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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 reserves the right to edit all articles for space and clarity.

Letters to the Editor

Thank you for the special rate for low income. I am 82 - on Social Security, and struggling to make ends meet. Getting my meds and enough to eat gets a little tougher every day. I know I can get my paper free at any one of several places in the Tower District, or in my doctors office and I know my little \$10 will help postage but it's small compensation for all you do. Because of you, Pacifica Radio, Air America, and my connection to Peace Fresno, I am informed and a fighter for justice and a peaceful world. I think I've been doing it all my life and wouldn't have it any other way.

Ms. Shanti Adams

I am writing to indicate my strong opposition to the proposal to build a nuclear power plant in the Fresno area.

While technological improvements may have reduced the chance of accidental release of radioactive materials, accidents are always possible. The consequences of a nuclear accident are so very bad and so long lasting for the area that the risks outweigh the benefits. Additionally, despite how much safer power plant technology may have become in recent decades, there is still no way to safely store the nuclear waste generated by the plant. This unavoidable waste remains deadly for thousand of years.

One piece of information that is often overlooked in these debates is the estimated functional lifespan of these power plants. I have read one 50-year estimate. But even if we could build one to remain usefully functional for 100 years or more, after that point the city would be stuck with an inactive plant, full of highly dangerous nuclear material, that would remain useless and dangerous for thousands of years. There is no known way to disassemble and dispose of an obsolete radioactive plant. Factoring in the long-term cost of simply keeping the plant safe from intruders would run into unimaginable dollars over the thousands of years that the plant would remain a safety hazard.

Nuclear energy supporters sometimes assume that some future technological advance will handle these problems. This strikes me as a good example of counting chickens

before they hatch. It is unreasonable to count on some unknown technological "fix" to come along and save us. We need to be more pragmatic with a decision of such consequence. If and when such technological advances come, then we can revisit our decision.

Since nuclear power was introduced to the commercial market, nuclear power supporters have promised cost savings. And yet again and again, cost overruns and other problems at existing power plants have made nuclear energy very expensive in practice, resulting in additional costs passed on to consumers long after plants were built.

Solar power is a logical alternative for our area to develop as one energy source among others. We have one of the sunniest climates in the country. There is no dangerous waste or other hazard, and time and again, solar power has been shown to pay for itself in savings over the long term.

Please oppose the proposal to build a nuclear power plant in the Fresno area.

John B. Jordan



pictures of city workers destroying homeless peoples property, given the homeless an opportunity to tell their story, and now find ourselves in Federal Court in an attempt to stop the attacks against the homeless in this community. Attorneys for the homeless are seeking a preliminary injunction to stop the City of Fresno from taking and immediately destroying poor people's property. The Community Alliance newspaper, because of our extensive coverage on this issue, was instrumental in bringing this case to court.

I was called to the stand in November to tell the court

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BIG THANKS!

Vickie Fouts has maintained the data base, been the bulk mail guru, and circulation director the Community Alliance newspaper for years. For several years she was also the advertising director. Her dedication and hard work was responsible for much of the success and growth of this newspaper. It is with sadness that we say goodbye to Vickie and wish her well in her new endeavors.

Photo by Howard Watkins.



what I have seen and identify some of the photographs I have taken, regarding the persecution of the homeless in this community. Under cross examination by James Betts, the attorney representing the city, I was accused of being biased in favor of the poor and homeless in this community. The attorney read several sentences from articles I have written, in an attempt to show that I and the Community Alliance clearly sided with the poor and oppressed in this community. I'm sure to him, this criticism was a stinging rebuttal to all of the evidence against the city. He seemed confident that since I do not follow the lead of corporate America and present information from the perspective of the rich and powerful, the court would discount the evidence.

Betts wanted me to admit that I recently wrote these words about the City of Fresno: "the current policy boils down to this - lets make life so miserable for the homeless that they either die or leave town" and "government leaders and public servants are the architects of a failed policy aimed not at eliminating homelessness, but rather targeting the homeless for elimination." I proudly admitted that I wrote those words and believe them to be true.

The homeless not only need media that will tell their side of the story, they need publications that will give them the opportunity to say, in their own words, what is happening on the streets of Fresno. That is why we continue this month with another installment of Homeless Women Speak Out - see page 13. Also, be sure to read the very fine article written by Jeremy Alderson on page 24 which goes into why there are so many homeless in America today. Alderson will be broadcasting the Homelessness Marathon from Fresno to over 100 radio stations throughout the country in February 2007. See page 3 for details about the Homelessness Marathon.

You will also find, in these pages, articles by prisoners, gay rights advocates, peace mongers, and a wide range of progressive writers. If you like what you see, and enjoy reading a paper that stands up for peace, social, and economic justice, we hope you will join us by clipping out the subscription form on page 3 and becoming a subscriber. It is not enough to stand on the side lines. It is time to get involved!

Beyond the Nine-Second Sound Bite

By Amy Goodman



My goal as a journalist is to break the sound barrier. To cut through the static and bring forth voices that are not usually heard. I am not talking about a fringe minority, or the Silent Majority, but a silenced majority, increasingly restless, of people who are looking for alternative sources of information in a complex world.

With this column, I join you in the important ritual of reading the paper, of examining the news, to discern for yourself the state of the world and your place in it. I invite you to join me in going to where the silence is, as we seek out the news and newsmakers who are ignored. This column will include voices so often excluded, people whose views the media mostly ignore, issues they distort and even ridicule.

If we take television as but one example, you would hardly think there are legitimate dissenting viewpoints in this world. What is typically presented to us as news analysis is, for the most part, a small circle of pundits who know so little about so much, attempting to explain the world to us. While they may appear to differ, they are quibbling over how quickly the bombs should be dropped, not asking whether they should be dropped at all.

Unfortunately, as a result, people are increasingly turning away from the news, when news media should be providing a forum for discussion — a forum that is honest, open, that weighs all the options and includes voices so often excluded, yet deeply affected by U.S. policy around the globe.

It is the job of the media to be the exception to the rules, to hold those in power accountable for their decisions, to challenge and to ask the hard questions — in

short, to be the public watchdog. We in the media need to find stories of hope. We need to tell those stories that resonate with people, to tell stories of the people who live far from the rarified concerns of that passel of pundits crowding and crowing on the small screen. We need to hear local discussions cast in a global frame.

In this new media environment, what daily local and regional papers can consistently offer their readerships are the authentic voices of people in their communities dealing with a globalized world. We don't have to wait for the alternative media; we are building it right now.

Newspapers have always held a central role for my indie media colleagues in our daily newsgathering. In this column, I hope to go beyond the nine-second sound bite to bring you the whole meal, grass-roots voices in this community as well as in communities around the world.

This column will be a forum for stories from the streets, not the suites. It will engage you on the most important issues of the day, but it will engage you, I hope, with a relevance to everyday life. It will bring out the voices like those in your community, from all over the world, of people who now live in an increasingly globalized community. These unprecedented changes are affecting everyone, everywhere, in related ways. This is the tenor and direction I hope to bring to this column.

I see the media as a huge kitchen table that stretches across this country, one where we all sit around to debate and discuss the most critical issues of the day: war and peace, life and death. Anything less than that is a disservice to a democratic society.

National Homelessness Marathon to be Broadcast from Fresno

The 10th Annual Homelessness Marathon is set to air from Fresno starting at 4 p.m. on Tuesday, February 20th. The Marathon is a unique 14-hour live broadcast focusing on homelessness and poverty in America.

The Homelessness Marathon is a consciousness-raising, not a fund-raising broadcast. There are no on-air solicitations. Instead, the Marathon presents the voices of experts, takes calls from around the country and, above all, puts homeless people on the air directly so America can hear who they really are and learn about the obstacles they face.

The Homelessness Marathon regularly covers topics other broadcasts don't touch. For example, six months before Katrina hit, we aired a segment entitled, "Hurricanes and Homelessness." Some of the tough questions we'll be raising this year include, "Why is there growing friction between Katrina survivors and people who are homeless for other reasons?" and, "Has the Colorado Coalition for the Homeless sold out the very homeless people it is supposed to protect?" But the toughest question is also the simplest one, and we ask it every year: "Why are people sleeping on the streets of the richest country in the history of the world?"

The Homelessness Marathon has been a very well-received broadcast. The first Marathon aired on a single small station. Last year's 8th Marathon was on 95 stations coast-to-coast, with another 30 or so stations across Canada carrying a parallel Canadian Homelessness Marathon.

The Homelessness Marathon will be hosted in Fresno by community radio station, KFCF 88.1 FM. . Additional information, including, broadcast schedules and sound clips from past Marathons, words of praise for the broadcast, and our growing list of affiliates can be found at the Marathon's web site: <http://www.homelessnessmarathon.org/>



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Wicked Witches, Flying Monkeys, and the Politics of Water

by Lloyd G. Carter

The Wicked Witch may be dead in the wake of the November midterm elections, but some of the flying monkeys are still around. For environmentalists nationwide, the Wicked Witch was Richard Pombo of Tracy, the seven-term congressman whose stated goal as the chair of the House Resources Committee was to gut the Endangered Species Act. Pombo may have fallen but a former top staff aide, Todd Willens, is now comfortably ensconced at the Department of Interior as the new Deputy Assistant Secretary for Fish, Wildlife, and Parks.

Willens, the senior policy director of the Resources Committee, jumped Pombo’s sinking ship on October 6 and began his new Interior job on October 10. According to news accounts, both Pombo and Willens had ties to convicted lobbyist Jack Abramoff. Willens reportedly took trips arranged by Abramoff and was given tickets to sporting events in Washington. The Pombo defeat was hailed by environmental groups nationwide who poured money and volunteers into the campaign to unseat him. Coupled with the Democratic takeover of Congress, Pombo’s ouster heralds new opportunities for protecting California’s natural resources and rivers in the coming year.

In January, California Sen. Barbara Boxer will take over as chair of the Senate Environmental Public Works Committee and has promised huge policy shifts on global warming, air quality and toxic-waste cleanup as she prepares to head the U.S. Senate’s environmental committee. Her Neanderthal predecessor as committee chair, Republican James Inhofe of Oklahoma, called global warming “the greatest hoax perpetrated on the American people” and, like Pombo, tried to eviscerate the Endangered Species Act.

Boxer is sure to pay careful attention to California environmental issues, including restoration of the San Joaquin River, renewal of the water delivery contract for the Westlands Water District, and agribusiness efforts to pump ever increasing amounts of water from the imperiled Bay-Delta Estuary, where fisheries continue to decline and drinking supplies are threatened.

Pombo’s likely replacement is West Virginia Democrat Nick Rahall, the ranking Democrat on the House Resources Committee, who said on the day after the election, “For too long now, this Congress has pursued policies that are out of touch with American expectations for conserving our unique natural and cultural heritage – and my colleagues and I are looking forward to working together to restore the balance that has been lost along the way.”

A critical subcommittee of the House Resources Committee is the Subcommittee on Water and Power Resources, currently chaired by Republican George Radanovich of Mariposa. Radanovich and Sen. Dianne Feinstein were set to introduce legislation this fall to provide Congressional funding for the San Joaquin River restoration. Recent news accounts indicate that, because of the Democratic takeover of Congress, that legislation may not be introduced until next year.

The ranking Democrat on the water subcommittee is Los Angeles Congresswoman Grace Napolitano, who is in line to take over the subcommittee chair in January. Congresswoman Napolitano’s website says she “has been working to ensure a reliable supply of clean, fresh water for our communities,” and she will be expected to pay attention to the drinking water pollution problems of so many of the San Joaquin Valley’s rural and farmworker communities. She is also well aware that western San Joaquin Valley agribusiness is competing

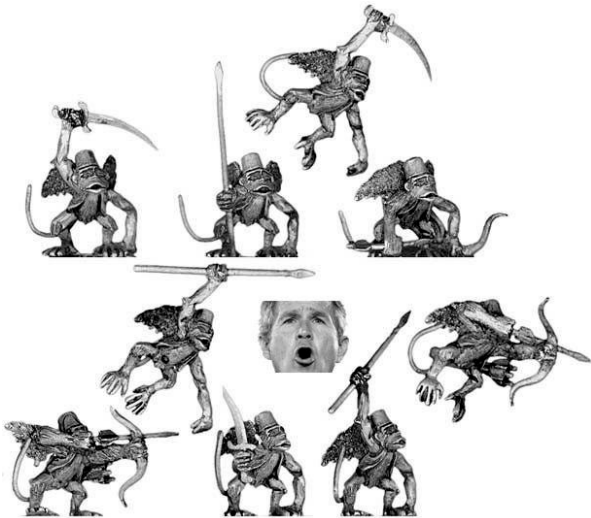
with Southern California for Delta water supplies.

Also serving on that committee are Valley congressmen Jim Costa and Dennis Cardoza and longtime member of Congress George Miller of Contra Costa County, who chaired the subcommittee before the Republican Revolution of 1994 but reportedly does not want the post again. Costa and Cardoza are not likely to find Napolitano as sympathetic to their agribusiness constituencies as Radanovich was.

The election also provided some good news in the Golden State. In the California legislature, perhaps the state’s first true environmentalist was elected to the Assembly from Marin and Sonoma counties. Jared Huffman, elected to the 6th Assembly District with 65 percent of the vote, is a staff attorney for the Natural Resources Defense Council (NRDC), a nationwide environmental group. Huffman was one of the NRDC attorneys in the 18-year-old lawsuit to revive the San Joaquin River. He is a strong advocate of protecting the Bay-Delta estuary from excessive pumping.

Huffman said his first goal following the election was to take his campaign signs down and recycle them. Supporters hope he will be appointed to the Assembly Water Committee and eventually become the chair, to balance the power now exerted by Ag and development interests.

Lloyd G. Carter is a Fresno attorney and president of the California Save Our Streams Council.



The Military Commissions Act of 2006 v. The United States Constitution

by Kenneth R. Mackie, M.A., J.D.

“These military commissions will provide a fair trial, in which the accused are presumed innocent, have access to an attorney, and can hear all the evidence against them,” said President Bush as he signed the Military Commissions Act of 2006 (MCA). Attorney General Alberto Gonzales said, “I want to make one thing clear: The Military Commissions Act does not apply to American citizens.”

However, an American citizen can be labeled an “unlawful enemy combatant” under the MCA. An “unlawful enemy combatant” is defined as “a person who has engaged in hostilities ... against the United States” The MCA distinguishes between “unlawful enemy combatants,” including citizens, and “alien unlawful enemy combatants,” that is, legal immigrants and non-citizens. Since “hostilities” is not defined, an American citizen participating in an antiwar rally could be declared an “unlawful enemy combatant.”

The MCA establishes Military Commissions to try “alien unlawful enemy combatants.” Under the MCA, all legal immigrants lose the protection of the Constitution. The 4th Amendment refers to “the right of the people to be secure in their persons, houses, papers and effects, against unreasonable searches and seizures....” The 5th Amendment states, “no person shall be... compelled in any criminal case to be a witness against himself” The 6th Amendment provides, “in all criminal prosecutions, the accused shall enjoy the right to a speedy and public trial.” These Amendments apply to all persons, not just citizens.

The 4th Amendment no longer applies because under the MCA, “evidence shall not be excluded from trial by military commission on the grounds that the evidence

was not seized pursuant to a search warrant or other authorization.” Evidence from warrantless wiretaps or illegal searches of homes would be admissible.

While a Military Commission may not put the accused on the stand to testify against himself, “a statement of the accused ... shall not be excluded from trial ... on the grounds of alleged coercion or compulsory self-incrimination.” The military judge may exclude the accused from any portion of a proceeding and keep him or her from seeing classified evidence. In addition, the government may introduce evidence “while protecting from disclosure the sources, methods or activities by which [the evidence was acquired].” In other words,

**Forum on the new
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SteveDM88@aol.com**

whether torture was used may not be introduced in the trial, even if it was used on the accused him/herself. This claim of privilege will be considered in the judge’s chambers “and shall not be disclosed to the accused.” Since evidence of torture is not permitted to be introduced in a Military Commission trial, there is no enforcement mechanism against the use of torture. In addition, Military Commission rulings on evidence are final, as “the Court of Appeals may act only with respect to matters of law.” The 5th Amendment has been repealed.

Further, “the military judge may close to the public all or a portion of a proceeding ... to protect information ... including intelligence or law enforcement sources, methods or activities.” The 6th Amendment guarantee of a public trial is gone. So too is the right to a speedy trial, or any trial, for that matter. “No court ... shall have jurisdiction to hear ... an application for a writ of habeas corpus” filed by a noncitizen who has

either been “determined to be an alien unlawful enemy combatant, or is awaiting such determination.” A person could be held for the rest of her or his natural life without ever knowing why.

The Constitution prohibits ex post facto laws. Yet the Military Commissions have jurisdiction to try any offense under the MCA when committed by “an alien unlawful enemy combatant before, on, or after September 11, 2001.” Offenses such as conspiracy, which prior to October 17, 2006, would have been heard in a public trial in criminal court, now may be tried in secret tribunals with classified evidence.

The Constitutional doctrine of separation of powers no longer applies. Interpreting law used to be the responsibility of the Judicial Branch. Under the Constitution, treaties are considered law. With the MCA, “the President has the authority ... to interpret the meaning and application of the Geneva Conventions ...” Now the President interprets the law.

While legal immigrants are stripped of Constitutional protections under the MCA, even citizens have cause to be concerned. With the ability of the President to declare anyone an “unlawful enemy combatant” using classified evidence, there is no procedural safeguard against the government also declaring anyone to be a noncitizen, again using classified evidence.

This is what President Bush calls providing “a fair trial, in which the accused are presumed innocent, have access to an attorney, and can hear all the evidence against them.” The Supreme Court may disagree.

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QUEER EYE

“Bunch of Freaking Hypocrites”

by Dan Waterhouse

“What a bunch of freaking hypocrites,” says AmericaBlog. “They knew that the number one leader of their movement, a movement devoted to anti-gay causes, was gay, and they didn’t do a damn thing about it.

“What a bunch of freaking hypocrites. This is akin to being a pedophile, in these people’s warped, bigoted minds, yet they did nothing about their leader being one of the abominations they daily rant against. They tolerated a known gay man running their entire movement while trying to pass anti-gay legislation to ruin the rest of our lives. They thumbed their nose at the word of [their] God because it was convenient.”

Just days before the mid-term elections, high-profile evangelical preacher Ted Haggard of Colorado Springs was brought down by a Denver queer escort who told news media that he and Haggard had had a sexual liaison for three years.

Haggard, despite his initial denials, was forced to resign as head of the National Association of Evangelicals. The Association numbers approximately 30 million members. Then, he was fired as pastor of New Life Church, and admitted having a secret life for many years.

A secret life which included habitual crystal meth use and queer sex for over three years.

After Haggard, who had been an advisor to President George W. Bush before his downfall, was outed, Rev. James Dobson, leader of the anti-gay Focus on the Family, also based in Colorado Springs, announced he was going to be on the “dream team” of “reparative therapists” who were going to turn Haggard into an “ex”-gay. Dobson then abruptly bailed from the team in early November.

Dobson’s departure from the “dream team” came on the heels of revelations from the virulently anti-queer Rev. Lou Sheldon. Sheldon claims Haggard had a conversation with him months before Haggard was outed. According to Sheldon, Haggard said “homosexuality is

genetic. I said, no it isn’t. But I just knew he was covering up. They need to say that.”

The Haggard saga, according to some bloggers, may destroy the credibility of some of these groups, such as Focus on the Family. They also expect to see investigations of some of the fundamentalist leadership from the outside. For instance, Dobson has given what some consider rather bizarre advice in one of his books that adult males should shower with three-year-old boys to “teach them what men look like” as a ‘method’ to prevent boys from becoming queer or transsexual.

Sheldon also revealed that other fundamentalist leaders also knew that Haggard was gay “for awhile” according to a story in Jewish Week, “but we weren’t sure just how to deal with it.”

Bloggers speculate that Haggard’s apparent acceptance that being gay is genetic led Dobson to bail from the “reparative therapy” effort because he does not want “to risk a very public failure with Haggard’s ‘de-gaying’ and having his name linked to it.”

It also turns out that the gay escort, Michael Jones, went to a Denver television news operation in September and laid the story out to the news crew. The plan was, according to Jones, for him to “wear a wire”—a recording device, secretly film the two of them having sex, and collect DNA samples. Jones says Haggard stopped calling him after their last get-together in August. Jones said he thought the Mark Foley scandal breaking had frightened Haggard.

Grassroots Profile

By Richard Stone

Debbie Reyes is the regional organizer for the Prison Moratorium Project (PMP), a group not well publicized by the big local media. This statewide organization is dedicated to countering the influence of “the prison-industrial complex” and to bringing humanity back into the justice equation.

If the Reyes name is familiar, it may be because of sister Sarah, a past state legislator. And if the face is familiar, Debbie is perhaps best known (or to some, notorious) in Fresno for her work on the city’s Human Relations Commission. There she caught the wrath of Jerry Duncan by allowing the Commission to hold hearings on the wisdom, morality and impact of the impending invasion of Iraq. Looking back, she says, “Everything we said then has proven right, but there was no place allowed for those truths,” inconvenient as they were.

Debbie has also been an up-front figure in the efforts of nonheterosexuals (the GLBTQ community) to gain legitimacy and equal rights. “One of the events that galvanized me into political activism was an L.A. Gay Pride parade led by Holly Near. Next I knew, I was in Washington, D.C., for the huge march of 1993 — hundreds of thousands of us. Amazing.”

Such overt activism might have taken a while to develop, but Debbie says the desire to speak out against injustice and represent its voiceless victims was native. “I remember even as a kid in high school being outraged by the Viet Nam War and doing art projects to raise awareness.”

Early on Debbie was also deeply impressed by the example of Dolores Huerta. “Her relentless drive for dignity and fairness for the people of her community inspired me. A few years ago, my work was recognized by the Dolores Huerta Foundation — it felt like a genuine blessing.”

Coming to the work of the PMP was no great leap. “In a



way, I was born into it; family members were incarcerated, I remember how it affected us.” And the literal call came from the family, too. “A sister who works in the Courthouse saw a job posting and called me saying, ‘This is for you.’” But the work is daunting: a major task is to overcome people’s fear for their security and persuade them to look honestly at the kind of society we are building when we invest so much in jails (instead of in, say, education) and in punishment (instead of in rehabilitation.)

The Valley has been especially targeted as a place to build prisons, thereby draining resources and involving communities in ugly dependence on the business of being punitive. Still, most people don’t want to look at the problems until their families are impacted; and it is a very mixed blessing that those numbers keep growing.

Debbie has found special local allies in Laura Talkington (whose son’s life has been turned upside down by his arrest for a minor infraction), Rev. Floyd Harris (who has helped create contacts in the African-American community) and Peace Fresno. She has found encouragement and support from PMP’s home office in Oakland, espe-

meeting—particularly evident when an alternative option of keeping in touch by e-mail was raised. I actively dislike being “informed” be e-mail, in fact I am almost never moved to action by an e-mail. But when people speak in person about what they’re trying to do and how others can help, I am often motivated to join in. Looking at each other, hearing a voice, feeling the passion, being able to ask questions and converse: what a difference this makes for me.

And so I prevailed on my fellow attendees to try one more time. Even with just a few of us, there were so many issues of merit and seriousness to look at that one of the central challenges of our work arose quickly: can we find some strong common theme,

IDENTITY BOX

Name: Debbie Reyes
Birthplace: Sacramento, California
Chief identity: human rights activist
Most frequented parts of Fresno: the Tower and Central areas; the jail
Personal motto: *Si se puede*
Nonpolitical interests: playing guitar
u\ Unexpected pleasure: playing at “biker chick”

Contact info: cell phone: 916-4370; e-mail: reyesdm@pacbell.net

cially Ruthie and Craig Gilmore; the Center on Race, Poverty and the Environment (“Their name says it all—they’ve helped me put the pieces together”); and Open Society Institute, which has recently awarded the Valley PMP a grant.

With such assistance, the moratorium movement has been growing. PMP has just opened an office in Los Angeles and hopes to establish one soon in Fresno; and recently thousands have been involved in efforts to halt construction in Mendota of yet another prison. The next step is to get elected representatives to pay attention to their constituencies rather than to the big-buck campaign contributors. What a change it would be to actually let the people impacted by legislative decisions be heard. “The people we organize want money invested in their children’s education and vocational training, they want the huge new detention center used to help kids, not deform them. We need to let our legislators know what we think.”

Most specifically, if Juan Arambula becomes the new chair of the Public Safety Committee in Sacramento (as seems likely at this writing), Debbie urges us to pressure our native son unremittingly. “Learn the facts—go to www.californiansforaresponsiblebudget.org and www.curbprisonspending.org . Then act on what you learn.”

Central California Peace Council: a report

By Richard Stone

“Peace Council” is perhaps too big name for a humble, fledgling group. Or perhaps it is an idea whose time has not yet come, or which on the surface seems to replicate other groups too closely. In any case, the October meeting’s attendance diminished from 13 the first time to 5.

And yet, for me, there was something special in the

some way of fortifying ourselves in our work, to effect FUNDAMENTAL change? Can honest connection with those outside our usual circle of acquaintance-ship in-and-of-itself justify agreeing to another round of meetings (even if only once a month?)

Our next (and possibly final) meeting is scheduled for Sunday, Jan. 7th 3 p.m. at the Center for Nonviolence. If you’d like to find out what others are doing and what the Council can accomplish, all are welcome to attend. If you’d like a (gasp) e-mail reminder, call me at 266-2559 or e-mail richard2662559@yahoo.com

Can we Trust Fresno County's Electronic Voting Machines?

By Mike Rhodes

We hear horror stories about electronic voting machines all the time. Last month (November 2006) 18,382 votes were lost by paperless voting machines in one Florida House race. In 2004, a fundamentalist church in the town of Gahanna, Ohio recorded a total of 4,258 votes for Bush and 260 votes for Kerry. The problem is that there were only 800 registered voters in that precinct!

Many people I know are convinced that elections are being stolen and democracy is in danger because we are using Diebold and other electronic voting machines. In order to investigate this story I managed to get myself appointed to the Fresno County Elections Oversight Panel. I was appointed by Victor Salazar, our County Clerk.

I found that Fresno County does indeed use Diebold machines to count the votes. Two types of machines are used - there is a touch screen machine and an optical character reading (OCR) machine. Most of the ballots are counted using the OCR machines, which scans a paper ballot, therefore leaving a paper trail. That is important, because with the OCR machine it is possible to cross check the results between the machine count and the paper ballots. Before the election is certified by Victor Salazar, the County Clerk/Registrar of Voters, staff members randomly check 1% of the machine count against the actual paper ballots. If they find a discrepancy a broader sampling would be taken and the election results would not be certified until the problem was resolved.

Currently, over 50% of voters in this county send in their ballots by mail. These absentee ballots are not currently cross checked with the OCR machine count. Kathy McClue, the assistant Registrar of Voters, says "our department will begin cross checking the paper absentee ballots with the machine count in 2008." But, until then, over 1/2 of the ballots cast in Fresno County are run through Diebold OCR machines and there is no way of knowing if the count is accurate.

Then there are the touch screen machines used by Fresno County. These machines, until now, have received very little use. McClue said that only a couple hundred votes were cast on them in the June primary election. There is one touch screen machine in every precinct to enable voters with a disability to more easily vote. These machines have also been used this year in outreach efforts to get voters to cast their ballots early at locations like California State University - Fresno, Fresno City College, the Kerman Library, etc. The County Clerk's office said only 342 votes were generated by all of the early voting efforts utilizing the touch screen machines.

Critics however say the touch screen machines are unreliable and do not provide an adequate paper trail. Fresno County is being sued by Voter Action for their use of the Diebold touch screen voting machines. Chuck



The photo above shows Fresno County Clerk employees counting the vote. This room is sealed off. It has no phone lines and computer data can't be transferred in or out. All of the memory cards from the voting machines are hand carried into this room and read on special Diebold machines. Photo by Mike Rhodes

Krugman, a Democratic Party activist in Fresno, is part of the lawsuit. Krugman said that there "is much controversy in the disability community about the machines as there is a segment of the community that believes that the need for disabled voters to vote independently and privately outweighs the need for a verifiable vote count. I for one do not hold that belief and feel that the verifiable paper trail outweighs the need to vote independently or privately."

Juan Witrago, the Systems and Procedures Analyst at the County Clerks Department, says that there is a paper trail in the touch tone machines. He showed me a thermal printer unit, which is in each machine. The printer provides a record of each vote cast. How do we know that the printer and the touch screen machine accurately reflects the voters choice? Witrago says "the machines are tested before they are sent out to the precincts."

Witrago and a small crew of co-workers are responsible for counting all of the votes on election day. They are also busy in the weeks leading up to the election counting absentee ballots, but the result of that count is not tabulated until after 8 PM on the day of the election. Each absentee ballot arrives in an envelope which has a barcode containing voter identification information. That barcode is scanned, the voters ID on the database is brought up, and the signature on the outside of the envelope is compared to the original voter registration signature. If both signatures match, the absentee envelope is opened, and the ballot is run through the Diebold scanner.

At 8 PM on November 7 the County Clerks Department started counting ballots, beginning with the absentee ballots that had already been loaded into the system. With a push of the button, we instantly had over 1/2 of the results. About an hour and a half later the data



**Fresno County Clerk
Victor Salazar**

storage cards from the precincts start to arrive. Witrago says that there are several security measures in place to prevent fraud. The data storage cards are sealed to prevent them from being tampered with. The data cards are transported from the precincts to the elections warehouse and then brought to the County Clerks Department. From there the cards are taken into a protected and isolated room where the data is downloaded into the election's department server. The room has no phone lines, wireless, or other connections with the outside world. This is done to eliminate someone from hacking the vote.

Enough votes are counted on election day for us to know which candidates will win or loose. Sometimes, like in the case of the Sheriff's race, the results take several days before the winner emerges. That is because it takes more time to count the provisional and absentee ballots that come in on the day of the election. Any person who goes to a precinct and is told they are not on the voter registration roles has the right to cast a provisional ballot. The ballot will be counted, if the person is a registered voter. Within 29 days of the election, Victor Salazar will certify the results.

Last June, during the primary election, only 32.45% of registered voters in Fresno County cast a ballot. There are many people who live in Fresno County that are not registered to vote. Therefore, the actual percentage of voters is even lower than what it appears. For example, in Fresno City Council District 3, there are about 65,000 residents. In the June 2006 election, the incumbent Cynthia Sterling, won with only 2,459 votes. There were only 4,071 total votes cast in the District 3 election. District 3 is perhaps the most impoverished area of town, in a city that has the highest concentration of poverty in America. See the Brookings Institute Report for the details. The real threat to democracy might not be Diebold voting machines, but voter apathy and disenfranchisement.

The touch screen voting machines used in early voting efforts are not taken to places like the Fresno County jail, where many people are eligible to vote, but can't get to their polling place. Voting machines are also not taken to the Poverello House or other areas where Fresno's large homeless population live. While the exact number of homeless people in Fresno County is hard to pinpoint, there are by the most conservative estimates about 5,000. A study done by the Continuum of Care a few years ago put the number at closer to 20,000. Most of the homeless live in downtown Fresno. If the homeless had voted in the June election, they could have elected their own City Council member in District 3.

Still, many people are more concerned about voting machines, than the disenfranchisement of the poor and working people in this community. To find out more about how to make electronic voting reasonably safe, the Brennan Center for Justice has done an exhaustive study and has recommendations for how to safely use this technology. A copy of their report can be found at their website.



Fresno County uses Diebold machines to count the vote. Photo by Tudor Stanley.

Electoral Victories - Whose City? Our City!

By Mike Rhodes

Fresno Progressives don't have very much experience celebrating victories on election night. In an exciting reversal of "business as usual," progressive candidates came out ahead in the City Council, Sheriff, and Fresno Unified School Board races.

On November 7, 2006, candidates supported by organized labor and progressive groups won, while candidates backed by Republicans and the business community lost. In the race for the Fresno Unified School Board, one of the largest school districts in the state, all four candidates backed by the teachers union won. Blong Xiong, the first Hmong to be elected to a City Council seat in California won his race and Margaret Mims won by a narrow margin in the race for Fresno County sheriff.

The race for the school board was contentious as two slates of candidates emerged. On one side there was the Voices for Excellence slate, primarily identified as the business slate and on the other side the candidates backed by the Fresno Teachers Association (FTA). Several issues emerged in the race that polarized the campaign. The Service Employee International Union - UHW asked all of the candidates to sign a pledge card saying they would support a workers right to orga-



nize and that they would uphold the National Labor Relations Act. The entire Voices for Excellence slate refused to sign the pledge. Current school board president and Voices for Excellence slate member Luisa Medina said she felt that the union "put a gun to my head" and told her to "sign or else." Other issues in the school board race were spending priorities and local control. FTA criticized the Voices for Excellence slate for putting too much money into management and administrative positions and not enough to hire front line teachers. The FTA also made an issue about the need to give School Site Council's the ability to direct funds as needed.

The vote, as of November 14 (the latest information available before going to press) is:

FUSD District 1

CAL JOHNSON	27835	56.22%
<i>(Fresno Teachers Association candidate)</i>		
LUISA MEDINA	21566	43.56%
<i>(Voices for Excellence candidate)</i>		
Write-in Votes	109	0.22%

FUSD District 3

VALERIE F. DAVIS	31932	64.70%
<i>(Fresno Teachers Association candidate)</i>		
STAFFORD PARKER	17300	35.05%
<i>(Voices for Excellence candidate)</i>		
Write-in Votes	123	0.25%

FUSD District 4

TONY VANG	28478	56.56%
<i>(Fresno Teachers Association candidate)</i>		
JULIE HORNBACK	21762	43.22%
<i>(Voices for Excellence candidate)</i>		
Write-in Votes	109	0.22%

FUSD District 7

MICHELLE ASADOORIAN	21272	41.79%
<i>(Fresno Teachers Association candidate)</i>		
PATRICIA R. BARR	17773	34.91%

<i>(Voices for Excellence candidate)</i>		
JOHN HARRIS LESTER	6017	11.82%
JIM BARR	5749	11.29%
Write-in Votes	94	0.18%

The Fresno County Clerk's department has 29 days to certify the elections.

In other Fresno election news, Blong Xiong became the first Hmong to be elected as a City Council member in California. He will represent District 1. Xiong was backed by most progressive community groups and organized labor. His opponent, Scott Miller was supported by the Republican Party, the Chamber of Commerce, and Tom Boyajian. Boyajian is the current city council representative from District 1 and generally considered a liberal. In interviews with Xiong, it was clear to most progressive groups that he would best represent their interests.

The vote, as of November 14 (the latest information available before going to press) is:

BLONG XIONG	5171	54.17%
SCOTT MILLER	4354	45.62%
Write-in Votes	20	0.21%

The race for Sheriff was notable for a couple of reasons. The current Sheriff, Richard Pierce decided not to run for re-election. Political analysts have speculated that investigations by the California Attorney General's office into the way Pierce ran his department were critical to his decision not to run. The issues being investigated included the Sheriff's Department infiltration of Peace Fresno, selling department vehicles to a security company Pierce worked for, and for allowing security guards at Harris Ranch to use department computers which had access to a restricted data base. Pierce did not address these issues when he decided not to run for re-election. He just said it was time for him to move on.

Margaret Mims, who won in what turned out to be a surprisingly close race, is the candidate most progressive groups endorsed. She is a Democrat and will be the first woman to be Sheriff in Fresno County.

The vote, as of November 14 (the latest information available before going to press) is:

MARGARET MIMS	72730	50.18%
CAL MINOR	71990	49.67%
Write-in Votes	212	0.15%

Measure C, the transportation tax, also supported by most progressive community groups, won by a wide margin - 78% to 22%. The passage of Measure C is significant because two years ago, with the opposition of the progressive community, the transportation tax failed. This was seen as a major victory, because the earlier version of Measure C did not provide enough funding for alternative transportation needs. Critics in 2004 argued that the measure provided too much money for road construction and would have led to more urban sprawl. The Measure C passed this year was broadly supported because it provided funding for bike paths, mass transportation, and other alternatives to the "business as usual" of building more freeways.



Why Did Progressive Groups Win?

There are many factors which led to so many progressive candidates winning in the November election. Voters in the entire country showed a dissatisfaction with Republican leadership. Republicans were demoralized because of scandal, corruption, and the war in Iraq. Their base was simply not energized to get out and vote.

The Democrats, on the other hand, were very motivated to vote the Republicans out of office. Organized labor, the Democratic party, and progressives in Fresno worked hard to get out the vote. SEIU, for example, focused on not only getting their members out to vote, but they also conducted a campaign in Southeast Fresno to get Latinos involved in the electoral process. The huge immigrant rights rallies in the Spring of 2006 appear to have been a catalyst for a larger voter turn out of poor and working people.

The change of power resulting from the 2006 elections will make long lasting changes in the nation and in this community. The unity being built between organized labor, progressive community groups, poor, and working people can lead to even greater changes in 2008. If you want more information and/or want to get involved, see:

www.cvppac.org
<http://www.seiu-uhw.org/>
www.fresnoteachers.org
<http://www.fresnodemocrats.com/>
<http://www.fresnogreens.org/homepage.htm>

All photos on this page by Tudor Stanley



Change to Win's Agenda for Restoring the American Dream

With a new Congress we have a chance to build a better future for our country and our children. For years, America's been heading in the wrong direction with American workers working hard yet losing ground.

Wages aren't keeping up with the cost of living, fewer and fewer workers have health care, and retirement security is increasingly a thing of the past.

But a new Congress brings new hope. Together we can restore the pillars of the American Dream:

- * A paycheck that supports a family.
- * Quality, affordable health care for all.
- * A secure and dignified retirement.
- * The freedom to join together in unions.

A Paycheck that Supports a Family

For working families in America, the size of their members' paychecks determines their income and quality of life. After decades of decline, average wages began to pick up in the late 1990s only to hit a wall in 2000. Six years later wage growth is still stalled.

Before tax, weekly wages of non-supervisory private sector workers in America today are below levels achieved in the early 1960s, and stand nearly 17% below their peak in 1972. Workers are now earning only 83 cents of every dollar they earned more than 35 years ago, while their productivity has increased a dramatic 80%. This is the central explanation for the explosion in corporate profits and the growing income gap in America, and the reason workers in America still believe the economy is moving in the wrong direction. All polls show that it is a big part of the reason why Republicans lost control of Congress.

The reason for this decline in wages and shift upward in the distribution of income are several – but can be boiled down to unbridled pro-corporate globalization, and the right-wing attack on unions and workplace and job market protections.

In 1972, at the peak of real wages, union membership in the private sector stood at nearly 28%, whereas it is now below 8%. Today, 25% of American workers earn a wage that puts them at or below poverty, and the minimum wage is a third lower in value than it was in 1968.

In order to reverse the declining standard of living of workers in America and restore the American Dream, Congress needs to:

* Raise the minimum wage: It should be a first act of Congress to raise the minimum wage from \$5.15 to \$7.25 per hour; future annual increases should be tied to inflation to take politics out of this basic need.

* Pass the Employee Free Choice Act: A bipartisan coalition supports this measure, which would restore the rights of private-sector workers to form unions. EFCA means a livable wage, not just a higher minimum wage, as union workers get paid much better than comparable non-union workers, and they have much better health and retirement benefits. There is no more realistic step Congress could take to improve the standard of living of working families over the long-term.

* Stop the Bush Administration's union-busting policies: President Bush has accelerated the decline of workers in unions. Congress should block the Department of Labor and the National Labor Relations Board from continuing to pursue anti-union and anti-worker activities. The federal government should beef-up enforcement of the Fair Labor Standards Act, IRS rules on the definition of independent contractor status, and other



mented workers contribute much to America – paying taxes and making significant contributions to their communities. They should be able to earn legalization and be provided with a path to citizenship. Immigrant workers also need full workplace protections, including the right to join together into unions, so that all workers are protected.

Quality, Affordable Health Care for All

Change to Win believes everyone who works hard and plays by the rules deserves quality, affordable health care. No one should end up in poverty, disabled or die due to lack of access to health care, but it happens to thousands of people every day in America.

For more than 70 years labor unions have played a leading role in creating and expanding our largely employer-based health care system. Health insurance fully paid by the employer was a marker that defined good jobs in the U.S. economy as a result of collective bargaining.

But today the health care system is failing: Costs are exploding, coverage is eroding and quality is deteriorating. We need a public-private partnership of unions and employers along with elected officials, health care providers and consumers to solve the crisis.

Change to Win supports reforms to the system that are comprehensive, rather than piece meal, and that include coverage for everyone guaranteed by a date certain, with a strong emphasis on preventing illness. Coverage should not depend on one's job or on having a job. While individuals should play an active role in taking care of their health, they should not be burdened by unaffordable costs and by high-deductible health plans that shift costs onto families while reducing their coverage.

These are Change to Win's principles for creating an American health care system:

- * Guaranteed Coverage: Everyone should have access to quality affordable health care.
- * Guaranteed Benefits: A standard health care benefit should meet people's medical needs.
- * Choice of Provider: Everyone should have a choice of doctors and other health care providers.
- * Controlling Costs: Our health care system should be efficient, reduce waste and curb excessive profits.
- * Quality of Care: Substantial investments are needed to improve safety and outcomes and to control costs.
- * Fair Financing: Employers and government must share responsibility for financing the system.
- * Role of Government: The federal government should efficiently manage public insurance plans and be the watchdog and enforcer of rules in the private sector.

To read more about the Change to Win's Agenda for Restoring the American Dream, go to: <http://www.changetowin.org/issues.html> . You may also contact them at:

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e-mail: info@changetowin.org

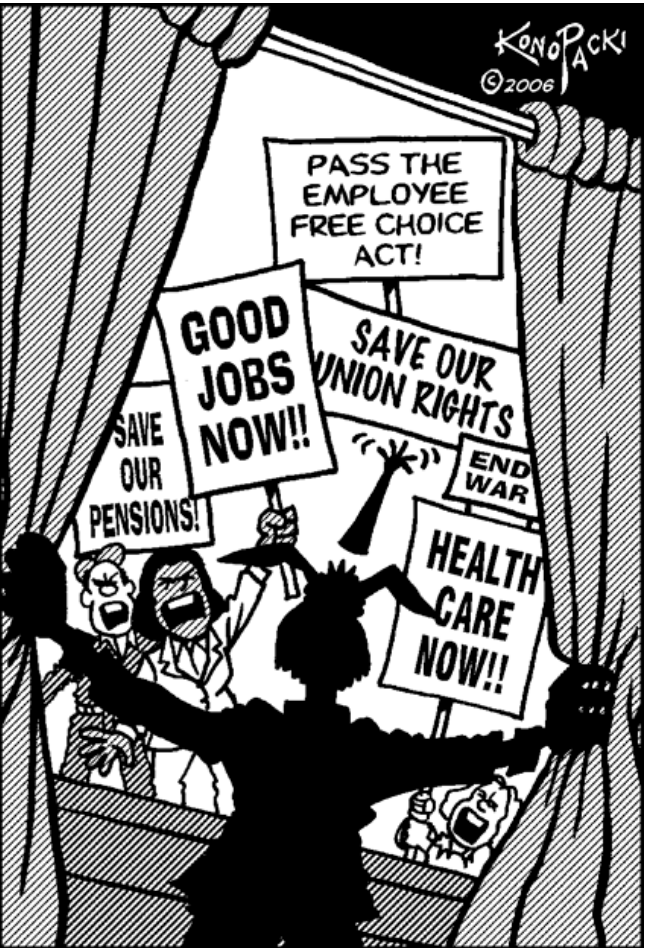
Mobilizing immigrants to vote was part of a winning electoral strategy by organized labor.
Photo by Mike Rhodes.



statutes that are designed to protect workers.

* Stop job killing, anti-worker "free" trade agreements: Congress must stop the Bush Administration's headlong rush to pass new "free" trade agreements, such as NAFTA, and fast track trade authority for the President, which gives him extraordinary authority to negotiate and write trade agreements. After more than a decade of such trade agreements the United States has lost millions of good paying jobs through corporate outsourcing to low-wage countries. America needs fair trade that protects workers at home and abroad.

* Pass a sensible immigration policy: We need to protect our borders and control the flow of immigration as we promote policies that prevent undocumented workers from being used as fodder in the corporate push to drive down wages and working conditions. Undocu-



Another Open Letter to George

by **Cindy Sheehan**

George,

First of all, I would have given anything to be a fly on the wall on November 8th, when we all knew fairly early that the Democrats had taken back the House of Representatives. I would also have loved to be in the room when Senator George Allen conceded and the Senate was lost. I hope you realize that your demented policies and miserably failed leadership style



Photo by Howard Watkins



The Presidential S(t)deal

By **Richard Stone**

The Presidential S(t)deal—an art installation by “Thor-Aphrodite” (aka Jerry Solom) was on display and put into action three Saturdays in November.

Four years in the making, this complex mechanical symbol of political corruption is influenced by Mexican “retablos” which depict vignettes on the frame of a ribcage, and transformation masks from the tradition of Native Americans from the Northwest coast.

Solom credits Michael Black Bull, sometime lecturer in American Indian Studies at Fresno City College, for motivating the piece. “He told us a story about the Caddoan tribe that was scapegoated for the killing (by others, it turned out) of white settlers. This was just after 9/11 and similar generalized vengeance was in the air. I felt called on to respond to that.”

The construction of the piece was begun as an assignment in an American Indian Art class the next semester, but it soon outgrew its origins and only this fall was deemed complete enough for presentation.

Solom is now planning a Spring retrospective of many years’ worth of his social-political artwork.



is responsible for the thumping that your party took this week. Even though I couldn’t be a secret first hand witness to your political demise, it was good to be in front of your soon to be vacated premises in DC.

On November 4th, 2004, after you stole yet another election, I wrote an open letter to you promising that I would use every last ounce of strength that I had to see you held accountable for the death of my son and for all of the gratuitous bloodshed that you have foisted on humanity since you have been president.

As committed as I am to bringing the troops home, I am as much committed to seeing you investigated, impeached, ejected from office, and imprisoned in the same cell with Saddam for crimes against humanity. After all, you yourself, have said over and over again that the troops aren’t leaving Iraq alone while you are in office...so get out of office so our young people can come home. A recent MSNBC poll said that 86% of their viewers are in favor of putting you on trial, George. 86% is exactly the same percentage of Iraqis who want our troops to leave their Bush-torn country.

Americans (you remember us, don’t you?), turned out in huge numbers the other day to hold you accountable. You had yourself another accountability moment there, and you lost, didn’t you? We Americans did not vote to retain the Republican status quo of murder, mayhem, and oppression. We voted to change politics as usual in this country. We voted against you and your wars of terror. We voted against you and your spies. We voted against you and your torturers. We voted against you and your definition of freedom as something that can be spread by bombing a country into oblivion. We voted against you and your definition of peace as something that can be spread by violence. We voted against you and your definition of security while your state sanctioned terrorism is creating more terrorists. We voted against you and your most atrocious and abominable exploitation of the right to life to continue your genocidal policies in Iraq.

We the people have a mandate for change. If you think that

we are going to squander our mandate and permit you to slide away into obscurity in Crawford, as a footnote as the worst president in US history, to lick your wounded pride and count your stacks of ill-gotten gains, you are wrong. You are not escaping punishment as other war criminal presidents have in our past. No matter if you and Rep. Pelosi become best buddies and take tea regularly in the oval office, we the people with our mandate are not going to allow you to get off scott-free.

After the 110th Democratic Congress is sworn in, we the people with all the power, will be out in force in the halls and offices of our elected officials to make sure that our mandate for change is carried out. Gone are the days when we will permit our elected officials to bow before the special interests and allow the war machine to run our country. Here are the days where we the people with the mandate will enforce our mandate.

We are also going to enforce our mandate for change to insure that you do not invade another country, in our names, that is no threat to the USA. We will not allow any more war for the war profiteers.

George, you and your buddy, Karl, frightened us into thinking that we needed you to protect us. We are not afraid anymore, George, but you should be very afraid. A sleeping giant has been awakened and we are starving for justice and peace. I hope your successors remember who employs them and who has the real power in the country, because you forgot and it is going to cost you your job and your nice life in Central Texas, or Paraguay...wherever you thought you were going to retire in infamy to.

George, you said that you have been to rodeos before. I am not so sure what you meant. A rodeo is filled with real cowboys and bucking broncos. You are a fake cowboy who is about to be thrown from the horse that you have been illegitimately and incompetently riding for almost six years now. Enjoy the rest of the ride while you can, George. Pad your seat, things are going to get even bumpier for you!

Fresno Folk Concerts

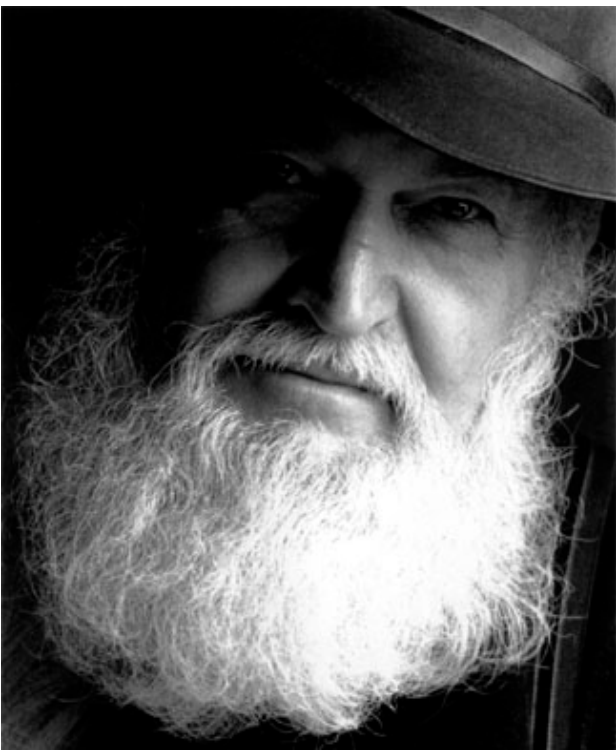
The Fresno Folklore Society encourages you to share music with those you love. Here is a listing of their upcoming events:

UTAH PHILLIPS Saturday December 2—YES! the evening of the Crafts Faire. Make a day and evening of it. Don’t miss him. Utah only comes around every other year at the most. 7:30pm Fresno Art Museum.

JOHN McCUTCHEON Thursday January 18. Buy tickets for the family, friends, your employees—great holiday gift. Make a party of the evening. John has outgrown the 145 seats of the museum so we’ve booked him into the concert stage in the CSUFresno music building. 7:30pm

ROBIN & LINDA WILLIAMS & Their Fine Group Friday March 16 Fresno Art Museum 7:30pm. These are the folks from PRAIRIE HOME COMPANION. You’ll be hearing them on KFSR 90.7 beginning in December.

JOE CRAVEN & BRYAN BOWERS Friday May 11 Fresno Art Museum. 7:30pm
Two remarkable musicians share the Bonner stage. What a treat.



For ticket information, see:
www.fresnofolkconcerts.com and
www.fresnofolklore.org

FROM THE STUDIO THAT BROUGHT YOU *FAHRENHEIT 9/11*

FRESNO FILMWORKS

Fresno Center for Nonviolence
dedicated to peace and social justice

"a place to work for peaceful change"

THE U.S. vs. JOHN LENNON

ARTIST. HUMANITARIAN. NATIONAL THREAT.

December 8 2006 - 5 & 8 pm

Tickets on sale at Tower Box office, The Movies and Wine Styles in Fig Garden Village

December 8, 2006

at Fresno’s historic Tower Theatre

Tickets are on sale now at The Tower Theatre Box Office,
at the Movies, 1435 N. Van Ness Ave.,
and in Fig Garden Village at Wine Styles

Tickets: General Admission \$10.00 \$8.00 for Students & Seniors

www.fresnofilmworks.org

SPECIAL HOLIDAY FOOD SECTION

Food Section Introduction

By Richard Stone

To save our nation, we need more than regime-change; the food-producing, -marketing, -selling, and -eating habits of Americans are equally in need of overhaul.

The Community Alliance has asked (in time for the food frenzy known as “the holiday season”) several local practitioners of “alternative food strategies” to talk about what they do and why. We have also sought their suggestions for celebrating the holidays with less tradition and more consciousness.

(For a good quick look at the big picture, see The Nation’s “Food Issue”, Sept. 2006. Also see related articles in past issues of the Alliance: “Sustainable Farms, Healthy Communities, Building a Local Food Network,” by Jeremy Hofer, Feb.’05; and “Putting Food on the Table”, by Edie Jessup, Nov. ’05. Also recommended, the video “The Future of Food”.)

Buy Local this Holiday Season

Claudia J. Sersland

Dave Lewis Farms grows and sells a variety of fruit and vegetables at the Fresno Farmers’ Market. We are a certified grower which gives us the opportunity to sell fresh produce to recipients of WIC and Senior coupons specifically for farmers’ markets. This is a business that has been evolving for about 10 years and is still expanding.



It was one blustery Easter Sunday that we planted twelve Ace tomato plants for home consumption. Needless to say those plants produced enough tomatoes to supply us plus family and friends. One evening we were eating tomatoes and I said “these are too good to give away we should sell them.” Thus began growing and selling produce direct to consumers.

Two years later we shipped peaches to a packer for the entire season and received a bill from the packer. This prompted us to tear out some peach trees and plant apricots, nectarines and plums. We planted several varieties of each fruit so we have them for sale from May to October and can ship all the fruit ourselves to the consumer thus by passing the packer.

In 1999 the price for raisins collapsed so we trellised a portion of our raisin grapes. We sell these grapes directly to the consumer thus by passing the packer.

We started with a roadside produce stand and now sell three days a week (Tuesday, Thursday, and Saturday) at the Fresno Farmers’ Market which is a year around market. It is very rewarding to be able to offer the public produce which is fresher than the grocery store at a lower price and at the same time we are receiving more for our product than we would be selling to a packer. I am also able to educate the consumer about buying local, how their food source was grown and how to prepare the produce.

During the holiday season it is tempting to buy prepared foods or dine out. I would encourage people to shop at local farmers markets and plan the menu around the produce that is in season. For instance green beans, beets, spinach and other “greens” can be the vegetable choice for the holiday meal. Pomegranates, persimmons, and oranges can be used as well. Buying from local farmers sustains their livelihood and provides you with fresher, tastier produce.

I hope to see you at the Fresno Farmers’ Market and happy, healthy eating during the holiday season!



Slow Food Movement

By Mike Fuller

As a result of fighting dam projects proposed by farmers and their irrigation districts, and closely examining the food system of which they are a part, I’ve come to view the factory food system in an unfavorable light. In addition to deleterious disruption of river systems and other environs, the dark sides of a factory food system include air and water pollution, poor public health and significant contributions to global warming.



Subsequently, my goal is to get mileage out of my food. Slow Food Madera, which I co-founded in 2001, is urging people to buy food grown within 100 miles of where they live. Most of my food will soon be grown within 100 feet of my kitchen.

I’ve chosen to opt out of the factory food and farming system because I prefer fresh, high quality food locally grown on a small scale. Buying food from community supported agriculture or CSA’s, farmers markets, community gardens, and locally owned bakeries and butcher shops provide positive alternatives to the factory food system. But my favorite option is growing and cooking fresh food at home.

Because growing food is new to me it took time to learn how to nurture healthy soil, cultivate semi-permanent crops and integrate the other natural systems necessary to sustain a productive garden. Within five years I created a small scale inner city farm in downtown Madera where I can easily grow most of the fruit, vegetables, herbs, eggs and meat I want to eat throughout the year. Learning how to bake good bread is next.

Discovering new or enhancing old traditions is a great way to enjoy holidays. May one ingredient of your holiday meals come from your garden; if not in 2006, 2007. Over time may most of your meals become home harvest celebrations all year round!

Recipe: Roughly 2/3’s Acorn Squash and 1/3 Yukon Gold Potatoes boiled, mashed and mixed together with a fair amount of Organic Valley Butter and some cumin.

In Search of a Smaller Footprint

By Gerry Bill

About thirty years ago I ran across the concept of the “Indian Equivalent”—the idea that we can measure the impact on Mother Earth of a typical citizen of India, and compare that to the impact of a typical citizen of the US. I was shocked to learn that it would take about 25 Indians to have the same effect on the environment as would be made by just one of us here in the good old USA.

There are many lifestyle differences that account for that discrepancy, but one of them is definitely our eating habits. A vegetarian diet puts a much smaller strain on the environment than does a carnivorous one, and that a vegan diet makes an even smaller footprint still. I am now in my 17th year as a vegan—one of several things I do to reduce the size of the footprint I am making on our precious planet.

When I was new at veganism I thought that the holidays would be difficult; they turned out to be much easier than I had expected. At first I felt obligated to make an alternative main course for myself while everyone else partook of turkey. However, I soon learned that I could dispense with the turkey substitute and just feast on all the side dishes. I found that the side dishes alone provided far more sustenance than one really needs. I never left the table hungry.

I have become the mashed potato chef and pie chef for my family, and have learned how to make those things in the vegan manner without sacrificing any quality. In the potatoes I just substitute a little soy milk for the cow’s milk, and a little olive oil for the butter. I typically bake an apple pie which can easily be made vegan, plus a pumpkin pie with a tofu base rather than a custard base. The pumpkin pie made with tofu tastes every bit as good as the dairy variety and it is far superior nutritionally. I often joke that the pumpkin pie is actually my main source of protein in the meal—which turns out to be true.

Gerry’s Tofu Pumpkin Pie

Preheat oven to 350 degrees F.

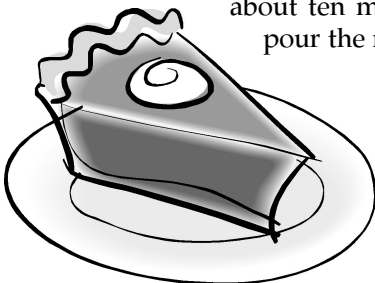
Have ready one unbaked 9" pastry crust.

Blend in a blender until smooth and creamy:

- 3/4 lb. tofu (a creamy but firm variety; Mori-Nu Silken brand works well)
- 1 16 oz can of pumpkin (about 2 cups)
- 1 1/2 tsp cinnamon
- 3/4 tsp ground ginger
- 1/2 tsp nutmeg
- 1 tsp salt
- 2/3 cup oil
- 1 tsp vanilla
- 1 cup light brown sugar
- 1 tsp molasses
- 2 tsp natural maple syrup

When well blended and no white flecks show, pour the mixture into the pastry shell and bake for 1 hour. Chill and serve.

For the crust, I usually make my own, using a standard recipe. Even though the recipe says to pour the mixture into an unbaked pastry shell, I often pre-bake mine for about ten minutes and then pour the mixture in.



To Gain or Not to Gain, That is the Question

By Giovanni Pivrotto

If you're like most people, you fret about gaining the typical five to ten pounds over the holiday season. Do we gain the weight because food is somehow more delicious, is it the kind of food we are eating or simply because its plentiful.

I think that for the most part, our food indulgence is actually about the memories that particular flavors and aromas help refresh, especially around the holidays. Aroma and memory are so powerfully interconnected. Our sense of smell is such a common trigger for emotional attachments to our past. Certainly we all share the experience of some smell that brought us back 10, 20, 40 years or more and call to mind a compelling, long forgotten memory. Also, our sense of smell and taste can be greatly affected by expectations.

The busyness of the season can lower the gate of resistance and inhibition, hence that third eggnog. Hell just drink the brandy straight and forget the nog, its all fat and sugar anyway, just kidding.

I can remember helping my mother prepare the holiday meals. We would watch her create what my sisters, my brother and I thought were the most delightful and savory goodies that existed on the entire planet. The smells of cinnamon and sage, orange and oregano (hey we're Italian) filled the house and you could smell it before you even walked through the door. And every bite was filled with sugar. So when you are a forkful away from taking that second slice of pumpkin pie, pause for a moment and ask yourself, is it that the pumpkin pie is so gosh darn appealing that it compels you to take the next bite, or is it the flood of memories that are transporting you to a place of comfort and peace. And maybe that's not so bad if you don't end up regretting it later.

I think it's possible to craft those moments of happiness and contentment without using food as the panacea. You can enjoy the foods you love without the pounds of guilt that go with it.

First of all, take your time, eat to enjoy, not just for the sake of eating. Literally slow down and savor every morsel, I mean holy mostaccioli Batman, chew before you swallow.

In 1986 Carlo Petrini of Italy founded a wonderful movement called "Slow Food" (slowfood.com, slowfoodusa.org). Part of their intention is simply to slow down and take pleasure in life. It seems to me, the older the culture, the more naturally they understand



that life should be enjoyed fully without rushing through every moment. We need to incorporate more of that good stuff into our culture.

Secondly, do things that honor those memories without the food connection. For example, enjoying live holiday music or looking through old photos that make you feel good. Connect in ways that support your emotional strength. If you find that you return to rewarding yourself with food, try to eat something healthy and cheering like maybe a hearty bowl of fragrant vegetable soup.

And thirdly, I have learned

ing to stay in balance.

Because I own a yoga studio and teach yoga daily, I have learned to "tune in" to the signals in my body. Pay attention to these signals, your body is reacting to whatever it was that you just ate. I am absolutely convinced that most weight-gain comes from an excess of sugar, not fats, and a lack of activity. It wasn't long-ago that sugar was considered a drug and prescribed and dispensed only by doctors.

A funny thing about those five to ten holiday pounds we think are packing on. The good news is that most experts think we overestimate, and truly only gain one or two pounds. It's the accumulation over the years that can be harmful. That couple of pounds we gain usually don't come back off the rest of the year. Increasing physical activity is an effective means for preventing weight gain during this time.

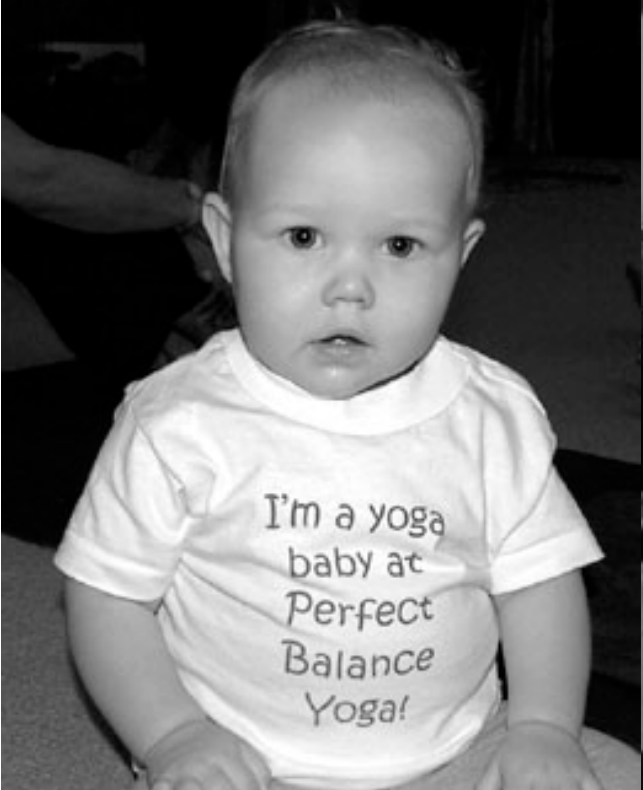
So why not take a long walk down Christmas Tree Lane, or go pump weights or do a few Sun Salutations (perfect for our foggy winters). A downward facing dog or two may keep you fit and happy. Remember, it's easier to not put it on, than it is to take it off. Happy holidays!

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Giovanni Pivrotto is the co-owner of Perfect Balance Yoga and has taught over 4000 hours of yoga. He can be contacted at gio@pbyoga.com



that it's best to continue a regular practice of activity and fitness when the holidays have arrived. Whether you like to stroll or have a gym routine, maintaining an activity will help keep you focused on supporting your wellness. A body in motion stays in motion. I know that when I stay active I experience fewer cravings for sugary foods. Also I find it helpful to continually drink lots of water, not with the intention of keeping my stomach full, but to help my body function at its greatest efficiency, help-



SPECIAL HOLIDAY FOOD SECTION

Something has got to Change Around Here

By Edie Jessup



I currently am working at Fresno Metro Ministry in California, an audacious social justice non-profit. I am the coordinator of the Hunger & Nutrition Project, and the Director of the Fresno Co. Central Calif. Obesity Prevention Project—a collaborative of 6 counties. I work on access to healthy, affordable, culturally appropriate food at all times for low-income people in Fresno. Fresno, where we raise enough food to feed the nation, and where the very people who harvest your bounty in 106 languages, are hungry. 40% of adults in Fresno County are food insecure at sometime during the year. 1/3 of the children are growing up in poverty. 85% of the children in Fresno Unified School District qualify for Free meals. The grandchildren of Selma and Delano are standing in the free meal kitchen lines.

You and I are presiding over the willful suspension of disbelief in our country. There is no scarcity of food. We have created hungry neighbors by clear policy decisions at the federal, state, and local level. We have decided to not feed people. We have created a FOODSECURITY issue. A Homeland and public safety security issue. If we do not change the policies that create an increasingly poor population that is obese and thus inflicted with chronic disease by diet, we all will pay. We will pay for the costs of increasingly ill neighbors; and early death of the 5th graders in California schools and the 5th graders across the country now at risk. Studies show Fresno County children overweight among the highest percentages in the State, a result of high poverty and lack of access to healthy foods. We need to change the environment very quickly, before we lose another generation to death by diet.

The way to do that is to lend what we know to policy and legislative changes. Wellness policies in Schools will turn the tide for all kids. Now we have to do the same in our own organizations and communities and

neighborhoods. Because what we are seeing is epidemic, and it is racist in its outcomes. The African American, Hispanic, and Southeast Asian populations are hugely being impacted by chronic disease. We are creating a situation where children are developing chronic disease in elementary school, and will be impaired physically and mentally and socially for the rest of their lives. They are dealing with healthcare needs starting with insulin management at age 10. They will be taking over our world. So, what to do?

First, the repair of the safety net for basic access to food by utilizing the Federal Nutrition Programs by all eligible: this includes utilizing Food Stamps, all School Nutrition Programs, WIC and Senior Nutrition programs. Convincing the farming community that Federal Nutrition Programs will benefit retail sales of their locally grown products, and finding a solution to getting good healthy food into neighborhoods at health risk because of poverty and the built environments is a second step.

Improving the access and use of local produce at local neighborhood stores, by entrepreneurial mobile vending, farmers markets, food recovery programs, community gardening and school use of local farm grown produce. The policy changes we can accomplish locally should meld the access and quality issues of food security in the ignored parts of Fresno and your city that paradoxically can grow plenty for the nation and could feed the local population. So, in my work at Fresno Metro Ministry, I have come to believe That working

food restaurant and does not allow a farmers market or community garden in a neighborhood. Or that nice safe parks exist in some parts of town, and not in others. Because the result of not having a public conscience in our public planning is resulting in obesity, and diabetes, and hypertension and other chronic illness developing in our children in elementary school. These children of god are going to be ill all of their lives, and will die earlier than their parents. This result is patently racist here in Fresno and in your community, because it is poor children and families of color being impacted most. And the issue is the environment, not just schools, not just healthcare, not just media, not just the planning department. It is multisectoral, and we do not even know what we are seeing, in the turning of the health of our city and our country.

What is Agriculture For?

We human beings started living in cities on the earth about 6,000 years ago and we did it because our farming got so good that not everyone had to spend all their time growing food. Farmers could raise enough food to feed themselves and lots of other people too, so some people began to specialize in making cloth, others specialized in making pottery, and others specialized in building buildings. We created cities as a result of good farming. Some of the oldest cities in the world were in Egypt. From the ancient Egyptian Book of the Dead here is a partial list of things a citizen was not supposed to do. One is not to cheat poor people. One is not to take land from a neighbor. One is not to take milk away from children. One is not to waste water. From 6,000 years ago, some pretty good recommendations about

farming and about what we need to live well in our cities.

We and the younger generation have been sold a bill of goods. The Corporate world is now defining nutrition. Meanwhile, we talk a lot about the health outcomes we are seeing and hearing about. Overwhelmingly those impacted are poor and of color. Our policy may have to CHANGE in the public health arena. Our Fresno County Public Health Officer has said that the three biggest public health issues in Fresno County are: Diabetes, obesity, and air quality. WE may have to change. Agriculture may have to change, and step up to the plate as a sustainable resource that can solve those problems.

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This is an excerpt from the talk Edie Jessup gave before the Commonwealth Club on November 13, 2006

The Corporate world is now defining nutrition

for environmental change, changes at a systems and policy level is desperately needed. Our city, our county, the Central Valley, is falling apart. Merely educating individuals has not worked.

I really hate the fish story. It is a myth. An urban legend that leaves poor families, poor single adults, poor elders, and poor children in a created prison where they are dismissed from human dignity and it is a poor story for sustainable agriculture to use as a mantra.

You know. Give a person a fish, they will eat for today; teach a person to fish and they will fish for a lifetime. Exactly 50% wrong. If they have no access to the water/land they will die, full of knowledge about how to fish, but dying of the inability to wet their line because someone owns the access to the land and water, and will not let them in to fish, will not let them grow food, will not let them eat.

It is really wrong when zoning allows building a fast

The Road to Health

By Rev. Dr. Sheryn Todd, Ms.D, C.A.P

I am a Wholeness Practioner (consciously practicing a healthy balance of mind, body and spirit) and Life Coach, Member of the African American Farmers of California, Slow Foods International., Assistant Manager of the Golden Westside Farmers Market, participant in the Community Hunger and Nutrition Forum and Fresno County CCROPP Policy Council.



Approximately 27 years ago I was treated for various symptoms. Doctors could find no disease; yet I was given an abundance of medication, which I found out years later, I was allergic to. That is when I began to seek alternatives. Less than a week ago, of this writing, while in an AAFC meeting, my sister called and said our mother (an apparently healthy, active 76 year old) vomiting and in extreme pain was rushed to the hospital by ambulance. Diagnosis was a large malignant tumor blocking her intestines. She knew immediately it was caused by her unhealthy diet. In partnership with a compassionate M.D., a Spiritual Healer, an Herbalist, an excellent Surgeon and the prayers of family and friends she is now doing extremely well and has a

new attitude that I'm sure will be reflected in what she eats this Holiday Season.

I do what I do promote community awareness of some alternatives to the death cycle the average person is experiencing daily. By sharing the Knowledge that has

helped me, my family and my clients, I hope members of our community will have a better quality of life. Please know what health benefits are, or lack thereof, in the food you prepare and consume. Remember we eat to live not live to eat!

VEGETARIAN COLLARD GREENS & CABBAGE

- 3 Bunches of Collard Greens: Cleaned & cut for cooking.
- 1 Head of Cabbage: Cleaned & cut for cooking.
- 2/3 Bay Leaves
- 2 Chili Peppers
- 1 Onion quartered and sliced
- ¼ cup Extra Virgin Olive Oil (or more to taste)
- 1 tablespoon of Sea Salt
- ¼ teaspoon ground or powdered Ginger
- Cayenne Pepper to taste
- ½ teaspoon garlic powder
- 1 or 2 cups of Organic Vegetable Broth (can add more if you want more Pot Liquor*)

Place Olive Oil in large skillet or pot on low heat and add bay leaves and whole chili peppers. Now add prepared Collard Greens, Cayenne Pepper, Garlic Powder, Ginger and ½ of the vegetable broth. Let simmer slowly until color of greens change from bright to dull green and are tender adding more broth if needed.

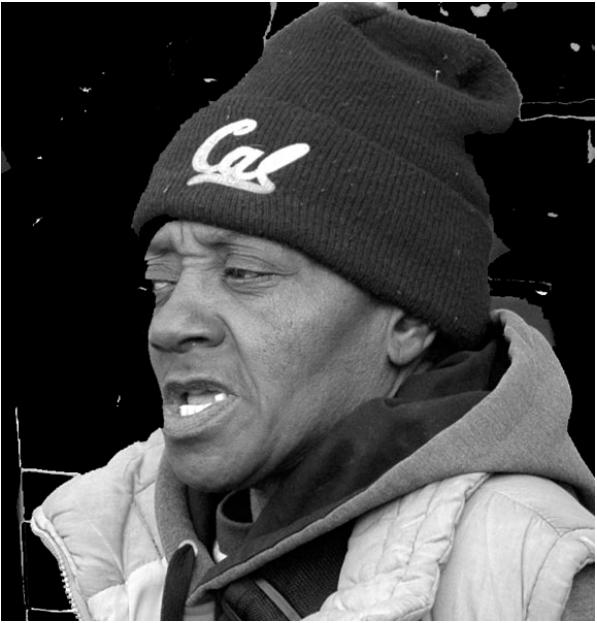
Add onions, cabbage and Sea Salt, cover and simmer until Cabbage shrinks down enough to mix well adding the rest of the broth. Cook for additional two or three minutes, stir again and remove from heat. Approximately 4-6 Servings

*Pot Liquor is what we call the nutritious green juice in the pot of greens.

Homeless Women Speak Out

Cynthia Greene

I was born in Madera, California almost 60 years ago. I attended several colleges, including UC Santa Cruz, and I have had a variety of professional jobs, including welding for a high-rise in Los Angeles. I moved back to the Fresno area from Los Angeles to care for my parents when they both became critically ill. After my mom died, I was caring for my dad and working as an in-home health care worker for other elderly people, living with one of my elderly clients. I lost my job (and therefore my home) shortly before my father passed away. Since my brother had already passed away, there were no family members that could take me in, and I became homeless. I now earn money doing odd jobs and recycling, but I do not make enough to afford an apartment.



During the past year, I have witnessed many occasions when the police and City of Fresno workers come to take the belongings of homeless people. The City has taken some or all of my belongings approximately five times since January 2006. None of that property has been returned. I believe almost all of it was destroyed. I do not recall the exact dates of each of these events, but below is my best recollection of the City raids in which I lost the most property.

In March or April 2006, my belongings were on the grassy strip across the highway from E Street. It was early in the morning, and I was with my belongings. However, when the City workers came, they would not let me save most of my property. I had to watch as they took most of what I owned. We had no notice that they were coming that morning; they gave us only a few minutes to gather a few belongings before they came and took the rest. In particular, on that occasion, I lost many irreplaceable photographs of my father, my mother, and my brother, all of whom have passed away. I earn money by repairing bicycles, and the City took two bicycles that belonged to me and threw them in a dumpster. These were good bicycles in working order that I was hoping to sell. The City also took my tent and all my bedding. It was still raining quite a bit at the time, and I got sick as a result of being out in the rain without any shelter.

In August 2006 – I believe it was Saturday, August 26, 2006, we received some notice that the City was going to come to the area where we were living. At the time, we were on the CalTrans strip of land on E Street, around the corner from the Poverello House. The notice the City gave was confusing. First, on Friday at about 11:00 a.m., they told us we had one hour to move everything. Then, someone called Liza Apper, an advocate for homeless people, who negotiated with the City to give us more time. As I recall, that afternoon, the Mayor came, and the City crews did not confiscate everything right away. As a result of the conflicting messages, we were not sure when or whether City workers would actually come. By the time City crews came back, I had moved most of my belongings, but I did not save everything. The City workers took and threw away my tent, tarps, bicycle pump and patches and winter gear such as rain suits and umbrella. The City then put up fences on the CalTrans strip of land on E Street.

As a result of the new fences on E Street, Joanna Garcia and I moved our property to the other side of the fences, near the bridge on Santa Clara that goes over the highway. We had all of our things packed into carts. The very next morning, I believe on Sunday, August 27, we saw a police car, a garbage truck, a bulldozer with claws, and some City pickup trucks parked across E Street, in front of the dairy. We thought they might go around the corner to the people camped near the Poverello House. Very soon after we noticed them there, the vehicles all came close to where we were. The police came and told us we had five minutes to move our belongings, or else they would take our belongings. We each grabbed one cart of the four or five carts we had, and started moving them across the street. A friend of ours, Terry, saw what was happening, and he started to come over to help. However, as soon as Joanna and I

started moving away with one cart each, the bulldozer truck came in and started picking up the rest of our property. The bulldozer with claws put all of it directly into the dump truck. We had four or five carts, and even though we ran back to tell the workers that we had a place to move everything, they continued to take and throw away our personal property. Meanwhile, other City employees were sitting in their cars and laughing. We did not have time to get our property before it was destroyed. As a result, I lost my medication, personal papers, my ID, some bicycles, a backpack, dog food, my sleeping bag, a new tent, blankets, food, dog food, a bag of recycling, a bag full of watches that I had collected from dumpsters over a year and I was going to repair, and a nice dolly that a friend gave me to transport things.

I have repeatedly lost belongings that I needed for survival as a result of the City's actions. City employees have consistently treated me like I am not a person. Based upon my experience, wherever I go as a homeless person in the City of Fresno, the City of Fresno workers, accompanied by the Fresno Police Department, will come to take and destroy my personal possessions. This has happened to me several times already and I believe it will happen again. The City of Fresno has made it clear to me by destroying my property and by the way in which they did that, that because I am a homeless person, I will always be vulnerable to having my property taken and destroyed by City of Fresno workers and police.

Joanna Garcia

I was born and raised in Fresno. Until a few years ago, I had a secure job and a family. I worked as a house manager at a group home for developmentally disabled adults. I had worked at one group home for 5 years, and had been working in various group homes for 12 years. That all changed when my husband, who abused me, decided to drive my truck to rob a house. I was at work at the time, but my husband took my bright blue 1957 Chevy Classic, and parked it right in front of the house he robbed. He did not tell me what he had done, and he dropped the truck off for me to drive while I was at work, even though I had nothing to do with it and was at work when it happened. A few people from my work saw the arrest, and as a result, I was fired. Later, all charges against me were dropped. Even though the charges were dropped, a person from community care licensing wrote a letter about the incident that has prevented me from getting any other work in that field. I was 40 years old and had never before been arrested, but as a result of this incident, I became homeless. I have asthma and need to use an inhaler. I currently work 5 or 6 days a week at the Holy Cross Women's Center and receive payment for that work in food vouchers. I also work part time for an independent newspaper. However, I cannot afford to pay the security deposit and first and last month's rent on an apartment.

During the past year, I have witnessed many occasions when the police and City of Fresno workers come to take the belongings of homeless people. The City has taken some or all of my belongings approximately five times since January 2006. None of that property has been returned. I believe almost all of it was destroyed. I do not recall the exact dates of each of these events, but below is my best recollection of the City raids in which I lost the most property.

In March or April 2006, my belongings and my boyfriend's belongings were on the grassy strip across the highway from E Street. They were neatly kept. My boyfriend and I had left for the day; I was working at Holy Cross. When we came back that evening, I said to my boyfriend, "I can't see our home." All of our belongings were gone, including tents, blankets, personal pa-



pers, clothes, my pink bicycle, and irreplaceable pictures of my grandmother and my son. I also lost my son's ponytail; I had grown his hair out when he was little, and I still had the ponytail from when I finally let him get it cut. At that time of year, it was raining a lot, and we could not stay dry without our tents and blankets. At Holy Cross during that time, we had 500 blankets that were all given out in one week, because the City had taken property from so many people.

During the first week of May 2006, the City came again and took my belongings. I was on E Street at the time, with my neatly packed belongings. Again, I lost everything I had accumulated for shelter, including a tent, blankets, and clothes. Worst of all, at that time, the police took my dog and her brand new puppies. The puppies were just a few days old. I tried to save the puppies instead of all the rest of my belongings, and Officer Wallace assured me that they would not be taken with the rest of my property. Despite these assurances, the City workers took my dog and her puppies. Eventually, the dogs were all put to sleep at the pound. I was heartbroken.

Then, in August 2006 – I believe it was Saturday, August 26, 2006, we received some notice that the City was going to come and take all our belongings if we did not move them. At the time, I was at work, and my belongings were on the CalTrans strip of land on E Street, around the corner from the Poverello House. The notice the City gave was confusing. First, on Friday at 11:00, they told us we had one hour to move everything. Then, someone called Liza Apper, an advocate for homeless people, who negotiated with the City to give us longer. That afternoon, the Mayor came, and the City crews did not confiscate everything right away. As a result of the conflicting messages, we were not sure when or whether City workers would actually take our belongings. By the time City crews came on Saturday morning, I had moved most of my belongings, but I was not able to save the cart that had my medication, including some of my blankets and clothing. The City put up fences on the CalTrans strip of land on E Street.

As a result of the new fences on E Street, Cynthia Greene and I moved our property to the other side of the fences, near the bridge on Santa Clara that goes over the highway. We had all of our things neatly packed into carts. The very next morning, I believe on Sunday, August 27, we saw a police car, a garbage truck, a scooper truck, and some City pickup trucks parked across E Street, in front of the dairy. We thought they might go around the corner to the people camped near the Poverello House. Very soon after we noticed them there, the vehicles all came close to where we were. The police came and told us we had seven minutes to move our belongings, or else they would take our belongings. We each grabbed one cart of the four or five carts we had, and started moving them across the street. A friend of ours, Terry, saw what was happening, and he started to come over to help. However, as soon as Cynthia and I started moving away with one cart each, the scooper truck came in and started picking up the rest of our property. The scooper put all of it directly into the dump truck. We had four or five carts, and even though we ran back to tell the workers that we had a place to move everything, they continued to take and throw away our personal property. Meanwhile, other City employees were sitting in their cars and laughing. Even though we could have moved our belongings with just a little time, they started scooping things up only about 30 seconds after they warned us to move. As a result, I lost my medication, including inhalers for my asthma and antibiotics, lots of important personal papers, my ID, food, tents, blankets and sleeping bags.

I have repeatedly lost belongings that had personal meaning, as well as belongings I needed for survival, as a result of the City's actions. City employees have consistently treated me like I am not a person. Based upon my experience, wherever I go as a homeless person in the City of Fresno, the City of Fresno workers, accompanied by the Fresno Police Department, will come to take and destroy my personal possessions. This has happened to me several times already and I believe it will happen again. The City of Fresno has made it clear to me by destroying my property and by the way in which they did that, that because I am a homeless person, I will always be vulnerable to having my property taken and destroyed by City of Fresno workers and police.

Word on the ~~Street~~ Beach

by Wendy Russell

Gentle cooling breezes caress me in the hammock. I am all alone at the Osa Sea Turtle Conservation Program’s station, located ten hours from the capital city, almost at the end of the road down Carate-way, so all I am wearing are binoculars and a cotton nightgown – ‘breezin’ they might call it in Jamaica, but here in Costa Rica I just call it keeping cool. Overhead, shiny black and vivid red Passerini’s Tanagers flit here and there and Scarlet Macaws squawk and fuss over almonds.

It had been a fun morning. Together, the staff, the other volunteers and I had all cleaned the station. We raked leaves, swept and mopped floors, washed clothes with bar soap and stiff brush, scrubbed stove, table and counter tops, restocked the two Beach Backpacks that we use for Night Patrol, washed reused plastic bags to hang on the line and entered last night’s data into the log books. Our cook, Chique (pronounced Chickie), had ground up a certain red rock, mixed it with water and –voila! We all wore fancy spa facials as we worked. Carolina Dominguez, a volunteer from Spain, had regaled us with how she had single-handedly fought off birds, crabs and *pizotes* (raccoon-like predators that travel in large family groups) with a stick — all to protect the 47 newly hatched Olive ridley hatchlings she found on that morning’s Beach Patrol.

Because that’s what we do here, we save sea turtles. We are a varied collection of concerned world citizens, giving up most of the comforts of daily life to live dormitory style, with no electricity or hot water, eating extremely sparse food and walking in high heat or black star-lit nights — usually in buckets of rain (it’s the rainy season) for up to seven hours at a time, determined to thwart all predators while we find, catalog and protect the female sea turtles (mostly Olive ridleys, plus Blacks and the rare, huge Leatherbacks) coming up on the beach to lay their eggs and any hatchlings emerging from their sandy nests. If the female has laid her eggs in certain areas we dig them up within four hours of being laid and re-bury them higher on the beach or in our hatchery. We take the hatchlings we find to the edge of the sea and guard them as they begin their long, dangerous journey, which will lead them back to this very beach in 20 years to lay their own eggs.

But now I am here alone in the hammock. The others are hiking to a waterfall for a swim and a lodge with internet for \$5 an hour. Not quite alone, because Costa Rica teems with life. From my hammock I see Antonio the resident iguana soaking up sun, leaf cutter ants carrying their green cargo and the ever-present beautiful Scarlet Macaws, always in pairs, as they mate for life.

God’s touch is still quite evident upon this land, while the works of man are swallowed up and disappear without constant work and diligence to hold it all back. I wonder, why does Man strive so to change the face of *el mundo* (the earth)?

HEE! HEE! He He He! laughs the hawk wheeling loops overhead, as if he finds my musings humorous.



Sandra Pédurthe

Further interruption comes when I hear Inma Salado Reyes. She is from the southwest of Spain, the others told me, which is a lively party area. She is blonde and tanned, and her happy voice always percolates with joy and passion. Next I see the rest of the happy crew hiking up the path from the main road. Right then I decide that this is the perfect place to ask this month’s question:

What advice would you give to the citizens of the USA?

Over our candle-lit dinner of rice and beans, carrots with onions, and orange kool-aid, I got my first answer from French ecologist SANDRA PÉDURTHE.

“To think better before voting and elect a better president. To help diminish the hole between poor and rich people. To maintain the actions to preserve the environment and biodiversity. To accept the differences between people and end racial discrimination. In France we know not all Americans are the same – some agree with Bush and others don’t. But the main image that arrives in France is bad because of your president’s actions and international relations.”

We are interrupted by the discovery of a huge spider on the wall, next to the door. Someone asks, “Is it poisonous?” and the answer is yes. No one moves to kill it, however. There is a balance here in Costa Rica, a wheel of life where everything clicks into place; and I know the spider fits in somewhere – hopefully it eats those %&@ sand fleas (we pronounce their name as PA-roo-HAS) that plague us after it rains, covering us with itching bites that torment and burn.

Sandra continues, “I don’t know any Americans. I get my impression from watching TV, discussions and opinions between my friends in France. All of this advice is based on my vision as a French woman.”

She is a petite, delicate woman who smolders with intensity and intellectual focus, which she directs right at me, asking, “Does your president even care if his



Alicia Ward – (with OSA logo behind her)

people like him?”

ALICIA WARD is a 23-year-old biologist, a Seattle-ite, a “USA and global citizen” she calls herself, and one of our Sea Turtle Program coordinators. She has done research in both the US and Costa Rica on sea turtles. Again, may I mention, only 23 years old.

I ask her the Question. What advice would you give the citizens of the USA?

“Keep an open mind. I think a lot of people are insulated in the USA and don’t seek experiences to get out of that environment. I think everyone should learn another language and travel. Learning another language gives a whole new structure to your thoughts, and when you travel you meet and talk to people whose life experiences are so different from yours that it’s eye-opening. And I add to study science because you will see the world differently and see the consequences of your actions. Our country is leading the way down a path to a future that does not look good. And I think there is a misconception that science and religion are not compatible or that science is the ultimate truth. Science gives us information and that’s why it’s so important to study that. It’s a constantly evolving system of understanding our world. We will never know when we are at the truth but we know we are getting close. Such as gravity: the theory of gravity has been improved several times. That doesn’t mean science is wrong – we are just bettering our understanding.”



Helberth Castro Cerón with a Northern cat-eyed snake.

The next day as I cleaned out one of the bodegas (storage areas), I found a snake – when I shrieked from surprise the live-in turtle conservationist and born and raised “Tico” came to the rescue. As we all played with the harmless snake I wondered what advice HELBERTH CASTRO CERÓN might have to give. He gave his answer later, with translation help from the others.

“I only see American tourists, property owners and volunteers. They notice our country and are more aware of conservation (more than Ticos/Costa Ricans). But – maybe they worry too much about things in general and are more nervous. It’s probably the stress they bring from home and I notice that – but they are nice. My advice is to relax a little bit.”

That night on Beach Patrol, in between turtle crawls, nest excavations and egg relocating, I got the answer to our Question from ski instructor and self-described “inhabitant of the earth” SERGI TURMO, who also adds that he is a specialist as a “*pa amb tomata*” eater — a typical and very inexpensive meal of a soft half tomato, spread on bread, toasted or not, with salt and, most important of all, Sergi says, extra virgin olive oil. He means this to say that he is a simple man. He is from a small village in the Pyrenees Mountains in the north of Spain.

What advice would you give to USA citizens?

“To avoid living in fear. It seems as if your government encourages fear — to better control the citizens.”

We spoke of another volunteer at the Station from the states who had purchased a huge machete after a little brush with a drug addict in Puerto Jimenez. He carried it around now on his days off in town. I mentioned how in the USA there were not many beaches where women could walk isolated beaches all night – and then realized that I sounded fearful saying that.



Sergi Turmo



Garnet Livingston Tafari Smith

I have extended family that, two years ago, made the Big Move from Colorado to beachfront property near surfer’s paradise, Matapolo Beach. My first day in town, as we ran errands we left the truck unlocked and windows down, even though their belongings and my luggage were piled high inside. It’s no problem, they kept telling me – no one will steal from us here, Wendy.

So I had asked their son – and my adopted grandson, age five and a half – the Question. GARNET LIVINGSTON TAFARI SMITH, what advice would you give the people back home in the USA?

“My advice is to spend more time in nature than you do in traffic!”

Now, isn’t that just absolutely brilliant?

Later, I am introduced to a man described to me as “Costa Rica’s own Crocodile Hunter.” Smiling, he tells me that, actually, they don’t have to hunt the crocs; mostly he just relocates already found crocodiles away from under houses or out of the lagoon or family pool. He chugs down a cold *papaya con leche*, then MIKE BOSTON adamantly answers our Question:



Mike Boston

What advice would you give the citizens of the USA?

“Get rid of your administration! As a Brit from Ireland, the perspective we had – at least through Clinton – was that we were happy with the U.S. policing the world. Well, you are economically and militarily the most powerful nation in the world – but now, not a nation in the world would concur with your policies.”

But, let’s go back to the Sea Turtle Conservation Program. Back to walking the beach for hours at night. Sometimes there is not much “turtle action.” The babies only hatch after a rain and maybe it’s been dry a few hours. Or the females happen to come up on the other beach rather than the beach we are patrolling. So we talk. We don’t use our headlamps because the dark tracks of the turtles crawling from the sea show up as a dark shadow slashing across the beach, plus any lights would scare off the female, until she starts dropping her eggs into the hole she has dug with her

flippers. Then she is on a sort of automatic pilot and we can do anything to and around her. We measure her, check for tags and then sit back and wait for her return to the sea, when we can either mark and triangulate the nest’s location or dig up the eggs and move them to a safer spot above the high tide mark. Only just-laid eggs can be moved safely, before embryos attach to the shell. Or if we find a nest that has been predated – a sad event – we dig up any remaining empty shells to re-bury elsewhere, enter the data into the log if it was one of our marked nests and then try to re-bury the remaining eggs so they might survive to hatch. If we find hatchlings – oh joy! – it never gets boring watching their lively sprint down the slanted beach to the white of the waves. We guard them as the waves wash them out and then back in, until they finally disappear into the sea. We turn them over when they end upside-down. But mostly we just walk, looking for those tracks in the sand. So we talk endlessly about everything. Well, almost everything – three of us once scared ourselves telling ghost stories and stopped that conversation quickly, moving on to how did you and your husband/boyfriend meet? That was the night we followed the crocodile tracks too.... Of all the crew at the Station, I got to know the head coordinator the best while on these walks. She is 31 years old and single, a Costa Rican born to Chilean parents who moved the family to Canada when she was age 17. She is now is a committed wild life biologist. When this area’s turtle season ends, CAROLINA ARANCIBIA will go work in northern CR on another turtle project there.

What advice would you give the citizens of the USA?

“When you vote, think about the future and children. Don’t vote for yourself. Do yourself a favor and help your future family. Know your facts and be confident about your choices. Do not be influenced by the politics of religion because politics uses religion for control. Even with a politician of your own religion, put that aside and instead use your common sense and history’s lessons.”

She ends by saying, “I wish I could ask Americans the questions; why don’t Americans vote or take the time to inform themselves about politics and promises? And why do Americans always go by promises and not results and facts? Carolina has a wise smile and confident way about her. This is a country of smiling faces – from the all-knowing Buddha smile of the sloth to the Ticos themselves. There is some sort of connection here and everyone seems to know it. We see it in action but just can’t explain it. In a world out of kilter, all the pieces seem to fit together just right here.

Today when I left the station to enjoy my first day off, I walked a puddled and slippery trail to a small road under an arch of trees grown up from a “living fence” (the Life Force/God is so strong here that even a fence post stuck in the ground grows!), hiking in a fierce downpour to the main road to catch the *Colectivo* for the bone-jarring two hour ride in the back of a truck on a hard wooden bench, across 36 kilometers of terribly pitted roads, 10 or 11 rushing rivers, under thick jungle canopy into town. Constant rain does not make for good roads – even repairs just get washed away in the next big storm. I was not looking forward to that ride. Then, just as I approached the bus stop in the pouring rain I saw a brand new King Cab pick-up parked right in the road. A couple from Utah had just finished changing their flat tire. There was reggae playing on the truck’s stereo. The man wore a black t-shirt with 420 printed in big letters. They asked if I wanted a ride into town?

Right on time. Perfect.



Carolina Arancibia with baby Olive ridley sea turtle.

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WOMEN'S INTERNATIONAL LEAGUE FOR PEACE AND FREEDOM

WILPF Fresno, PO Box 5114, Fresno, CA 93755

WILPF Page for December compiled by Elizabeth Swearingen • es015@csufresno.edu

Graphic by Lincoln Cushing

CALENDAR

Saturday, December 2, 10:00 a.m. – 4:00 p.m.
WILPF 2006 HOLIDAY PEACE CRAFT FAIR
First Congregational Church, 2131 N. Van Ness

WOMEN IN BLACK

Wednesday, December 6, noon to 1:00 p.m.
Fresno Courthouse, Downtown Fresno

Wednesday, December 27, 3:00 p.m.
Stir it Up with WILPF on KFCF

Local Water Issues Speaker Program, Chris Eacock, Bureau of Reclamation
Thursday, January 18, 7:00 p.m.
Unitarian Universalist Church, 4144 North Millbrook

Please send news, articles, and photos for the January WILPF page to Jan Slagter by December 15. <janetsl@csufresno.edu>

WATER BACKGROUND

Chris Eacock, Project Manager at the Bureau of Reclamation, will speak to the basics of water on Thursday, January 18th at 7:00 p.m. at the Unitarian Universalist Church of Fresno, 4144 North Millbrook, and ½ block south of Ashland. He has given this talk to high school students and those requiring background to understand the impact of State and Federal Water Projects. Chris Eacock will review the geography and the science as it pertains to water distribution in California – which has a huge system. Both natural and man made flows will be explained. Chris Eacock has been with the Bureau of Reclamation for 24 years. He holds a degree in agriculture. This is a great opportunity to fortify ourselves to be better able to decide how we need to store water presently and prepare for the future. Lydia Flores, Ellie Bluestein, and Bette Noblett.

UPROOTING RACISM

By Vickie Fouts

At our last meeting of the Uprooting Racism book discussion group it was decided to continue as a group to work on institutional racism in the Fresno area. We talked about expending our education and taking different actions. We would like to do a full day NCBI prejudice reduction workshop, a Metro Ministry Cross-Cultural cluster and recommend people attend the Multi-Faith Exchange.

For actions we talked about a textbook review, work with the new ACLU chapter and the Central California Criminal Justice Committee that is trying to get an independent police auditor and more. It was decided we would also act as a support group for each other and continue our work as allies. We also hope to do another book discussion. We have a waiting list of about 20 who are interested and current members would like to attend sessions they missed. At this time we will again limit the group to women and Vickie Fouts is working on the idea of starting a men's group.

One of the greatest things to come out of our last meeting was an idea from our head facilitator, Francine Oputa. Francine is also director of CSUF's Central Valley Cultural Heritage Institute. Francine offered to work in partnership with the Institute and help in getting organizing support to help with our future work. It will be wonderful to have someone help with all the many details and work needed to keep this group going. It is a great honor for WILPF and our Uprooting Racism group to be offered this partnership because it is a win/win situation for both groups and the community.

Thanks to all who attended the book discussion and the support you gave each other. Thanks to the NCBI facilitators for their excellent work and example.

WILPF & IMMIGRATION

WILPF representatives Ellie Bluestein and Vickie Fouts joined Myrna Martinez Nateras and Estela Galvan with Pan Valley Institute of the American Friends Service Committee and the Coalition for Immigrant Rights of the Central Valley in a meeting with Senator Boxer's field representative, Ameen Khan, on November 6th to discuss the immigration issue. WILPF and Pan Valley representatives talked about how they do not want the border wall to be completed or a guest worker program. What is needed is a just and comprehensive approach to immigration. The apparent racism in the national discussion around immigrations was discussed as well as the desire for immigration policy to include civil and human rights along with family values as keeping families together. Representatives lobbied for the need for US Foreign policy to include positive relationships with Latin American countries along with the need to work together on economic and political issues for fair and just immigration solutions. Mr. Khan agreed to share these thoughts and ideas with Senator Boxer.

WILPF MEMBERSHIP

Vickie Fouts will be updating a new directory of WILPF members to be available after January. Members who are behind in dues, we hope you will renew your membership to keep WILPF strong. Women are invited to join our membership and enjoy a subscription to national WILPF publication, PEACE AND FREEDOM and local participation in peace efforts, decision making, and events. Anyone interested may contact Vickie Fouts at socialjustice@sti.net or by phone at 658-8260.

FEMINISM AND WAR CONFERENCE

By Elizabeth Swearingen

The three day conference, held from October 19-21 at the University of Syracuse, NY brought together feminist scholars and activists from around the world in a series of panels, speakers, protest rallies, art installation and fashion show to address the impact of neo-colonialism, militarism, and war on the daily lives of women inside and outside the U.S. Peace activist Cindy Sheehan opened the symposium to a crowd of over 1,000 – all expressing a deep frustration with current Bush administration policies in the war in Iraq.

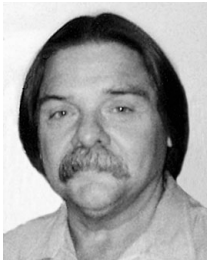
Panelists particularly highlighted how the war in Iraq is a war on women. Topics included anti-militarist organizing, sexism and war, militarized motherhood, western media, cultural representations of war, religion and war, violence at Abu Gharib Prison, and thinking feminism in a time of war. Plenary speakers included prison abolition activist Angela Davis, former African National Congress member Patricia McFadden, anti-militarist author Cynthia Enloe and Margo Okazawa-Rey working in the Women's Center for Legal Aid and Counseling in Palestine. Angela Davis spoke about the link between militarization and racial prisonization within the U.S. arguing that because the reality of war is not representable; its abstraction feeds the current U.S. moral panic and xenophobia extending into racism and anti-immigrant sentiments. Davis argued that the work of feminism is imagining a world without slavery, de facto segregation, violence and militarism in order to see through ideological veils that perpetuate war on America's past and present. Cynthia Enloe addressed how post war narratives militarize U.S. memory which in turn seeds the next war. Enloe spoke of how militarism is commodified within civilian ad agencies serving military recruitment practices such as targeting mothers as influencing sons to join the military. Margo Okazawa-Rey spoke of the need to connect heads, hands, and hearts working at all levels in solidarity against predatory violence of U.S. against all of humanity. Okazawa-Rey asked the ques-

tion "What kind of security should the U.S. seek?" In answering this, she shifted the current xenophobic U.S. responses of homeland security to securing real security within the U.S. in living wage, health care, education, sound environmental policies, and protection from avoidable harm.

Particularly engrossing was the panel discussion entitled "Every Bomb Dropped on Iraq Falls on U.S. Cities: Organizers Speak on the Impact of War on Women within the U.S." This panel was in relation to Martin Luther King's earlier statement "Every Bomb dropped in Vietnam falls on Harlem." Panelists explored how the U.S. military-industrial costs are draining domestic budgets and inner city social services. Harlem Activist Nellie Hester Bailey spoke on how imperialist wars are waged on the backs of working class within America. Bailey argued that an analysis of the serious economic crisis building because of the war debt has the potential to throw the world into global recession. Especially affected are non-profit social service agencies hesitant to speak up against domestic cut backs because their continued funding is dependent upon Bush administration appropriations. Panelists argued it is vital to see the consequences of war in broader context by connecting local consequences to global policies and practices.

As representative from WILPF and CSUF Women's Studies, Elizabeth Swearingen spoke about the cultural support for war embedded within performances of past wars and war gaming. Her presentation entitled "Performing Gender: Patriots, Warriors, and Ladies" focused on an ethnography of Civil War reenacting within California pre and post 9/11. Swearingen argued that gendering of war militarized masculinity and recast the American Civil War in racist ideologies of white privilege expressed as Anglo brotherhood, mystical mothering, Victorian femininity combining to form nationalist American pseudo-salvation made mythical in relation to the violence of 9/11. Romanticized notions of gender, nation, and sexuality allowed men and women to participate in notions of glory, honor, and nobility as civic extensions of familial love, duty, loyalty, patriotism, and right causes. Connecting with Enloe's work on how war is remembered and memorialized, the American Civil War as a form of pedagogy extends into new imaginings of war replacing critical interpretive frameworks with heritage industries. Ritualized performances of past war served as a vehicle for the embodiment of war within nationalism. Heritage as the performance of war presented a powerful hidden curriculum that embodied claims of white exceptionalism and entitlement in the celebration of neoconservative American heritage united in its conservative patriarchal and militarized identity. Students expressed that because Civil War as living history 'looked, smelled, and tasted real' it must be real history – in effect seducing students into hyper-aroused states in which the racial, gendered, and militarized subtexts were obscured.

The conference concluded with more than 450 conference attendees endorsing a call to action to "End U.S. Wars Now!" by standing in solidarity to sign the following statement released to the public and the press "The pretext of 'rights of women' has been and is being used by the current U.S. administration to justify its wars of aggression. We, participants at the 2006 Feminism and War Conference at Syracuse University, condemn the neocolonial, racist, and imperialist wars launched by the U.S. We join with world-wide anti-war movements in calling for an end to these wars that are, in fact, worsening the conditions of life for women in the invaded and occupied countries – and in the U.S. We are in solidarity with all who are suffering from the consequences of U.S. and U.S-funded military aggression. We pledge our renewed commitment to end these wars, and we seek the commitment of all those in agreement to actively mobilize against them."



The Ongoing Wave of Secrecy Inside California's Sub-constitutional Prison System

By Boston Woodard

Access is knowledge. Once again, Gov. Arnold Schwarzenegger has decided to veto another Senate Bill (the 3rd since taking office) that would have restored some of the access into state prisons to members of the media. The same access that was afforded to them for decades without incident.

Senate Bill — 1521, by Sen. Gloria Romero, D-Los Angeles, would have lifted the shroud now covering the prison system. SB-1521 would have improved media access, allowing prisoner interviews and re-implementing a policy that allowed prisoners and members of “legitimate” media outlets to correspond confidentially. This method of correspondence worked well for decades, allowing prisoners to inform the media of the other side of the story without fear of being punished. The public now only hears what the California Department of Corrections and Rehabilitation (CDCR) wants it to hear

Dortch was restrained with chains and leg irons then held in a tub full of scalding water with long handled scrub brushes until his skin began to literally melt off his body.

In the 1990's, a media ban was written into policy after the CDCR and various politicians duped the public and the Office of Administrative Law (OAL) that approves policy changes, into believing that media access was a “safety” and “security” problem. The CDCR also claimed full media access would make “celebrities” and “big-wheels” out of certain prisoners.

The media had broader access to California's prison system until 1995. Embarrassed by media reports about Pelican Bay State Prison and other prisons, Gov. Pete Wilson implemented restrictions on journalists greatly impeding their ability to report the full story. Gov. Gray Davis refused to lift those restrictions prior to being booted from office by the citizens of California. And now, Gov. Schwarzenegger wants to continue the wave of secrecy.

In January 1995, a federal judge declared that Pelican Bay prison officials conditionally applied unconstitutional, “cruel and unusual punishment” on mentally ill prisoners in it's notorious Security Housing Unit (SHU). Another federal ruling found that the entire California prison system was operating below minimum constitutional standards.

Also in the mid-1990s, the CDCR was dealing with the FBI investigating the use of lethal force at Corcoran State Prison. Several employees were placed on administrative leave, including an associate warden. Corcoran prison officials allowed lower ranking lieutenants and sergeants to “stack the tiers” in certain cell-blocks with rival gang members. When the prisoners were released to the exercise yard and began to fight, perimeter (gun tower) guards would shoot them with high-powered rifles. The “code of silence” used and condoned by the California Correctional Peace Officer's Association (CCPOA) exacerbated matters causing rank-and-file staff to be pressured into silence.

About eleven years ago, prisoner Vaughn Dortch's story made big media when it was reported that Pelican Bay staff tortured him. Dortch was restrained with chains and leg irons then held in a tub full of scalding water with long handled scrub brushes until his skin began to literally melt off his body. Dortch was scalded over 70 percent of his body and his story made national headlines. The national news show 60 Minutes aired a scathing report about the torture of prisoner Vaughn Dortch.

There were no shortages of scandals throughout the department of corrections in the 1990s. Gov. Wilson and prison officials went on the fast track to prevent the public from knowing what goes on behind the thick walls of the CDCR. Scheming to limit media access policies as quickly as possible, they began to dupe the public into believing that prisoners' access to the media would gain them “celebrity status” or “big-wheel status.”

Adding to the concern of prison officials and the governor's office was the mounting overcrowding, medical and mental health problems throughout the entire multi-billion dollar prison system.

Prison authorities were quick to use convicts like Charles Manson as examples that prisoners were misusing the media. They claimed that Manson used the media frequently to be interviewed by national television talk shows and tabloid programs that are often

presented in tandem with sympathetic interviews with his “fans” in the free society. The CDCR claimed that as a result there was a surge in Charlie's popularity.

Other rare examples prison officials used to malign media access are the cases of Kody ‘Monster’ Scott and James Johnson, a.k.a. Rick James. Officials blurted that Kody Scott was using the media to promote his book Monster. While he was residing in the SHU in Pelican Bay, it was reported that he used his media access opportunities to interview with CBS and other national and international media. His book was devoted to describing his criminal exploits. The late Rick James, a well known funk and rock musician long before he went to prison, was said to have utilized the media to promote a (then) upcoming album.

The excuses and examples the governor and prison officials use to discredit media access into the prison system are baseless and without merit. These examples are nothing more than ploys to dupe the public into believing that they make for security breaches throughout the prison system. Again, it should be noted that there has never been a case of abuse of privileges by a member of any media outlet or prisoner while a story was being covered. Prison officials are masters of de-

ception and illusion when it comes to covering up their own malfeasance and corruption. Accusing convicts of abusing the media process is there easy button for nearly everything they do. Maligning and punishing prisoners who report deplorable living conditions, overcrowding, and horrid medical and mental health practices is easy for them.

to the superimposed image behind the woman) . That same commercial depicted a supposed prison riot at Pelican Bay approximately ten years ago. This same piece of surveillance tape has been distorted, used and reused hundreds of times by the CCPOA to push it's feel sorry for us agenda while they are laughing all the way to the bank. The reason they keep running the very same piece of video tape in their commercials is because the occurrences depicted are far and few in between. Guards do get hurt, including black eyes. Many of their injuries are almost always due to staff over-reacting to relatively minor incidents. The lamentations spewed by prison officials are false and misleading. California needs prisons and prisons need security. No one's disputing that. But lets keep it real. It is the prison system and those in charge of it who are abusing the media process, not the prisoners.

Once again, Schwarzenegger has terminated an opportunity to focus on real troubles behind the walls by vetoing SB-1521. After two years of legislative hearings, court hearings, lawsuits, severe overcrowding, deplorable medical and mental health issues and much more, it is apparent that the state's prison system is in a true crisis. Keeping the media out will just make matters worse.

It is important that the public make informed choices about the criminal justice system. These choices are all the more critical as the prison population is exploding and the CDCR consumes a growing share of the tax dollar, now nearly \$9 billion annually. It is unfortunate that the governor and prison officials have acted again to restrict media access and the public from the truth.

Expressed best by Peter Y. Sussman, journalist/author; co-authoring Committing Journalism with Dannie Martin:

“Freedom of the press was enshrined in our Constitution specifically to guarantee the independence of the news media to report on issues of public concern. That independence does not exist when the very officials whose actions are being scrutinized are allowed to direct the news coverage.”

Allowing the media more access won't fix all the problems, hut it will certainly shed some much needed light of the dirty details. Sen. Romero's SB-1521 breezed through the state legislature only to be clobbered by Schwarzenegger. SB-1521 would have required the CDCR, upon reasonable notice, to permit representatives of the news media to interview prisoners in person, as specified. The bill would have also forbid retaliation against a prisoner for participating in a visit by, or communicating with, a representative of the news media'

Allowing the media more access won't fix all the problems, but it will certainly shed some much needed light on the dirty details.

ception and illusion when it comes to covering up their own malfeasance and corruption. Accusing convicts of abusing the media process is there easy button for nearly everything they do. Maligning and punishing prisoners who report deplorable living conditions, overcrowding, and horrid medical and mental health practices is easy for them.

The guard's union, the CCPOA, perpetuates lies and misinformation all the time. The union uses television and newspaper ads before every big election spending millions of dollars. Bemoaning the state of the prison system with claims of prison guards being “assaulted” and “over-worked” are methods to ingratiate themselves with the public. Nearly all the assaults they speak of, nine per day they claim, are verbal assaults. Not physical. Those claims look great when millions of dollars are spinning them into their favor. Each guard carries a small, usually black, date book issued by the CCPOA in which they clamor to fill with as much overtime they think they can get away with. Some make in excess of \$100,000 a year. An amount of money teachers in California certainly deserve more than a prison guard. This information isn't new, everyone knows this is true, and yet the CCPOA keeps whining and spinning it into a sympathy ploy.

To further bolster their claims the CCPOA's paid-for-commercials use a grandmotherly-looking female guard with a black eye. The image is from many years ago in a maximum security prison setting (according

It is clear without any kind of oversight or accountability, mistreatment, and poor practices have been allowed to perpetuate. Assemblyman Todd Spitzer, R - Orange, said, “We must pass this bill and the governor must sign it if we are going to restore accountability in the Department of Corrections.”

The indomitable insanity of the CDCR kicked in and took control once again of the public's right to know what goes on behind prison walls. In the twisted logic of the CDCR, good policies such as media access that actually benefit the public, are bad. Bad policies that conform to the CDCR's agenda are good. Silence is golden.

The entire prison system begs for severe, fundamental reform. A good place to start would have been with the active adoption of full media access to state prisons and it's charges. The most vital element in the penal system's ultimate reform, however, is the continuation of uncensored voices of prisoners, voices from inside the system.

It is a foregone conclusion that voters will one day be faced with a billion-plus dollar state prison bailout.

###

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.

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Fresno Unified Incorporated

By Larry Moore

When Fresno Unified Superintendent Mike Hanson spoke to a standing room only crowd of parents, students, teachers, administrators – lots and lots of administrators – and interested community members in the Fresno High School library in mid-November, he announced that he and district staff were there to gather input from the community. They wanted to hear people's ideas, to share in a frank exchange, in short – to converse.

He then proceeded to lecture the crowd for the next 40 minutes without interruption, most of the time it was hard to remember he was even talking about children in classrooms.

It was much the same the previous night when he debuted his monologue before the school board, saying with a straight face, "Our core business processes are not aligned to improve efficiency and customer satisfaction."

Leapfrogging from "singular data point" to the "data dashboard" and back again via "thought leaders" and a "laser-like focus," Hanson's *bizspeak* thoroughly revealed his mindset and values, culminating in his praise for Microsoft's "corporate leadership" tour.

In short, our schools' \$280,000-a-year superintendent apparently sees himself as the CEO of Fresno Unified *Incorporated*. His downtown administrators are upper management; principals and other school site administrators are mid-level managers; teachers are factory floor supervisors; students are the workers, and the product is test scores.

He has reduced education to "student achievement as a system."

District Action Plan

The focus of the school board and Fresno High presentations is Hanson's "District Improvement Action Plan." Two more community meetings are scheduled in December (*see box*).

Unfortunately, parents and teachers are being included in development of Hanson's plan only at the final hour. Three short public meetings in November and December, a few tweaks, and it's off to the school board for approval in early January. A truly inclusive process would start, include throughout and finish with in-depth conversations with the people most impacted by the impending decisions: students, parents and teachers.

However, the really substantive decisions have already been made and implemented. If one attends either of this month's forums – and it is quite valuable to do so – please take note of three factors:

- The Action Plan's "Targeted Improvement Actions" are already in place,
- Nowhere in the presentation is the term School Site Council to be found,
- No specific goals for Community Outreach are proposed.

It appears Hanson does not want real community involvement. School site councils are the democratic method for community involvement in public education created in 1988 by the state legislature, but they directly conflict with the top-down corporate management model favored by the CEO of FUSD Inc.

School site councils are elected bodies of parents, teachers, community leaders and, in secondary schools, students. Their purpose is to develop school-specific spending priorities based on an annual needs assessment of the student body. The legislature created these councils to insure community involvement in schools, particularly to see that education funds reach the classroom and are not siphoned off by administrators.

However, CEO Hanson imposed his "Single Plan for Student Achievement" late in the 2005-06 school year, overriding the site councils and centralizing the decision-making process. He also embarked on unprecedented levels of siphoning of funds with the largest expansion of school bureaucracy in FUSD history.

Meanwhile, last month the district's school site councils were given a Nov. 30 deadline to "approve" the downtown-mandated spending plan for their schools. So far off

the tracks is the annual process, that councils were directed last year to *not* draft new plans and budgets for 2006-07, and they are now being told they must approved a 2006-07 Addendum to a "Board-Approved 2005-07" plan.

Lost and nearly forgotten in Hanson's contortions of language and the district's manipulations of legal requirements are what matter most: our children's education. Papered over by reams of planning documents is what they need most: the basics, such as reasonable class sizes, adequate materials and safe, well-maintained campuses.

Again, despite all of the inherent flaws, people should attend the district's forums to observe the lecture, wade through the bureaucratic documents and eventually take the opportunity to remind these highly paid public servants of what matters most.

They need to be reminded the community just voted in overwhelming numbers to support classroom teachers and to restore full funding to programs such as music, libraries and school nurses. The community voted to cut administrative waste. The voters directed the district to listen to the voices of teachers who have spent a lifetime in the classroom and know firsthand what it takes to help students learn.

All Should Attend FUSD District Action Plan Town Hall Meetings

**Roosevelt High School
6-8 p.m., Thursday, Dec. 7**

**Hoover High School
6-8 p.m., Monday, Dec. 11**

**Dinner will NOT be served Cookies, fruit, coffee
and water available**

"Downtown administrators are upper management; principals and other school site administrators are mid-level managers; teachers are factory floor supervisors; students are the workers, and the product is test scores."

Election Wrap-up

The Harder They Fall

By Larry Moore

The results of last month's school board election were nothing short of historic, and not just for those of us directly involved in children's education in Fresno but for all the working families of our community.

Together we stood up for our children's right to a real education that puts classroom needs first. We stood up for workers' rights to organize. We stood up for the voices of classroom teachers, librarians, school nurses, cafeteria workers, bus drivers, custodians, office clerks and more.

We stood up to the local power structure...and won, sweeping all four of the Fresno Unified school board seats in contention.

From the Fresno Business Council to The Fresno Bee, from Juan Arambula and Jim Costa to Pete Mehas and Jim Boren, our opposition had a very long list of backers dominated by our homegrown crop of neo- and theo-con leaders. Together they launched a series of vicious attacks on the Fresno Teachers Association, Service Employees International Union and organized labor as a whole.

What they failed to understand is that the political landscape of our community is shifting beneath their feet. What they failed to estimate is the depth of community support for organized labor and community disdain for any group of self-appointed "stewards" of our city. And what they failed to anticipate was the response from Labor and the community.

Labor United

As one old Labor song puts it, "Workers' strength cannot be broken when unions be combined/Stand up tall and stand together, victory for you prevails." Stand up we did. FTA, SEIU and the affiliated unions of the Central Labor Council worked hard to reach our members and the community at large.

Between all of our efforts, hundreds of people walked precincts throughout town or joined phone banks, resulting in tens of thousands of meaningful conversations about the issues and candidates.

SEIU broke new ground in Fresno with its SOL (Strengthening Our Lives) program, an intensive outreach program to Spanish-language households. Their inspiring effort led thousands of citizens to put their faith back into the electoral process – and they were rewarded with a stunning victory for their neighborhood schools.

Arambula Drops \$100,000

Ironically, leading the attack on Labor right up to the election – and even afterwards – was Assemblymember Juan Arambula, D-Fresno. Besides the open assault during a debate on right wing radio (*see Community Alliance*, November 2006), he orchestrated a press conference with former county superintendent of education Pete Mehas. At the event Mehas denounced labor unions and publicly withdrew his endorsement of incumbents Dr. Tony Vang and Valerie Davis for having signed the SEIU pledge which recognizes workers' basic right to organize.

So intent (some might say obsessed) was Arambula on controlling the outcome of this election that he took \$100,000 from his Arambula for Assembly 2006 account to contribute \$65,000 and loan another \$35,000 to the Voices for Excellence in Fresno Unified PAC. Additionally,

before moving money to the Voices PAC he personally loaned his own campaign account \$30,000 which now appears to be around \$17,500 in the hole. Similarly, the Voices account appears to be in the red by more than \$15,000.

It's fair to ask, does Juan Arambula truly represent the citizens of his district? Are the needs of working families – of our children – his number one priority? Or does he now choose to serve the powerful, the elite?

Final Results

In the end, the Voices slate of incumbents Louisa Medina and Pat Barr and challengers Stafford Parker and Julie Hornback were soundly defeated. Judging from their election night comments, the thumping the Voices slate candidates received at the polls came as a surprise to their incumbents and Arambula alike.

It was a nearly 20-point landslide in Sunnyside where incumbent Valerie Davis was the top vote-getter with 34,615 votes to challenger Stafford Parker's 18,918.

For the Edison High area the difference between winner and loser amounted to 13 percentage points. Challenger Cal Johnson received 30,289 votes to incumbent Luisa Medina's 23,413.

There was a 13-point difference in the McLane High trustee area, too. Incumbent Dr. Tony Vang garnered 30,936 votes to challenger Julie Hornback's 23,704.

Newly elected Bullard High area trustee Michelle Arax Asadoorian's seven-point victory was a major win in political terms. She earned 23,194 to incumbent Pat Barr's 19,310. Two other candidates captured the remaining 12,835 votes cast.

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FCNV Page Editor: Brandon Hill

THE WELCH REPORT

By Jack H. Welch, M.D.



FIRING POTENT WORDS FROM A TANK

President Bush has said he will enforce the letter and spirit of the Geneva Conventions. One hopes he will stay true to his word.

"My great respect for the conventions developed not from afar, but from the ground, in the Second World War, at the dirty-boot level, where the bullet meets the soldier." So said Arthur Hadley, a young Army lieutenant who had the job of making clear to the enemy, via loudspeaker or leaflet-filled artillery shells, that the accords would be honored: "Over and over from Normandy to the Elbe River, in tanks and in foxholes, my sergeants and I would say in German, 'You will be well handled according to the Geneva Conventions'".

Noting that Lt. Hadley spoke German, the Army placed him in a German-speaking unit, some of whom made broadcasts, others interviewed captured German soldiers to discover ways to damage their morale. "Through interviews with prisoners, we soon discovered that reminding Germans that they would be treated according to the Geneva Conventions was one of the most effective ways to persuade them to surrender."

Their broadcasts took on the following structure: first, they'd outline what they knew about the German position; second, they'd describe the weight of artillery and air power that was about to fall on them, and finally they'd end with assurances that those troops who surrendered would be well treated under the Geneva Conventions.

As a "tanker" Lt. Hadley hoped to get loudspeakers mounted on tanks where they would be mobile and more effective during an attack, in which he did succeed. After the Battle of the Bulge he received the O.K. to mount a loudspeaker on a light tank of the Second Armored Division, and at the same time a loudspeaker was placed on a Third Armored Division tank (unfortunately, the agent doing this latter was soon killed, leaving the "talking tank" of the Second Armored Division as a pioneer). At last our message could be broadcast during an attack.

The "talking tank" worked remarkably well. The loudspeaker was mounted on the forward slope of the turret, partly covered by a metal casing that resisted light machine-gun fire. The generator was set over the engine in the rear, totally covered. Having trained as a tanker, Lt. Hadley was familiar with tank combat; he could work the radios and fire the guns. He usually placed the tank as no. 3 in an attack column where it could broadcast immediately without interfering with the two point tanks ahead of it.

They were a success. In three weeks fighting beyond the Rhine in 1945 the Second Armored Division credited the talking tank for the surrender of 5,000 prisoners. The willingness of other tankers to hold their fire allowed surrenders a chance to take place. Germans had time to weigh the alternatives: an attack from our tanks versus imprisonment under the Geneva Conventions. In this way American and German lives were saved. The British had a similar strategy, though they did not use loudspeakers.

"We face a different enemy from the one we faced half a century ago. But I've seen firsthand the power of Geneva Conventions, both to compel surrenders and to broadcast for the world our determination to live up to our highest ideals." (Source: Op-ed article The New York Times September 25, 2006 by Arthur T. Hadley, former assistant executive editor at the New York Herald Tribune)

The US vs. John Lennon

The true story of the U.S. Government's attempts to silence John Lennon, the musical and cultural icon and advocate for peace. Presented by Fresno Filmworks and sponsored, in part, by the FCNV.

December 8th: 5 pm & 8 pm at the Tower Theater

Tickets \$10, \$8 seniors and students.

More info. @ www.fresnofilmworks.com

Stir it Up

**Wednesday December 13th,
3 p.m. 88.1 FM**

Michael Black Bull and tentative guest Bernard Navarro discuss American Indian activism.

Need meeting space?

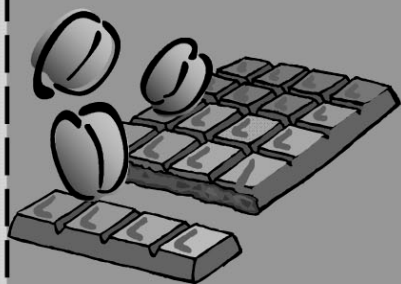
The FCNV has comfortable space to rent for meetings and other events. Fees are low and negotiable.

Give a Gift in the Spirit of Peace and Justice!

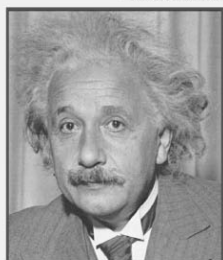
at the FCNV (M-F: 11am - 3pm)

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You cannot simultaneously prevent and prepare for war.
—Albert Einstein



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"You cannot simultaneously prevent and prepare for war" canvas bags \$15



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\$40 - Large
\$32 - Medium**

Second Wednesday Video Series:

December 13th

Trudell

Trudell presents the engaging life story of Native American poet-prophet-activist John Trudell and his heartfelt message of active, personal responsibility to the earth, all of its inhabitants, and our descendants.

Trudell, past chairman of the American Indian Movement also took part in the 21 month occupation of Alcatraz Island, an act creating international recognition for the American Indian cause.

Noon & 7:00 p.m. - FCNV

Join us for a potluck at 6:30 p.m.

Jacob M. Weisberg
Attorney at Law

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In Memoriam - A Tribute to Frances Sivak

Based on the reflections of Nancy Marsh, as told to Richard Stone, with additional input by Nancy Waidtlow

Frances was so self-effacing, most people had no idea of the quantity or quality of her work. She decided early on that life is purposeful and the purpose of her life was to help the poor. And she did that her entire adult life.

Frances grew up in a small town in Michigan. By the 8th grade she was questioning the conventions of her society: on being taught about the internment camps for Japanese Americans during World War II, she understood that she couldn't trust the official moralilty of the country. By high school graduation, she was questioning even the social expectations of her era: after hearing a newly-engaged friend gush about looking for a new washing machine, she wondered, "Is that all there is to life?" She decided marriage was not her goal, and instead became a teacher.

In the 1960's "Vatican II" ushered in a new era for the Catholic Church, emphaasizing bringing the Gospel and better life to the poor. Frances joined a holy order, not so much from religiosity as from the thought of finding others equally committed to her social vocation. She gave up her regular teaching position and founded a Montessori school in one of Detroit's poorest sections. She made it a point to train neighborhood resi-

dents to run the school, and typical of her lack of self-concern, worked her way out of the job.

By that time, her order was taking on a more tradition-bound cast, and reading in the Catholic Worker newspaper that the UFW needed a pre-school teacher for its La Paz headquarters, Frances fearlessly uprooted herself and come to California. Over the next several years she took on a variety of roles for the Union, in La Paz and Delano, and it was during this time that we met. One wonderful adventure we shared was going to Telpeneca, Nicaragua, a sister-city of Fresno, to help build a school in 1989.

Soon afterwards, Frances moved back to Detroit to see about her aging parents. Leave it to Frances to find work teaching ESL to Chaldeans, who I didn't know even existed any more, along with Montessori and Adult Education.

In 1996 Hugo Morales at Radio Bilingue needed a reliable person to coordinate the execution of several grants. He and I agreed that Frances would be ideal, so she mde another trek half-way across the country, this time bringing her ailing father with her. As she did wherever she worked, Frances made herself beloved. Every day she would bring in pan dulces; and then when her ideas about nutrition were modernized, it was fruit. And, as always, she was the most organized person around. She retired 3 years ago, and long afterwards a contact address was needed and there it was in Frances' old files.

Now for Frances there was no difference between life and work, so retirement was just a word for moving to the next job. She had already been working on her Adult Ed. credential, and she began teaching basic education to mothers of kids in HeadStart, in a wonderful proram called EvenStart. Again, for her there was no distinction between teachers and students, clients and family. She brought people home with her who needed a place to live for a while; and when (as a life-long Democrat—even during the time she was mostly involved with people from the Communist Party) she would walk precincts, it was as much to canvass the people and needs of the neighborhood as to get a particular candidtate elected.

This is not to imply that Frances was a work-a-holic She loved her house and her cats. She was an avid reader, especially of American History; she was an active member of the Folklore Society; she regularly went hiking and camping. In recent hears she had joined the

U.U. Church, for the companionship and her regard for Rev. Jessup, and because (as she would say) she just loved Jesus.

A project dear to her heart the last years was the Living Wage Campaign. It irked her terribly that in a nation of opulence people could toil day-in-day-out and not be able to afford the basics of life. In this up-hill battle against the whole capitalist mentality, her style of gently persistence was the best bet. But with both Frances and the other primary leader of the campaign, Larry Trullinger, dying so close together, there is a big void to fill.

Frances leaves a void in my life, too.We had so much in common (except temperments). Our politics, our love of being in nature and of the arts, our choice for modest lilving. We expected to be friends together as we grew old.

But I miss also the quirky differences that made her Frances. What ex-nun but Frances would say, "Even if religion isn't true, we need it and we'd make it up, and "Evolution is God's design." Or, having no bad habits to worry over, who else would turn to Weight Watchers as a self-improvement regimen; and at about the same time would declare her intention to learn poker "because I need some more fun in my life."

It is hard to believe that such an obstinate believer in the goodness of life, such a willing participant in making happen the goodness she expected, is dead because her seat-belt didn't fit her frame properly. It would take Frances to help me make that into a silk purse.



Becoming Peace

(Based on the Teachings of Raja Yoga Meditation)

Om Shanti, Om means I am a soul, Shanti means peace

Om Shanti, I am a peaceful soul

Realize you are a soul, separate from thy physical costume

Realize you are a soul and peace is the true nature of the soul

I do not have to ask for peace or search for peace

Because peace is within me, it is my eternal religion

My real home is a place of complete peace...silence, golden silence

My form is light and I am a child of the Ocean of Peace

The waves of the Ocean bestow on me the gift of a tranquil mind

Awakened as I am with this awareness of peace divine

That is rooted in purity, truth, bliss and limitless love

I know this peace keeps me stable, steady and safe

No matter how many storms of peacelessness surround me

Thios peace has become my power, so I radiate rays of peace in the world

Now this peace is mine, and may it become yours

And together we can transform the world into a heavenly abode

Poetry Corner

We are now receiving a flow of submissions. We can only print a couple at a time, and not all that come in; but we are glad to get new material. This month, two from contributors with strongly contrasting styles. Bryan Medina is well-known locally as a dramatic performance artist; Veena Kapoor (yes, Sudarshan's wife) is the presiding spirit of a meditation "family".I think you'll be able to figure out who wrote which.

The American Bar & Grill

Welcome to the American Bar and Grill!
What white conservative, right wing, neo-political spin can we serve for you today?

For refreshments we have:
The North Korea "Blaster",
Guantanamo Bay "Surprise",
The "No S.S.I. For You" Whiskey Shot,
The "Vietnam Again"
Tang Refresher and the "Get ya at the Pump" Guzzler Ale.

Today's soup is: "Keepin' Blacky Down", followed by a fresh salad of "Stickin' it to the Poor".
Mmn-mm...It's so good!

Having Lunch?
Why not try our Tom Delay Special
pork bologna sandwiches cooked over open flames with ranch flavor "Bull Chips" and a warm drink of
Who's your Daddy Now" latte'.

For dinner, we have a wonderful selection of choice meals to chose from; like our Village Idiot Stake & Texas Oil Shrimp alongside our own blackened "Condi" rice!

Next, is our costumer favorite "9/11" Al-Qaida Charbroiled Ribs, (So good, they disappear right before your eyes!) that come with a huge helping of Patriot Act fries and "We got 'em" Insane Husane Coleslaw!

...We also have the Donald Rumsfeld Rump Roast simmered in our W.M.D. Glaze with a side of our piled high Abugrade Prison Mashed Potatoes and vegetables.

And for those dessert lovers, after one of our hardy meals;
there is our San Francisco treat of "Gay Marriage" tapioca!
That comes with our crowd favorite "Civil Rights" frosty.
Or
You can have the Tony Blair "Yes Master" vanilla ice cream.

We thank you and hope that you enjoyed your stay.
Y'all come on back now,
ya hear...

PEACE AND SOCIAL JUSTICE CALENDAR OF EVENTS

Saturday December 2 10 AM - 4 PM

The Women's International League for Peace and Freedom hosts its Annual Holiday Craft Faire on Saturday, December 2nd from 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. at the Red Church which is the First Congregational Church at 2131 N. Van Ness between Clinton and McKinley. Admission, entertainment and children's activities are all free. It is the place to find unique handmade holiday gifts and amazing art and creative crafts. Join us for lunch of homemade soups, breads and desserts For more information contact Ellie Bluestein at 559- 229-9807 or Joan Poss at 559-227-6134.

Saturday, December 2 7:30 PM

UTAH PHILLIPS. That first class rascalion and rabble-rouser, folksinger, humorist, and storyteller. Fresno Art Museum 7:30pm. Frank Moschella will open.

UTAH PHILLIPS is a first-class rascalion and rabble-rouser, as well as a folksinger, humorist, archivist, and storyteller. Pete Seeger says: "If you have never heard Utah Phillips live, you're in for a treat. He's fantastic. Unique. You'll feel better ever after, as you recall him. There's no one like him." Rolling Stone: "Call him a conspicuous enigma: a canny, uncanny blend of Mark Twain and Will Rogers, with a touch of P.T. Barnum and more than a hint of Huck Finn. Utah Phillips is also one of the most important songwriters to be found in North America."

Tickets are available at these independently owned stores: The Movies Video Store; Patrick's Music, National Hardware or online at www.fresnofolkconcerts.com The Museum Gift Shoppe carries tickets for the concerts at the Fresno Art Museum. Or send a check made out to FFS and send with an enclosed SASE to Pat Wolk, 6661 N. Forkner, Fresno, 93711.

Thursday, December 7 Social Hour at 5:30 PM and the Dinner begins at 6:30 PM

The Fresno Metro Ministry's 36th Anniversary Dinner and Awards will be held at the Hope Lutheran Church, 364 E. Barstow. This event honors three to four persons who personify Metro's values. The event is also a major fundraiser, as well as a time of celebration and renewing friendships with others who want to create a better community for everyone. Tickets are \$35. <http://www.fresnometmin.org/>

Thursday, December 7 7:30 PM

The Fresno Poet's Association presents B. H. Fairchild at the Fresno Art Museum, 2233 N First. For more information see www.fresnopoets.org for further information or call 226-1528.

Friday, December 8 5 PM and 8 PM

Fresno Filmworks presents "The U.S. vs. John Lennon" at the Tower Theatre. This new documentary about Lennon focuses on his transformation from Beatle to antiwar activist and Nixon's campaign to deport him in 1972.? Tickets can be purchased at the Tower Theatre Box Office, 815 E. Olive Ave., The Movies, 1435 N. Van Ness Ave., WineStyles 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 December 8 6:30 PM

Another World is Possible –A presentation about the World Social Forum. Hear from local activists who attended the 2006 World Social Forums in Caracus, Venezuela and Karachi, Pakistan. Mike Rhodes, Pam Whalen, Simone Whalen-Rhodes, Jean Hays, Dan Yaseen, and Camille Russell will show a PowerPoint presentation featuring their pictures, analysis, and impressions. There will be a potluck dinner at 6:30 PM, and the presentation will be at 7:30 PM. This event will be at the Visalia Friends Meetinghouse 17208 Avenue 296, Visalia, 93292. For more info. contact Merrily Davies at 781-6296.

Sunday, December 10 10 AM

Human Rights Day. Gather at Justice Corner, March to

the Trade Center, Mexican Consulate to Federal/State Building. Route: Gather at "C" and Fresno street, March east on Fresno Street to Fulton Mall north to face trade center, march around to Stanislaus street (east) south on N street to Merced. East on Merced to O south on O to federal and state buildings. Come dressed as a character - a victim or oppressor of human rights. For example: Iraq war, Viet Nam, Darfur, Oaxaca, a political prisoner, China, United States, Mexico, Latino American, and School of the Americas etc.

Bring noise makers, posters and be ready to inform others who your character is, what has happened to them, or what violations they have committed.

For example:
Mohamed Taha Mohamed Ahmed, a well-known and outspoken Sudanese journalist and social commentator was kidnapped from his home in Kober by unknown masked individuals. On 6 September Mr. Taha's decapitated body was found in the Fetaih Alaqalien area of Kalakla district. Abu Hafs al-Sudani, purporting to lead an African branch of al Qaeda, claimed responsibility on for the beheading. SOAT report from Sept 8 and Source:
http://www.humanrightsfirst.org/International_justice/darfur/table/ngo-table.aspx

For the past 13 years, more than 400 women have been murdered or "disappeared" in Ciudad Juárez. In a number of these cases, the women had been mutilated or severely beaten before they were killed. Some had even had their nipples cut off, or their torsos were dismembered. In a majority of the cases, authorities have not determined who was responsible for the crimes and at least 34 of the victims remain unaccounted for today. <http://hrw.org/doc/?t=americas>

For more information contact Comit  No Nos Vamos at 497-0206 or 268-2261.

Sunday, December 10 4 - 5:30 PM

Peace Fresno and La Raza Law Student Association of the San Joaquin College of Law are co-sponsoring an educational forum on the new Military Commissions Act of 2006. The forum will be moderated by Jeffrey G. Purvis, James K. and Carol Sellers Herbert Professor of Constitutional Law and will be held at the San Joaquin College of Law, located at 901 5th Street, Clovis. For more info. contact Dan Yaseen 432-3445 danyaseen@sbcglobal.net or Steve Malm 264-9122 SteveDM88@aol.com

Tuesday, December 19 7:00 PM

Polly Victor will address Peace Fresno on the work of the Friends Committee for National Legislation. At the Fresno Center for Non Violence, 1584 N Van Ness at McKinley. All are welcome.

Monday, December 25 11:30 AM - 1:30 PM

Join the Santas for Peace at the Peace Corner, Blackstone and Shaw. For more information go to the Peace Fresno website at: www.peacefresno.org

Saturday, December 30

6th Annual Winter Concert, original music by Lyquid Amber Fresno Art Museum, Bonner Auditorium, 2233 N. First St. Fresno, CA Hans York, Evo Bluestein, Eva Scow, Kevin Hill
Tickets at the door (\$20)

As Lyquid Amber prepares for its 6th Annual Winter Concert, we are celebrating the original music that has developed over 8 years, since Hans York came from Germany to visit with Evo in California. This December we our recording our second album which will include our newest member, Eva Scow on violin, though she is not on the album that you will be playing on your show. Shortly to be graduating from high school, she is already making a name for herself. Besides performing with Lyquid Amber, she can be heard on David Grisman's latest "Tone Poets" cd or performing Brazilian music with Mike Marshall. For more information, see: <http://lyquidamber.com/>

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15???

Out of Iraq

By Vickie M. Fouts

The Peace & Freedom Party, at their State Central Committee meeting in Fresno, CA on November 12, 2006, passed an “Out of Iraq” Resolution based on the George McGovern-William Polk plan.

Their resolution reads: “The Peace and Freedom Party supports the McGovern-Polk “Out of Iraq” plan, except that we oppose U.S. funding of an Iraqi national police force, and we believe that six months is far too long for a withdrawal that could be accomplished in two weeks. We call upon the elected representatives in the Congress and Senate to put forward legislation immediately to implement the plan, and call upon all anti-war groups, activists and public officials to support the McGovern-Polk plan and work to bring about its implementation and return of troops directly to the United States at an accelerated pace.”

- A summary of the McGovern-Polk plan calls for:
- Withdraw U.S. military forces and private mercenaries with 6 months, beginning in December
 - Terminate all post-war oil contacts and return the Iraqi oil industry to Iraqis
 - Adopt and implement an economic plan that would:
 1. Rebuild Iraqi infrastructure
 2. Build hospitals and school
 3. Close U.S. prisons in Iraq and release POWs
 4. Eliminate U.S. bases in Iraq
 5. Provide financial assistance to create a national reconstruction corps
 6. Provide for an independent audit of all funds spent on the war
 7. Fund reparations to Iraqi civilians
 8. Fund veterans’ services in the U.S.
 9. Rebuild Babylon (restoration of damaged archaeological sites)
 10. Finance the creation of a national Iraqi police force (instead of an Army)

It is estimated that this plan would cost \$12 billion or less than two months at the current rate of \$250 million-a-day we are spending on the war.

We urge local peace and social justice groups to join us in a call to urge Congress to support and act on the McGovern-Polk “Out of Iraq” plan.

You can learn more about the McGovern-Polk plan at <www.harpers.org/TheWayOutOfWar.html>. You can learn more about the Peace and Freedom Party of the San Joaquin Valley at <<http://peaceandfreedom-sjv.org>>.

Peace Fresno

By Bill Simon

Peace Fresno conducted an “Impeach Bush” Demonstration at the Dixie Chicks Concert at the Save Mart Center on November 16. We continue our monthly anti-war demonstration at the Peace Corner, Blackstone and Shaw, on the first Friday of each month from 4:30-6:30. Please join us on Friday, December 1. While we hope the recent elections are a step toward peace, we are afraid that we will soon have to add Iran to the growing list of unjust wars in which the U.S. is involved.

We continue to meet each Tuesday at 7:00 pm at the Fresno Center For Non Violence, McKinley and Van Ness. Everyone is always welcome. Of special interest, perhaps, are our non-business meetings. On December 5 we will have a potluck and watch part 2 of “When the Levees Broke.” On December 19, Polly Victor will explain the work of the Friends Committee for National Legislation. In January we will begin planning for our, unfortunately, annual Rally in the Valley, to be held in March.

The Forum on The Military Commissions Act has been postponed and will now be held on Sunday, December 10, at the San Joaquin College of Law, 4:00 to 5:30 pm, 901 5th St in Clovis. Since this is another example of what happens when we give in to the fact that “the only thing we have to fear, is fear itself”, understanding this law is very important. Finally, join the ‘Santas for Peace’ at Blackstone and Shaw on Christmas Day, 11:30 am-1:30 pm. For more information, call 487-2515 or visit our website: www.peacefresno.org . Peace!



Immigrant Rights - What has Changed?

By Dan Yaseen

On November 2, the Pan-Valley Institute and the Central California Coalition of Immigrant Rights sponsored a media briefing on the status of immigration at the Islamic Cultural Center of Fresno. Juan Esparza Loera, editor of *Vida en el valle*, Central California’s leading bilingual newspaper, facilitated a panel discussion. The panelists were Judith Golub, Leonel Flores, and Eduardo Stanley.

The panelists analyzed and discussed the expected immigration legislation in Congress, the impact of the law to build 700-mile fence along U.S. – Mexico border, the effects of anti-immigration rhetoric on the public opinion and the status of the immigrant movement.

Judith Golub of Immigrant Legal Resource Center in San Francisco said, “The House bill HR4437 was bad but the Senate bill S2611 was good because it included the amnesty for the majority of the undocumented immigrants in the United States. The Congress did authorize the construction of the 700 mile fence along the U.S. – Mexico border but no money was allocated”. She predicted, regardless of what happens in the November 7 elections, the lame duck109th Congress will work on allocation of funds for the fence in the remaining two months.

Leonel Flores of Union de Exbracero y de Immigrantes stated, “The Hispanic immigrant community has a lot in common with the Islamic community – 911 has been used against both communities. Both the U.S. and Mexican governments are responsible for the welfare of the millions of immigrants and their children, but they are not fulfilling

their responsibilities. The term *illegal immigrant* itself is prejudicial; they are just hard working people who want to take care of themselves and their families.” He stated that the immigrant marches in April and on the Labor Day were very important. He expressed the hope that the immigrant community would take part in the election process, reminding the audience of the slogan, “Today we march. Tomorrow we vote” which was used during the march. He said, “Now it’s time to vote”.

Eduardo Stanley, editor of the Visalia newspaper, *El Sol*, said “HR4437 puts more restrictions on the immigrant rights. Congress is trying to put pressure on us; we are not going to let them do it. The Latino community is very well organized. We brought thousands of people together in April and on May 1st. We also did the boycott. Many immigrants in this community are getting discouraged because we have not achieved our objectives, so we have lost some support, but the movement has not gone away.” He further stated, “Those politicians, both Democrats and Republicans have betrayed us. They just talk about the immigrant issues but they have not given us anything.”

Since this event, the midterm election on November 7 resulted in electing a Democratic House and Senate. The sponsors of the media briefing, the Pan Valley Institute and the Central California Coalition of Immigrant Rights have expressed some hope that the new Congress will be more sympathetic to immigrant issues. They are also working towards building alliance with the other peace and social justice groups.

The Pan Valley Institute and the Central California Coalition of Immigrant Rights welcomes individuals and groups interested in working on immigrant issues. Contact Myrna Martinez Nateras at the Pan-Valley Institute. mnateras@afsc.org 559-222-7678

Peace Fresno activists calls for the impeachment of George Bush at the November 16,2006 Dixie Chicks concert at Save Mart Center. Photo by Howard Watkins.



OPINION AND ANALYSIS FROM THE GRASSROOTS

A View From Nowhere

by Nobody

"Let The Bums Have A Flop"

I've said it before, and I'll say it again. The reason nothing gets fixed in this country is because the problems are more profitable than the solutions. And it's usually not hard to figure out where the profit lies. You don't have to be a rocket scientist to see that many industries find it's cheaper to pollute than to clean up. And you don't have to be an industrial polluter to see that scientists make more money building rockets than working for peace.

But it's a little harder sometimes to see the profit in homelessness. After all, who makes money off the homeless besides drug dealers and distilleries? Isn't that the cause of the problem, that they all drink and drug too much and, oh yeah, some of them are crazy? No, that's not the cause of the problem, but this myth certainly keeps us from looking at what the causes really are.

Let's start with the bums. Yeah, that's right, let's not call them homeless, let's just call them bums like we did when we were kinder to them. Back in the old days, there used to be flop houses. I grew up in Manhattan, so I know first hand that in the early 60's it used to cost 25 cents for a flop except in the more upscale "Lyons House" where it was fifty cents. I know this because they had their prices displayed right outside.

Today, Manhattan's flop houses are gone, and I have it on the reliable testimony of a former New York City junkie that the cheapest hotel rooms in the city cost about \$35 a night. Even if a couple of people split the room, that still means the price of a bed for a drunk has gone up 70 times in 40 years. That's like a \$200-a-month apartment becoming a \$14,000-a-month apartment. If sober people had faced hikes like that, even more of them would be on the streets too.

Where did the flop houses go? In city after city they were victims of urban renewal, as were the SRO's (single room occupancy buildings, where you could get a cheap room on a monthly or yearly basis). Why did the flop houses go? Because in city after city the powers that be decided more revenue would be returned to the tax base (i.e. they'd make more money), if the cheap housing was torn down and replaced by office buildings, stadiums and convention centers. Me, I'd have said, "Let the bums have a flop," just like people said for generations, but that's not the way it is in America anymore. The cities like to talk about the millions they spend solving homelessness, but not the tens of millions they made creating it.

Of course, there are plenty of homeless people who aren't bums, by which I mean, they're clearly not doing everything they can to stay in the same miserable situation. Think of it this way. More than 750,000 people are homeless at any given moment, which represents as many as 3.5 million people cycling on and off the streets every year, which represents at least 20 million people homeless since the early '80s when the crisis began. Just do the math.

750,000 represents less than four percent of 20 million, which means that more than 96 percent of all the people who have ever been homeless have gotten out of homelessness (as will most of the people on the streets today). That's a statistic you won't hear from Bill O'Reilly who regularly portrays homeless people as unable to get their lives together. Maybe because once you've heard it, you have to wonder how come this obviously motivated more-than-96% wound up on the streets in the first place.

Does anyone remember the name Sam Pierce? He was

Reagan's HUD secretary, and two things happened under his aegis. First HUD got out of the business of building housing, which is why there's a critical shortage of affordable housing today. In the peak years of the 1970s, we were spending over \$60 billion a year on all the Federal housing programs. But under Reagan and Pierce, that figure plummeted to the point where we're spending less than \$30 billion today. If we'd stayed at the pre-Reagan/Pierce levels, an aggregate of well over \$500 billion more would have been spent on housing. Can anyone doubt that we wouldn't be in the pickle we're in if it weren't for those cuts? Well, someone else got the \$500 billion, so we know exactly what this policy change was worth to them.

The other thing that happened under Pierce was that there was a mammoth scandal about HUD funds being misappropriated to finance pet projects for the clients of highly-placed Republican consultants. Pierce didn't

extra \$500 a month, which might be enough to give most of them a little fiscal dignity. That would be an additional \$6000 per year for 2.65 million people or, approximately, \$16 billion a year. In other words, leaving some of our neediest citizens to rot, frees up \$16 billion a year for people who couldn't possibly need the money as much, if at all.

On the other hand, there are plenty of people with low incomes who actually do work, but they just don't make much money at their jobs. The original idea of the minimum wage was to keep these lowest-paid workers from sinking into poverty, but the real-dollar value of the minimum wage has fallen to the point where it doesn't do that anymore. And as the wage floor has fallen, it has taken with it the real-dollar value of the wages pegged to be a little above the minimum or a little above that. Whose fault do we think this is?

Do we think it was the minimum-wage workers, themselves, who lobbied Washington and insisted that they be paid too little? Or do we think the process is a tad more influenced by the wealthy employers? Well what was it worth to the employers?

According to the Department of Labor's Bureau of Labor Statistics, 13,677,000 people are working for \$7.14 an hour or less. If we gave them all an extra dollar, the ones at the very top would be getting about the purchasing power of the minimum wage in 1968. And the ones at the bottom still wouldn't be making enough, but at least they'd be better off. That one dollar would cost employers \$13.6 million dollars an hour. That's \$544 million a week (for a 40 hour week) or more than \$28 billion dollars a year.

In other words, every dollar that low-wage workers lose represents a \$28 billion subsidy for business — annually. And, of course, when the lowest wages are depressed, the wages in the middle are too, freeing up the globs of cash that today's titans of industry use to reward themselves with historic largesse. But even this is not enough.

You just can't make an American job cheap enough to keep someone with expensive tastes from shipping it overseas. And what is it worth to American corporations to have the remaining American workers so scared that they'll accept give-backs and cuts and be afraid to unionize much less strike? The bosses don't have to hire Pinkertons when they can hire Congress to strip away labor's protections and threaten workers with becoming homeless if they raise a peep.

Add to this the billions of dollars that are made by the for-profit health-care industry which has no compunctions about bankrupting people, driving them into the streets and then denying them proper care when they get there. This mega-industry's profits would be lost if we had national health care like almost every other industrialized nation.

And of course, unless something changes, the enormous Federal budget deficit will be paid for in no small measure by reductions in aid for the poorest Americans. That's how Schwarzenegger is fixing California's deficit. Has anyone heard of a different plan for the national debt? And how was that debt created? With massive tax breaks for the rich. So how greedy is that? They've even stolen from tomorrow's poor. Couldn't they at least have had the decency to leave some poor for future generations to rob?

No wonder we're supposed to think homelessness is just a matter of personal responsibility. It's a money gusher for the people who really create it, and they're the ones who never take responsibility at all.



Nobody, AKA Jeremy Alderson, who is bringing the Homelessness Marathon to Fresno in February. See page 3 for details.

go to jail, himself, but some of his associates did, indeed, wind up living in government housing aka the pokey. And just which money do you think it was that they misappropriated? It was some of the surviving funds (about \$10 billion worth) for low-income housing. So let us not be too polite to remember that the homelessness crisis was created, in part, by people who weren't too proud to rob the poor box.

And let's also not forget that when we're talking about low-income housing, we're talking about housing for people who do, in fact, have an income. Why do these people make so little money that they need low-income housing to begin with? O'Reilly notwithstanding, the answer has much less to do with choices they made than with choices they didn't make.

For example, the Social Security Administration says that in 2001, there were 2,649,523 people getting SSI and no other form of Federal benefit except maybe food stamps. These people were, by the requirements of the program, blind, disabled, or over 65 years old but for

some reason not eligible for regular social security. These were surely among the people Ronald Reagan called the "truly needy," the ones he said would not be allowed to slip through the social safety net.

But these SSI recipients couldn't decide for themselves how much money they would get. That decision was made for them in Washington, and in Washington they decided that the average monthly payment (as of Dec. 2003) would be \$435.38. Some of the states kick in another \$200 or so, but this is why every year on the Homelessness Marathon I find myself talking to disabled people who don't get a check from the government big enough to let them afford housing.

Let's do some more math. Let's just suppose we gave the otherwise destitute aged, disabled and blind an

The bosses don't have to hire Pinkertons when they can hire Congress to strip away labor's protections and threaten workers with becoming homeless if they raise a peep.

The Mean Streets of Fresno

By Ellie Bluestein



Fresno has become a mean, mean city. Three times the city council has rejected a proposal for an independent police auditor, leaving Fresno as the only large city in California without police oversight. This despite the fact that violence by and to-

wards the police seems to be on the rise. Lawsuits are the only recourse for those who feel they have been wronged by the police. Win or lose, it's an expensive solution for both individuals and the city. And for those who cannot afford legal action there is no recourse, no independent, impartial complaint system to appeal to, resulting in anger and frustration on the part of the public.

After twenty years our city council has abolished the Fresno Human Relations Commission, again making us unique among California cities. This despite the great diversity of cultures that we have, and our standing as a city with one of the largest populations of people living below the poverty line. Here is a mission statement of the HRC from Eugene, Oregon, a city much smaller and less diverse than Fresno:

"The City of Eugene values the dignity of all human beings. We are committed to: Ensuring that human rights are a central part of every city program. Respecting and reflecting cultural and individual diversity. Fostering mutual understanding. Promoting inclusiveness, justice, and equity. Our mission is to work so that everyone has the opportunity to share in the full benefits and responsibilities of living in Eugene."

Has Fresno so completely achieved these goals that we no longer need a Human Relations Commission?

Meanwhile we are trashing the homeless people. If only we could throw them into the garbage trucks along with their belongings our problem would be solved. How can people secure their property when they have no space to lay their heads? Moving them from one place to another where they are not wanted doesn't give them much option in terms of keeping their belongings intact. We all know there is not sufficient room, either in Poverello House or at Reverend Arce's Mission, to accommodate all of our homeless people. Where are the so-called Christians who permeate our city administration and police department? Don't they know that Jesus, speaking of what's required of us, (Isaiah 58:6-7) says: "sharing our food with the hungry, taking the homeless into our homes, clothing the naked when we meet them and never evading our duty to our neighbors and kin." After all, they are God's children too.

Of course, the city council is too busy dealing with the Christmas tree, shopping carts, trash containers. Besides, despite the recent raise they gave themselves most of them only work part time for the city council. I bet the Human Relations Commission could help in dealing with the problem but...

Oh yes, we've already taken care of that. Indeed, Fresno has become a mean, mean city.

###

Ellie Bluestein has been a member of Women's International League for Peace and Freedom for 52 years and active with the Central California Criminal Justice Committee here in Fresno for almost 8 years. She can be contacted by email at: geneb@csufresno.edu

I Don't Want AIDS For Christmas

Gary Dennis



Ah, the joys of the holidays to shop till you drop and eat till you pop. This is the time of the year where material guys and girls can be themselves and get that certain something that they have been

waiting for all year long. Or maybe you're the generous type, and like to buy presents to impress you friends and family. Well I'm sure whatever it is that you give or receive, AIDS is not on top of that list. But unfortunately this is the time of year where loneliness sets in for some and inhibitions leave town. Where busy bodies who have been working all year long finally slow down and realize that there is no one around; a time where drinking becomes the norm, and "party and play" becomes the thing to do to get through those lonely holiday nights. Yet sadly, in the midst of all this fun and frolic AIDS is doing its thing and making its way around finding new people whose lives it can change and rearrange all because folks don't want to take the time and play it safe. Playing it safe means using a latex condom properly each and every time you have a sexual encounter (oral, anal, or vaginal) and if needle use is your thing, using a clean needle each time and not sharing your injection equipment (works) with anyone, I don't care if it's your momma! Don't do it! Because I can tell you right now, if you don't play it safe, you'll be ending up with HIV/AIDS, a gift that keeps on giving. Unlike the fruit cake your grandma gives you, that you just throw away or the gift that your friend gave you that you returned to Macy's because it wasn't your size, you can't do these things with AIDS. Once you got it, it's yours to keep until they come up with a cure. The best way to keep things in perspective is to remember those who do have this disease and see how their lives have changed; if you haven't already forgotten about them or if they haven't died because of this disease. Remember the nightmare that they were going through in regards to Medicare Part D (which for some is still happening), or the fact that they were once able bodied individuals now living on a fixed incomes, or the fact that some may have been discriminated in housing or employment because of their HIV status. Basically, don't forget friends and family living with HIV/AIDS over the holidays or the babies that are in the orphanages because their parents died of AIDS. If you can hug an AIDS baby or tell a child living with AIDS that you love them and that God does care for them, if you are truly a caring Christian person. If you haven't thought about the HIV/AIDS fight, maybe this could be the opportunity to get involved and do something. You could even donate to PROJECT: MALE as a way of showing your support if you don't have time to volunteer and get involved. If you have questions or would like to know more, call me at (559) 268-1969. Happy Holidays to all and God Bless!

Nancy Pelosi - One Heart Beat Away from the President

By Ruth Gadebusch



Much to our relief the election has come and gone. Of course, our relief is short lived with the rush to file presidential and other exploratory committees, not to mention the renewed quest for money to cover campaign debt and/or reelection. In any event, it is a break from the scurrilous advertising.

By and large, we have much to be thankful for. It seems to me that it was rather clear that the majority think we must extricate ourselves from the Iraq war. Even recognizing that there may be no happy way out, we still feel it is necessary to leave sooner, rather than later.. With our climbing death rate and the Iraqis suffering exponentially more, it is difficult to see how matters could be much worse if we just pick up and leave.

For women, it is indeed a sweet victory that will see a female rise to the highest position ever in this nation. It is particularly sweet when one realizes that throughout the campaign "Nancy Pelosi, San Francisco Liberal" was tossed about as a pejorative. This entire campaign seemed to be much more about how terrible the other side is than what good the candidate could offer. Fortunately the tactic did not work. Nancy Pelosi is vindicated.

For a woman to have this position has been a long time coming to this nation. Other countries, which we often consider less advanced than we are, have long had women in the top position. Ms. Pelosi remains, as they say, two heartbeats away from the presidency; or as one wiseacre put it, one heartbeat because Cheney has no heart!

It appears that the new Speaker of the House of Representatives is coming to office without vindictiveness; although many of us think she would have reason to be less than conciliatory. Fortunately, she seems wise to appreciate that tit for tat is not in the best interest of this nation. The minority's having been reduced to near voicelessness in this Congress has not served us well.

Even the president now says we must work together; but that is a bit late coming. There was not much working together when his party was in the majority. Here, the old axiom — organizations do not change when they are fat and sassy, only when they are lean and hungry — applies. The party out of power is always hungry leaving us with hope that the administration will see the wisdom of working together and make good on the president's pronouncement — not, as in, "I am a uniter," which has not turned out to be true at all.

Nancy Pelosi's service as Speaker of the House will show that women are just as capable as men in positions of power. It will pave the way for women to be seen as creditable candidates for the highest office in the land.

With abortion restrictions defeated in several states, including California's Prop 85 (the so-called parental notification) and South Dakota's near total ban, there is hope that abortion politics can be put on the back burner. It is time to recognize that we will never see eye to eye in this matter and accept it as a very personal issue to be decided by the woman involved and her doctor. The ability to control her own reproductive life has been the single most important factor in women's ability to have careers, participate in civic affairs, and rise to positions of power.

With many of the newly elected Democrats being more conservative, women cannot sit back and relax; however, it is promising that we will have less meddling into our personal lives. Of course, we must also hope that the Supreme Court will see its way clear to refrain from practicing medicine in the case, restricting one method of abortion, currently before it. Granted, the procedure is even more unpleasant than abortions done in the first trimester, but it is a medical decision to be made in light of the conditions.

Regardless of party, we women should cheer loud and long for Speaker of the House Nancy Pelosi. She puts us miles ahead in our pursuit of equality. Locally, as this is written, there is hope that this conservative community has elected Margaret Mims as its first female sheriff, raising women another notch. Maybe "Morning in America" has actually arrived.

###

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.

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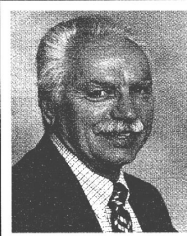


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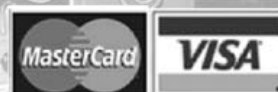
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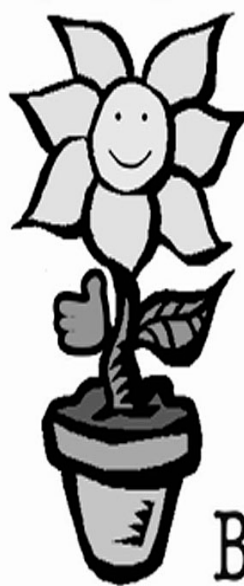
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A Liberal's Pledge to Disheartened Conservatives

November 14th, 2006



To My Conservative Brothers and Sisters,

I know you are dismayed and disheartened at the results of last week's election. You're worried that the country is heading toward a very bad place you don't want it to go. Your 12-year Republican Revolution has ended with so much yet to do, so many promises left unfulfilled. You are in a funk, and I understand.

Well, cheer up, my friends! Do not despair. I have good news for you. I, and the millions of others who are now in charge with our Democratic Congress, have a pledge we would like to make to you, a list of promises that we offer you because we value you as our fellow Americans. You deserve to know what we plan to do with our newfound power — and, to be specific, what we will do to you and for you.

Thus, here is our Liberal's Pledge to Disheartened Conservatives:

Dear Conservatives and Republicans,

I, and my fellow signatories, hereby make these promises to you:

1. We will always respect you for your conservative beliefs. We will never, ever, call you "unpatriotic" simply because you disagree with us. In fact, we encourage you to dissent and disagree with us.
2. We will let you marry whomever you want, even when some of us consider your behavior to be "different" or "immoral." Who you marry is none of our business. Love and be in love — it's a wonderful gift.
3. We will not spend your grandchildren's money on our personal whims or to enrich our friends. It's your checkbook, too, and we will balance it for you.
4. When we soon bring our sons and daughters home from Iraq, we will bring your sons and daughters home, too. They deserve to live. We promise never to send your kids off to war based on either a mistake or a lie.
5. When we make America the last Western democracy to have universal health coverage, and all Americans are able to get help when they fall ill, we promise that you, too, will be able to see a doctor, regardless of your ability to pay. And when stem cell research delivers treatments and cures for diseases that affect you and your loved ones, we'll make sure those advances are available to you and your family, too.
6. Even though you have opposed environmental regulation, when we clean up our air and water, we, the Democratic majority, will let you, too, breathe the cleaner air and drink the purer water.
7. Should a mass murderer ever kill 3,000 people on our soil, we will devote every single resource to tracking him down and bringing him to justice. Immediately. We will protect you.
8. We will never stick our nose in your bedroom or your womb. What you do there as consenting adults is your business. We will continue to count your age from the moment you were born, not the moment you were conceived.
9. We will not take away your hunting guns. If you need an automatic weapon or a handgun to kill a bird or a deer, then you really aren't much of a hunter and you should, perhaps, pick up another sport. We will make our streets and schools as free as we can from these weapons and we will protect your children just as we would protect ours.
10. When we raise the minimum wage, we will pay you — and your employees — that new wage, too. When women are finally paid what men make, we will pay conservative women that wage, too.
11. We will respect your religious beliefs, even when you don't put those beliefs into practice. In fact, we will actively seek to promote your most radical religious beliefs ("Blessed are the poor," "Blessed are the peacemakers," "Love your enemies," "It is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for a rich man to enter the kingdom of God," and "Whatever you did for one of the least of these brothers of mine, you did for me."). We will let people in other countries know that God doesn't just bless America, he blesses everyone. We will discourage religious intolerance and fanaticism — starting with the fanaticism here at home, thus setting a good example for the rest of the world.
12. We will not tolerate politicians who are corrupt and who are bought and paid for by the rich. We will go after any elected leader who puts him or herself ahead of the people. And we promise you we will go after the corrupt politicians on our side FIRST. If we fail to do this, we need you to call us on it. Simply because we are in power does not give us the right to turn our heads the other way when our party goes astray. Please perform this important duty as the loyal opposition.

I promise all of the above to you because this is your country, too. You are every bit as American as we are. We are all in this together. We sink or swim as one. Thank you for your years of service to this country and for giving us the opportunity to see if we can make things a bit better for our 300 million fellow Americans — and for the rest of the world.



Signed,
Michael Moore

