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JULY 2006

COMMUNITY ALLIANCE

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

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From the Editor

Welcome to the July 2006 issue of the Community Alliance newspaper. As we get closer to our ten year anniversary (we started publishing on September 20, 1996) it has given us the opportunity to reflect on where we have come from and where we are going. We

started out as a newsletter building a Labor/Community Alliance, then changed into a magazine under the superb artistic direction of Elfie and Maia Ballis, and have now transformed ourselves into an alternative/independent newspaper.

The Community Alliance newspaper exists because of the need to tell the story about people who are working to build a movement for peace, social, and economic justice. We are here to empower and validate the lives of those who stand up to support immigrant rights, environmental justice, and a living wage for all people.

The paper you are reading breaks through the corporate control of the media (like a wildflower in a parking lot) and gives readers the truth and the news they need to build a more just society. In this month's paper you will encounter some controversial and perhaps dangerous ideas - was the Bush administration responsible for the attacks on 9-11? Did the Republicans steal the November 2004 presidential elections? You are not likely to find these stories in any other Fresno based publication.

You will also read about how the City of Merced has banned anyone who uses tobacco (even at their own home) from being hired. Is that legal? Writer Nick Osborne asks what kind of a slippery slope they are on. Sara Jane Olson, who is incarcerated in the women's prison in Chowchilla, shares with us the importance of family visits and how Mother's Day was celebrated in that institution. We are honored to have this article by Olson and another by Boston Woodard (he is in Vacaville) who reach out through the bars and give our readers a glimpse into their harsh reality.

In addition you will find some really nice photos and an article about the June Fresno Gay Pride Parade, Dan Waterhouse's

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regular Queer Eye column, a progressive analysis of the primary elections, and the Peace and Social Justice calendar. Each month the Fresno Center for Nonviolence and the Women's International League for Peace and Freedom have a whole page in this newspaper telling the community about their important work.

Where do we expect the newspaper to be ten years from now? While it is probably impossible to predict that far into the future, I can tell you that one of our goals is to publish more frequently. We are moving in the direction of becoming a biweekly or weekly publication in the next couple of years. Fresno is the only community of its size in California that does not have an independent/alternative weekly newspaper.

We have added outdoor newsstands around town for greater distribution (we now print 10,000 copies a month) and are delivering papers door to door in the Tower District. Our goal is for the Community Alliance to reach an ever growing audience with the message of hope, peace, and the struggle for economic and social justice.

LETTER TO THE EDITOR

I have this crazy idea for supporting the environment and honoring a group of real community activists doing a great benefit for society—BUS RIDERS.

Now people might say, "Sure, sure, anybody can be a Bus Rider," and truly anyone can pay a buck and board the bus. But not everybody can stand to use it as their main means of transportation. That's why those who have been using FAX for a long time, they deserve a real Gracias, a genuine Thanks! After all each ride means one auto less on that battlefield known as "the road."

So I have a plan to help the Bus Rider. Don't get the impression this is another pitch that is for my benefit and not for you. There is no commission, fee, salary—just a way to get riders free rides.

This began as a grassroots effort sometime back with a young lady who badly needed a better home for her Familia. At work she heard about a meeting about housing, so as soon as she got back to her casita she grabbed 3 quarters, ran to get a bus and just made it. (Usually she had to wait a long, long time, that's why she hadn't used it recently.)

Aboard she dropped in her fare, but before she could sit down she was accused of sneaking in without paying the full amount.

She assured the driver that she had dropped in 3 quarters, but he said, "Please don't tell me that old story that you "didn't know" the fare is \$1. Pay up or get off."

Because so many people heard, she was very embarrassed and jumped off the bus, so she got to the meeting very late. Still she was able to get some referrals, but then she asked, "Can't we do anything to get the bus fare back to 75 cents?" A lot of others agreed that the increase was hard on them.

Since I hadn't been using buses for a while, I didn't know the history. But it seemed like a cop-out to stay out of it, so I said I'd see what I could do. Then I came up with this plan, and after talking with others, I sent a letter on March 29, '02 with my proposal: that riders get a transfer they can turn in for discounts at different establishments. Their answer: in a very polite, intelligent organized letter they said "should the opportunity present itself, FAX will discuss the idea with the business community."

I took this as a reasonable first step, but a lot of people told me they were really saying, "Stay out of it, we are the officials, you don't belong in it." (Chingaso, ouch, Out!)

More than offended I was challenged, so I had to get more involved. After talking with various entrepreneurs, I sent another letter. Their response (August 18, '03) was "your letter poses a wonderful opportunity to provide a value-added benefit for our customers...Good luck!" But in September I found some partners, and they took out ads in the FAX Schedule Guide printed in January, '04.

Since then every SG shows a growing list of business partners offering reimbursements to riders, including cafes, Office Depot, and the City Zoo. In the latest Guide (April, '06) 28 partners are listed on P. 15. But still almost no one knows about it, that they can get their fare re-imbursed.

Senores, that's where you come in. Your opinions are very valuable. Can you be a part in helping this information become known? It is important to have existing sponsors be mucho mejor, better aware, before trying to get more.

Excuse me if this is too long, it's an honest pensamiento, a thought to have more of you join in. Any help will be greatly appreciated for the Craaaazy idea. (It was written up in The Fresno Bee City View on Dec. 20, '03 but almost no one saw it.)

Muchas gracias, thank you all,

Tomas Casas Acosta Sr
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Unquestioned Answers: Nonconspiracy theorist David Ray Griffin takes aim at the official 9-11 story

By Steve Bhaerman



Dr. David Ray Griffin is the author of a book on the 9-11 attacks called *The New Pearl Harbor*, as well as *The 9-11 Commission Report: Omissions and Distortions*.

About 10 years ago, I was asked to perform comedy at a conference I quickly dubbed “the Paranoids Conference.” Each presenter had a dark tale to tell of abductions, drug running, assassinations and other nefarious horrors too terrible to mention. There were whispers of government agents in our midst, so when it was my turn to perform, I said I was

with the CIA. I paused while the audience gasped. “That’s the Comedians Institute of America.” It got a laugh, but no amount of laughter could counterbalance the toxicity of the atmosphere. I couldn’t wait to leave.

Fast forward to a sunny Sunday afternoon early last year when I found myself in Santa Rosa’s Church of the Rose to hear Dr. David Ray Griffin, author of a book on the 9-11 attacks called *The New Pearl Harbor*, as well as *The 9-11 Commission Report: Omissions and Distortions*. Griffin, a soft-spoken retired professor of theology with sandy, graying hair, proceeded to calmly and quietly dismantle the official 9-11 story. The room was filled to standing with people of all ages, many of whom attended the church. As Griffin made his case for how the official story could never have happened the way they said it did, I looked around me. Everyone was riveted, and yet I could detect no fear, no paranoia in the room.

People were hearing his message—the essentials of which are that our government likely knew about or had something to do with the 9-11 attacks—and yet there was something about his delivery that was reassuring. I’ve heard David Ray Griffin twice since then, once at a small gathering of world government advocates, the other time at the prestigious Commonwealth Club in San Francisco. Each event had a similar ambiance: a calm, thoughtful, scholarly presentation without the least hint of sensationalism or personal glory.

Whatever one’s assumption of what a “conspiracy theorist” is like, David Ray Griffin doesn’t fit the mold, perhaps because he’s really a nonconspiracy theorist. While he methodically deconstructs the official story, he doesn’t spin his own alternative yarn to fill the vacuum. Instead, he allows audience members to draw their own conclusions. As for conspiracy theories, he explains, “the official story is itself a conspiracy theory. As the accepted ‘conspiracy theory’ goes, a cadre of al Qaida operatives conspired to hijack four jetliners, did so undetected and were able to complete their mission with no interception or even interference from the best-prepared air force on the face of the earth.”

Even more unusual, Griffin says, “the crime was solved immediately, and the official story was in place before the day of the attack was over. Within 48 hours, our president stood at the National Cathedral surrounded by Billy Graham, a cardinal, a rabbi and an imam, and used this religious setting to declare a holy war on terror.”

If we were to contrast the smoothness of the post-9-11 operation with the aftermath of Katrina, we are left with the question: How can a president so inept in one setting have been so “ept” in another?

False Flags

While Griffin professes no formulated alternative theory of what did happen, he offers a clue in the title of his first book. A *New Pearl Harbor* refers to a passage in a document called Project for the New American Century—the neocons’ blueprint for what they call “pax Americana”—which says that for the American people to accept the overt military mission of creating security through world domination, a “new Pearl Harbor” would be needed. Griffin believes that the 9-11 attacks were just that.

This is a pretty serious—and horrific—assertion to make: that the leaders of our country would see fit to sacrifice some 3,000 civilians so that we could launch a preemptive attack on a perceived enemy. And yet, Griffin is quick to point out, our history is rife with just such incidents, from the “remember the Maine” boosterism preceding the Spanish-American war to

the Gulf of Tonkin lie that launched U.S. involvement in Vietnam, to the Pearl Harbor attacks themselves. Indeed, recent scholarship on Pearl Harbor suggests that President Roosevelt knew of the attack plan in advance and even purposely provoked the Japanese, because he knew it was the only way we could join the war against Germany. This in itself offers a dicey moral dilemma: Is it justified to sacrifice thousands of lives to save millions of lives?

During the Cold War, two more chilling examples of so-called false flag operations have come to light. (False flag operations are covert situations conducted by governments or other organizations that are designed to appear as if they are being carried out by other entities.) In his recent book, NATO’s Secret Armies: Operation Gladio and Terrorism in Western Europe, Dr. Daniele Ganser, a senior researcher at the Center for Security Studies, Federal Institute of Technology in Zurich, reports that NATO, guided by the CIA, supported terrorist attacks on civilians in various European countries to discredit the left and create fear on the part of the populace.

In Italy, right-wing terrorists, supplied by a secret army (named “Gladio,” Latin for “sword”), carried out bomb attacks in public places, blamed them on the Italian left and were thereafter protected from prosecution by the military secret service. As right-wing terrorist Vincenzo Vinciguerra explains in Ganser’s book, “The reason was quite simple. They were supposed to force these people, the Italian public, to turn to the state to ask for greater security.”

In our own country during the early ’60s, the Joint Chiefs of Staff under the command of Gen. Lyman Lemnitzer came up with a similar plan to provoke an attack on Cuba. According to NSA myth-buster James Bamford in his 2001 Random House publication *Body of Secrets: Anatomy of the Ultra-Secret National Security Agency*, the Joint Chiefs called for undercover operation of terror within the United States that included plans for “innocent people to be shot on American streets; for boats carrying refugees fleeing Cuba to be sunk on the high seas; for a wave of violent terrorism to be launched in Washington, D.C., Miami and elsewhere. People would be framed for bombings they did not commit; planes would be hijacked. Using phony evidence, all of it would be blamed on Castro, thus giving Lemnitzer and his cabal the excuse, as well as the public and international backing, they needed to launch their war.”

President John F. Kennedy nixed the plan immediately, and it was never put into action. But it did have the approval of top military brass, and with the right president—or the wrong one—it could very well have come about.

In the aftermath of 9-11, Griffin initially dismissed any speculation that the attacks could have been an inside job. “I subscribed to the ‘blow-back’ theory,” Griffin says. “After generations of exploitation and interference by Western powers, these people had such fury that they had to lash out any way they could.”

At the time, Griffin, who was close to retirement from his position at Claremont School of Theology, was working on a book on global democracy. In the wake of 9-11, he decided that he needed a special chapter on U.S. imperialism. He worked on that chapter for over a year before he came to the view that 9-11 was an inside job. “As much as I knew about prior false flag operations, as much as I knew or thought I knew about the nefariousness of the current regime, my first take was not even the Bush administration could or would do such a thing.”

Three Different Stories

It wasn’t until a colleague sent Griffin an e-mail with Paul Thompson’s timeline—an exact, minute-by-minute accounting of the events of Sept. 11 based entirely on mainstream media accounts—that he changed his mind. “The most glaring anomaly,” Griffin now says, “was that none of the hijacked planes were intercepted, even though all of them would have been, had standard procedure been followed.”

According to Gen. Ralph Eberhart, head of North American Aerospace Defense Command (NORAD), from the time the FAA senses something is wrong, it takes about a minute to contact NORAD, after which NORAD, Eberhart says, can scramble fighter jets “within a matter of minutes to anywhere in the United States.” So what happened on that morning?

The government has given three conflicting answers to this question.

Since a full 32 minutes elapsed between the time the first hijacked airliner was detected and the time it crashed into the World Trade Center, it initially appeared that “stand down” orders must have been issued to suspend standard procedures. Indeed, the first reports from both NORAD and Gen. Richard Myers, the acting chair of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, indicated

that no jets were scrambled until after the Pentagon was hit at 9:38am.

By Sept. 13, however, the original story had morphed into an explanation that “the planes were scrambled but arrived too late.” The delays were blamed on the FAA, said to have been slow in notifying NORAD. If that were the case, Griffin points out, it was strange indeed that no FAA personnel were fired or even cited for the breakdown in procedures and the resulting disaster. (Griffin notes, moreover, that the FAA flawlessly handled—on the same day—the unprecedented task of grounding thousands of domestic flights.)

Meanwhile, Griffin reports, transportation secretary Norman Mineta testified that at 9:20am—about 18 minutes before the Pentagon was hit, allegedly by Flight 77—he went down to the shelter conference room under the White House. According to Mineta, a young man walked in and said to the vice president, “The plane is 50 miles out,” and later, “The plane is 30 miles out.” When the young man reported, “The plane is 10 miles out,” he also asked the vice president, “Do the orders still stand?”

“Of course the orders still stand,” Cheney is alleged to have replied. “Have you heard anything to the contrary?”

When Mineta was asked by the 9-11 Commission how long after he arrived the conversation occurred, Mineta said, “Probably about five or six minutes,” which would have placed it around 9:25 or 9:26am. However, in the final version of the story, The 9/11 Commission Report maintained that no one in our government knew about the approaching aircraft until 9:36am, too late to shoot it down. How did the Commission deal with this apparent contradiction? Like just about every other piece of testimony that conflicted with the official story, Griffin avers, they ignored it.

“With regard to the question ‘Do the orders still stand?’” Griffin says, “Mineta seemed to assume those orders were to shoot the plane down. But really, the young man’s question makes sense only if the orders were to do something unexpected—that is, not to shoot the plane down.”

So what did happen? Whodunnit?

Again, Griffin prefers to focus on the circumstantial framework for examining the evidence. “You have a suspect who changes his story three times. Does this make him more or less suspicious?”

Collective Evil

Of course, the top echelon of leaders in this country aren’t exactly your usual run-of-the-lineup perps—which, according to Griffin, is why those who’ve pointed fingers at the emperor’s bare buttocks in this case have been marginalized like a bunch of tinfoil-headed kooks. No argument about this. I’ve asked a number of savvy authors and commentators why they haven’t taken on the unanswered questions and unquestioned answers around 9-11. Their answers have been pretty much the same: It’s just too big a stretch for most Americans to believe their own government could have had anything to do with it. However, in an exceedingly underreported Zogby poll done just last month, 42 percent of adults polled believe the U. S. government and the 9-11 Commission “concealed or refused to investigate critical evidence” that contradicts the official explanation of the attacks.

Perhaps what these reluctant commentators really meant is that they would be committing career suicide by questioning the official story. So why and how is David Ray Griffin different? And why is he spending his retirement traveling around the country writing and talking about something that conventional wisdom insists people don’t want to hear?

Perhaps it has something to do with Griffin’s background in “process theology.” Process theology is specifically designed to answer such post-Holocaust questions as, how could a loving God have allowed such a thing to happen? Griffin has written or co-authored a dozen books and articles on the subject, and roughly the answer is this: We, as creations of the Creator, have free will to choose how and what we create in this life. This very often results in what we call “evil.” On the other hand, our greatest power as human beings is to bring that loving God to earth by creating good instead.

To those who assert “God is dead,” process theology says no, Griffin reasons. The loving God is alive in our thoughts and words and deeds. God doesn’t intervene to set things right unilaterally. Rather, that spirit—through us—embodies divine love. In other words, the world changes—if we change it. Divine power, he says, is “persuasive, not controlling.”

Continued on page 4

While Griffin's faith may be deep, it certainly isn't narrow. He recently edited a book called Deep Religious Pluralism.

"I've written two books on the problem of evil, so I've been dealing with the topic for a long time," Griffin says. "Frankly, as soon as I saw the evidence that 9-11 was an inside job, I wasn't surprised. I had studied the rise of Nazism and the Holocaust, the Japanese butchery of the Chinese in Manchuria, our use of nuclear weapons in Japan in spite of their imminent surrender. I've seen the depth of evil in collective situations. It's an old, old story, and this is just the latest chapter. Once the nation-state announces it is threatened, everything else gets pushed to the back burner. That's what we're seeing now."

Griffin's intention just over three years ago was to write an article for Harper's on what he then believed to be "foreknowledge and thwarted intelligence." But the more evidence he saw that the attacks were likely orchestrated by our own government, the more he felt a book was needed. Since none of the American investigators had been able to get a book published at that time, Griffin figured that as a published author he had a better chance.

But it was far from automatic. Richard Falk, a Princeton professor of international law and practice, had personally recommended Griffin's book to several publishers. Every one of them turned it down. "Not for us," said one rejection tersely. At dinner one night, Falk suggested Interlink Books, a tiny publisher that had published a recent book of his. Interlink took the book, but only because of a quirky coincidence. The editor was dubious. But knowing Griffin was a theologian, she asked her father, a minister, if he'd ever heard of the guy. "David Ray Griffin?" said her father. "I have all of his books!"

And so, in 2004, the book got published. But you'd never learn this from mainstream magazines and newspapers, which have yet to publish a review of The New Pearl Harbor, which has sold over 100,000 copies. Nor will you see him on mainstream TV, which has yet to invite him to appear. Griffin seems unperturbed by this, and points out that each week and each month the alternative account of 9-11 gains wider credence. Is he afraid? Does he feel in danger? "Well," he jokes, "there are two possibilities. Either they leave me alone, or they take me out. If they leave me alone, I get to enjoy my old age and write my systematic theology. If they take me out, my 9-11 books go right to the top of the New York Times bestseller list. So it's a win-win situation."

More seriously, he points to his Christian faith (Disciples of Christ is his own background), and says that Christian history is full of examples of the faithful who stuck their necks out for the truth. "If we who believe in everlasting life fear death," he says, "what does that say about our faith?"

Myth-Informed?

Other than standing for his faith, what does Griffin hope to accomplish by exposing the 9-11 story as a lie? As an advocate for a worldwide democratic order, he sees this story as an example of "governmental lawlessness" so egregious that its exposure could call into question the continuation of the present system with its "anarchical competition between nation states." First, however, people must be willing to think the unthinkable, and to be willing to look at the evidence that it is our own nation that has become the evil empire.



This is a formidable barrier to cross. Ever since the notion of the "Big Lie" was first put forth to describe the tactics of the Third Reich, it has become a cliché that the bigger the lie, the harder it is for people to see the truth. This is especially so when the official version takes on the status of what theologian Griffin calls "sacred myth."

"The 'truth' of the official 9-11 story," explains Griffin, "must be taken on faith. It is not a matter of debate or even discussion. Anyone who brings up anything that contradicts the official story is either ignored or denounced as a conspiracy nut."

"However," he continues, "when the official account of 9-11 is

stripped of its halo and treated simply as a theory rather than an unquestionable dogma, it cannot be defended as the best theory to account for the relevant facts. When challenges to it are not treated as blasphemy, it can easily be seen to not correspond with reality."

And so David Ray Griffin continues to make presentations, do interviews and get his version of the truth to "break the soundless barrier." With Falk, John B. Cobb Jr. and Catherine Keller, Griffin co-authored the just-published anthology The American Empire and the Commonwealth of God: A Political, Economic, Religious Statement. His own contribution portrays the 9-11 attacks as orchestrated to promote the American empire. Publishing in July is his newest book, Christian Faith and the Truth Behind 9/11: A Call to Reflection and Action.

His hope? That enough Americans wake up and call for a re-investigation, and that those who know more will feel safe enough to come forward. But first, he says, we Americans must muster the will and courage to face the situation squarely in the face.

As a postscript to my interview with David Ray Griffin, I am reminded of a March 30 article by journalist Doug Thompson published on OpEdNews.com. In it, Thompson recalls a 1981 encounter with the late John Connally, the former governor of Texas who was wounded in the Kennedy assassination. In an unguarded moment, Thompson asked Connally, "Do you think Lee Harvey Oswald fired the gun that killed Kennedy?"

"Absolutely not," Connally said. "I do not, for one second, believe the conclusions of the Warren Commission."

"So why not speak out?" Thompson asked.

"I will never speak out publicly about what I believe," Connally replied, "because I love this country and we needed closure at the time."

Now here we are more than 40 years after that devastating perpetration and we have to wonder, how well did "closure" serve us? As we see daily the fruits of self-serving secrecy and unchecked power, it might be time for some disclosure instead.

Steve Bhaerman is a writer and "uncommonator" who is sometimes known by his comic alter ego, Swami Beyondananda. His bi-weekly blog, Notes From the Trail can be read at www.opednews.com, and he can be found online at www.wakeuplaughing.com.



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The Primary Election in Fresno - What Went Wrong?

By Mike Rhodes

Fresno County progressives were surprised at the largely negative results of the June 6 primary election. After months of fund raising, candidates forums, walking door to door, and a substantial Get Out The Vote campaign, Fresno progressives were disappointed at losing several key local races. What happened? What could be different next time?

While most of the candidates supported by the progressive community lost, there were a couple of positive outcomes in the election. Voters retained Cynthia Sterling, who is an ally in City Council District 3, and Margaret Mims, the only Democrat running for Fresno County Sheriff, will be in a runoff this November. But, that was about as good as it got.

Progressive community activists and organized labor focused on two races - the City Council District 1 and the Board of Supervisors (BOS) District 4 races. The Fresno County BOS race between Judy Case and Cynthia Gonzalez had the potential to change the balance of power in county politics. Gonzalez defined herself as a progressive Democrat and had significant community and labor support. Large numbers of people walked precincts and made phone calls for Gonzalez. The Central Valley Progressive PAC (see www.cvppac.org) made significant contributions to the Gonzalez campaign, as did the Service Employees International Union - United Healthcare West, who wanted to have had her on the BOS when homecare workers negotiate their next contract.

While Gonzalez had popular support she did not have the financial backing needed to run a viable campaign. In the most recent records on campaign contributions (available just before the elections), Gonzalez had raised \$22,287 to Case's \$109,290. The Fresno Bee also endorsed Case and ran a series of negative stories against Gonzalez. An article in The Bee's May 27 edition, on the front page of the Local & State section, featured a photo of Gonzalez looking down and the headline "Lost Endorsement?" The story was one of a series criticizing Gonzalez about an incident in her past. The article asked if the Fresno Deputy Sheriff's Association was going to withdraw their endorsement. The answer was no, but the headline and photo told a different story. The information about Gonzalez's past, which amounted to nothing, appears to have been part of a smear campaign from forces that will stop at nothing to maintain power. With 100% of the ballots counted, the vote was:

Judy Case 11,588 votes for 75.93% of the vote
Cynthia Gonzalez 3,657 votes for 23.96% of the vote

Reflecting on the election outcome, Gonzalez said the low voter turnout was a critical factor in her failure to unseat Case. Gonzalez added, "The 6 negative Fresno Bee articles detailing a past incident did much harm in my ability to raise funds. I am the only candidate in the history of Fresno County to have been sued-by the Fresno Bee in the most critical point of the campaign, resulting in lost time, momentum, personal finances and embarrassment."

Lydia Florez, chairperson of the CVPPAC said "though Cynthia

Gonzalez had significant community and labor support, it was not enough to cover that whole Supervisory District 4. Many houses were terribly spread out and it took more volunteers to cover the house to house contacts."

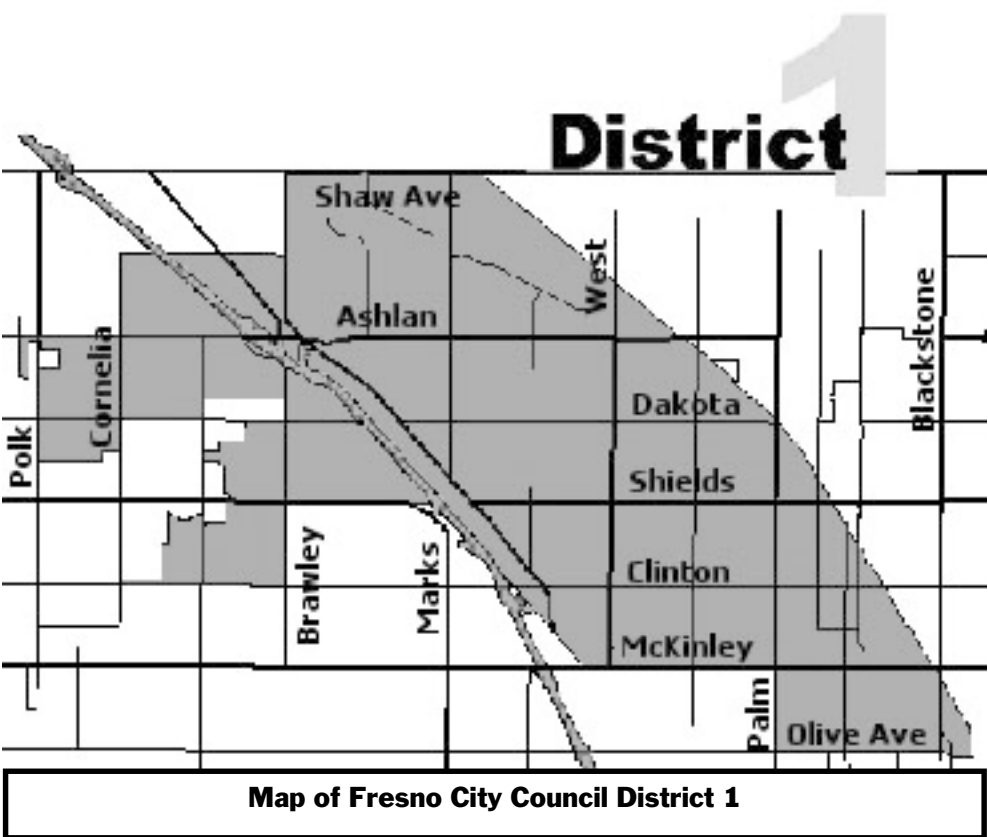
Democratic party activist Jay Hubble said "It is no wonder that Cynthia Gonzalez got slaughtered. Judy Case spent \$124,000 to Cynthia's \$40,000. I suspect the Republicans voted and the Democrats stayed home in droves. There are 129,322 registered Democrats in Fresno County. 34969 Democrats voted for governor but 1612 left the governor choice blank. Only about one in four Democrats bothered to vote in the primary."

Gonzalez was late to enter the race which may have effected her fund raising and as Florez, from the CVPPAC, also noted, "it was not to her benefit to lose her campaign manager" in the middle of the campaign. The campaign manager left following the series of articles in The Fresno Bee.

There were two contested races for the Fresno City Council. Cynthia Sterling, as mentioned above won in the District 3 race. Because she received more than 50% of the votes cast, there will not be a run-off in November. She retains her seat. With 100% of the ballots counted, the vote was:

Cynthia Sterling 2,238 votes for 64.91% of the vote
Manuel Toledo 1,018 votes for 29.52% of the vote
Ignacio Garibay 175 votes for 5.08% of the vote

All of the candidates in the District 3 race have left/progressive politics. Ignacio Garibay's campaign strategy included



holding a free barbecue and handing out T-shirts for the homeless on E street, south of Ventura. Toledo is a community organizer who has worked for years on neighborhood issues - he was the lead organizer for Fresno Area Congregations Together (FACT). This District represents West Fresno and extends into the Tower District. It has the largest number of African Americans and Latinos in the city. While some progressives complained that Sterling is not as accessible as they would like or as effective of a leader, they were not persuaded that the most important use of their time was to remove a liberal African American woman from the Fresno City Council. Most activists worked on other races. Some actively worked in support of the Sterling campaign.

Tom Boyajian currently represents Fresno City Council District 1. Boyajian, a liberal, is termed out and unable to run for re-election. Five candidates ran for this seat on the City Council. Chuck Riojas was the only Democrat in the race and the candidate supported by most progressive groups. His supporters included the Central Valley Progressive PAC, the Central Labor Council, SEIU, and Fresno Stonewall Democrats. The Riojas campaign had precinct walkers that covered the district, a phone calling operation, and an impressive Get Out The Vote campaign. On weekends there were 50 - 100 volunteers walking door to door for Riojas. The campaign was said to have had identified 2,000 voters who were committed to cast their ballot for Riojas. With 100% of the ballots counted, the vote was:

Scott Miller 1,650 votes for 25.32% of the vote
Blong Xiong 1,640 votes for 25.17% of the vote
Chuck Riojas 1,378 votes for 21.15% of the vote
Allen Schroeder 1,159 votes for 17.79% of the vote
Cliff Archer 675 votes for 10.36% of the vote

Scott Miller is a moderate Republican who participated in last weekend's Gay Pride Parade. Blong Xiong is not a member of



Scott Miller and his wife participated in the Gay Pride Parade.

any political party, but had the backing of Susan Anderson who is a moderate Republican on the Board of Supervisors and Juan Arambula who is a moderate Democrat in the State Assembly. Allen Schroeder and Cliff Archer are both Republicans. Archer was backed by conservative City Council members Jerry Duncan and Larry Westerlund. Scott Miller and Blong Xiong will face off in a November run-off election.

The outcome of the District 1 race is hard to analyze. Just about everyone working on the campaign thought Riojas had a good chance to win the election outright. Supporters were certain that he would be one of the two in the run off. What went wrong? Insiders in the Riojas campaign point to several reasons why he lost this election. The most obvious reason is the lack of voter participation, which was exacerbated by the candidates inability to identify an issue in the district that would mobilize a higher voter turnout. With no burning local issue and nothing terribly exciting on the statewide ballot, most people simply did not vote.

Riojas entered the race late. Miller and Xiong announced early and were able to secure endorsements that might have otherwise gone to Riojas. Kevin Hall, a community activist and an associate director at the Fresno Teachers Association, said "I never thought I'd see the Tower District's City Council seat go Republican, but it apparently has. Local labor leader Chuck Riojas, a Democrat, jumped into the race for the final 90 days and captured 21% of the vote, missing the runoff by less than 300 votes. The march of the red precincts across Fresno

continues. Two years ago Westerlund defeated Castillo and now this."

Hall offered this advice on how progressives can be successful in future races. "If you're a member of a union, get involved in your political program. If you belong to a political party, contact your county central committee. The local Democrats, for example, are organizing a precinct captain program where people will learn work with party members in their own neighborhoods. Local labor organizations are successfully rebuilding their political field program and a new generation of labor leaders is emerging. It's a very exciting time."

Voting was extremely light in Fresno County. Only 26% of registered voters cast a ballot. The low turnout of voters is far less if you include the number of people who are not registered or who have been disenfranchised from the voting process. Each Fresno City Council District has about 60,000 residents. Cynthia Sterling won her District 3 City Council seat with 1,799 votes. In other words, only 3% of the residents of District 3 actually voted for Sterling. If you assume 1/2 of the residents are under 18 (which is probably high), and therefore ineligible to vote, you still have only 6% of the residents over 18 in District 3 voting for Sterling. Not a good commentary on the democratic process in Fresno.

One of the few bright spots in local elections was the Sheriff's race. The current Sheriff, Richard Pierce, decided not to run for re-election. Pierce did not talk much about why he was not seeking re-election. Some analysts have speculated that it was because of the Peace Fresno spy scandal. Others believe it was part of a deal between Pierce and the State Attorney General who investigated the Sheriff's department for wrongdoing related to several of Pierce's activities. Those activities included moonlighting, selling Sheriff department cars (at a very reasonable rate) to the company he was moonlighting for,



Blong Xiong and Scott Miller will face each other in a runoff this November. This photo was taken on the day he announced his candidacy for the City Council District 1 seat.

How They Stole Ohio

by Greg Palast

This is a fact: On November 2, 2004, in the State of Ohio, 239,127 votes for President of the United States were dumped, rejected, blocked, lost and left to rot uncounted.

And not just anyone’s vote. Dive into the electoral dumpster and these “spoiled” votes have a very dark color indeed.

In another life, I taught statistics. And these statistics stank: the raw data tells us that if you are a Black voter, the chance of you losing your vote to technical errors in voting machinery is 900% higher than if you were a white voter.

Any guesses as to whom those African-Americans chose for president on those junked ballots? Check Ohio’s racial demographics, do the numbers, and there it is: Kerry won Ohio. And that, too, is a fact. A fact that could not get reported in the USA.

But the shoplifting of those votes in Ohio was just the tip of the theft-berg. November 2, 2004 was a national ballot-box bonfire. In total, over three million votes (3,600,380 to be exact) were cast?marked, punched, pulled?YET NEVER COUNTED. I’m not talking about the Ukraine or Uganda. I’m talking about the United States of America “with liberty and justice for all.”

Well, not “all.” The nine-to-one Black-to-White ballot spoilage rate is a national statistic, not just an Ohio trick. Last year, I flew to New Mexico to investigate the 33,981 cast but not counted ballots of that state in the 2004 race. George Bush “won” New Mexico by 5,988 votes. Or did he? I calculated that, of all the ballots rejected and “spoiled,” 89% were cast by voters of color. Who won New Mexico? Kerry won, or he would have, if they had counted the ballots. But they didn’t count them. And that was deliberate. It’s in the plan. It’s the program. And the program for 2008 is simple. Two million ballots were cast but not counted in the 2000 race. (Over half, 54%, were cast by African-American.) In 2004, the GOP kicked it up to THREE million. Get ready, these guys aim high: “four in ‘06, and “five in ‘08, looks to be their game plan.

How will they pile up five million un-voters in 2008? Let’s start with the three million “disappeared” of 2004:

Step 1: “Spoiling” ballots?1,389,231 of them. In the vote-count game, these are called “undervotes” and “overvotes.” You can recognize these lost ballots by their hanging chads, punch cards without punches (an Ohio specialty), paper ballots eaten by scanners, and touch screens that didn’t know you touched them.

Step 2: Rejecting “provisional ballots”– 1,090,729 in this pile. Voters finding themselves at the “wrong” precinct, or wrongly “scrubbed” from voter rolls get these back-of-the-bus ballots first inaugurated in 2002. In ‘04, provisional ballots were passed out like candy to voters in the poorest precincts. They handed them out, then threw them away, one million dumped in all. In Ohio, Republican Secretary of State Kenneth Blackwell changed state rules, allowing him to toss out the ballots of legal voters who cast ballots in the wrong precinct although these citizens were told their vote would count after confirming their registration.

Step 3: Not counting absentee ballots - 526,420 of them. At least, that’s what we figure from official stats. But it’s anyone’s guess how many mailed-in votes were dumped. (However, in one case, in Palm Beach, Florida, Jeb Bush’s candidate for Elections Supervisor, Theresa LaPore, counted more absentee votes than absentee ballots mailed in. Not the brightest bulb in the vote-fix biz, that Theresa.)

Step 4: Scrub’m, Purge’m, Block’m. These are the voters who never got to vote at all. This group includes those who found their registrations were never entered on the voter rolls. In Ohio, about one-fourth of those registered by Jesse Jackson’s 2004 voter drive, found their registrations delayed beyond the election date or lost.

Add to this un-voter group, those who were wrongly

“scrubbed” from registries as “felons.” For example, there was Bernice Kines, purged in Florida in 2004 because she was convicted of a felony on July 31, 2009. I repeat: 2009. There was something especially odd about the Ohio felon purge: ex-cons are ALLOWED to vote in that state, Mr. Blackwell.

How many lost their chance to vote by scrubbing, purging and blocking? That’s anyone’s guess, but one million would not be an unfair estimate and that’s not included in the 3.6 million tally of ballots uncounted.

Was it deliberate? Oh my God, yes. I’d like you to take a look at the “caging” lists the Republican National Committee concocted to challenge voters with “suspect” addresses. It included page after page of African-American soldiers, like one Randall Prausa, shipped overseas. Mission accomplished, Mr. President?

And there’s some new tricks for these old dogs. For the 2006 and 2008, the GOP is pushing new Voter ID requirements. Your signature won’t be good enough anymore.

What’s wrong with the new ID laws? This: in the 2004 election, 300,000 voters were turned away from the polls for “wrong” ID. For example, in the “Little Texas” counties in New Mexico, if your voter registration included a middle initial but your driver’s license had none, you were kicked out of the polling station. Funny, but they

only seemed to ask Hispanic voters. We should see the number of voters rejected for ID to quintuple by 2008 based on the new “voting reform” laws recently passed in several states.

Also, coming to a polling station near you: more caging lists, scrub lists, ID challenge lists and more. Exactly why do you think they are compiling those “War on Terror” and War on Immigration databases? Behind the 2000 felon purge lists and behind the 2004 caging lists were databases from the same companies that now have those homeland security contracts. Are they saving us from Osama or from Democrats?

I wish I could give you a book on a page, because information is our weapon: Turn on the lights and the cockroaches scatter. That’s why I’m asking you to read RFK’s article on the Theft of Ohio and GET ANGRY. Then read, “Armed Madhouse: & The Scheme to Steal ‘08”?AND GET READY.

BBC investigative reporter Greg Palast is author of ARMED MADHOUSE: Who’s Afraid of Osama Wolf?, The Scheme to Steal ‘08, No Child’s Behind Left and other Dispatches from the Front Lines of the Class War. Or order it at www.ArmedMadhouse.com

Also, check Bradblog.com and AirAmericaRadio.com for the audio of Janeane Garofalo, Brad Friedman and Randi Rhodes reading “Kerry Won” and other sections of Armed Madhouse. Then belly up to the beast: Join Greg Palast and the Reverend Jesse Jackson (in Chicago), Amy Goodman (in New York), Bob Fitraakis (in Columbus) and others for the 24-city US/UK Armed Madhouse Class War Boot Camp meetings.

They begin this Monday, sponsored by Ohio Citizens Alliance for Secure Elections, Operation PUSH, Oregon Voter Action, Activist San Diego and Pacifica Radio. For dates and locations, go to www.GregPalast.com

Investigative reporter
Greg Palast



Elections continued from page 5

installing Sheriff department computers at the Harris Ranch in West Fresno County, and the Peace Fresno incident. While we may never know the full details about why Pierce did not run, the end result was that we will have a new Sheriff after the November elections.

There were five candidates running for Sheriff. Margaret Mims had endorsements from the Central Valley Progressive PAC, Fresno Democratic Women’s Club, National Women’s Political Caucus, and Fresno Stonewall Democrats. She was the only Democrat in the race. All of the other candidates were Republicans. With 100% of the ballots counted, the vote was:

Cal Minor 35,118 votes for 37.50% of the vote
Margaret Mims 26,231 for 28.01% of the vote
Joe Flores 14,144 for 15.11% of the vote
Colleen Mestas 12,567 for 13.42% of the vote
Chris Curtice 5,451 for 5.82% of the vote

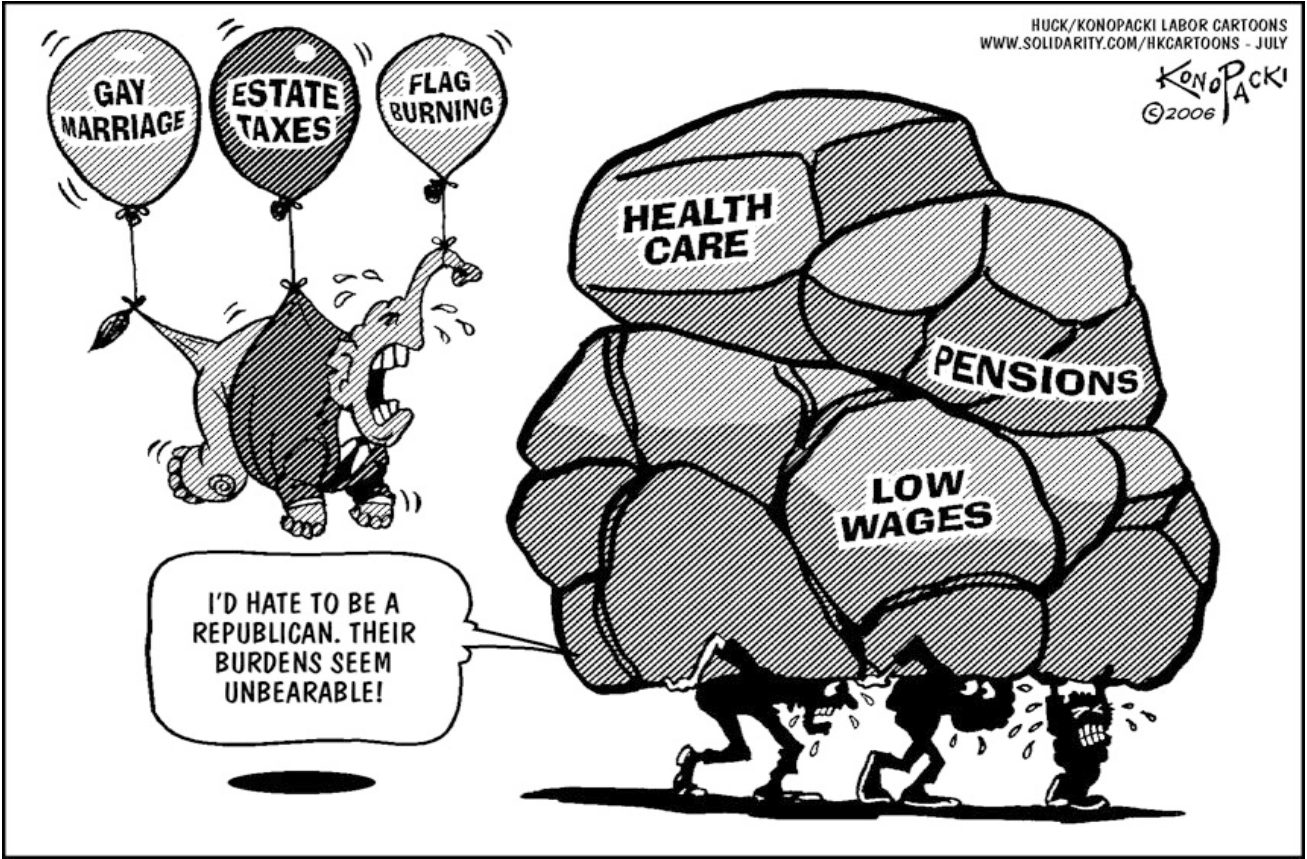
In the last reporting period, Cal Minor was reported to have received \$122,023 compared to Margaret Mims \$117,539. Chris Curtice only reported \$7,760 in donations. Money does make a difference in electoral politics. Colleen Mestas, who came in a disappointing 4th, was backed by organized labor in Fresno.

In the race for Fresno County Superintendent of Schools, there were two Republican candidates (both named Larry) to choose from. Larry Powell was backed by outgoing Superintendent Pete Mehas and considered to be the more conservative of the two candidates. Powell has close ties with the fundamentalist Christian community. Larry Wilder was backed by the Fresno Teachers Association, California School Employees Association, SEIU, the Black Political Council and the Central Labor Council. With 100% of the ballots counted, the vote was:

Larry Powell 55,132 for 62.72% of the vote
Larry Wilder 32,606 for 37.08% of the vote

There was a very limited presence of progressive third party candidates in Fresno County. John Crockford, who is running for the 29th Assembly District, will run as a Peace and Freedom Party candidate against the incumbent Mike Villines. There is also a Green Party candidate, out of Visalia, who is running in the 21st Congressional District. The 21st CD only includes a small part of Fresno County. John Miller is the Green Party candidate.

Progressive community activists working on local electoral campaigns need to analyze the results of the June 6 primary election and figure out what went wrong, what could be done better next time, and how to win in November.



Freedom From War: Transforming A Movement Of Pieces Into A Peace Movement

By Dave Dionisi

Do you ever wonder why we just don't end the war with a general strike? Certainly, if the majority of Americans who already oppose the war refused to go to work, we would end the war in a matter of months.

I believe the answer is we must organize and welcome other peace organizations as we welcome our family and our local peace organization members. If we do this, we can end the illegal Iraq war, prevent an attack on Iran, and restore our democracy with well coordinated acts of civil obedience. If joining a general strike is something Americans are not ready for, then we must wake up fellow citizens with programs to help them take that first step against the war.

Freedom From War is an organization designed to help the peace movement work together and help individuals speak out for peace. Our vision is a world at peace, made possible by freedom of religion, freedom of speech, freedom from want, and freedom from fear. To help end and prevent future wars, we work to transform from a world based on greed, pain and cruelty to a world based on generosity, compassion and love.

We are an open source non-profit that welcomes everyone desiring a world of nonviolence, peace and social justice. The open source term comes from the software industry and means programs and best practices are made freely available to end-

users who have various degrees of rights to modify and redistribute what we offer back into the community.

Freedom From War offers non-violent peace education programs to all ages that:

are scalable nationally and internationally. have a high return on energy. help transform the peace movement into a cohesive force for non-violent change.

We exist to transform the current movement of pieces into a peace movement. We invest our energy because we want to safeguard life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness. We hunger for a world with meaning and authenticity. We want to contribute to the common good because we become lost when life is focused on accumulating material goods.

We are careful not to duplicate existing efforts of other organizations. For example, we engage the public in thoughtful discussions with our "Stand Up For Peace" program. This program enables individuals and organizations to make a difference by participating in a massive peace collage. Individuals who are 18 or older can participate by sending a digital picture where they are holding a sheet of paper with a statement for peace to freedomfromwar@sbcglobal.net. To see the current collage, go to www.freedomfromwar.org/standup1.htm.

We also teach peace via resources like the Happy Cricket, the Did You Know & What To Do series and the American

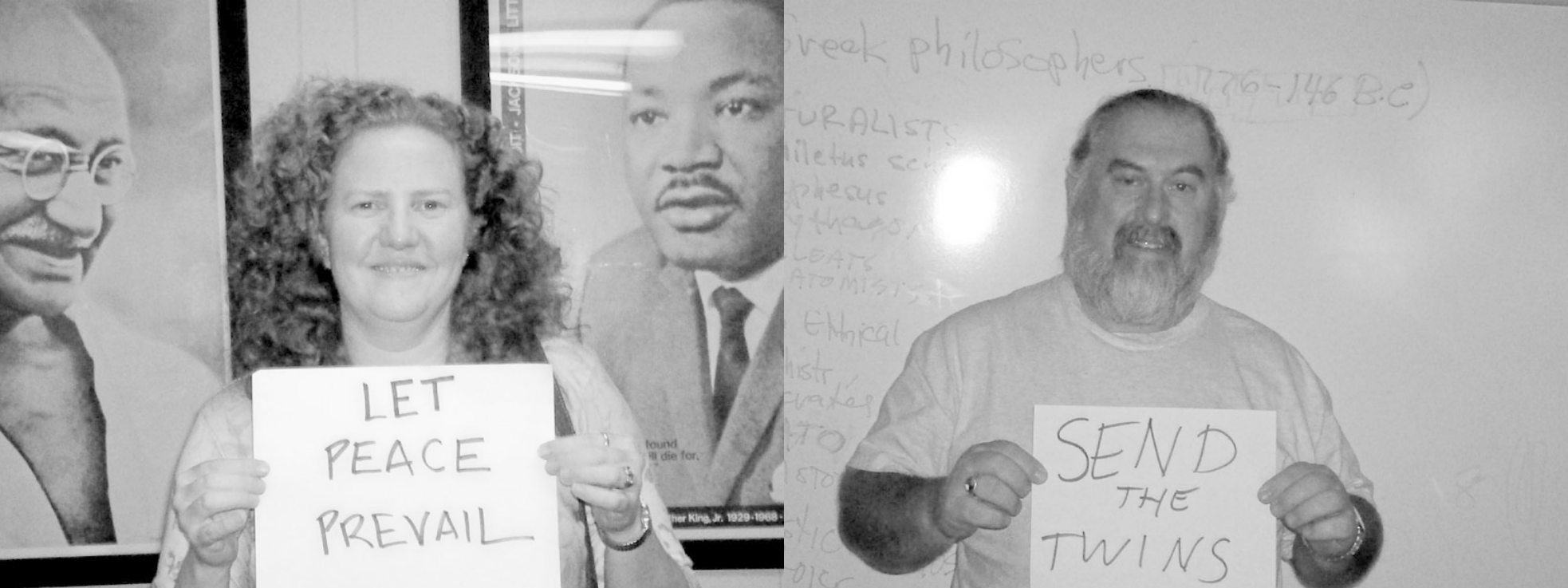
Every Tuesday • 7 PM

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

Hiroshima book. The Happy Cricket is a peace education program designed for children. Our educational materials can be used to enhance the efforts of other peace organizations. Another powerful way to raise awareness is with the Freedom From War online documentaries (see <http://www.freedomfromwar.org/videos.htm>). These resources help peace organizations educate groups and individuals.

The Fresno peace community understands this and was well represented by Jean Hays and Dan Yaseen at the Freedom From War June 10th meeting in Davis. Peace Fresno is helping to lead the way and has agreed to join Freedom From War. Together with Peace Fresno, Freedom From War welcomes all peace groups in the Central Valley.

Peace will prevail! Working together is the key acceleration pedal for rapidly ending the war. Visit www.freedomfromwar.org today, Stand Up For Peace and discuss the idea of a general strike with your friends.



July 4 Celebration

The public is invited to The 9th Annual 4th of July Celebration of our Diversity Brunch at O'Neill Park, CSUF Campus (Barstow between Maple and Chestnut streets). Sponsored by the Interfaith Alliance of California. Honoring the racial and religious pluralism that makes America Great!

This grand event representing the pluralism of Fresno that makes America great, features flags and entertainment from the variety of faith and cultural groups in the Fresno area. This year's brunch will be a Laotian Brunch. Join the Celebration of the Diversity of our Country on the 4th of July with the Interfaith Alliance of Central California. For further information call 225-1438.

The public is invited to join Interfaith Groups for a Brunch, and celebrate with music, dance and entertainment from the variety of faith and cultural groups represented here in the Fresno Area. The grand celebration includes an opening Flag Ceremony, and entertainment representing the pluralism of Fresno that makes America great.

Suggested donation: \$5 for adults, \$2 for children under 12, with a maximum of \$15 per family. For tickets or further information, please call Edie or Bryan Jessup at 255-1438. Tickets will be available at the brunch, also.

Last year over 600 people enjoyed entertainment, Brunch, and friendship celebrating America's Pluralism. Entertainment this year will include: Tocanto Brazilian ensemble; Classical Dance of India; Fresno Gumyo Taiko drummers; Cubdhi Sidhu Sikh dancers; the Vang Sisters/Traditional Hmong dancing; Heartland Harvest; Terry Lewis; Jamelle Todd, Soul Vocalist; Larry Bassman and Stolen Thunder; Lebanese Traditional Dabke Dancers; and more!

The Interfaith Alliance of Central California is an inclusive, progressive group in the Central San Joaquin Valley committed to: Affirming religious pluralism and celebrating differences; Protecting minority rights; Separation of Church and State; and Civility in political debate.

4th of July Diversity Celebration Committee: Fr. Perry Kavookjian; Bryan and Edie Jessup, , Babs and Saul Eskin, Ashraf Ibrahim, Rev.Floyd Harris, Anne Jenny, Rachel Carpenter, Dr. Mohinder Singh Poonia; J.P. Sethi, Ghassane Habib, Ray Ensher, Al Evans, Su Kapoor.

Rev. Bryan Jessup, Co-Chair, Interfaith Alliance of Central California 225-1438, w. 227-6146

The Third Annual Gene Bluestein Memorial Concert



featuring

The Bluestein Family

Joel • Evo • Frayda • Jemmy

Friday, October 6
8:00 pm

Tower Theatre for the Performing Arts
815 E. Olive Ave., Fresno

Tickets on sale now!

(559) 485-9050
towertheatrefresno.org



Local Think Tank Presents Series of Articles in the *Community Alliance*

Some of our region's best analysts are fellows of the Central California Institute, our local progressive think tank. To provide a forum for the work of our fellows and kindred spirits, we have contracted with the *Community Alliance* for a series of five articles on subjects of local importance. The continuation of the Institute depends on the interest and support of the community. To utilize the expertise of the fellows, to comment on the work of the Institute, or to provide financial underwriting, contact CCI c/o FCNV, 1584 N Van Ness, Fresno 93728 or call Ray Ensher at 439-8140.

Medicare Part D

By Gene Roza

Congressional leaders asked Speaker of the House Dennis Hastert last January to start an investigation into how the Medicare Part D plan was passed. Their letter was headed: "Democratic leaders call Medicare drug legislation the product of a 'Corrupt legislative process', and it demanded exposure of the scandal-tainted lobbying, the denial to Congressional members of the opportunity to offer amendments, and the fact that the vote was held up for hours into the night while Congressmembers were arm-twisted and bribed into passing it.

Additionally, cost estimates of the legislation were illegally withheld. During the debate, Tom Scully, a high-level Congressional analyst, assured Congress that the Medicare drug benefit would not exceed \$400 billion over 10 year. In fact, the Medicare actuary, Richard Foster, had correctly predicted it would be over \$600 billion. Scully threatened Foster with loss of his job if he shared this information with Congress. This act by Scully is a violation of multiple federal laws. Then Scully left his government position to take a job at Alston & Bird, a firm that represents several pharmaceutical companies, where he registered as a lobbyist. Representatives Bill Tauzin and James Greenwood, who were key to procuring passage of the bill, also later accepted jobs with the drug and biotech industries, which benefit from the drug bill. The final bill

reflects a deplorable breakdown in the legislative process. In effect, millions of seniors and U.S. taxpayers are paying a costly "Corruption Tax".

What can we do about this disaster known as Medicare Part "D"? One answer lies at the ballot box and with who we elect to represent us taxpayers, consumers, seniors, care providers and families. CARA (California Alliance for Retired Americans) developed a California Legislator Score Card on 16 high priority bills that can have an impact on seniors and low-income people, bills addressing prescription drugs, affordable housing, elder abuse, health care, and the like. So let's identify some Central Valley representative and see how they scored (with 100% being the best) : Juan Arambula 94%, Bill Maze 25%, Nicole Parra 88%, Michael Vilines 19%, Roy Ashburn 25%, Dean Florez 93%, Charles Poochigian 25%, and Governor himself 46%. Remember these names and scores in November.

Statewide, OuRX Coalition (see note below) believes that consumer needs should come before the profits of drug companies, and is working toward that end. They are backing critical legislation at the state level that begins to address the burgeoning costs of health care: AB-75 would establish the California Rx Plus State Pharmacy Program to leverage the state's purchasing power, primarily through its Medi-Cal program, to negotiate drug prices.

AB-2877 would create the California Rx Prescription Drug Web-site Program, to provide information about drug purchasing options. SB-163 would require drug companies who contract with the state to disclose the percentage of their national operating budget that is spent on marketing as compared to research & development.

SB-1638 would require these same companies to make publicly available the results of all their clinical trials for the drugs they sell in California. AB-71 would establish the Office of California Drug Safety Watch, a clearing house of information about safety and effectiveness of prescriptions advertised on TV.

On the national level, MediCare Part "D" needs to be changed. Enrollment was chaotic, with millions pushed too quickly into making decisions that were extremely complex. (Choosing a

plan became known as "The Valley of Tiers" because 47 plans each with different "tiers" of choice were offered, making an informed choice almost impossible) Medi-Cal beneficiaries were especially disadvantaged in this process, as these so-called Medi-Medis lose access to life-saving drugs or are forced to pay extremely high co-payments, while being faced with late enrollment penalties that last a lifetime. Also Part "D" created "DONUT HOLES" where there is no coverage for drug costs between \$2,500 to \$5,100, even while monthly payments are still due.

Part D, remarkably, prevents the federal government from negotiating lower prices for drugs. Meanwhile, it allows drug companies to switch the drugs and prices they offer at will, but seniors are locked into plans for up to a year. And it is planned that, over the next 8 years, the average monthly premium will increase from \$32 to \$64; the average deductible will increase from \$250 to \$437, and the DONUT HOLE will expand from \$2,850 to \$4,984. Clearly this plan was designed to privatize Medicare with a high bottom line for the pharmaceutical industry, not for the benefit of consumers.

So, before we vote again we need to ask all candidates in local, state and federal elections where they stand on issues that have such a dramatic impact on this nation's elderly and those in need of health care. This election year, if candidates want your vote, insist they take a positive stand on these issues. The Alliance for Retired Americans (ARA) produced a 2005 Congressional Voting Record of all national elected officials. Go to www.californiaalliance.org to find your representatives' voting records. Also posted are a series of questions you can ask the candidates seeking your support. "Silence Is Not An Option".

Note: OuRx coalition Steering Committee includes representatives from: Aids Healthcare Foundation; California Alliance for Retired Americans; California Labor Federation; Consumers Union; CALPIRG; Congress of California Seniors; Gray Panthers California; Greenling Institute; Health Access California; Latinos Coalition for a Healthy California; Older Women's League; and the Senior Action Network.

Mother's Day in Chowchilla

By Sara Jane Olson



What makes a mother legitimate? Who has the right to be a mother in the United States? Are women who are incarcerated fallen women, prime examples of the patriarchal version of the Garden of Eden story and, thus, ineligible for legitimate motherhood? Do we feel love for our children? Do we miss them like women who have never been in prison? Yes, we do.

Central California Women's Facility (CCWF) is located about 20 miles North of Fresno, between Madera and Chowchilla and right across the road from Valley State Prison for Women (VSPW). Together, they form the largest women's prison complex in the world with an incarcerated population of approximately 7,500.

Most of the prisoners at CCWF are mothers. On Friday, May 12, CCWF hosted the annual Get on the Bus (GOTB) event, uniting women prisoners with our children and loved ones, to honor Mother's Day. GOTB day is organized and financially supported by various Catholic dioceses and a large number of other churches and organizations throughout the state. The main organizing work within the prison is spearheaded by Ms. Hansen of Friends Outside, a self-help group operating within and without California's CDCR institutions. Staff from the prison allow the event to occur once a year.

This year, 189 women applied to take part in the festivities held in the prison's Visiting Center. Only 46 weren't approved. Denial of approval typically centers on parental custody or documentation issues.

California's Southern dioceses handled the logistics for CCWF mothers because its prisoners come from all points South of Bakersfield. They bring the women's children and other relatives and friends - sisters, mothers, aunts and uncles. For instance, Shirelle C.'s son lives in Elsinore. The Catholic Diocese of San Bernardino sponsored him.

The churches raise money privately to pay for the buses, breakfast, and dinner meals en route both ways, food in the Visiting Center for inmates and guests, a gift tote bag of art materials for each child and two Polaroid photos. They provide outreach services to help the kids come by assembling and paying for identification, birth certificates and notary services.

On the big day, inmates come to the gym on the main yard. The night before, we receive ducats (an in-prison appointment pass) on the three facility yards for 9 AM. As the buses come in from Southern California, women are called to the Visiting Center to meet with the children and other loved ones. This year, only three women in the gym were never called.



children tell mom how thrilled they were to read them.

After the visit, inmate mothers, like all who get a visit, are stripped and searched. We can each bring back a Polaroid photo from the visit. It's a magic time even though moms can't bring back the cards made by our children during the visit or, if the kids have drawn a creative handprint on mom's shirt, mom may be threatened with a write up for "destroying state property." No matter. It's worth it.

Get on the Bus Friday is the only time most mothers see our chil-



dren each year. It's a precious gift but it's hardly adequate for either party. Many mothers are lifers of very long termers. When one considers the impact incarceration has on a mother and child, one finds: prison destroys. It attempts to destroy not only the mother/child bond but, consequently, it strikes huge reverberations throughout our family and community structures.

Furthermore, the majority of GOTB women prisoners can not ever have overnight visits with our children. In 1994 California outlawed Family (FLV) Visits for lifers. This proscription was extended to all Close A and Close B (Close Custody) inmates, a designation that limits in-prison movement and programs which creates more special staff positions for guards on each faculty yard.

Children of prisoners and we, their moms, need to see each other more often. We would like to have more GOTB Fridays, restoration of Family Visits for lifers, and a reduction in the wholly unnecessary Close Custody designation. After all, in prison or not, for a woman who is a mother, everyday is Mother's Day.

###

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

The week before the event, the mothers write a letter telling our children how much we enjoyed the visit. The letters are distributed on the bus ride home. The



JULY 2006 COMMUNITY ALLIANCE 10

State Prison “Grooming Standards” Over Turned By The Federal Court

By: Boston Woodard

In 1998, a new state prison dress-code was submitted to the California Office of Administrative Law (OAL) for approval. The code, which became California Department of Corrections (CDC) policy, has been unnecessary and unfair, a burden that had no benefit especially for 160,000 male prisoners.

The 1998 dress-code required male prisoners to cut their hair, beards and fingernails. Though men would lose their beards and be forced into new haircuts, female prisoners would still be allowed to wear earrings, nail polish and make-up to “enhance their looks,” according to (then) CDC Director of Corrections, C.A. Terhune.

Corrections officials blurted that the new grooming standards were for the “safety and security of all institutions,” and for “public safety.” Surely he announced this with a straight face.

I can not recall anything as unrealistic and absurd as the reasons given for the change of rules regarding grooming standards for California prisoners.

In his initial statement of reasons, the director wrote, “This action is necessary to promote good personal hygiene as well as to aid in the security of the prisons and to protect the safety of the public.”

His statement smacked of classic textbook ploy to dupe the public into believing that if convicts are forced to trim their mustaches, the public will be safer. The claim that uniform grooming standards support legitimate penological interests was also baseless. Police would find it much more difficult to “identify” and “apprehend” escapees forced into a standard appearance.

The director claimed to “. .set the standards for each gender according to needs, physical and psychological differences, behavioral differences and social standards.”

Disregarding the Penal Code, the CDC took it upon itself to make up particular degrees of punishment according to gender.

California’s lawmakers did not enact two sets of punishments - male and female. His double standard for male and female prisoners’ grooming criterion violated preferential treatment laws.

The Department of Correction’s most egregious lie in its initial notice of rule change was that the department “determined that this action will impose no fiscal impact.”

In 1998, California prisons did not provide adequate hygiene supplies: i.e., soap, razors, tooth powder, etc., to accommodate existing grooming standards. When the new rules were inacted, the taxpayers had to pay.

Tens of thousands of new prisoner I.D.s and hundreds of thousands of copies of the Title #15, California Code of Regulations (CCR5), rules governing prisons, had to be reprinted and distributed to every prisoner and tens of thousands of prison staff members as required by law. Courtesy of the taxpayers of California.

There were countless, expensive, disciplinary actions sparked in many cases by prisoners’ legitimate refusal to comply because of personal, religious, and ethical reasons. There were federal civil rights complaints filed on behalf of those prisoners with devout religious objections to mandated rules on hair length and facial-hair styles (Native Americans, Orthodox Jews, Muslims and Rastafarians to name some). There were years of court costs and fees for attorneys defending the state — all because of a “grooming standard problem” that never existed within California’s prison system. The new rules cost Californians millions it did not have to spend.

As a result of numerous lawsuits regarding the religious rights of prisoners, i.e. Warsoldier v. Woodford, Case No.: 04- 55879, DC No. CV-04-02233-IRSWL, (July 2005); Mayweathers V. Newland, 314 F.3d 1062, 1070 (9th Cir. 2002); and In Re Corey Williams, Case No.: SC133840A, (Feb. 2004). The CDC has been ordered to comply with the Religious Land Use and Institutionalized Persons Act (IRLUIPA) which provides that government may not impose a substantial burden on a prisoner’s exercise of religion unless the regulation in question furthers a compelling state interest in the least restrictive manner. Furthermore, the courts have determined that it would also serve a compelling governmental interest by ordering the CDC to apply grooming standards equally to all prisoners, irregardless of their religion, race, ethnic background, or sex.

Early on, rank and file guards felt the new grooming standards were not necessary, uncalled for, and would pose a distraction from the legitimate details of their job assignments.

Don Novey, who was president of the California Correctional Officer’s Peace Officers Association (CCPOA), had said before the grooming standards were implemented, “Staff have better things to do than to check the length of prisoners’ hair. We’ve got a lot of problems in there, and that’s not one of them.”

This was done soon after ex-Gov. Pete Wilson stopped reporters from interviewing specific prisoners. Because the public now only hears the watered-down version of events prepared by prison administrators, the CDC snuck the grooming standards into policy.

The grooming standards emerged in the wake of Wilson vetoing a bill by (Pet) San Fransisco Senator Quentin Kopp that would have reinstated the public’s right to hear the whole story before making it policy.

The grooming standards were not, and never will be, progress toward legitimate penological interests as CDC’s shot callers spewed.

Such as many of the rules, regulations, and policies in the California prison system, the grooming standards were arbitrary and unnecessary. The public needs to demand that rule changes such as these not be implemented until a complete investigation can be conducted to assess their merits, and to prevent wasting millions on baseless claims by the California Department of Corrections.

###

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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OUT IN THE VALLEY!



Another Great Pride!

By Dan Waterhouse, The Waterhouse Report, Courtesy of News Link

Well, Fresno Rainbow Pride 2006 is a wrap!

And, this year's rendition was probably the best one since Community Link was asked to assume the responsibility of organizing the event four years ago.

In 2003, Community Link stepped in and pulled a very successful parade and festival together in just six weeks after the previous organizing group collapsed.

In 2006, an organizing committee of just seven, headed up by Community Link's Chief Executive Officer Jeffery Robinson, put together "Out In The Valley." This year's theme was chosen to mark the evolution of Fresno's event into the premier Pride event between the Los Angeles area and Sacramento.

There were a lot of "firsts" this time. There were roughly 60 groups in the parade—the largest according to Robinson since

the event began. There were 40-some exhibitors at the Festival this time—again the largest number ever.

A contingent of LGBT veterans marched in the parade for the first time ever. Note to Fresno mayor Alan "Bubba" Autry: two years ago you said that, if there were veterans in the parade, you would make sure a Proclamation in honor of Pride was approved by the full City Council and that all city fees would be waived.

Veterans—gay and lesbian veterans—marched, Mayor. Now, it's time for you to fulfill what you promised two years ago. Thank you.

And, the first-ever celebrity grand marshal—Matthew Fashion.

The youthful "Fashionality"—he just turned 21—was warmly received by the crowd at the parade and at the festival.

Speaking of youth—the future of the queer community—its young people—was well represented in this year's event. Fresno City College's Diversity Club turned out. Visalia's College of the Sequoias' Pride Club was there. The Youth Alliance walked down Olive along with the Gay Straight Alliance Network and OUTLOUD.

Over 100 young people participated.

A contingent from Bakersfield marched. We would have had other groups from the north end of the Valley if not for conflicting events in the Bay Area.

Ellos Latinos, Carmen Miranda Maraca Cha Cha Band and Deja Vu had the most colorful groups or floats.

All in all, another successful event.

But, then some reality set in.

This is not an easy event to put together. In the past few years, planning has become a year-round endeavor!

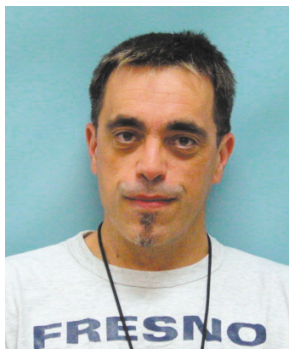
Individual community members need to step up to the plate and help keep this prize alive and well. It takes more than seven people to plan Fresno Pride! People to serve on next year's organizing committee are urgently needed.

If you're curious about helping, please email clinkinc@aol.com or call (559) 486-3464.

The date for next year's Fresno Rainbow Pride has been set. Pride will be on Saturday, June 2, 2007.

See you there!





QUEER EYE

Waterston Says City Bankrupting County City Should Pay for Needle Exchange Program

By Dan Waterhouse

When the Fresno County Board of Supervisors refused on May 23rd to authorize a legal needle exchange in the county, three board members made several things crystal clear.

Supervisor Bobby Waterston said, “Most of the problems we [the county] see come from a city that’s the fifth-largest in the state.” He went on to say the county is broke from providing services to Fresno city residents. He feels a needle exchange program serving mostly Fresno residents should be paid for by the City.

Supervisor Henry Perea wants any needle exchange program operated by county employees, so clients can be forced into drug and alcohol treatment. Perea also hinted he is uncomfortable with HIV/AIDS outreach and testing by the county being anywhere near to the present needle exchange program.

And, Judy Case wondered whether the now-illegal needle exchange program is essentially an attractive nuisance, bringing out-of-county drug users to Fresno because it is the only program in the Central Valley.

The current controversy whether to authorize needle exchange in Fresno County was triggered when the 2004/05 Grand Jury recommended that a legal program be established. The Board of Supervisors then directed Dr. Edward Moreno, the county health officer, to determine whether a health crisis did exist in the county. A status report concluded that a public health crisis does exist “with respect to Hepatitis C virus and HIV in the Fresno County injection drug using community.”

Dr. Moreno recommended that a needle exchange program be authorized, to be part of the coordinated outreach, education, testing, counseling, early medical intervention and treatment programs now offered by the county.

The status report stated that 75-81% of injection drug users in the county have Hepatitis C, as compared with 1.8% of the general population. The study also revealed that 34% of HIV patients (men and women) in the county are injection drug users. Among women with HIV in the county, 60% reported injection drug use. Just 0.2% of the general U.S. population is HIV positive.

Supervisor Case questioned why Fresno County has the highest numbers of injection drug users in the country. Dr. Moreno replied that the high rates are a Central Valley wide phenomena. The majority of the counties report HIV infection rates of 29 to 35 percent among injection drug users.

According to Dr. Moreno, babies born to HIV and Hepatitis C infected women often end up infected themselves. Six percent of infants born to women with Hepatitis C wind up with the virus. And 17% of babies of Hepatitis C/HIV positive women also have Hepatitis C. Depending on the severity of the mother’s illness, between 5.5 and 39 percent of babies born to HIV positive women are themselves HIV positive at birth.

Perea asked Dr. Moreno if needle exchange clients could be mandated into treatment as a condition of receiving clean needles from the program. Moreno replied there is no statute

allowing a county to do that. He added that 70% of injection drug users typically are not ready to enter substance abuse treatment. Moreno said those users would then not approach the program and would continue to use “dirty needles” and be at risk.

Jim Kirby, principal analyst for county Substance Abuse Services, told the supervisors that the rates of injection drug users per 10,000 people vary from 100 in the Sacramento area to 173 in Fresno. He noted that the Bakersfield area rate is 128 per 10,000, and in the Stockton/Lodi area, the rate is 149 per 10,000. He said the entire Central Valley has extremely high rates of injection drug use.

Kirby added a recent study commissioned by Fresno County affirmed that drug and alcohol treatment does work. A total of 3,000 clients were studied. People who spent more days in treatment (especially intensive in-patient or out-patient) were more likely to stay clean and sober.

The primary drug of choice among clients was methamphetamine (29%) followed by cocaine or crack and heroin (all at 15%). All three are commonly injected by users.

The queer community has been hard hit by the use of meth—or crank. The drug has reportedly led to higher numbers of HIV cases, particularly among gay men, in recent years.

Fresno Center for Nonviolence



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THE WELCH REPORT

By Jack H. Welch, M.D.



MAHATMA BUSH

"Evidently the president's trip to India created an option too perfect to pass up: The man who has led the world in violence during the first years of the 21st century could pay homage to the world's leading practitioner of nonviolence during the first half of the 20th century. So the White House announced plans for George W. Bush to lay a wreath at the Mahatma Gandhi memorial in New Delhi.

"While audacious in its shameless and extreme hypocrisy, this PR gambit is in character for the world's only superpower. One of the main purposes of the Bush regime's media spin is to depict reality as its opposite. And Karl Rove obviously figured that mainstream media outlets, with few exceptions, wouldn't react with anywhere near the appropriate levels of derision or outrage.

"Presidential rhetoric aside, Gandhi's enthusiasm for nonviolence is nearly matched by Bush's enthusiasm for violence. The commander in chief regularly proclaims his misty-eyed pride in US military actions that destroy countless human lives with massive and continual techno-violence... The president of the US is not exactly committed to violence; what he wants is an end to resistance.

"A conqueror is always a lover of peace', the Prussian general Karl von Clausewitz observed. Yearning for Uncle Sam to fulfill his increasingly farfetched promise of victory in Iraq, the US president is an evangelist for peace—on his terms."

In April 2004 the "cerebral pundit" George Will engaged in a burst of candor when he wrote a column about the widening bloodshed inside Iraq: 'In the war against the militias, every door American troops crash through, every civilian bystander shot will make matters worse for a while. Nevertheless, the first task of the occupation remains the first task of government: to establish a monopoly on violence.'

This column in the Washington Post, headlined "A War President's Job", diagnosed the problem and prescribed more violence. 'Now Americans must steel themselves for administering the violence necessary to disarm or defeat Iraq's urban militias, which replicate the problem of modern terrorism—violence that no longer is state-based. For unleashing the Pentagon's violence, the rationales are inexhaustible.'

In an important sense, it's plausible to envision Bush as a lover of peace and even an apostle of nonviolence. The president of the US is urging "peace" as a synonym for getting his way in Iraq. "From Washington, the most exalted vision of peace is a scenario where the occupied no longer resist the American occupiers or their allies."

At the Brink of Apartheid

This May Nobel Peace Prize nominee and coordinating director of the Israeli Committee Against House Demolition, Jeff Halper spoke eloquently on the situation in Israel with an emphasis on the partition of Palestine and the construction of the apartheid wall. For those who missed his presentation the Center has an excellent DVD on Halper's work entitled, "Resisting the Occupation on the Ground" as well as books written by Dr. Halper available for borrowing.

Those interested in learning more about Halper's work may visit www.icahd.org which provides information about the organization as well as easy and fulfilling ways to get involved.

Coming Events

- July 12th: 3 pm: KFCF 88.1 - Stir it Up with Angela Price and Dick Haas discussing global warming
- August 9th: 2nd Wednesday Film Series: "Dr. Strangelove or: How I learned to Stop Worrying and Love the Bomb" and potluck
- August 9th: 3 pm: KFCF 88.1 - Stir it Up with Vincent Lavery discussing water issues

Fresno Center for Nonviolence

14th Anniversary Celebration

Sunday, July 16th – 4pm – 6pm

Margaret Hudson's Barn at 4247 N. Thorne

Featuring

- Way of Peace Awards ceremony honoring: Edie Jessup, Reverend Floyd Harris, Lloyd Carter, Reedley Peace Center, Simone Whalen-Rhodes, and Brandon Hill
- Tribute to contributors to Dozen Roses for Peace program
 - Live Music
 - Fine Arts Raffle
 - Delicious potluck

Second Wednesday Video Series:

July 12th

Crash

A 36-hour period in the diverse metropolis of post-Sept. 11 Los Angeles is the theme of this unflinching Oscar winning drama that challenges audiences to confront their prejudices. Lives combust when a Brentwood housewife and her district attorney husband, a Persian shopkeeper, two cops, a pair of carjackers and a Korean couple all converge.

Join us for a potluck at 6:30 pm

Movie: 7:00 pm - FCNV

Grassroots Profile

By Richard Stone

A strange scene presents itself when you pass the downtown jail on Monday or Tuesday evenings. There's a familiar-looking soup line, but the patrons are of all sorts. Homeless people, of course, but also bail bondsmen and jail staff, families and friends of prisoners of all colors and classes, even your occasional lawyer grabbing a quick dinner on the run.

This intermingling of social strata and ethnicities is not accidental; it is an essential part of the project design, and a reflection of the philosophy of Leeza and Bryan Apper, the “godparents” of Fresno’s St. Benedict Catholic Worker House.

The Catholic Worker movement was initiated by Dorothy Day and her associates during the Depression. A CW “community” is based in a physical domicile where a core family-group can provide hospitality and safety, attention and lovingkindness, to a few of life’s refugees. As the Appers explain, “We’re not interested in creating an institution to “solve social problems”; we want simply to enact examples of Christian love”, bringing as it were good deeds as well as the good word to life.

Bryan and Leeza moved to Fresno 9 years ago, after a long apprenticeship with Catholic Worker communities and political activism in cities including Los Angeles and Baltimore. (In the latter, they were associated with Jonah House, home of the Berrigans when they weren’t in jail.)

The Appers actually met as teenagers through Catholic Worker Activities. Leeza says, “I heard about it on L.A.’s Pacifica Station and decided to volunteer for the summer. But,” she adds, “Bryan and I got serious some years later when we met again working for Bobby Kennedy.”

At first their interests were more political; but dissatisfaction with the feel of political activity led them back to the spiritual work of Catholic Worker, with its faith in the long-term effect of Good Work. “Our most important job is to listen deeply to people’s needs and feelings, and respond as fully, and materially, as possible. And our mission is to bring our attention where it’s most needed, among the poor and dissipated.”

So St. Benedict’s Catholic Worker House is the Apper’s residence, where typically two to four visitors co-habit, “though some summers we’ve had to put up tents in the yard to house



Catholic Workers in a San Francisco demonstration calling for an end to the war in Iraq



IDENTITY BOX

- Primary Identity: Catholic Worker/Benedictine Spirituality, “Personalist” philosophy
- Political affiliation: faith-based justice, with preferential option for the poor (“prophetic, not political”)
- Most frequented parts of Fresno: the jailhouse, Poverello House
- Inspirations: Dorothy Day & Peter Maurin (founders of Catholic Worker movement); the Berrigans
- Mottoes: No act of kindness is ever wasted (Leeza); PAX (Bryan)
- Unexpected Pleasures: Composing chamber music (Bryan), movies, People magazine and Oprah (Leeza)
- Contact information:
www.sbcw.org; 559-977-3648

everyone we took in.” On my visit, there were visible two other adults and a few children—I couldn’t tell whose, and it didn’t seem to matter. (As I interviewed Bryan and Leeza, one of the guests—Dulcie Miller—would interrupt her family cooking to comment on their answers, with testimony as to the power of their work. “I’ve known them for years, they found me on the street and took me in, and taught me to love the Bible again...By their example, I’ve grown up spiritually, emotionally, financially...I’m back now with my fiancé looking for an apartment, but they welcome me as family, the only family I have.”)

In addition to maintaining the House, CW communities engage in social justice work to protect and dignify “the poor in spirit.” The Appers selected serving meals at the jail as their main project; but additionally they are involved in work opposing the death penalty, and protecting the homeless. Recently (cf June C/ A) Leeza personally held off the razing of a tent pitched near E St—providentially saving a man who was not known to be inside. The Appers are grieved by the attitude they’ve seen—especially in New Orleans, L.A. and Fresno—that the City has the right to “clean itself up” by getting rid of the poor people as if they were more trash. The jail project is meant directly to contravene that picture by creating a place where everyone belongs and adds to the richness of the scene.



Catholic Workers at the Nevada nuclear test site where they have been involved in protest, prayer, and civil disobedience for 20 years. The photo shows Francesca Apper (far left) and Liza (second from the left) at Mass before the mass arrest of more than 50 Catholic Workers from California and Nevada Catholic Worker houses. Both Francesca and Liza were arrested. Photo by Bryan Apper

The Apper’s time-consuming, labor-intensive project is supported by devoted local volunteers; partnership with the Community Food Bank, Poverello House and Holy Cross Women’s Center; staunch advocacy from Bishop Steinbock and the Fresno Diocese; public legitimization from Mike Rhodes and the Community Alliance; and especially the fellowship of “Sister Houses” in California and other states. (“We pray together, have a yearly retreat, send volunteers to each other at crucial times.”)

Their short-term goals are to acquire a functioning truck (“Suggestions anyone?”), to add a Sno-cone night at the jail, and to initiate counselling services in donated office spaces downtown. Their vision is to serve meals every night, and have a separate guest house “to accommodate visitors with more dignity than a futon on the floor.”

To support the Appers’ work, readers can contact them to volunteer, provide food or monetary donations, and/or participate in their periodic roundtable discussions. There’s definitely something to learn from people able to produce 10,100 meals a year almost from thin air.

Help for Local Non-profit Groups

The Fresno Regional Foundation recently announced the merging of the Fresno Nonprofit Council and the Nonprofit Advancement Center to create a new entity – the new Fresno Nonprofit Advancement Council.

The mission of the new Fresno Nonprofit Advancement Council is to promote, strengthen and advance the influence, professionalism, accountability and effectiveness of nonprofit organizations in a manner that builds their capacity to accomplish their missions and preserves the idealism and value of nonprofit organizations in the Central Valley. “The merging of these two organizations has presented such a great opportunity for Central Valley nonprofit agencies and I am excited to be a part of it,” said Ms. Kate Henry, Executive Director. “The new Fresno Nonprofit Advancement Council provides nonprofits with the tools and information they need,

as well as gives them a unified voice through advocacy work on issues affecting Central Valley nonprofit organizations.”

The new Fresno Area Nonprofit Advancement Council’s facility houses a comprehensive resource library and conference room for board meetings. The library boasts the most up-to-date database in the area – continually updated every three months – allowing nonprofit agencies to search through a comprehensive list of all the nonprofit foundations in the U.S. and learn how each foundation operates as well as what grants they have available. The library also contains books on a variety of topics important to nonprofits ranging from how to start and manage a nonprofit organization to raising funds to developing a strong board to tactics for gathering resources and volunteers. The Fresno Area Nonprofit Advancement Council is located at 1752 L. Street in downtown Fresno.

For more information about the New Fresno Nonprofit Advancement Council call (559) 264-1513.

THE ROOT OF HOMELESSNESS

If we have learned anything about homelessness over the past 25 years, it is that public policy based on assumptions, fear, and paranoia about people forced to live on the streets will never create a plan that can work.

All the recent federal plans on homelessness - FEMA emergency shelter plans, HUD Continuum of Care plans (5 years) and the 10-year plans of the Interagency Council on Homelessness are based on the assumption that in the early 1980s, homelessness re-emerged in America because something was wrong with the people who were becoming homeless.

The federal government required local communities to submit competitive applications for federal largesse, and to show that they could effectively address the “problems of homelessness in America” within the grant amounts allocated. So local governments did just that: they formed committees; created task forces; hired tons of consultants (we should know, many of us served as such); and they wrote grant after grant and plan after plan stating how they were going to address the problem if only the feds would give them the lion's share of the money.

Plans deemed groundbreaking and effective changed over the years as the “dysfunctional homeless sub-group of the month” changed. But one thing was always constant: The root of the problem was blamed on the homeless people, not on the federal government. After all, it was the federal government not the homeless people evaluating the proposals.

The federal government pretended and legions of nonprofits and city agencies applying for federal grants were forced to believe that the \$54 billion dollar reduction in affordable housing funding over the last 25 years could now easily be addressed with life-skills training for homeless single mothers. The federal government promulgated the myth that its tax credits for companies to send blue-collar jobs overseas could be easily offset by having welfare recipients sweep streets and pick up garbage in exchange for below-poverty-level welfare assistance, so that they will value giving back to the community.

Imagine this: suppose it wasn't the federal government evaluating these proposals to address homelessness. Let's say it was your high school science teacher. The average high school science teacher could, in a few hours, shred the flawed assumptions, half-baked hypotheses, and lack of factual evidence that comprise these weighty and endless volumes of governmental plans.

Therefore, in honor of high school science teachers across America, we present you with some facts to consider the next time you're wondering, “Where the hell did all these homeless people come from?” Look for the common denominator amongst all these people. If we can identify that, we can begin to make some assumptions and perhaps come up with a hypothesis about the causes of and potential solutions to “the problem” of homelessness.

Our government has formed a flawed hypothesis about homelessness because, from the very outset, it has conveniently turned a blind eye to its own role in drastically cutting federal housing funds. Instead of looking honestly at the factors that created an enormous shortfall of affordable housing, our government has simply jumped to an unscientific prejudgment of homeless people themselves and has set out to “fix” homeless people with counseling and micromanagement instead of addressing the nation's calamitous housing shortage.

Fact one: Compared to 1978, the U.S. government is currently spending nearly 65% less on developing and maintaining

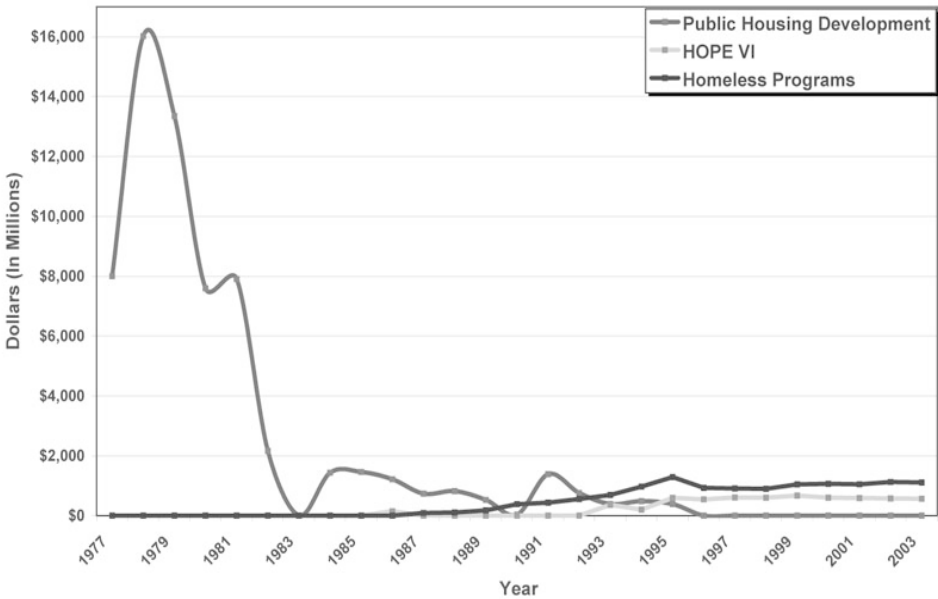
affordable housing units for poor people. (\$83 billion was appropriated in 1978, while only \$29 billion was allocated in 2005.)

Fact two: Compared to 1978, the U.S. government currently spends \$84 billion more on subsidies for homeownership programs. (It spent \$38 billion in 1978 on these subsidies for middle-class and affluent homeowners versus \$122 billion in 2005.)

Fact three: In 2004, 61% of all federal housing subsidies went to households earning over \$54,787 per year, while only 20% of those subsidies went to households earning less than \$18,465 annually. The 2004 federal poverty threshold for a household of four with 2 minor children was \$19,157.

Hypothesis: There is a direct correlation between the fact

Comparison of Funding for Homeless Programs, Public Housing Development, and Hope VI



ludicrous current attempts to fill a \$54 billion housing hole with a mere \$1.37 billion of annual homelessness assistance funding would have drawn ridicule long ago.

How many life skills training courses would a homeless person need to take to compensate for the fact that, in the 20 years from 1983 to 2002, the U.S. government built 500,000 FEWER units of affordable housing than it did in the 7 years from 1976-1982? How many money management classes must a rural parent take to compensate for the 35,000 FEWER units being built in rural America each year?

Are money management classes and life skills training good things? Sure, why not? Is a lack of money management classes and life skills training the cause of a re-emergence of homelessness? Doubtful. Will money management and life skills training or case management, or more outreach, or the repressive policing of homeless people for sleeping and living on our streets ever create enough housing to make up for a \$54 billion cutback from the federal government? Hell no.

If we want to address homelessness in America, we need to stop looking at “them” and start looking at us. If we believe our government represents us, it's we, the people, who must force the federal government to create justice. What did we (the U.S.) do to contribute to this problem and what can we (the U.S.) do to address it? Acting in our name, the U.S. government has chosen to redirect our housing subsidies to homeownership; the real estate industry receives over \$120 billion dollars a year towards this goal. Acting in our name, the U.S. government has chosen to cut \$54 billion from housing assistance programs for poor people. We (as citizens of the U.S.) KNOW that 1.3 million children experienced homelessness in 2003.

Look at the information we present to you. Not only do the facts invalidate the current housing “plan” of the federal government, they invalidate their underlying hypothesis. A group of us: Western Regional Advocacy Project (WRAP) - have gathered documented data from the U.S. government about its housing policies. We have converted this information, facts if you will, into easily understandable charts. Charts can give the same information in a direct visual way that more people can digest and understand. They also do a hell of a good job at cutting through the lies and misinformation of politicians and showing the real trends in our nation's housing policies.

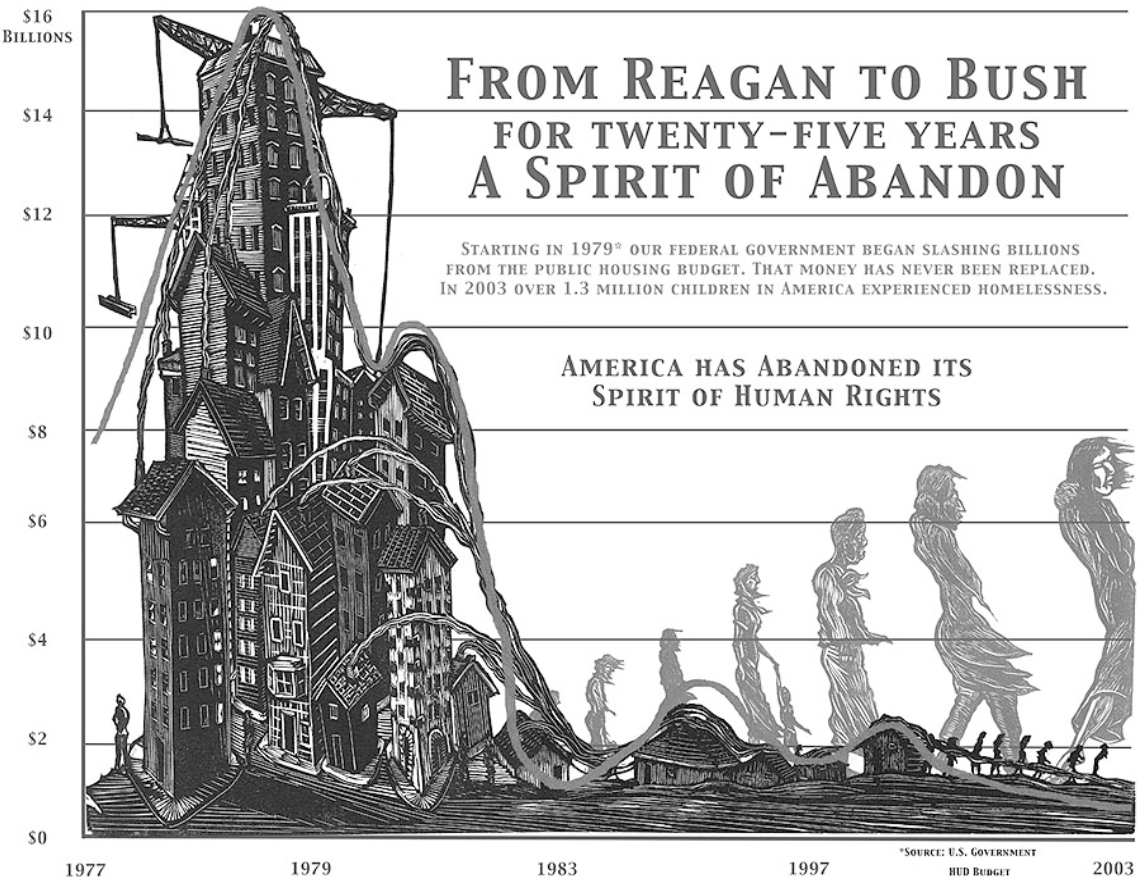
The chart on this page shows that when this nation first abandoned its commitment to funding federal housing programs, it abandoned millions of homeless people with the same stroke. Abandoned federal housing programs led directly to millions of abandoned, impoverished Americans languishing without housing in cities across the nation. Something else that is just as precious to our national identity has also been abandoned: the very spirit of human rights has been left by the wayside to die of the same neglect and callous disregard. San Francisco artist Art Hazelwood created an unforgettable image for WRAP, “From Reagan to Bush: For Twenty-Five years, A Spirit of Abandon,” that graphically shows how savage cutbacks in federal housing led to the cruel specter of countless Americans living on harsh and unforgiving streets.

Trends tend to reflect priorities and, after three years of studying these trends, we at WRAP feel it is the right time for us to make a hypothesis. Our educated guess, or hypothesis, is that an equal distribution of housing subsidies from the federal government will have a dramatic impact on alleviating homelessness in America. We also have a related hypothesis: that an honest evaluation of corporate welfare vs. citizen's welfare will show that our government urgently needs to balance out who is getting government help before our government decides who needs life skills training. We, the people, must stay focused, not on promoting the corporate “bottom line,” but on promoting “the common welfare,” as it says in the preamble to the U.S. Constitution.

WESTERN REGIONAL ADVOCACY PROJECT (WRAP)

The Western Regional Advocacy Project (WRAP, a collaboration of six community organizations in CA, OR, and WA) and the National Policy and Advocacy Council on Homelessness (NPACH) plan to have a full report based upon this and other data by the end of April.

WRAP can be contacted by email at wrapsf@yahoo.com, or at 2940 16th Street, Ste. 200-2, San Francisco, CA, 94103



that, in the late 1970s, the U.S. government made a conscious decision to redirect expenditures for housing from rental assistance for poor people to home ownership and the re-emergence of homelessness in America in the early 1980s. When President Reagan “reinvented government” by drastically slashing assistance to the poorest of the poor, he played a major role in reinventing homelessness so that it re-emerged in modern America.

If our federally mandated housing and homelessness plans (FEMA, HUD and ICH) and our locally politicized campaigns had been focused on addressing “what created this mess,” the

PEACE AND SOCIAL JUSTICE CALENDAR OF EVENTS

Sunday, July 2 • 3 PM

Fresno Stonewall Democrats (LGBT supportive) meet at the Democrats in Action office located at 255 N. Fulton Ave. Suite 104. That is just one block south of the 180 Fulton Street offramp on the right hand side of the street. Phone Chuck Krugman for more information at (559) 226-3717 or e-mail him at ckrugman@sbcglobal.net.

Monday, July 3 • 5:30 PM

Several individuals who have been working on community empowerment and hurricane relief/rebuilding efforts in New Orleans will be coming through Fresno on a West Coast speaking tour in July. They will be making a presentation at the Sara McCardle Room of the Fresno Library (2420 Mariposa St. off "N" Street). Their organization is called "HOPE" and they would like to get the word out about pre and post hurricane injustices and successes. This is particularly timely as the new hurricane season has just begun. For more information about the organization, their website is www.keep-hope.org. For more information about the event contact Sue Kern at 877-5800, or Michael Handley at 300-0433.

Monday, July 3 • 11 PM

There is a branch of CODEPINK www.codepink4peace.org starting in the Fresno area. It's first event will be a twenty-four hour Troops Home Fast, to be held at the Fresno Center for Non-Violence, 1584 N. Van Ness, beginning at 11PM on July 3 and continuing until 11PM on July 4. The local fast and vigil will be done in solidarity with a CODEPINK hunger strike in Washington, DC in front of the White House beginning July 4, and other similar events held by local CODEPINK branches, both national and international. While many Americans will be expressing their patriotism via barbecues and fireworks, CODEPINK will be fasting in memory of the dead and wounded, and calling for the troops to come home from Iraq. This nationwide event is cosponsored by Gold Star Families for Peace. Both men and women are invited to participate for all or a portion of the 24 hours. Please come to the Center at 10:15 PM on July 3 for an orientation before the fast begins at 11PM. Bring a sleeping bag if you plan to stay for the full 24 hours. For more information, call 559-439-0280 or 559-313-7674.

Tuesday, July 4 • 9 AM - 1 PM

The public is invited to The 9th Annual 4th of July Celebration of our Diversity Brunch at O'Neill Park, CSUF Campus (Barstow between Maple and Chestnut streets). Sponsored by the Interfaith Alliance of California. Honoring the racial and religious pluralism that makes America Great! See details on page 7.

Thursday, July 6 • 5 - 8 PM

The Fresno Arts Council (FAC) sponsors ArtHop, which was founded more than 10 years ago by local artists. On the first Thursday of each month, artists and art galleries open their exhibition studios to the public to view art.. To be added to the ArtHop mailing and e-mail list, please e-mail mfranco@fresnoarts.org or call (559) 237-9734.

Friday, July 7

Santero will be at Arte Américas, 1630 Van Ness in downtown Fresno. San Francisco Bay Area based SANTERO incorporates classic African and Latin styles to deliver a powerful dose of Reggae, Hip Hop and Latin rhythms. SANTERO is known for its thick dubby bass assault and clean memorable melodies, the fusion creates an innovative blend of unconventional and contemporary musical sensibilities certain to get any crowd rocking.

Friday, July 7 • 6:30 - 8:30 PM

The Reedley Peace Center presents Speaker: JoAnn Quintanilla, immigrant counselor with West Coast MCC, will relate her experience as she joined 90 walkers on the Migrant Trail. This 75 mile trek through the desert near Tuscon under the hot summer sun, raises awareness of the humanity of the migrant and the need for change in border policy.

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

Saturday, July 8 • 3:30 PM

The Central Valley Progressive PAC will have a General Meeting at the Center for Non-Violence 1584 North Van Ness at McKinley. Discussion will center around prioritizing issues and concerns in the Central Valley. What is new around Fresno? After working to GOTV, what is most important? Public welcome. Information: Lydia Flores at 435-7360

Saturday, July 8 • 7 - 9 PM

Contra Dance at Severance Dance Studio—1401 N. Wishon at Floradora. All dances taught, come alone or bring a friend! Questions: call Evo 297-8966 or email evo@evobluestein.com Don't worry if you don't know how! If you are new, please try to come at 6:30 pm.

Wednesday, July 12 • potluck at 6:30 p.m., film at 7 PM, and a discussion following the film.

The FREE 2nd Wednesday Video series film this month is "Crash" to be shown at the Center for Nonviolence, 1584 N. Van Ness. A 36-hour period in the diverse metropolis of post-Sept. 11 Los Angeles is the theme of this unflinching drama that challenges audiences to confront their prejudices. Lives combust when a Brentwood housewife and her district attorney husband, a Persian shopkeeper, two cops, a pair of carjackers and a Korean couple all converge. For information call the Center at 237-3223 (Mon-Fri 11-3). FREE

Friday, July 14 • 6:30 - 8:30 PM

The Reedley Peace Center presents a Music Night featuring A Far Cry. A Far Cry is Jill England and David Nigel Lloyd, an acoustic duo with a fresh non-traditional approach to traditional Celtic music. Their repertoire is unique. Their style is eclectic in the best sense of the word. Their incisive and irreverent wit is disarming audiences wherever they perform.

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

Friday, July 14 • 5PM and 8PM

Fresno Filmworks presents "Iron Island" at the Tower Theatre. Set on an abandoned oil tanker in the Persian Gulf, this whimsical fable from Iran creates visual poetry from the everyday struggles of the families who inhabit the floating refuge. Tickets can be purchased at the Tower Theatre Box Office, 815 E. Olive Ave., The Movies, 1435 N. Van Ness Ave., the Fig Garden Bookstore in Fig Garden Village, and at the door, for \$10; \$8, for students and seniors. For more information call the FFW info line, 221-0755, or go to www.fresnofilmworks.org.

Sunday, July 16 • 4 - 6 PM

The Fresno Center for Nonviolence 14th Anniversary Celebration will be held in Margaret Hudson's Barn, 4247 N. Thorne. The Center's 2006 Way of Peace Award winners will be honored, along with those that became part of our Dozen Roses for Peace program. There will be a Fine Art Raffle, refreshments and entertainment. Raffle tickets will be available June 26. For more information call the Center at 435-6383 (Mon-Fri 11-3) or Angela at 435-6383.

Thursday, July 20 • 6:30 to 9:30 PM

Progressive Thursday presents "Hemp and the Rule of Law." This movie is a clear and concise synopsis of the history, benefits and future of industrial hemp. Taken out of the hands of the DEA, industrial hemp is the crop to replace cotton and save the valley's agriculture. The video will be presented at Round Table Pizza, 5763 N. First St., Fresno. Buy your favorite entree and join us for dinner; doors open at 6:30 PM, video begins at 7:00 PM. A discussion will follow after the film. Progressive Thursday is hosted by the GROW working group of the Fresno County Green Party and is a free, wheelchair

accessible event open to anyone interested in discussing topics of interest to the progressive community. For more information contact Larry Mullen at (559) 227-0293.

Friday, July 21 • 6:30 - 8:30 PM

The Reedley Peace Center presents the movie: Movie: The Snow Walker. A pilot who delivers supplies to tribes in the backwoods of the Canadian north is implored to escort a sick young Inuit woman to a hospital. On the flight back, the plane's engine fails and they crash in the wastelands. Rescuers are unable to locate them and the two are left to struggle for their survival. The ailing woman thus teaches the hot-headed pilot the way to live in these regions.

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

Friday, July 21 • 7:30 PM

The Chicano Experience in song & canvass. Agustín Lira* & Patricia Wells in concert with Enrique Ramirez & Miguel Govea, in a Chicano Music Festival @ Arte Américas Plaza on July 21st. Bass player Ravi Knypstra and special guest artists will perform in a special tribute to the Chicano Movement. A free lecture demonstration with Lira, Wells, Ramirez & Govea, will take place @ 2:00 p.m., July 22nd, in the main gallery of Arte Americas. The festival is part of the Grand Opening of the Chicano Art Collection of Cheech Marin**, featuring works spanning 4 decades by the foremost Chicano artists of our times. Tickets are \$10, doors open @ 7:30 p.m., show starts @ 8:00 p.m. call for more information about festival and exhibit (559) 266-2623

* <http://home.earthlink.net/~almas2/> • Bio & background

www.thefarmworkermovement.org • Interview with Lira w/ background music

** www.thechicanoartcollection.org • Preview the art exhibit

For up-to-the-minute information about what is happening in Fresno's progressive community, join the Community Alliance email alert network. We send out an updated calendar of events once a week and alert you when there is an emergency rally or demonstration. This is a free service. You can join by sending your email address to <AllianceEditor@Comcast.net> and say you would like to subscribe to this service.

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IRON ISLAND July 14, 2006



IRON ISLAND

The titular "Iron Island" is a huge rusting tanker off the Iranian coast in which dozens of homeless families have found shelter and formed a community. The head of the ship, Captain Nemat tries to balance finding jobs, oil, food and even husbands for the poor and struggling families. He controls the "residence" with absolute power which comes to violent crisis when two young lovers attempt to defy his authority and from the increasing pressure of business interests seeking to seize the ship and evict the residents.



Friday, July 14, 2006 - 5 & 8 pm

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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 at The Fig Garden Bookstore, Tickets/General Admission \$10.00 \$8.00 for Students & Seniors



www.fresnofilmworks.org

La Violencia en Oaxaca Repercute en el Valle

Por Eduardo Stanley

El pasado mes de abril, una delegación de empresarios, periodistas y representantes del gobierno de la ciudad y uno del condado de Fresno visitaron Oaxaca, con el fin de establecer relaciones comerciales directas. La delegación invitó al gobernador, Ulises Ruiz, a visitar Fresno el 2 de junio.

Esta visita despertó la indignación de las organizaciones oaxaqueñas del Valle Central, quienes buscaron explicar la situación de los derechos humanos en ese estado mexicano. “No nos oponemos al intercambio comercial, pero cuestionamos la relación con un gobierno represivo y que no nos hayan consultado”, dijo Rufino Domínguez, coordinador del Frente Indígena de Organizaciones Binacionales (FIOB), con sede en Fresno. Se estima que más de 60,000 personas de ese origen viven en la región.

Ulises Ruiz asumió la gobernatura en diciembre de 2004, después de unas elecciones controversiales que la oposición catalogó de fraude masivo. El 17 de junio del 2005 fue asaltado, con apoyo policial, el periódico “Noticias”, de Oaxaca, crítico del gobierno de Ruiz. El periódico permanece todavía tomado.

De acuerdo a representantes de las organizaciones oaxaqueñas del Valle, unidas por primera vez, el gobierno de ese estado es un ejemplo típico del caciquismo político establecido y desarrollado por el Partido de la Revolución Institucional (PRI), al cual pertenece Ruíz.

“Prevalence la impunidad en Oaxaca, una administración parcial de la justicia, la politización de la misma y una débil institucionalidad del estado” dice el VI Informe anual de la Red Oaxaqueña de Derechos Humanos (página 10). “Hay un constante hostigamiento contra quienes critican al gobierno, incluyendo arrestos arbitrarios y hasta asesinatos”, explicó Leoncio Vásquez, del FIOB.

El 9 de mayo, representantes de las organizaciones oaxaqueñas del Valle se reunieron con la Cónsul de México en Fresno, Martha Elvia Rosas Rodríguez, a quien le entregaron una carta donde expresan su punto de vista. En su respuesta escrita del 15 de mayo, la Cónsul Rosas pide al FIOB le entregue documentación interna como “número de miembros y los estatutos, con el fin de contar con información cierta sobre esa organización”.

Poco después, la Policía de Fresno contactó a las oficinas del FIOB buscando aclaraciones sobre algunos términos expresados en la carta a la Cónsul del 9 de mayo. “Es un procedimiento de oficio, buscamos aclarar posibles amenazas que afecten la seguridad pública”, dijo el detective Dean Williamson. “Pero ya todo está aclarado”.

Los activistas oaxaqueños se preguntan cómo llegó la carta entregada al Consulado primero al Ayuntamiento y después a la policía. De los dos concejales de Fresno que viajaron a Oaxaca, Henry T. Perea y Larry Westerlund, el primero ignoró pedidos de entrevistas y el segundo se negó a reconocer su responsabilidad.

Finalmente, el 2 de junio el gobernador de Oaxaca no llegó con la delegación de ese estado que participó de eventos simbólicos y paseos en Fresno. Esta visita fue recibida por protestas (ver fotos).



Decenas se expresaron contra la visita oficial de Oaxaca

También ese día, pero en Oaxaca, miles de maestros aumentaban el tono de sus protestas en búsqueda de aumentos salariales. El gobierno de Ulises Ruíz reprimió violentamente a los maestros—se habla de cuatro muertos—pero esta vez tuvo que aceptar una negociación. De acuerdo a las organizaciones oaxaqueñas del Valle, esta violencia oficial es la prueba de que sus quejas eran correctas.

Para analizar más la situación en Oaxaca, Community Alliance presenta un artículo sobre el asesinato de un líder campesino, “Moisés Cruz, Historia de una Muerte Anunciada”—y todavía no resuelta.

Moisés Cruz: Historia de una Muerte Anunciada

Por Samuel Orozco

A Moisés Cruz se la habían sentenciado muchas veces. A cada rato lo amenazaban de muerte. Finalmente, el 18 de mayo pasado cumplieron. Ese día, el líder oaxaqueño de 46 años de edad dejaba una fonda en su natal San Juan Mixtepec, donde había desayunado, cuando dos hombres armados le salieron al paso y lo asesinaron a sangre fría. Delante de su esposa. A la vista de los transeúntes, los matones se perdieron.

La muerte de Moisés seguro habría pasado como una más, de no ser porque no es un asesinato ordinario. Moisés, migrante y activista, se granjeó muchos amigos. Conocí a Moisés a principios de los 80s. Me acuerdo sobre todo de una hazaña suya en Arvin, poblado agrícola del valle central de California que en los años 30s ganó fama por servir de albergue a migrantes de Oklahoma.

Medio siglo después, Arvin siguió siendo refugio de migrantes, esta vez oaxaqueños, que igual que los de Oklahoma huyeron de polvo y miseria. Para los migrantes indígenas, sin embargo, no hubo sanitarios, lavaderos, ni dormitorios. En 1986 el desamparo hizo crisis. Las pizcas se tardaron y cientos terminaron viviendo a la intemperie. Un día, un migrante amaneció degollado y otros asaltados por pandilleros mientras dormían a campo abierto. Moisés Cruz movilizó a su gente. Reclamó garantías a las autoridades y gestionó el auxilio de agencias no gubernamentales. En

menos de una semana, cientos de familias recibieron de emergencia techo, cobijas y alimentos.

Un día, en una nutrida asamblea realizada entre surcos al norte de Sacramento, decenas de oaxaqueños hablaron con temor y desaliento de todo lo que hace a Oaxaca, pese a su riqueza natural, el segundo estado más pobre de México, región en la que tres de cada cuatro viven en la extrema pobreza. Moisés, entonces, decidió regresar a Oaxaca.

En 1986, llegó a San Juan Mixtepec con el compromiso de echar a los caciques del poder. Los caciques son ladinos (mestizos o criollos) que controlan la región: autorizan el canje de los cheques que envían los desde el norte, explotan los bosques comunales para su beneficio y obstruyen obras públicas para evitar la comunicación con el exterior.

Moisés fundó el Comité de Defensa Popular Mixteca, una red de ocho cooperativas de consumo popular y, con esta base, lograron en un par de años elegir el primer presidente municipal que legítimamente representó a la comunidad indígena. Una década después, él mismo fue elegido alcalde. Luego, dirigió la creación en la ciudad de Oaxaca del Centro de Desarrollo Regional Indígena (CEDRI). Y a fines de los 90s, fue electo coordinador general de la Red Internacional de Indígenas Oaxaqueños, una coalición de comités de migrantes.

Pero la reacción no tardó. En 1996, un grupo de hombres armados secuestró a Felipe Sánchez Rojas, el presidente del CEDRI. Moisés, que acompañaba a Felipe, escapó al atentado. Felipe permaneció desaparecido varios días en un lugar que luego describió como con sonidos de cuartel: se oían clarines cada mañana.

Sin duda, Felipe se salvó por la oportuna intervención de sus apoyadores dentro y fuera de Oaxaca. La asociación mixteca convocó desde California a una vigorosa campaña de llamadas al gobernador y al Secretario de Gobernación. Quizás Felipe jamás habría reaparecido si Moisés no hubiera estado allí para presenciar los hechos.

Diez años después, nadie estuvo allí para salvar a Moisés. Su muerte fue obra evidente de profesionales. Hasta el momento no se sabe de sus asesinos.

¿Quiénes estarían interesados en eliminar a Moisés? A los líderes indígenas no les cabe la menor duda: los autores intelectuales son los mismos que lucraban de los bosques, los que estafaban al migrante, los que sometían al pueblo indígena. Indignados, dichos líderes apuntan su dedo acusador a los caciques locales, a los jefes de la Confederación Nacional Campesina, a influyentes cuadros del Partido Revolucionario Institucional (Moisés acababa de sumarse a la campaña presidencial del perredista López Obrador). Por esos sospechosos debe comenzar la averiguación, exigen, y a la vez alertan sobre el peligro de que este asesinato pase a ser una estadística más en la larga lista de fechorías contra los derechos humanos. Sólo en el 2005, Oaxaca acumuló un negro historial de 20 asesinatos y más de 40 presos por motivos políticos.

Los oaxaqueños organizados se proponen ponerle un hasta aquí a esa historia de impunidad y ese clima de terror. El caso de Moisés someterá de nuevo a prueba la capacidad de la sociedad civil migrante de obligar a sus gobiernos a escucharle y a rendir cuentas claras.



La comunidad oaxaqueña del Valle protestó por los abusos del gobierno estatal

CONSTRUYENDO SUEÑOS SIN FRONTERAS

El movimiento inmigrante está creando una nueva generación de líderes y activistas.

Eduardo Stanley,
New America Media
nuestroforo@kfcf.org

FRESNO, CA— Antes de su presentación estaba nerviosa. Caminaba alrededor del escenario y practicaba su discurso. Solamente había hablado frente a pequeños grupos, pero ahora era diferente, casi 20,000 personas y sus familias se habían concentrado frente al edificio del Ayuntamiento de Fresno, cantando, bailando, exigiendo una regularización migratoria, prometiendo votar en el futuro.

“Al principio sentí nervios, pero me dió fuerzas ver tanta gente”, dijo sonriendo esta trabajadora de la construcción de 27 años. “Ahora estoy más convencida de lo que estoy haciendo”. No ocultaba su emoción y su sorpresa cuando los medios de comunicación la buscaban.

Margarita llegó a Estados Unidos a los 11 años de edad, siguiendo a su madre. Aunque nació en Ayoquezco de Aldama, Oaxaca, se crió en Ciudad de México. Vivió la vida de muchas niñas de origen humilde: ayudar en las labores de su casa, cuidar a sus hermanas, compartir su vida con tías, ir a la escuela. Y como muchas niñas, creció sin la presencia de su padre, quien inmigró a Estados Unidos, olvidando la familia que dejó atrás.

En 1994 participó junto a cientos de estudiantes en las marchas de protesta contra la Proposición 187 impulsada por el entonces gobernador Republicano, Pete Wilson, quien buscaba así—y luego obtendría—la reelección. Esta medida buscaba prohibir a los inmigrantes el acceso a servicios estatales.

Durante esos días, Margarita vivió otra experiencia decisiva. Un guardia de la escuela la acusó de llevar un arma. Fue detenida, “me revisaron como una criminal, hasta con armas en la mano. Trataron de humillarme”. Hoy, mientras recuerda ese episodio, afirma que eso la convenció aún más de la necesidad de levantar su voz ante los abusos del poder.

A los 18 años completó su educación preparatoria y dió luz a su hija Jesenia. Desde entonces comparte su vida con su esposo, Eduardo Ruíz, también oaxaqueño. Dedicó cuatro años a criar a su pequeña y luego de pasar por varios trabajos, encontró su suerte. “Un señor afroamericano me ofreció trabajo en la construcción y desde entonces no he dejado el martillo”, dice con picardía. “Me gustan las máquinas y herramientas pesadas”. Y ante la mirada irónica del reportero, agrega, “a pesar de mi estatura soy fuerte”.



Margarita en su trabajo



Hablando a la concurrencia durante el rally del 1o. de mayo en Fresno

Trabaja en una empresa que coloca canaletas de agua, principalmente en casas nuevas. Se mueve con rapidez, sube escaleras, toma medidas, corta el material y lo instala. Siempre con una sonrisa en sus labios, solo interrumpe su trabajo unos minutos para hablar con su familia por teléfono.

Este trabajo, dice, le permite estar al aire libre, conocer gente, cambiar de rutina y aprender. “Soy la única mujer. Me siento bien, creo que puede abrir puertas para otras mujeres”. Le divierte narrar algunas experiencias con sus compañeros de empleo. “Durante un tiempo me tocó supervisar una cuadrilla de 25 trabajadores, y como eran hombres se resistían a aceptar mis indicaciones”. Se ríe, mira hacia arriba como invocando su memoria y agrega, “Pretendían no escucharme y hasta iban con chismes al patrón!”

“No siento discriminación, reconocen lo que sé hacer”, dice segura. Margarita insiste en las palabras aprender e

injusticia. “Tengo caracter fuerte... No me gustan las injusticias, si veo que a mi vecina su marido la golpea, me meto”.

Desde hace unos años, ella y su madre son voluntarias de una iglesia católica de Fresno, donde colaboran en diferentes programas sociales. Ahí conocieron a un activista de los derechos de los inmigrantes quien las invitó a participar de la Coalición que organizó las marchas en Fresno.

“Creo que viene de familia”, dice Isabel Vásquez, de 48 años, madre de Margarita. “Leo la biblia y habla de la justicia pero en la vida real es muy diferente, hay que ganársela”. Decidió emigrar a Estados Unidos por la falta de empleos en su tierra, por eso se siente expulsada. Y asegura que el gobierno mexicano no solo no ayuda sino que perjudica a su gente, “creo que hubiera sido más feliz en mi comunidad”.

Siente que ha sido estricta con sus tres hijas pero tenía temor de que “se metieran en drogas o se hicieran flojas”. Sin embargo, no oculta su satisfacción de ver que sus temores fueron infundados y que entre ellas hay comunicación. “Me gusta participar con mi hija en este movimiento, en la Coalición podemos opinar y nos respetan”.

Margarita está de acuerdo con su madre, rebelarse contra la injusticia viene de familia. Por ejemplo, explica que desde chica no le gustaba que la manipuleen. Madre e hija hablan animadamente, una a la vez, sin interrumpirse.

A Margarita le preocupa la situación de las mujeres, que considera producto de una cultura machista. Por ejemplo, dice, las mujeres que padecen violencia doméstica sienten que no pueden escapar, pero si se les ayuda sí cambian. “Entonces verán que hay un mundo diferente y podrán superarse”.

En este sentido, Margarita tiene planes. “Me gustaría formar una coalición de mujeres, así nos escucharían más”. Está convencida de que las mujeres son más convincentes y visualiza una marcha de mujeres, con sus hijos. “Vamos a salir adelante”. Su convicción tiene un importante condimento, reconoce. “Esta experiencia me está enriqueciendo mucho, estoy aprendiendo y siento que también ayudo a la gente. Por ejemplo, ya conozco algo de leyes”.

No es de sorprender, porque para Margarita, aprender sobre derechos humanos y laborales es como aprender a manejar herramientas: ambas cosas, dice, sirven para construir.

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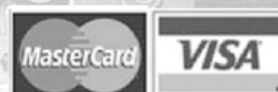
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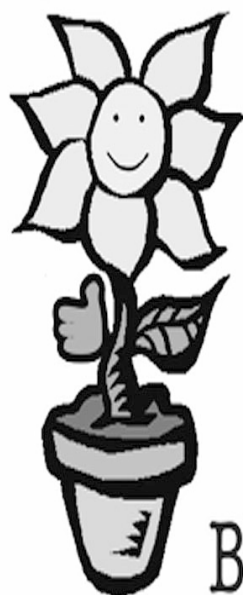
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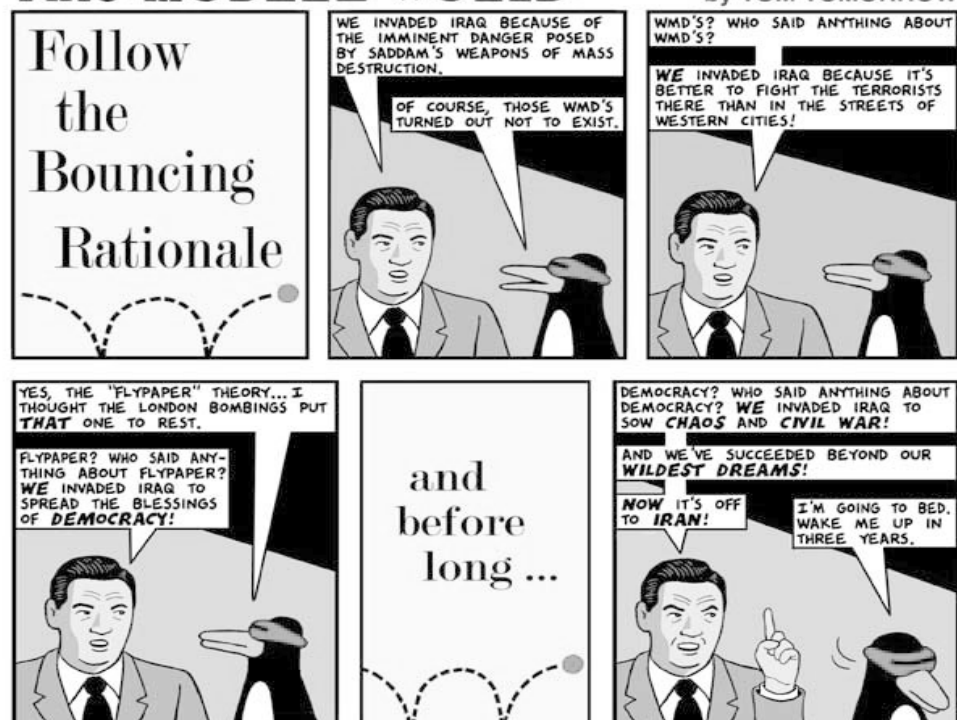
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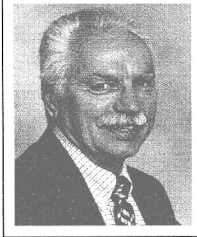


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The Slippery Slope in Merced

By Nick Osborne

Just recently, the City of Merced placed a ban on the use of tobacco products, for all new employees. Director of Support Services, Deneen Proctor, states that the move was prompted by employee health concerns. Apparently, leaders in Merced have never heard of equal protection under the law, or the right to privacy. So what happens if the leaders in Merced decide that they do not like alcohol? Will new employees have to sign a contract stating they will never consume alcohol; also a legal drug?

The whole concept is ridiculous and appears to be motivated by capital, rather than health concerns. Any way one looks at it, allowing employees who are already working to be exempt while new employees are not, is discriminatory. This could cause tension between employees, and we know that too much stress is unhealthy; so the move seems counter-productive.

A big question is how the policy is enforced. Will Merced do urine test on employees reported to have used tobacco? How much will it cost taxpayers to test for legal drugs? Seems that money could be better spent on education or the homeless.

Proctor stated, “If we cannot hire people that do smoke, hopefully in the long run we’ll see a reduction in our health insurance costs.”

Apparently, it is more important to the leaders in Merced, to “save a buck”, rather than to protect and respect the freedom and rights of its citizens. When government starts to dictate the personal lives of its citizens, we are no longer a Democracy. Leaders in Merced need to wake up and realize that, even if there is no “legal” violation of privacy, there is a moral violation. Thus, Merced begins its journey down that “Slippery Slope”.

Let’s Consolidate Local Government Services

By Ruth Gadebusch

It is time to stop the turfdom! It is time to cooperate among the various government entities. It is time to look for solutions rather than reasons not to consolidate.

The recent talks between the North Central Fire District and the City of Fresno have raised the issue again. If memory serves me correctly, it is not the first time that discussions have been conducted. Still, they come to naught.

Mine is a philosophical position, not one of which station could get there in five minutes, or 3 minutes and 15 seconds, sooner. I appreciate that seconds make the difference in controlling a fire or destruction of the building, not to mention saving entrapped persons; however, I can’t help but think that more than a few seconds might be made up with the ability to call a fire station without the delay of deciding which one is the correct one. I would note that my home is in close proximity to one of the fire houses that would be shut down, but I believe in consolidation enough to take my chances. Even with 911, an operator must ascertain which station serves a given area under the current conditions.

In terms of unity why do we even have the islands of so-called independence, or whatever we think they are, within the city? Perhaps this is a phenomenon of Fresno, or perhaps it was only a political awakening for me to discover some forty-odd years ago on my arrival in Fresno, that my neighbors considered themselves as living in a rural area so long as they did not have curbs, street lights and sewers. As one who was raised in a true rural area, it puzzled me then and still does.

I think the main argument against becoming a part of the city was: taxes! Remember, this was Prior to the infamous “Prop 13.” The citizen enacted proposition did place something of a curb on taxes, an evening out, but it has left authorities searching ever since for ways to provide necessary services. At one time there was a movement lead by a prominent citizen to “Square off in ‘84,” or was it 74? So much for that. Look at the city outline now.

At this point it seems to me that the main effect is to prevent those of us who live in these islands from voting for a city council person who ultimately has great influence over our lives. There can be no disputing that we are affected by the city regardless of our status.

Just about everything except consolidation has been tried. In the case of North Central and the City of Fresno, it does not even require the North Central District to go out of business.

Back when there were financial incentives for school districts to unify many did, only to use a provision in the law that allowed them to withdraw after a period of time, taking with them the higher revenue limit of the unified district. Needless to say, a stop was put to that and we have not seen much unifying since that time. Never mind, that many of the small districts sometimes do not have sufficient candidates to fill the offices, much less to have contested elections. The advocates for small districts of all sorts say it is local control. Well, how much local control is that?

Speaking of elections, how many of us really know much about the candidates whom we elect to the various boards such as fire district, irrigation, flood control and on and on? This is local control? Some of these boards actually pay a stipend for the service of these board members, limited as the duties may be. Wouldn’t it make more sense to turn their function over to the county supervisors?

Yes, I know some of the districts cross county lines but that takes me back to cooperation. Where there is a will, there is a way.

For a short time this spring in the sheriff election, it looked as if we might take a serious look at the possibility of consolidating some of the sheriff and city police functions. It did not happen, and now the mayor is exacerbating the situation with his budget proposal to build a downtown joint police/fire dispatch center. As one council member pointed out it would sabotage future discussions with Fresno County to include the Sheriff’s Department.

In many ways a joint police/fire dispatch makes infinite sense but it has waited this long and can wait a bit longer. It makes more sense,yet, to include the county. We will have a new sheriff in a few months who just might be more amenable to looking with a wide open mind. Perhaps the City Council and the County Board of Supervisors can put aside their territoriality and come together for the good of all.

Integration, in all its aspects, could be a good thing. Our fate is tied together, let us work together.

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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