with.”

Man, I was angry. I mean, we pay his salary, he works for us. The least he can do is say, “Sorry I don’t have time.” I mean, he’s not gonna write it anyway, all he has to do is say, “Amanda send that jackass reporter a little note and blow her off for me.” But not even that. . .we’re like dirt beneath his feet.”

After a few days, I get my composure back and I write His Honor a note to fill in for the one he never sent. I say, “Thank you very much for your cooperation, now I understand you much better than before.” After that I could write my hit pieces on him with a clear conscience.

Speaking of politics, here’s another beauty. There’s a little park near where I live, just a triangle with a couple of trees and a little rock memorial put there for the City’s centennial. About three years ago our neighborhood improvement group got the idea to plant some grass and make it nice, you know, green and inviting. So we ask around for donations to get the sod and some drip irrigation and to put in a water line. Now where I live isn’t the greatest—I call it a “not yet gentrified area”—but there are a few small business, and some of them ante up right away. But the big guns in the neighborhood are the rental landlords, and we go to the biggest of them all. Now this guy owns like half the apartments in the district. He lives in a big house on the bluffs and word has it he owns a villa in Spain, and besides that he’s a big shot in his church. You’d expect a little charity there. But when he hears our proposition, he actually laughs. He says, “How do you think I got this rich? I don’t put money into neighborhoods, I take it out.” Thinks he’s pretty clever. . .and I bet he thinks his armpits don’t stink either.

Anyway we get the money together and someone who knows how volunteers to landscape it for us, and in a couple of months we get us a sweet little oasis in our concrete desert. And people come over on their lunch break to sit in the grass for a few minutes, or take a nap. . .like people do when a park is a park.

So a year goes by, and one day we find the grass has been dug up, and the little shrubs left look like a case of green measles. I call the police, and when they show up they say, “We checked with the Parks Department and your Councilman ordered them to do it.”

I call his office, and he says, “We got complaints from the businesses around that the park was attracting unsavory loiterers.” So I say, “And what about the residents, don’t we matter enough even to ask. We have an association you know, and we paid to have the grass put in.” But he just says, “It’s business that pays the bills around here, what they want goes.”

Now I believe in democracy as government by the people, not government by the business interests, so I take it upon myself to go talk with our local entrepreneurs. I canvass every store and motel and car repair shop in a two block radius of the park, and all but one say they liked the park or at least had nothing against it. Just this one store owner says, “I had a customer who came all the way downtown for us, and she saw a bum drinking wine on the grass and she was afraid to get out of her car.”

And when I report my findings My Representative, hope you catch the sarcasm there, tells me, “Well, what’s done is done.” So there it is: some ritzy dame who doesn’t even live here can trump a whole neighborhood. That’s life in our people’s republic.

Now here’s another perplexing incident. This guy shows up at the office, a working stiff—I think he drive forklift at a warehouse. He’d never been involved in civic affairs in his life, but he is now, up to his neck. Turns out his ten-year-old kid had started getting terrible headaches and stomach pains. They just suddenly started. The doctor couldn’t find anything particular, and the medicine he prescribed didn’t seem to work. So this guy, Jerry O’Dell’s his name, starts talking to neighbors and he finds a few of his kid’s schoolmates also have odd symptoms.

Then he begins asking questions and he’s not shy. He goes to the principal of the school, and then to the school board; he goes to the Health Department, and the E.P.A.; he goes to the police, even the F.B.I. When he comes in he’s got a whole cardboard carton full of papers. He pulls out this one envelope full of pictures, and says, “Look at this.” It just looks like a building to me, but he goes on, “I got confidential information from this one official that at the National Guard facilities near the school they’ve got experimental surveillance equipment and the stuff puts out radiation that might be affecting the kids.”

So I say, “Jerry, I can’t write a story without corroboration. Give me evidence, something.” So he gives me a guy’s name and number, and says “He’s the one, tell him you talked to me and that you won’t use his name.” So I call, and Deep Throat says, “I have no idea what you’re

talking about.” So then I call the principal of the school and ask if they have a problem there, and he says no.

So I tell Jerry I have no story, and he gets upset and says, “you have no concern for the kids, the kids are suffering. Here I’ve got a petition from twenty parents saying their kids are sick.” But when I check it out, there are all kinds of symptoms and the kids aren’t even all from the same school. And it goes on like this for two weeks, every lead he gives me goes nowhere.

“Jerry,” I tell him, “there’s no pattern, no evidence. There’s no story.”

“You’re like all the rest,” he says, “you just don’t give a damn. I won’t take any more of your time.”

Part of me says “Thank God,” but in another corner of my brain a voice whispers, “What if it’s true? What if there was something going on, it would take more than a phone call to find out. What if Homeland Security was involved and there were instructions from up above to deny everything? Could that be possible?” And I nod yes, I could believe that’s possible. “Or what if it wasn’t radiation from equipment, but some kind of local environmental issue. Is that possible?” And thinking of all the horror stories I’ve read, I nod again.

And I think about Jerry’s kid, who must really have headaches and stuff or why would the old man go on like this. And I think, what if it was my kid and I tried to find out what was happening and all I got was people telling me I’m crazy and there’s nothing wrong?

But then, I’m no private investigator. I just do these interviews, and if I don’t get a story there’s the end. But Jerry was no help. I tried to tell him he had to be more scientific, to get real evidence. I’d say, “You can’t just expect people to believe you. Yeah, there’s cover-ups all over, and people get sick from the air and the chemicals in the ground and from cigarettes and God know what else. But there’s also a lot of crackpots telling us the drinking water is being poisoned, or that quartz watches give you cancer. And I don’t know which is true here, or both.”

And damn, even today I don’t know. I wonder should I of believed him, or at least taken more pity on this poor fork lift driver being driven by.. .whatever. So the story I’m left with after all is said and done is this: even if Jerry is paranoid, he has every reason to be. That’s no story for The Blade, but it stayed with me till today.. . your tough luck, huh.

To be continued in the September Community Alliance newspaper...



Way of Peace Awards

The Fresno Center for Nonviolence, dedicated to Peace and Social Justice, celebrated their 14th Anniversary on Sunday, July 14. The event was held at Margaret Hudson’s garden in central Fresno.

The Way of Peace Awards were given to:

Edie Jessup
Lloyd Carter
Rev. Floyd Harris

The Way of Peace Youth Awards were given to:

Simone Whalen-Rhodes
Brandon Hill

The Way of Peace Organization Award was given to:

Reedley Peace Center

Entertainment was provided by the Raging Grannies



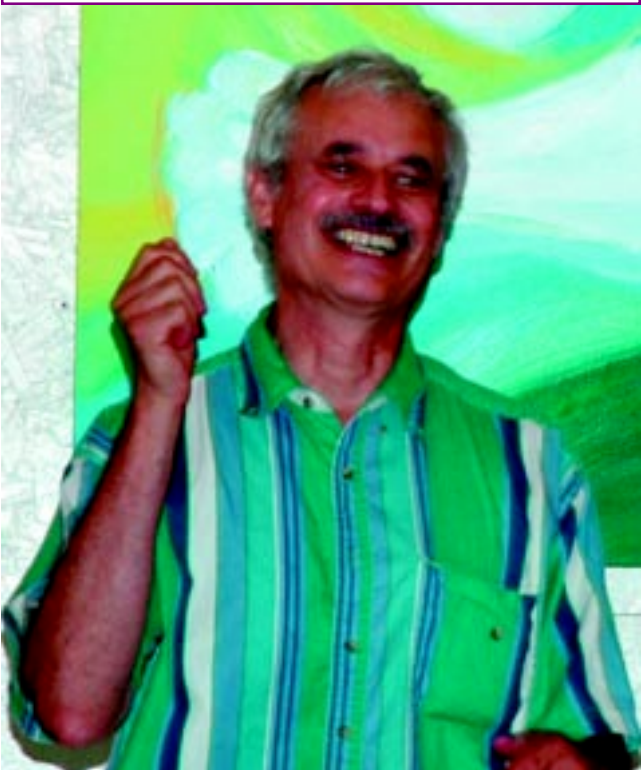
Howard Watkins receives a rose from Margaret Hudson



Rev. Floyd Harris Jr. is given the Way of Peace Award by Vickie Fouts



Mike Rhodes presents Simone Whalen Rhodes with the Way of Peace Youth Award



Richard Stone is the Administrative Director of the Fresno Center for Nonviolence and an editorial board member of the Community Alliance newspaper



There was standing room only at this year’s Way of Peace Awards



All of the recipients: Don Friesen (Reedley Peace Center), Rev. Walt Parry (accepting the award for Edie Jessup who was not in town), Rev. Floyd Harris, Lloyd Carter, Simone Whalen-Rhodes, and Brandon Hill



The Reedly Peace Center was given the Way of Peace Organization award



Walt Parry and Way of Peace Master of Ceremonies, Ray Ensher



Betsy Temple sings

Central California Peace Council Forms

By Connie Young and Richard Stone

Picture, if you will, a sleek and sturdy crew boat drifting on a river. It sports a rainbow-colored flag on which is emblazoned the word “Progressive”. The ethnically diverse crew of men and women are smart, determined and in great shape (perhaps because of their diet of tofu and organically-grown alfalfa sprouts.) Next to them is another boat, whose tattered red, white and blue flag bears the name, “Conservatives”. Its crew members are cigar-smoking, grey-haired white males with flabby biceps and big, overflowing bellies. Yet, when the gun goes off and the race begins, the Conservatives quickly pull into the lead and win the race. What happened?

The Progressives had rowed with all their might, yet they failed to coordinate their strokes and they worked against each other’s efforts. The Conservatives, on the other hand, had agreed on, and rowed to, the same beat. Having handily defeated their opponents, they entered more races and, pulling together (sometimes with a different beat) they won again and again.

In his book “Don’t Think of an Elephant” George Lakoff explains how Republicans disciplined themselves to set aside their differences and work together on common causes. Once they achieved a goal important to one segment of the GOP, they could concentrate on another faction’s priority. With each success their confidence increased and they were emboldened to take on greater challenges.

It seems to this “impartial observer” that Fresno’s peace groups are like the poor Progressive crew team. They are smart, motivated and fit, yet somehow they fail to pull together for the common good. So we get sparse attendance at the Rally in the Valley despite widespread public discontent with the occupation of Iraq, and mea-



The Ragging Grannies provided the entertainment

ger turnouts at well-advertised forums and lectures. It is discouraging to sponsor or attend events that draw only the minimal attendance, with only the same faces in evidence.

What if Progressive groups were to agree on one or two overriding objectives to work on together? What if they were to speak out with one strong and united voice that could not be ignored by the media and the general public? I think this is possible. That is why I urge progressive groups and individuals to support the proposal by the Fresno Center for Nonviolence for the establishment of a Central California Peace Council. We can turn our individual “choirs” into a magnificent Chorus.

Connie Young

[The following letter has been sent to many area organizations. The invitation is hereby extended to any group or individual interested in participating.]

Underlying the multitude of issues and causes that confront us, the Fresno Center for Nonviolence has enumerated four interrelated principles that enable us to “work for peace”...not just for political victory. These are:

- 1) social equity and justice
- 2) moderation and simplicity in living
- 3) inclusiveness
- 4) nonviolent means to attaining goals

(These principles are elaborated on in the Center’s Peace Agenda, found on our website at, www.fresnoalliance.com/centerfornonviolence/)

While each organization and individual can address only a few of the many issues and causes, if we can trust that each of us adheres to the four principles, we can

support each other’s efforts, even when we cannot actively be involved.

In addition, if many of us can jointly identify one or two actions that we prioritize as most worthwhile or necessary at the present moment, we can coordinate efforts and maximize our impact on the Fresno community.

Toward these ends, we propose the formation of the Central California Peace Council with representation from any organization that subscribes to “the four principles”. We invite you to join us on Sunday, August 13th at 3 P.M., at our Center (1584 N. Van Ness, just south of McKinley) to:

- a) meet each other and learn about each other’s issues and projects
- b) discuss how the principles of nonviolence impact the goals and methods we choose
- c) draw up a list of projects that would forward the work of as many as possible of our participating groups, while observing the principles of nonviolence; then select one or two of these to work on collectively, creating a committee to coordinate each activity undertaken.
- d) decide if periodic gatherings of this kind would be desirable, and if so create a steering committee to establish a framework for future meetings.

If you would like to join us, please call in (237-3223) or e-mail us fcnv@sbcglobal.net

P.S. As an historical note, we look back to a similar process that was initiated in the 1990’s under the name “Visions of Community”. One long-lasting result of their work was the establishment of the Fresno Center for Nonviolence.



WOMEN'S INTERNATIONAL LEAGUE FOR PEACE AND FREEDOM

WILPF Fresno, PO Box 5114, Fresno, CA 93755
Vickie Fouts, Editor, (559) 658-8260 or socialjustice@sti.net

Graphic by Lincoln Cushing

WILPF DATES:

Thursday, August 10 NO WILPF Business Meeting - Replaced with Retreat

Saturday, August 19, 10 AM-4PM: WILPF's Annual Retreat & Potluck - At the home of Pat Wolk

Wednesday, August 23, 3 PM: WILPF Stir-It-Up on KFCF 88.1 FM

WILPF Annual Retreat: Please join us on August 19th, 10 AM to 4 PM for our annual retreat and potluck lunch at the home of Pat Wolk. We will be sharing what we have accomplished this past year and more importantly discussing what we plan on doing this next year. One of the best tools to come up with excellent plans for the future is brainstorming as a group and coming up with a large number of diverse ideas. We need to think outside the box. You don't need to be an active member or someone with lots of time on your hands in order to brainstorm. It is your ideas we need. Once we have a plan of action then we can go from there. The retreat will give us a place to start from.

The retreat is also an excellent time to meet new people and renew old friendships with people who are dedicated to peace and freedom. Do come join us. Please RSVP by August 12th to Vickie Fouts at socialjustice@sti.net or 658-8260. Hope to see you there.

Membership Updated: We wish to welcome two new members. Nancy Kelly joined after becoming a Raging Grannie. Cheryl Caldera joined after taking part in our Uprooting Racism Book Discussion. **Welcome!** This past month we have received several requests for information about WILPF. They have been sent a membership brochure, added to our email list, and newsletter mailing list. This is a promising sign that more and more people are concerned about what is going on in our country and our world and want to do something positive in the name of PEACE and FREEDOM.

Our branch is stronger as we have added many new members this year. In order to keep our branch and National Office strong we also need our current members to pay their dues. At this time we have 22 members behind in their dues and 29 who have been dropped by National. You can use the below form to send in your dues so we can be as strong as we can be. Where there is a WILPF there is a WAY!

Women's Suffrage Coalition for the Women's Voices - Women's Votes March & Rally: In 2004, 22 million single women voters failed to vote in a presidential election with the potential to greatly impact their lives. Women are on the sidelines of our democracy because they doubt any candidate will listen to their concerns & understand the pressures they face. Women in the valley face extraordinary challenges everyday to put a roof over their heads, food on the table, and gas in their cars if they are lucky enough to have a car. Women in the valley struggle with sexism, bigotry and the challenges of legal status, age & sexual orientation. Women in the valley face poverty rates equal to those in Appalachia.

When women understand they have the power to bring about change, to elect people who will work on issues they care about like: jobs, living wage, health care, reproductive justice & education they are motivated to register and vote.

The planned march is a progressive, non-partisan event. Coalition partners support social justice, environmental justice & reproductive justice. WILPF will be a co-sponsor. The event will inspire women to register & vote. The March/Rally will take place Saturday August 19 9:00 AM - 12:30 PM at Fresno Fulton Mall.

For more information contact Patsy Montgomery of Planned Parenthood Mar Monte at 488-4908 x 301 or Patsy_Montgomery@ppmarmonte.org. Even though this is during our WILPF retreat please pass on the news and join the

march/rally if you aren't planning on attending the retreat.

Waste or Residue- It's all the same - By Lydia Flores

There were few solutions offered for the problems of the California Water System revealed at the Latino Issues Forum Saturday, June 23. The most disconcerting of all was to be told that the Central Valley has the poorest water quality due to high levels of nitrates and arsenic. Though there are ways to remove these contaminants from the water, it leaves high concentrations of pollutants in the residue. What to do with them?

In addition, we have processes that also contribute to these concentrations. These processes are in the wineries, oil production, and food processing plants, not to mention the dairies that have moved into the Valley. All have to find their own solution for the disposal of that waste. It is a challenge finding a place to put it. It was easy in the past since it was drained into a river, a basin, the desert-some isolated place. But this is no longer possible. Agriculture, residences and commercial buildings compete for acreage. So as the residue of these processes sink into the water tables, the water is polluted. It is a shame but children of families who work at these plants reflect the dangers of the processing methods.

All this is magnified as humans also have their waste. It is no longer possible to dump the sewage into the ocean. Recently Los Angeles was stopped from dumping their sludge into the Bakersfield basin. Now LA is asking Fresno- Merced if they would accept this waste. But human excrement is full of more contaminants that can affect our health here in the valley if it is used as fertilizer in agriculture. The pollutants will sink down into the water tables and render our water unclean for human consumption and eventually we will be sick since not all disease producing elements can be removed.

Los Angeles has a pipe line about a mile out which it uses to dump its sewage. This is no longer enough due to the size of the population. Thousands of beaches along the California coast have been closed as a result of this dumping.

From where I stand, I believe that it is the WASTE that is going to kill us all. The debris affects the air and the water quality which are the basic elements we need to live. Rather than agree with Senator Dean Florez that there will be 30 million people in the Valley, can't we limit the population? Why should we look at Los Angeles and say, we will be like that city- an asphalt jungle. Why can't we think regionally and negotiate that there will be only a certain amount of industry that we can sustain? Let's demand that land development be in parcels that allow for liveable communities which mean some parks, schools, libraries and walking distance from a shopping mall to reduce our dependence on fossil fuels. Let's ask for streets and gardens that will consider the conservation of water and allow run off to be absorbed into the water tables instead of washed to the ocean. There are many empires in Fresno. Developers, Agribusiness, Water Agencies, the Board of Supervisors, and the City Council and others have only an eye to the bottom line. We need citizens to register concern for these circumstances. It is we citizens who have to live here and suffer the consequences. Please step forward and speak up.

Kay Camp: WILPF has lost a beloved long time member. Kay Camp died in her sleep on July 9th in Pennsylvania. Kay was both the US Section President and International President of WILPF during the 70s and 80s. She was in Fresno during the Viet Nam War and spoke at a big march we had down to the courthouse. Look for more history about Kay in the next issue of *Peace and Freedom*. Few details about Kay's life are available at this time but I thought I would share with you the words of Edith Ballantyne, another prominent National and International WILPF leader. They are very inspirational.

Kay Camp's death comes as a terrible shock. I feel a part of me has died with her. We worked closely together in WILPF for more than four decades when she was US Section President, then member of the IEC and later International President. Our close relationship continued after that although communication became difficult in the past few years.

Kay was such an extraordinary human being, with this special combination of high intelligence, creativity and activism, committed to the transformation of a military society to a peaceful one in which women had their big part. She had a wonderful way with words and could create a slogan at the

drop of a hat like no other person I know. The title of her publication for WILPF, "Listen to Women for a Change" became a slogan still used. She was the creator of WILPF's S.T.A.R. (Stop the Arms Race) campaign in the early 1980's. It was a signature campaign to exhort citizens around the world to "buck the arms race with a buck", the slogan she created to raise funds to carry out the one-year campaign that took the petitions to the NATO headquarters in March 1983, ending with a huge women's rally in Brussels. Around a million signatures were collected and many paid one dollar for the privilege to sign. It was the only campaign to my knowledge that ended with a benefit.

Kay was always a creator, and also an enthusiastic supporter of ideas of others, and once they were accepted she did everything to help make them a reality: the renewal of the WILPF summer schools for young women in the 1970's (later named Gertrud Baer seminars in memory of another great WILPF woman), the internship program started in 1980, and later the opening of the WILPF UN office in New York. Those were some of the bigger innovations that one remembers easily, but she was behind many others, small ones that were important but easily forgotten.

I remember many hour-long telephone conversations we had, often arguments about ideas, about positions, about actions that made each of us clearer and stronger in our thinking and convictions. Kay was a wonderful person to work with and to be with. She was gracious, generous and always challenging. She was a thinker, a creator, and indefatigable activist. She joins the WILPF Hall of Fame. Her disappearance leaves a terrible void and we will miss her.

There will be a memorial service for Kay Camp in September at the Norristown, PA Friends Meeting where she was a member. The family requests that in lieu of flowers donations be sent to: Kay Camp Fund - Jane Adams Peace Assoc. - 777 United Nations Plaza - NY, NY 10017

World Peace Forum: Ten US WILPF DISARM activists, including three DISARM team leaders, joined 5,000 registrants in Vancouver for hundreds of workshops, a dozen international conferences, peace marches and celebrations of a culture of peace as part of the World Peace Forum June 23-28.

WILPF members attending the conference included Susi Snyder, our WILPF Secretary General from Geneva and Jennifer Nordstrom, Program Associate responsible for Reaching Critical Will. Raula Zoubiane, Past WILPF International President from Lebanon, gave a presentation on conflicts over water in the Middle East. Members of the DISARM leadership team included Claire Gosselin (Boston DISARM and Branch chair), Jean Verthein (UN Rep, New York Metro Branch) and Carol Urner (DISARM co-chair and Portland OR and Los Angeles Branches). Judy Evered and Lynn Hendred attended from Santa Barbara. Linda Richards and her mother attended from Ashland OR Branch. Celeste Howard came up from the Portland OR Branch and Odile (WCUSP) and Alan Haber attended from Ann Arbor Branch. The last evening of the conference they all met for dinner with about twenty members of Branches throughout the Canadian Section. As a special treat, Emiko Hiram of the New Japan Women's Association joined them for the evening.

The WILPF DISARM website has four separate reports regarding the forum. They are:

- 1) WILPF involvement in Keep Space for Peace Week planning and annual meeting of Global Network Against Weapons and Nuclear Power in Space
- 2) The invitation only meeting and luncheon with Dr. Hans Blix
- 3) The annual meeting of ABOLITION 2000
- 4) U.S. 52 billion dollar Biological "Defense" and Weapons Program. To read the full reports check out learn <http://disarm.wilpf.org>. To learn more about the World Peace Forum check them out at <www.worldpeaceforum.ca>

Quote of the Month:

"The history of progress is written in the blood of men and women who have dared to espouse an unpopular cause"

- Emma Goldman

Fresno Center for Nonviolence



1584 N. Van Ness Ave., 93728 - www.centerfornonviolence.org - email: info@centerfornonviolence.org

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SIMPLICITY ~ JUSTICE ~ INCLUSIVENESS ~ NON-INJURY**

THE WELCH REPORT



(Note: Due to health concerns in the family, Dr. Welch was unable to perform his usual task of sorting through materials we receive and compiling a commentary referencing selected articles. Instead he has sent us an abridged version of one article he felt especially strongly about, "The Changing Climate" by Chip Giller and Katharine Wroth, from The Gist, May 24, 2006) (Source for last month's Welch Report: Stanislaus Connections May 2006, article by Norman Solomon)

The Changing Climate

In the week of 24 May 2006 Al Gore made his action-hero debut in the movie, "An Inconvenient Truth". Let's not call the subject of the film climate change, or even global warming. Let's call it the most extensive science experiment of all time, which has been going on since the start of the Industrial Revolution. The entire planet serves as the lab.

Over the last century the planet's average surface temperature has risen by about 1 degree Fahrenheit. The increase is due to an overabundance of carbon dioxide and other gases in the atmosphere, which trap too much of the sun's heat. These gases can come from natural sources, including volcanoes, decaying plants, and flatulent farm animals; human beings, however, are a major source because we "burn fossil fuels" by driving, heating our homes, buying goods that have been manufactured and shipped, and doing many other things.

Detractors say the temperature increase and the changes attributed to it—the fact, for instance, that 19 of the 20 hottest years on record have occurred since 1980—are part of normal patterns. These detractors still insist that scientists disagree about humanity's role in this. Scientists, however, evidently don't disagree: a 2004 review of 928 papers published on the topic of peer-reviewed journals between 1993 and 2003 found no article arguing against the view that we are contributing to this trend.

Even President Bush, "slow to jump on any bandwagon that doesn't run on oil", has acknowledged the reality of climate change. The question now is not whether the climate is changing, but when, where and how, and what we should do about it.

The Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change, created in 1988 by the UN, has estimated that the Earth's average temperature will rise between 2.5 and 10.4 degrees by the year 2100. The added heat will throw the whole system out of whack: we're in for heat waves and droughts, but also cold spells, floods, severe storms, and the spread of infectious diseases. Hurricane Katrina was created by the Gulf's waters being warmer than usual, which had been forecast. Seas worldwide have risen 4-8 inches in the last century, and they're expected to rise another 3.5 to 34.6 inches by 2100. More than half of US residents live in coastal areas.

To brace for these changes, 141 of the world's 192 countries have ratified the Kyoto Protocol, which outlines emissions cuts for developed countries. The US, which has not ratified Kyoto, spews a quarter of the world's greenhouse emissions.

Faced with federal fecklessness, state and local governments are taking action: Mayors from 235 cities representing more than 45 million people have agreed to meet Kyoto goals in their cities. Some of the world's biggest corporations, e.g. Ford, oil giant BP, GM, GE and DuPont, are cutting emissions, pledging to use renewable energy, and making other choices that better serve both customers and the planet. As individuals we can use fluorescent bulbs, drive less and drive a more efficient car. We should become willing to change our behavior before it's too late for us all—at least before Gore decides to make a sequel to "An Inconvenient Truth"!

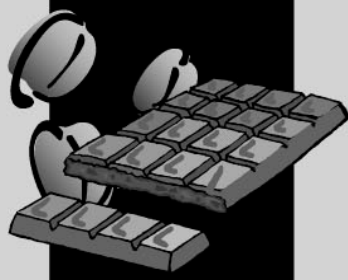
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Steve Thachuk

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**Join us at the beautiful downtown Arte
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A benefit for the Central California Criminal Justice
Committee and
the Fresno Center for Nonviolence



Steve Thachuk is one of Canada's most outstanding classical guitarists. Dr. Thachuk's repertoire is rich and varied, featuring traditional Baroque works, Spanish classics, contemporary originals, and interpretations of popular music to include the Beatles.

When: Arte Americas (1630 Van Ness Ave.)

Where: Saturday, August 26, 7:00 pm.

Tickets: \$10.00 (\$15.00 at the door)

TICKETS AVAILABLE at THE MOVIES at (1435 N. Van Ness - 233-8346), PATRICK'S MUSIC (1st & Barstow - 224-7286) and the CENTER FOR NONVIOLENCE

Stir it Up

August 9th, 3pm: KFCF 88.1 FM – Host Richard Stone interviews Rebecca Rangel of the Central California Criminal Justice Committee about the need for an independent police auditor.

Second Wednesday Video Series:

August 9th

Dr. Strangelove or: How I Learned to Stop Worrying and Love the Bomb

Stanley Kubrick's classic satire of the nuclear age. *Dr. Strangelove* is a perfect spoof of political and military insanity.

Join us for a potluck at 6:30 pm

Movie: 7:00 pm - FCNV

PEACE AND SOCIAL JUSTICE CALENDAR OF EVENTS

Friday, August 4 • Box office opens at 7 PM • Gate opens at 7:30 PM • Concert at 8 PM

Los Soneros del Este will perform traditional “sones” from Cuba and Veracruz. Sones are a musical form that is found in seven areas of Mexico (with regional variation) including Jalisco where it is the root of Mariachi music. The song La Bamba is the most famous of the Sones Jarochos - Jarocho designates someone or thing from southern Veracruz. Sones are a mixture of Spanish music influenced by African and Carribean rhythms. The music is played on a harp, jarana (small guitar), and requinto (small rhythm guitar). Its dances are made up of diverse steps or “zapateados” with flamenco characteristics.

This event will take place at Arte Américas 1630 Van Ness. Tickets: \$10

Friday, August 4 • 6:30 - 8:30 PM

The Reedley Peace Center presents the Documentary: The Future of Food. An in depth investigation into the truth about the unlabeled, genetically engineered foods that have quietly filled grocery store shelves for the past decade. This film gives a voice to farmers whose lives and livelihoods have been negatively impacted by this new technology. It examines the complex web of market and political forces that are changing what we eat as huge multinational corporations seek to control the world’s food system.

Light potluck at 6:30. Program begins at 7 pm. This event is sponsored by the Reedley Peace Center and will be held at the Fellowship Hall of First Mennonite Church, on ‘L’ street between 12th and 13th streets in Reedley. Admission is free. Contact Don Friesen by email at dfriesen@telis.org

Sunday, August 6 • 6 PM

Beach Party Blockade, a local band, will play for a Family Courtyard Concert at First Congregational Church of Fresno, 2131 N. Van Ness Blvd. (south of Clinton). The band features rock and roll with an island vibe. Refreshments will be served. Suggested donation is \$5 per person, with a maximum of \$15 per family. For more information call First Congregational (Mon-Thurs, 9:00-4:30 and Fri, 9:00-noon.) at 227-8489.

Wednesday, August 9 • 7 PM

Second Wednesday - Free Video Presentation - 7 PM at the Fresno Center for Nonviolence, 1584 N. Van Ness, Fresno, CA 93728, Across from Fresno City College * SE Corner Van Ness & McKinley * Entrance on Van Ness

Movie, Pot-Luck and Discussion Dr. Strangelove: How to Stop Worrying and Love the Bomb

Friday, August 11 • 5 PM and 8 PM

Fresno Filmworks presents “Water” at the Tower Theatre. Set in India during Gandhi’s struggle against colonial rule, Deepa Mehta’s newest masterpiece gracefully balances epic political scope with intimate personal drama. In Hindi with English subtitles. Tickets can be purchased at the Tower Theatre Box Office, 815 E. Olive Ave., The Movies, 1435 N. Van Ness Ave., the Fig Garden Bookstore in Fig Garden Village, and at the door, for \$10; \$8, for students and seniors. For more information call the FFW info line, 221-0755, or go to www.fresnofilmworks.org

Friday, August 11 • 6:30 - 8:30 PM

The Reedley Peace Center presents the documentary: The Heroes Rx for Survival. This documentary relates real life stories from around the world of unsung champions who protect people from the ravages of disease. It is the uplifting story of the successful, and sometimes simple, ways that people are helping third world citizens overcome a variety of health issues.

Light potluck at 6:30. Program begins at 7 pm. This event is sponsored by the Reedley Peace Center and will be held at the Fellowship Hall of First Mennonite Church, on ‘L’ street between 12th and 13th streets in Reedley. Admission is free. Contact Don Friesen by email at dfriesen@telis.org

Friday, August 11 • Box office opens at 7 PM • Gate opens at 7:30 PM

40 Watt Hype is a neo hip-hop band that combines elements of Latin, Soul and R&B creating a new, fresh and commanding sound with tremendous crossover success. Often compared to groups like N.E.R.D., Black Eyed Peas and Ozomatli, 40 Watt Hype brings a slamming, high-energy live show complete with two emcees, horns and Latin percussion.

This event will take place at Arte Américas 1630 Van Ness. Tickets: \$10

Saturday, August 12 • 3:30 PM

The Central Valley Progressive PAC meets at the Center for Non Violence, 1584 North Van Ness at Mc Kinley. Details of the free Water Forum for August 24th will be discussed. Water: What Everyone Needs to Know. Public is invited. How are the plans for the Celebration of the Third Anniversary of the CVPPAC? This will be a party for all to join. Which initiatives would you like discussed at a Forum in September? Have your say! Information: Lydia Flores-435-7360 or www.cvppac.org

Saturday, August 12 • 7 - 9 PM

Contra Dance at Cynthia Merrill—4750 N Blackstone Ave. All dances taught, come alone or bring a friend! Questions: call Evo 297-8966 or email evo@evobluestein.com Don’t worry if you don’t know how! If you are new, please try to come at 6:30 pm.

What is contra dance? <http://www.sbc.ds.org/contradance/whatis/#Def0> This event is affiliated with the Fresno Folklore Society <http://home.pacbell.net/ckjohns/>

Sunday, August 13 • 3 PM

The Central California Peace Council will hold it’s first meeting at the Fresno Center for Nonviolence, 1584 N. Van Ness, just south of McKinley. See the article on page 13 for details.

Sunday August 13 • 5 - 10 PM

Jamaica My Weekend Caribbean Music Celebration featuring the world renowned reggae artist: Sister Carol with the Yellow Wall Dub Squad and special guest Itawe also MASSIVE SOUND INTERNATIONAL Robert Rankin & Spliff Skankin. St Therese Church Lawn.

It’s time once again to kick off your shoes, relax on the lawn and listen to an evening of music under the stars! It’s the Tower District’s 9th Annual Jamaica My Weekend - Caribbean Music Celebration! This wonderful all-ages event will be held across the street from St. Therese Church on the Southwest corner of Maroa and Floradora in Fresno, California.

This year’s celebration headliner is world-renowned reggae artist Sister Carol. Known as the “Black Cinderella” and “Mother Culture,” Sister Carol has led the way for women in reggae. Her music is rich with cultural heritage and infused with a vital social consciousness. Having succeeded in a musical genre that is widely dominated by male performers, Sister Carol’s life is a true testament to the spirit and energy that she conveys in every live performance she gives.

Appearing with Sister Carol will be The Yellow Wall Dub Squad, an original authentic Roots Reggae Band comprised of legendary Jamaican studio session musicians. Opening the show are local favorites, Green Machine. Master of Ceremonies will be MC Red I from Santiago, Chile.

Admission price is \$12 in advance, \$15 day of show. Children 9 and under free with paid adult admission.

Food vendors will be serving up tropical treats like jerk chicken and dirty rice, jerk beef, veggie, and seafood specialties. Make the best of Fresno’s tropical weather and enjoy some cold Humboldt Brewery Hemp Beer or our famous ?Yah Mon! Rum Punch in the Beverage Oasis.

Tickets will be available after July 20th at Brass Unicorn, Grandmarie’s Chicken Pie Shop, Livingstone’s, The Landmark, Tower Theatre, The Movies, Sequoia Brewing Company Tower and Sequoia Brewery North.

For more information call the TDMC at 497-8362, or log on to www.towerdistrict.org/jamaicamyweekend Proceeds to ben-

[efit Tower District neighborhood projects.](#)

Jamaica My Weekend is presented by the TOWER DISTRICT MARKETING COMMITTEE, Wendy Russell Productions, Humboldt Brewery Hemp Beer and Donaghy Sales.

Tuesday, August 15

Deadline for articles and calendar items to the September, 2006 Community Alliance newspaper. Send information to AllianceEditor@Comcast.net

Wednesday, August 16 - Friday, September 8

The Rachel Corrie Exhibit will be in Fresno. See article on page 1

Wednesday, August 16 • 7 - 9 PM

League of Women Voters of Fresno Annual Ice Cream Social will be held at 2655 West Celeste Avenue, an outdoor event. There is no charge but the public is requested to call in a reservation at 226-8683 so we know how many people to expect. Supervisor Henry Perea will speak on Mental Health in Fresno County, and ice cream will be served.

Friday, August 18 • 6:30 - 8:30 PM

The Reedley Peace Center presents Speaker: Adam Shapiro of the ISM, the International Solidarity Movement. He will be speaking about the work and death of Rachel Corrie who was involved in an ISM attempt to stop Israeli demolition of a Palestinian home when she was run over and killed by an Israeli bulldozer. This is the opening night of the Rachel Corrie Exhibit, which will be in the Fresno area for nearly three weeks.

Light potluck at 6:30. Program begins at 7 pm. This event is sponsored by the Reedley Peace Center and will be held at the Fellowship Hall of First Mennonite Church, on ‘L’ street between 12th and 13th streets in Reedley. Admission is free. Contact Don Friesen by email at dfriesen@telis.org

Saturday, August 19 • 9 AM - 12:30 PM

Women’s Voices - Women’s Votes march and rally at the Fulton Mall in downtown Fresno. See article on page 4.

Wednesday, August 23 • 5:30 PM

The National Women’s Political Caucus-Fresno County holds its annual Women’s Equality Day event commemorating USA women winning the right to vote. This year our theme is “The Many Faces of Education” and our honorees are Coke Hallowell, Carol Gaab Hansen, Jack Osterhaus, Judy Parker, Dorothy Smith and Barbara Thomas. The featured speaker will be Armen Bacon, Executive Assistant to Fresno County Superintendent of Schools and Mistress of Ceremonies will be Karen Humphrey, former Mayor of Fresno. The location is Pardini’s at 2257 W. Shaw and tickets are \$75. For more information, call 229-9661.

Thursday, August 24 • 7 PM

Water: What Everyone Needs to Know, a powerful array of speakers- all water experts: Lloyd Carter, environmentalist, journalist, attorney and president of Restore the San Joaquin, Steve Haze, the manager of Millerton Lake Water District, Dr. John Suen, hydrologist and geology professor at CSUE, and Ron Pistoresi, farmer and chairman of the Madera Irrigation District.

Bring your questions. With many bonds issues seeking voter approval in the form of propositions on the ballot, we need to get informed. This forum is presented by Central Valley Progressive PAC (CVPPAC). It is hosted by the UU Social Justice Committee and Women’s International League of Peace and Freedom (WILPF). It is being held at the Unitarian

Universalist Church of Fresno at 4144 North Millbrook south of Ashlan. This is a FREE EVENT. For information call Lydia Flores (435-7360)

Friday, August 25 • 6:30 - 8:30 PM

The Reedley Peace Center presents Speaker: Nana-Dicta Graves, Ghanaian artist and dancer will tell her story.

Light potluck at 6:30. Program begins at 7 pm. This event is sponsored by the Reedley Peace Center and will be held at the Fellowship Hall of First Mennonite Church, on ‘L’ street between 12th and 13th streets in Reedley. Ad-



mission is free. Contact Don Friesen by email at dfriesen@telis.org

Saturday, August 26 • 6:30 PM

Celebrate with Central Valley Progressive PAC (CVPPAC) This is our third anniversary. Meet other progressives. Where? At Howard Watkins’, 1785 Dovewood Avenue. Please RSVP so that we can plan sufficient refreshments. Music is anticipated. The City Council members will also be invited. \$20 suggested donation. Free to new members. Reply to Lydia Flores 435-7360

Saturday, August 26 • 7 PM

Steve Thachuk, one of Canada’s most outstanding classical guitarists. Join us at the beautiful downtown Arte Americas, 1630 Van Ness Avenue, for an evening of classical guitar music. This concert is a benefit for the Central California Criminal Justice Committee and Fresno Center for Nonviolence. Tickets: \$10.00 (\$15.00 at door) may be purchased at the Fresno Center for Nonviolence, 1584 N. Van Ness (Mon-Fri 11-3), Patrick’s Music, 769 E. Barstow (224-7287), and The Movies, 1435 N. Van Ness (233-8346). For further information call the Center at 237-3223.

ONGOING WEEKLY ACTIVITIES/ PROGRAMS

Every Sunday • 3 - 4 PM

Sunday Food Not Bombs serves free food at Courthouse Park to anyone who is hungry. They start cooking at 1 PM and serve the food at 4 PM (meet at the Tulare side of the park). For more information see: <http://home.comcast.net/~fresnofnb/>

Every Tuesday • 6:30 - 8:30 PM

The Fresno River Zen group meets in Horsley Hall at the Unitarian Universalist Church, 4144 N. Millbrook, Fresno. This group welcomes all who wish to seek clarity, compassion, and harmony with oneself and the world through mindful meditation. Emphasis is on bringing peaceful actions from personal experience in meditation to healing the world. Teaching and practice in the spirit of the Suzuki Roshi Lineage is led by Grace Schireson, an ordained Zen priest. For more information, call Grace at (559) 877-2400 or email her at grace@emptynestzendo.org.

Every Monday and Tuesday • 7–9:30 PM

The St. Benedict Catholic Worker serves a meal to the homeless, working poor, and visitors and released inmates in front of Fresno County Jail (corner of Fresno and M streets). Volunteers are needed to help prepare and serve the meals. For more information contact Liza Apper at (559) 229–6410 or liza.apper@sbew.org; or visit their Web site: < www.sbew.org >.

Every Tuesday • 7 PM

Peace Fresno meets at the Fresno Center for Nonviolence at 1584 N Van Ness, south of McKinley. If you want to help stop Bush’s endless war against the world, come to this meeting! For an up-to-the-minute listing of all peace actions in the Fresno area, call the Fresno Center for Nonviolence at (559) 23PEACE (237–3223). For more information about Peace Fresno, call 487–2515 or visit their Web site at www.peacefresno.org.

Every Friday • 7 PM

Reedley Peace Center holds it weekly peace meeting at the Fellowship Hall at Reedley’s First Mennonite Church, 1208 L Street, Reedley. Programs vary, but the focus is always on peace issues: local, state, national, international. The contact is Carol Krehbiel: (559) 637–9098 or krehbiel@cvip.net. The meeting is free, open to the public, and accessible to the handicapped.

Every Saturday • 1–2 PM

Food Not Bombs feeds the hungry near the Olive Ave entrance to Roeding Park. The location for cooking on Saturday is at the Wesley United Methodist Church, 1343 E Barstow, between First and Cedar, starting at 9 AM. They are always in need of servers at the park. For more information see: <http://home.comcast.net/~fresnofnb/>

Every Saturday • 1 PM until the last patient is served

Medical clinic for the homeless, actively injecting drug users, and prostitutes. You can find them near Hughes and Olive Ave. Staffed by Dr. Marc Lasher and volunteers. Accepting financial donations. Contact: 266–0444.

Every Saturday • 1–3 PM

Fresno Free Bicycle Repair Clinic. Most Saturdays. Donations of bicycle parts, inner tubes, and blinky lights welcome. Volunteers needed to help with minor repairs. The bicycle clinic is near the Olive Ave entrance to Roeding Park, beside Food Not Bombs. For more info and to arrange donations, e-mail fresnofreebikeclinic@yahoo.com.

ONGOING MONTHLY ACTIVITIES/ PROGRAMS

1st Sunday of every month • 8 - 9 AM

The South Valley Peace Center <<http://www.svpc.info/>> has peace demonstrations at the northwest corner of Mooney and Caldwell in Visalia. Come out and demonstrate for peace. Bring a sign with your favorite peace message. Please note:

The So. Valley Peace Center is on its summer (2006) schedule. Vigil is 8-9 AM each fist Sunday at the corner of Caldwell and Mooney, followed by breakfast at Chapala’s Mexican Restaurant on Caldwell. Their regular meetings are at the Visalia Friends meeting House on the 4th Sunday of the month.

1st Sunday of every month • 3 - 5 PM

Fresno Stonewall Democrats meeting at Java Wava,1940 North Echo across from Fresno High is open to the public. Stonewall Democrats’ focus is on social and political issues of interest to progressives in general and progressive and liberal Democrats in particular. For more information contact Jay Hubbell at (559) 292–4905, e-mail <fresnostonewall@mangen.com>, or visit the Web site<www.mangen.com/stonewall/>.

3rd Sunday of every month • 10 AM–12 Noon

World Meditation Day is observed to promote peace within oneself and harmony in the world. Held at 7319 N Fourth St, Fresno. Program includes guided meditation followed by discussion and light refreshments. Call Veena Kapoor, (559) 435–2212, for more information.

3rd Sunday of every month • 1 PM

Humanists of the San Joaquin Valley meet in Room 1 at the Unitarian Universalist Church of Fresno, 4144 N Millbrook. For info call June: 645–1719, or visit their Web site at www.fresno.humanists.net

2nd Monday of every month • 1 PM

The Living Wage Committee will meet at the SEIU 250 office, 1279 N Wishon. For further information contact Frances Sivak at (559) 222-5240 or fsivak@msn.com www.livingwage-fresno.org

3rd Monday of every Month • 6:30 PM

California Prison Moratorium Project will meet at the Fresno Center for Non Violence, 1584 N Van Ness. Everyone is invited to attend this meeting. The discussion “Uncaging the Valley” mobilizing a valley wide coalition an exclusive valley focused project. Potluck is encouraged but not required. Upcoming , speakers from the anti prison movement are being scheduled. Call Deb Reyes at 559-916-4370 for more info.

4th Thursday of every month • 7 PM

FresCAMP (Fresno Coalition Against the Misuse of Pesticides) meeting. For more information e-mail frescamp@sbcglobal.net, call (559) 227–6134.

3rd Tuesday of every month • 7 PM

The Fresno Free College Foundation (owner and operator of KFCF 88.1 FM) Board of Directors meet at the Unitarian Universalist Church, 4144 N Millbrook, Fresno. The public is invited. For more information call (559) 233–2221, e-mail kfcf@kfcf.org, or visit www.kfcf.org.

1st Wednesday of every month • 12 Noon–1 PM

Women in Black– Silent Vigil at the Fresno County Courthouse entrance. Show your support for PEACE and for negotiated settlements of US current military actions! Meet downtown at the Fresno courthouse, and stand silently, advocating for PEACE. For more info, call 278–7140 or 225–2850.

1st Wednesday of every month • 7 PM

The Fresno County Democratic Central Committee meetings are held in the State Building Assembly Room. The address is 2550 Mariposa Ave. Call Steve Haze, Chair–855-8844 stevehaze@psnw.com or Jay Hubbell, Secretary - 292-4905 / jayhubbell@comcast.net for more information.

1st Wednesday of every month • 7:30 PM

Conservation Committee of the Sierra Club Tehipite Chapter at the Unitarian Universalist Church, 4144 N Millbrook, Fresno.

1st Thursday of every month

ART HOP. For more information contact Maria Franco at mfranco@fresnoarts.org or call (559) 237- 9734.

2nd Thursday of every month • 5 PM

The Human Relations Commission meetings are open to the public. Regular meetings are usually scheduled on the second Thursday of each month in Meeting Room 2165N of City Hall. Any person who wants to place an issue before the Commission should first contact the HRC staff at 621–7770.

2nd Thursday of every month • 7 PM

Fresno LGBTQ Social Group (<http://www.gayfresno.com/social/>)
Carrow’s Fresno
1484 E. Shaw Ave
(one block south of Fashion Fair)
Get together and hang out

2nd Thursday of every month • 7 PM

Monthly meeting of the Fresno County Green Party, County Council, at the California State Building in downtown Fresno. The address is 2550 Mariposa Ave., and is located between O and P streets and Fresno and Tulare. Enter through the main door along the pedestrian mall just off P Street. Call (559) 265–3647 or go to www.cagreens.org/fresno for more information.

3rd Thursday of every month • 6–8 PM

Fresno County Bicycle Coalition, monthly meetings to provide a forum for bicyclists to organize, discuss common concerns, and influence public policy. If you are interested in helping Fresno County become more bike-friendly, you are invited to join this group. Please call (559) 444–2065 for more information.

3rd Thursday of every month • 6:30 PM

Central California Criminal Justice Committee is meeting at the Fresno Center for Nonviolence, 1564 North Van Ness (Southeast corner of McKinley and Van Ness).

1st Friday of every month • 4:30–6:30 PM

Peace Fresno is at Shaw and Blackstone Avenues to protest the occupation of Iraq and other harmful domestic and foreign policies of the Bush administration. Peace Fresno advocates alternatives to war and social and environmental justice. For more information go to <www.peacefresno.org>.

1st Friday of every month • 7–9 PM

Dances of Universal Peace. Sacred Circle Dances from Around the World at the First Congregational Church, Van Ness and Yale.

3rd Friday of every month • 4:30 PM to 6:30 PM

“Justice Corner” In West Fresno The local chapter of the National Action Network with support from Peace Fresno is establishing a “Justice Corner” at the intersection of ‘C’ and Fresno Streets. “This will be the bookend to the “Peace Corner” at Blackstone and Shaw Avenues” says Aline Reed, a member of the local NAN group. The “Peace Corner” project has been a monthly presence by Peace Fresno members since the advent of war in 2001.

Supporters of peace and social justice issues are invited to join with NAN and Peace Fresno members on third Friday of every month from 4:30 PM to 6:30 PM. For more information contact Rev. Floyd Harris Jr, California State President of the National Action Network, (559) 264 - 0097 www.nanocal.org Xyfloyd@aol.com

1st Saturday of every month • 9:30 AM

Kennedy Club of the San Joaquin Valley meets at Denny’s Restaurant at Abby and Divisidero. Call 439–8140 for more information.

1st Saturday of every month • 3–5 PM

Women of Spirit—a gathering of women rediscovering their own spirituality and enabling others to do the same. You are invited to join the circle of women the first Saturday of each month, at 7319 N Fourth St, Fresno. Beginning and closing meditation, discussion and activity, light refreshments after closing. The event is free. Both men and women are welcome. Contact: Veena Kapoor, (559) 435–2212.

2nd Saturday of every month • 9:30 AM

Fresno Center for Nonviolence monthly meeting at 1584 N. Van Ness, south of McKinley. For more information about the Fresno Center for Nonviolence, see their Web site <www.centerfornonviolence.org> or call 559–23PEACE (237–3223).

2nd Saturday of every month • 10 AM

The Black Political Council meets at King of Kings on Martin Luther King Blvd.

4th Saturday of Every Month • 8 -10 AM

Tower Beautification Cleanup. Meet at the Olive/Wishon corner of the Chicken Pie Shop. Bring hat, gloves, broom or rakes and weed hoes, water. We supply orange vests, pick up bags, grabbers and extra tools. Why do we do this? To beautify our community and build empowerment through responsibility for our quality of life. Questions:? Call Coordinator, Gay Amend, at 237-6716 Sponsored by the Tower Trust, Council Districts 1 and 3 and the City of Fresno Sanitation Department which provides supplies and insurance.



The Value of the Public Education System

By Ruth Gadebusch

It is easy to criticize the public schools, but matters are not all that simple. Educators themselves have sometimes contributed to that idea when they have let the frustrations of their failures dominate the joy of their successes.

With four board positions of the Fresno Unified School District up for election this fall and a mayor who thinks he could do a better job, we citizens should take a long serious look at the role of public schools. Yes, there is plenty of room for improvement but things are not as bad as the critics would have us think.

We have long concentrated on the value to the individual of an education with statistics clearly indicating increased income in proportion to the level of education; however, that is not why the system is supported by taxes. An educated populace is essential to a democratic society. Specifically, in our nation of diversity the public school system is the only institution for developing our commonality. If we doubt that, all we need do is to look at parts of the world where education is limited to the chosen few, usually males of wealth, often from a very narrow religious view.

Indeed, our own system developed from private schools but it soon became evident that education for all was an absolute necessity if all were expected to participate as thinking citizens. Thomas Jefferson is often quoted, "I know of no safe depository of the ultimate powers of the society but the people themselves, and if we think them not enlightened enough to exercise their control with a wholesome discretion, the remedy is not to take it from them but to inform their discretion."

The society was largely satisfied with the system until the public schools were directed to take on roles that the general society itself was not ready to do: namely, desegregation. It was the correct thing to do, but it brought heretofore unknown dissatisfaction with the system.

Also different from the memories of the "good ol' days" is the presence of children of disability once hidden from view as ineducable. Likewise, we now reach out to those coming from homes with parents of limited education, limited language skills, limited medical resources and, in general, limited knowledge of children's needs in a complex society. The efforts to limit access of illegal immigrants and others to the system are extremely shortsighted.

Once again, it isn't for the benefit of the individual nearly so much as for all of us who share this nation. Education is a prevention tool, far more cost effective than the so-called remediation, such as prisons.

As for mayors desiring to become the dictator of public schools. I know of no evidence of the system approaching any closer to perfection in those Eastern cities where the mayor has appointment authority. In the case of Fresno it would disenfranchise many because the district boundaries are not contiguous with the city. Let the mayor take care of social problems that are in his purview and the school district's job would become infinitely easier. Public schools do not operate in a vacuum.

In the meantime the Fresno Unified School District, and others of this nation, will continue to struggle to educate a wider variety of children than any other on earth. Programs cannot be simply replicated as one size fits all. Teaching is more - much more - than having a neat textbook and keeping one page ahead of the students. It is more than having a summer off because teachers are required to get continual training. Nor are teachers paid commensurate with others of equal training; although we have made improvements.

Because we have not placed a high priority on funding schools, many teachers buy supplies from their own pockets. Actually, school financing is such a complex matter that it is near impossible for the average citizen to comprehend. Though all of us seem to think we are experts on schools because we went to school.

Admittedly, teacher unions have contributed to the diminished status of teachers. On the other hand, unions were formed to counteract abuse by school boards.

Interesting enough the federal Department of Education has just released a study indicating that public schools are doing as good a job as private ones. Since it does not support the Bush administration's drive for vouchers, the report was released on a Friday afternoon with little fan fair.

Without doubt the public school system is a complex challenging operation, but we dismantle it at our own peril. Of course, the individual profits from education, both in terms of income and quality of living. Of course, we need to do a better job but at the same time we must recognize what it has accomplished. Public schools are a, if not the, major contributor to the success of this society which for all its problems still serves more of its citizens better than any other. Whether we have school age children, or not, we have much at stake as citizens of this nation.

The Fresno Board of Education members run from designated areas of the community but they are charged with the welfare of the entire system. It behooves us to give careful consideration to whom we elect to these positions. They will define the future of this community.

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Ruth Gadebusch was born and raised on a Georgia farm. In 1977 she was elected to the Board of Education of Fresno Unified School District and served for thirteen and a half years. She continues to be active in the community while serving as Vice-President of the Center for Civic Education (promoting responsible citizenship and democratic principles internationally) and writing for the Liberal Opinion, a weekly national newspaper.

How to Fight Corporate America Where it Hurts - In the Pocketbook

By: Vickie M. Fouts

Where do you want to keep your hard earned money, within the community or in the pocket of major bank CEO's and their stock holders? Do you use a local credit union or a national bank for your financial needs? It can make a big difference in whether you are helping a neighbor make a modest middle-class income or just helping the fat cat corporate CEO's get fatter.



There are over 15 credit unions in Fresno. Credit unions are not-for-profit financial cooperatives. This means that one member's savings becomes another member's loan. A credit union is owned entirely by its members, so there are no investors to dictate decisions based on stock prices and dividends. Instead, management answers to a volunteer Board of Directors elected from the membership and are dedicated to making decisions that provide the most value to all members.

Without shareholders to pay, profits are returned to members in the form of lower loan rates, low or no-fee products and services, and higher savings rates. The not-for-profit status of credit unions enables them to operate at a lower cost than many for-profit institutions.

You can become a member of many credit unions in Fresno by just living or working in Fresno County. Your immediate family can also join or you can join a credit union of an immediate family member. Some credit unions are open to employees of 100 or more, different local business or government agencies.

Salaries - The heads of America's 500 biggest companies received an aggregate 54% pay raise in 2004. As a group, their total compensation amounted to \$5.1 billion, versus \$3.3 billion in fiscal 2003 per Forbes.com on April 21, 2005 <www.forbes.com/2005/04/20/05ceoland.html>. Here is the Forbes ranking of some financial institutes CEO's salary as of April 2005.

- Richard D. Fairbank, CEO of Capital One Financial, #10 at \$56.7m
- Richard Kovacevich, CEO of Wells Fargo, #12 at \$53.1m
- Kenneth Cheneault., CEO of American Express Co., #67 at \$18.3m.
- Bruce Hammonds, CEO of MBNA Corp., #72 at \$17.4m (now part of B of A)
- Kenneth D Lewis, CEO of Bank of America, #176 at

7.4m

Compare that with the total compensation and benefits paid in 2005 by a local credit union with almost 30 employees of \$1,165,305. You can surly see that their CEO didn't make several million in 2005. The *Non Profit Times* reported in February 2005 that the average pay for an executive director of a non-profit was \$92,411 in 2005. Another point is that a credit union CEO's and employees' salaries are spent locally, not in New York, San Francisco or some other big city or even in India by call center employees.

Rates & Services - Services offered are the same - checking, savings, CD's, IRA's, mortgage, auto & personal loans, major credit cards, but the interest rates are much different.

- Home loans: Major Banks 6.38-6.75% Local Credit unions - 5.87-6.12%
- Auto loans: Major Banks - 6.7-11.4% Local Credit unions - 3.99-6.12%
- Credit Cards: Major Banks - 9.15%-21.99% Local Credit Unions - 7.99%-13.4%
- Savings: Major Banks .25-.5% Local Credit Unions - .60-1.10%

Safety - National Credit Union Administration, a Federal Government Agency, insures all accounts to \$100,000 which is same amount as banks who are insured by Federal Deposit Insurance Corporation (FDIC). Most were founded in the 1930-1950's.

Too often I see liberals and progressives using large corporate banks while at the same time complaining about "Corporate America" and their greed and hold on of the American people. I encourage them to walk their talk and close their bank account and open up a credit union account instead. Maybe it won't hurt the fat cat CEOs and stock holders that much, but it sure would be keeping your money in the community and would be helping a neighbor.

Victory in Hanford

By: Rev. Floyd D. Harris Jr

Earlier this year I began investigating what was going on in Hanford. This community, surrounded by farm land, is about 45 minutes South of Fresno. What I found was substantial poverty and poor housing within the black community. It was obvious to me that the City of Hanford treats the African American community without regards of equality and fairness, especially when it comes to providing public service for people of color.

There is a community park called Coke Park on the south side of Hanford where the majority of people of color and their families live. The entrance of this park looked ridiculous, you never felt a sense of pride or place where community would have the urge to be involved. This park is known to have snakes crawling because of the farmland and the refusal of equitable park district upkeep. The park grass in this Black community was two - three feet high in some areas of the park. The children can't run or kick balls because the grass is too tall. On the other hand, when you travel to the north end of Hanford in the white neighborhoods, the parks where immaculate and very inviting.

While taking the time to observe these two different communities I was not surprised to discover that the politicians who run the City of Hanford had not established a holiday to honor Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. Dr. King was a civil rights leader in America and stood for those who couldn't stand for themselves. Dr. King was tired of black people and all people of color being treated like second-class citizens. Dr. King was tired of seeing incidents such as inequality, injustices, and unfairness overshadowing the African American communities.

For example: Mrs. Rosa Parks who refused to give up her seat to a white man while sitting on a public transportation bus. She was told to go and sit at the back of the bus but she refused and was then arrested. Dr. King was determined to end the strife between the have and the have nots. Dr. King fought to end segregation and believed that all people had the right to be treated fairly. He saw there was unequal treatment when white business owners refused to serve Colored people at there place of business. African American children were not allowed to white area schools and this was widely accepted at the time. Until a man like Dr. King with a grand movement of other individuals behind him changed history.

Observing the injustice in Hanford and realizing the need for observing a day in honor of Dr King, I put out a nation wide alert. We set out to make sure that Dr. King's holiday would become a reality for all of America, "the land of the free",

FROM THE GRASSROOTS



Rev. Floyd Harris leads a prayer vigil for justice in Hanford

including the City of Hanford. The National Action Network of California announced that they would expose the city of Hanford on a national level if the politicians there were intent on ignoring the importance of making a Holiday set aside in the remembrance of Dr. Martin Luther king Jr. for the people of the City of Hanford. I called for a prayer vigil on the steps of the Hanford City Hall so that God would touch their hearts before they voted.

National Action Network of California State Crisis Intervention Officer (CIO) Safiyah Brannon called each of the counsel members and the Mayor's office in the City of Hanford to educate them on the importance of why they should pass the holiday. Brannon called each counsel member and the mayor's office to invite them to the vigil, but none came. Brannon told me that one of the counsel members stated that she was not coming and that if you all come to the city of Hanford you all better walk soft. Brannon asked the counsel member if that was a threat?, the counsel member said "no, no more than what you all are doing!"

The MLK holiday is about fostering unity and encouraging diversity among Americans of all backgrounds. At the Prayer Vigil the National Action Network of California's goal was to open the hearts of the politicians in power, hence to change policy for the betterment of their communities. We stated our organization would not tolerate the city of Hanford to operate with such inconsistencies by sitting in seats of power that represents freedom, justice, and equality for all but yet showing indifference to such previously mentioned communities. We strongly challenged the City of Hanford to approve the Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. Holiday. In our estimation this act by the City of Hanford would verify the city's intent and favor for justice for all humanity and would most likely improve race relations amongst people of all ethnicities in their area.

Brannon said that "by making this a holiday we are educating other nationalities about who African Americans are." NAACP Hanford branch went into the community to collect signatures in favor of having a Dr. Martin Luther King Holiday to have it put on the November 2006 Ballots. My position is that this issue is a no brainier and it's an insult to Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. and the black community to have to go and beg people in the community for signatures. We can't sit on the sidelines and watch Politicians toy with Dr. King's legacy. The city of Hanford is behind the time and they needed to catch up.

By Honoring Dr. King's Legacy we are reminded of the horrible injustices that permeated America and all the gains we've made through the Human Rights and Civil Rights movements. Also, this remembrance challenges us as a nation never to go backwards but to look forward with expectation of a greater justice and equality for humanity. Don't forget my sisters and brothers from all cultural, ethnic, sexes, and all people that he sacrificed his life so that all people would learn that violence, institutional racism, and prejudices are a violation of ones civil and human rights. Between January 24, 1956 and April 4 1968 Dr. King was Arrested 8 times, had his home bombed 3 times, was stabbed once and then finally he was assassinated April 4

Dr. King's assassination on April 4 1968 should have been the only necessity a rights of passage needed to pass this holiday. Lady J who is the Community Relation Officer for the National Action Network observed undercover police watching and following us around the city. Lady J took pictures and video taped the undercover cops observing us. After said Prayer Vigil there was a victorious outcome. The Hanford city

counsel's voted yes to have a Dr. King holiday without any further delay.

I believe that the African American people in America need to deal with the problem directly and take control of their history and their future. White decedents benefitted from the slave trade in America. Criminals of European decent and other ethnicities violated the African people like animals. Black people were lynched, African women were raped, hung by there toes and babies were cut out of their stomachs and much more. Black men were hung, gentiles were cut off and put in their mouth and they were sold like cattle. I can no longer sing we shall over come because I know I have over come through Jesus Christ my Lord Savior.

The victory in the City of Hanford should give other black community leaders and lay people motivation and an obligation to educate their people not just with words but also with action. We should have the stamina and the know how to make demands on America's politicians to stop their oppressive behaviors on black people, and demolish their institutional racism against people of color. Black men and Black women you have a special purpose on this earth, because God created you first and everything in and on earth for his pleasure. God created black people uniquely to replenish the earth, and to transform into different hues of pigmentation, textures of hair, and shades of eye color as a means of survival in any environment.

Read about the history of human kind, and ancestors. In addition, be proud of what African people have accomplished through hard work, determination, faith, and prayer. Continue to educate yourself and your children about their black history, which is the human race's history.

###

Rev. Floyd D. Harris Jr. is the California State President of the National Action Network www.nanacal.org

Henan Province Time

By Dan Garst

Very few Americans even know that such a province exists in China. But for the past 10 months, Henan Province was this particular American's home. During this time, I taught English to Chinese students at the only American-owned University in China, SIAS International University, located in Xinzheng City near the provincial capital of Zhengzhou.

This experience exposed me to a different side of China, far removed from the urban glitz and first world veneer of Beijing and the country's coastal cities. Henan Province represents backward and poor rural China. And because of this backwardness and poverty, Henan province, not Beijing or Shanghai, will determine exactly how China's economic and political modernization unfolds in the coming years.

Let's begin with one key fact. Some 100 million people live here, more than any other province in China. indeed, Henan Province's population closely approximates that of Mexico however, all these people are crammed into a much smaller space, making it the most the most densely populated province in China.

Less than a third of these inhabitants live in large cities. Foreign direct investment is flowing into the province, while

the city of Luoyang boasts the largest tractor factory in China and smelts Euro coins. However, manufacturing in Henan Province lags well behind the more developed Chinese coastal regions. For example, in 2005 Shanghai exported \$90 billion worth of goods, dwarfing the \$2.1 billion worth of goods exported by Henan province.

Thus most people here continue to make a living farming. In fact, Henan Province is China's biggest producer of wheat and sesame seeds. Gazing at these wheat fields from train or bus windows, I was always struck by the small size of the plots, which were clearly not designed for a mechanical harvester. And on one bus trip into Zhengzhou taken during harvest time, I noticed the farmers separating the chaff from the wheat kernels by hand, in very much the same way it had probably been clone for centuries.

You don't then need to be a Nobel Laureate in economics to know that far too many people remain on the farm here, people who would be more productively employed and earning higher incomes making toasters. It also then comes as no surprise that per capita income in Henan Province is a quarter of that in the Yangtze Delta industrial powerhouse provinces of Zhejiang, Jiangsu, and Shanghai. And the gap between the latter areas and Henan Province's rural population is certainly much, much greater

I saw evidence of this backwardness everyday during my strolls through Xinzheng City. For example, I noticed only one Giant bicycle during my time here: the rest were rusty, old one-speed 'Flying Pigeon' Chinese bikes. And I saw at least one person every day hand-washing their laundry in the Zhenshui River's filthy waters—as one fellow SIAS faculty member quipped, the river should be named "Sewers R-Us."

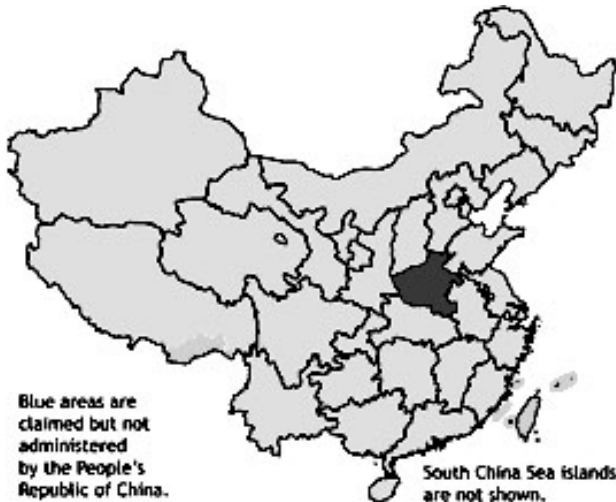
These urban-rural and regional socio-economic imbalances are fueling rising social protest in China. Some 87,000 protest incidents were logged by the Public Security Bureau in 2006, up from 74,000 the previous year (these figures also certainly understate disturbances). Henan province is a flashpoint of this unrest: more people sue the government here than in any other region in China.

The leadership in Beijing knows that it has a major problem on its hands. Thus one cornerstone of the latest five year plan proclaimed in the 2006 National People's Congress is the so-called "New Socialist Countryside." Rural taxes are being abolished and spending on education and other social services will be increased.

However, one obstacle faced by the central government in implementing the "New Socialist Countryside" in Henan Province is the provincial government. It is quite simply the most corrupt provincial government in China. For example, it allowed the blood supply to get contaminated with HIV. Consequently entire villages are populated by HIV positive people, who receive a small 100 RMR a month stipend and a pig.

Indeed, things are so bad that stories about corruption in the Henan Provincial Government appear in even the state media. I recall watching one story on a Chinese news channel about the 20,000 people illegally employed by the Henan Provincial Government. Many of these people were actually dead, lending a whole meaning to the phrase "graveyard shift!"

Henan Province will therefore be ground zero for seeing how the contradictions and imbalances associated with China's economic modernization play out. It would be foolish to underestimate the central government's ability to both physically suppress dissent and co-opt protesters with limited and selective reforms. But the Middle Kingdom clearly faces a bumpy ride over the next decade. I think of that old Chinese proverb, "May you live in interesting times," and look forward to experiencing their first-hand after returning to the country in August.



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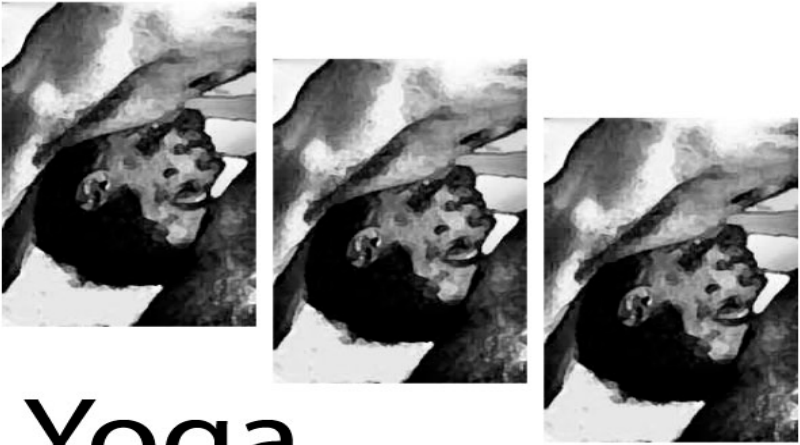
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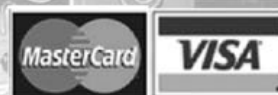
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POETRY CORNER

Poetry Corner has revived with a poem by Paula Ann Costis (and two other poets waiting in the wings.) Is summer the season of the bard?

LAMENTATION de la GUERRE

Sadness
All pervasive
Silent partner of despair
Unseen, unheard
Tethered;
Yet moving everywhere.

Seeking a reflection
In rooms without a view
Where plaintive, haunting echoes
Chase ghosts that they pursue.

A blurry apparition
Stands sentry at the door,
Ignoring all entreaties
As teardrops graze the floor.

Unable to void
A cavern full of pain:
A vision of tomorrow
That does not measure gain.

An echo yet continues
And now repeats a name;
Many more are added,
But all remain the same




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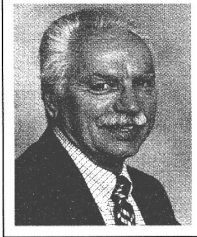
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In 1996, a week before J.S.’s last family visit, her husband died. During that visit her son told her, “Last night I was going to run away or slit my wrists, but I knew I had this visit with you, so I came.”

J.S. says, “Now everything is gone. No visits, no family boxes. It’s all punishment. The guards are lazy. They don’t want to keep an eye on things. They lump us all into one mess and categorize everyone as the same. They make everyone look like a man, a man and hard, so they can treat us hard.”

In 2005 the Criminal Justice Institute did a cultural assessment of the CCWF work and social milieus. Interviewers questioned many staff members, both custody and noncustody, and several inmates. Many guards referred to CCWF as “. . . the best-kept secret in the state. The lack of violent behavior . . . has resulted in staff becoming more accustomed to a ‘relaxed’ correction environment. Consequently, boredom and complacency have emerged and contribute to the culture at CCWF . . . Not being threatened or having to ‘watch their backs’ on a daily basis, results in staff from all levels making small issues into something larger.”

J.S. says, “There are drugs in here but they don’t come through Receiving and Release (R&R) because all merchandise is ordered from vendors. The vendor prices are high, sometimes 100 percent more costly than the same item on the street. All the boxes and books that move through R&R are unpacked by a guard and written on an inventory. It would be impossible to get more than a tiny amount through day visiting.” When asked how drugs get in, J.S. pauses then replies, “My belief . . . I think the institution allows so much in. There’s too much observation: guards, cameras, binoculars and searches. I say, check the staff as they come into work.”

J.S.’s most recent Board of Parole Hearings (BPH) appoint-

“They make everyone look like a man, a man and hard, so they can treat us hard.”

ment was July 14, 2006. She says, “I expect no change. It’s like being on trial again. At every BPH session, one is forced to relive the events of one’s crime many years before. The commissioners want all the little details. They want you to remember every minute of a report that’s a quarter century old. They look at codefendants’ statements from their hearings and order you to respond. I don’t know what my codefendants said.

”I’m different now. There’s no regard for maturity. For women who kill, the majority are abused terribly in their early lives. I was molested since I was six. It’s my first real memory.

”I don’t even tell my family anymore. Knowing I’m going to a BPH hearing gives them hope and there’s no hope. My family writes to the BPH and begs for my parole. It’s too painful. The BPH always denies me. They want us to pay again and again . . . lawyers, courts, fees, all of it. If you can’t, oh, well. Stay in prison.

”After the [overnight] family visits were eliminated for lifers, my husband was dead, so it was harder for my family to get my kids here. My older son lives in Oregon. My younger son lives in Fresno and he brings his daughter, my little granddaughter, to see me. My son says, “Mom, if the family visits are restored, write or call immediately. We’ll come.”

Some prisoners, mostly short-termers, can still have family visits every six weeks. The visits are limited to two days. The inmate and visitors must buy food from the prison’s canteen list except for a few extra items. For those who qualify, the visits make prison bearable.

For the California Department of Corrections and Rehabilitation to be more than Orwellian-speak, it must enact a program of true rehabilitation where more of the CDCR budget is spent on programs than on staff salaries. It must do all it can to reconnect prisoners with the larger society and to help them find their places in it. This can be done through better education, job training, and mental health programs than the ones that currently exist. Family restoration should be a top priority and family visits are a crucial element for such a goal. Limit the use of restricted custody levels (Close A and Close B) that only exist to enhance the number of staff positions and to further segregate inmates within the prison. Give us back our quarterly boxes from our families and/or friends; they sustain an important “link of love” and are much cheaper than vendor boxes for our families to assemble. Let us look like women again in all our individual permutations.

Note: The Criminal Justice Institute used CAP (the Institutional Culture Assessment Protocol), “a standardized process and instrumentation designed specifically for use in assessing a prison’s culture,” to describe the CCWF work and living environments from June 6, 2005, through June 14, 2005. Its report

was published January 5, 2006, by the Criminal Justice Institute, Inc., Middleton, Connecticut (860) 704-6400.

Sara Jane Olson is a prisoner, a mother and an activist. She is from Minnesota, where her husband and daughters still reside, transplanted to CCWF for a long - though impermanent - sojourn

Alternatives continued from page 1

Friday, September 1 at 7:00 PM
A special community forum titled “Voices of Courage” featuring Cindy and Craig Corrie, parents of Rachel Corrie.

Fresno City College
A display of the Rachel Corrie Exhibit starting on Monday, August 29 through Thursday, August 31 at the Student Lounge, South Side of Cafeteria

A special presentation by Cindy and Craig Corrie on Wednesday, August 30 at 12 noon at the Student Lounge, South Side of Cafeteria

Arte Americas
A display of the Rachel Corrie Exhibit starting on Monday, August 21 through Friday, August 26

A special presentation on Thursday, August 25 at 7:00 PM

Eyewitness Report from Palestine featuring Don Friesen of the Christian Peacemaking Team has just left to Palestine and will be providing an update upon his return

California State University Fresno
A special presentation by Cindy and Craig Corrie on Thursday, August 31 at 7:00 PM.

While in Fresno, Cindy and Craig Corrie will be taping a special TV segment at KNXT, Channel 49 as part of the Catholic Diocese program, Forum for a Better Under-

standing. Also, on Wednesday, August 30th, the Corrie will appear live on KFCF, 88.1 FM as guests of the radio program, Stir It Up, a program of Peace Fresno.

For more information about the exhibit and the awareness campaign, contact Kamal Abu-Shamsieh, director of Islamic Cultural Center of Fresno at (559) 297-9535, email director@icfresno.org or visit www.icfresno.org.

The exhibit and the awareness campaign are supported and co-sponsored by various individuals and the following institutions; Fresno Center for Non-Violence, Peace Fresno, Pan American Institute, Iranian Culture & Art Club-Fresno, Reedley Peace Center, Fresno Friends Meeting “Quakers”, American Friends Service Committee, Women’s International League for Peace & Freedom, Arte Americas & Fresno City College—Social Science Division.

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Kamal Abu-Shamsieh is the Director of the Islamic Cultural Center of Fresno and may be reached via email director@icfresno.org

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WATER: WHAT EVERYONE NEEDS TO KNOW DOWN TO THE LAST DROP

By Lydia Flores

Water, water everywhere and we think we may not have enough to drink. We hear the terms water banking, watersheds and privatization, but what does it all mean? How does it affect us? When the media gives us headlines and no real information and our legislators do not reveal their real intent, we don’t have information to decide whether they are choosing the right solutions for our water concerns. Sometimes the words that are chosen make us assume that all is being taken care of. We need honest truth.

The Department of Public Utilities sends us booklets telling us not to use the garbage disposal. It is too difficult to recycle the water. We are told that we are over-drafting.. That means taking too much water from the aquifer. Yet our elected local officials continue to grant permits to the developers though residences potentially use more water than farmlands. The homes at Armstrong and International already have wells that have gone dry and water has to be trucked in. The residents at Auberry and Shaver Lake complain about low water pressure. Who is looking after the water?

With expensive infrastructure bond measures on this November’s ballot, including hundreds of million of dollars for water-related items, it would be wise for us to learn more about the water system. We may be able to avoid an unduly amount of debt being passed on to our grandchildren. At the Latino Issues Forum, Senator Dean Florez stated that the legislators were divided in the vote on Temperance Dam. He said that it was up to us to focus our legislators by writing that we want a dam, underground storage, and the infrastructure at the Delta enlarged. Why is Senator Florez promoting a dam while the feasibility study will not be completed until 2009? What is going on?

In order to learn more about WATER, the Central Valley Progressive PAC has organized a Water Forum. This event is co-hosted by the UU Social Justice Committee and Women International League of Peace and Freedom (WILPF).

On Thursday, August 24th at 7 p.m. Lloyd Carter, the environmentalist, journalist and lawyer heads a team of experts in their fields. Steve Haze, Program Coordinator for the Millerton Area Watershed Coalition under a grant from the California Bay Delta Authority, Dr. John Suen who is a hydrologist and a professor of geology at CSUF as well as Ron Pistoresi, farmer and chairman of the Madera Irrigation District board of directors which is proposing the Madera Ranch groundwater bank program. These water experts will provide us with valuable information. Each will speak to one of four issues. Bring your questions. Steve Haze says “It is time to get closer to the truth.”. Let’s hear it at the UU Church, 4144 North Millbrook Avenue at Ashlan. It is a FREE EVENT.

Fresno Homeless Attacked by the City

By Mike Rhodes



These are some of the carts that are in front of the Poverello House, while their owners get food or other services. A few minutes after this photo was taken, the Department of Sanitation arrived and started throwing these carts into a garbage truck.

“The homeless people that live here are the luckiest homeless in Fresno.” Surprised by the statement, I asked undercover Fresno Police Officer Rey Wallace what he meant. “They have maid service. We come out and clean up for them about every other week.” The cleaning party that day in late June was particularly vigorous.



This was the scene on June 22, 2006 on the West side of E street where City crews leveled the area. Here they are seen throwing someone’s bed into a garbage truck.

The letter handed out by the Fresno Police Department, giving notice of the “clean up” said they would “start at 8:00am.” I arrived at 7:50 AM and the destruction of property was already well under way. One homeless woman told me that everything she owned had been destroyed because she was a few minutes too late to save it. “I had paper work in there that can’t be replaced,” she said.

Once the “clean up” crew had made its way all of the way down the Caltrans property on E street (on the West side of E near Ventura) they swung around and headed down the East side of E street. This caught the homeless community completely off guard. Until that day the City Sanitation Department would go down the Caltrans strip of land with a bulldozer, sweep it clean, and then leave. The homeless, every other time this had happened, simply moved their possessions to the other side of the street. After the clean up crew was gone, the homeless would move back to the West side of the street and re-build their encampment. But, this time the Fresno Sanitation Department, backed up by a larger than usual Fresno Police Department contingent, made a U turn and pulled onto the East side of E street. Stunned homeless people watched as all the possessions they had removed from Caltrans property were loaded into the dump truck.

The shopping carts and piles of possessions stacked up on the sidewalk, on the East side of E street were thought to be safe because no notice had been given that there would be a change in procedures. Besides, the sidewalk is public property. Many



The Fresno City Sanitation Department, backed up by the Fresno Police Department, is making life miserable for the homeless in this community. It would be less expensive to provide basic services for the homeless than constantly attack them.

of the homeless had removed their possessions as instructed and then left to eat, work, or do whatever they would normally do on a Thursday morning. As officer Wallace directed the clean up crew to throw away anything not in the possession of someone, the homeless people still in the area mobilized to save whatever they could.

One clean up crew worker was overheard saying “I wish I had a nickel for every cart we destroy.” Dallas Blanchard, from Food Not Bombs (see <http://home.comcast.net/~fresnofnb/>), tried to prevent the workers from throwing the homeless peoples possessions away. He was forced from his position directly in back of the garbage truck. Liza Apper from the St. Benedict Catholic Worker (see: <http://www.sbcw.org/>) stood in front of some shopping carts. She was repeatedly told to move but refused. Apper was able to save a couple of grocery carts full of items.

But that did not stop the police and the clean up crew. They simply moved a few feet beyond Apper and threw entire carts into the dump truck. Several people tried to pull their possessions back to the West side of the street (Caltrans land) and as they arrived were told the Garbage truck would be back to throw their things away. With no safe place to go, some of the homeless just stood by their carts to protect them. The police and clean up crew did not forcefully remove people to destroy their possessions.

Henry, an African American homeless man who lives on E street told me that officer Wallace had prevented him from removing his tent. “I was trying to untie my tent from the fence and this guy came up behind me and told me to leave. He was not in uniform and did not identify himself as a policeman.” Henry continues, “this guy (Wallace) hit my hands as I tried to untie my tent.” Henry said he was physically forced to leave his tent, which was then picked up by a bulldozer and put into a garbage truck. Henry is a diabetic. “My medicine was in that tent, everything I owned was in that tent and they just destroyed it.” Henry said the incident happened in April 2006. Another homeless person, Dee, told me she witnessed the incident. Wallace denies the assault took place.

After targeting both sides of E street, the FPD and the Sanitation Department headed for Santa Clara street. Santa Clara runs into E and is in front of the Poverello House. Many of the homeless people who use the services at the Poverello House (food, clothing, and some medical services) leave their carts on Santa Clara. There were about 20 carts there when the garbage truck arrived. None of the owners were with their carts. The truck backed up and workers started throwing one cart after another in, crushing them. As the word of the destruction spread the owners came running out of the Poverello House yelling at the city workers to stop. Those homeless people who made it there in time and stood in front of their cart were able to save their possessions from destruction.

The following weekend the Fresno Police returned to the Caltrans strip of land shortly after daybreak in search of shopping carts. This time, the FPD turned the shopping carts upside down emptying all of the owners possessions on the dirt. Regina (not her real name) says she told the police that she owned the shopping cart they were about to take



These two women moved this tent from one side of the street to another in an attempt to save it from destruction. All Photos by Mike Rhodes

but they would not listen. “A church group came out here and gave us these used shopping carts that were no longer being used by grocery stores,” Regina explained. “After throwing out clothes on the dirt and stealing our carts, they had the nerve to tell me that if I was ever caught with a shopping cart again they would arrest me, or something.”

Why are the police taking an increasingly aggressive role in harassing the homeless? In an earlier inquiry to the FPD, they claimed they were only playing a supportive role in helping Caltrans, who owns the property, clean up. As Public Information Officer Jeff Cardinale said, “we are just there to keep the peace.” Cardinale claimed Caltrans had requested their assistance.

Caltrans officials say their agency has been responding to a petition from the City of Fresno on file with the Caltrans office to “clean up” this strip of land (on E street just South of Ventura). In response to a Public Records Act request Caltrans provided me with an Encroachment Permit. The Permit says that the homeless are to receive written notice of any City of Fresno action and that it is only valid Monday - Friday from 9 AM - 4 PM.

When asked why she thought the homeless were under attack, Ellen said she thought the Poverello House (a homeless agency nearby) was behind it. She said “every time the police come out here, this guy from the Poverello House comes out and watches. I think having all these homeless people living out here makes it look like they are not doing their job.” The police and City spokespeople often cite the Poverello House as a place where the homeless could go to get off the street. The Poverello House has several tool sheds they have opened up to the homeless to sleep in, as an alternative to sleeping on the street. “With temperatures over a 100 degrees these days, I wouldn’t let my dog sleep in those tool sheds,” Ellen added.

Other homeless people I talked to said the police and city officials would like to make life so miserable for the homeless that they leave and go to another town. Some community activists think the developers who are seeking to revitalize Chinatown are behind the attacks. The theory behind that is the old adage - “Follow the Money.” Still others suggest that the attack on the homeless is part of the right wing agenda coming from City Hall or the FPD. That theory goes something like - It is kind to be cruel. In other words, by making life miserable for the homeless, you will make them want to turn their lives around and become productive citizens. It is the “Strong Father” model discussed in George Lakoff’s book, Don’t Think of an Elephant.

The Community Alliance newspaper will continue to follow this story and bring you the news as it develops.



Liza Apper is seen here, next to some of the possessions she saved from destruction, as she talks to a KMJ radio reporter.