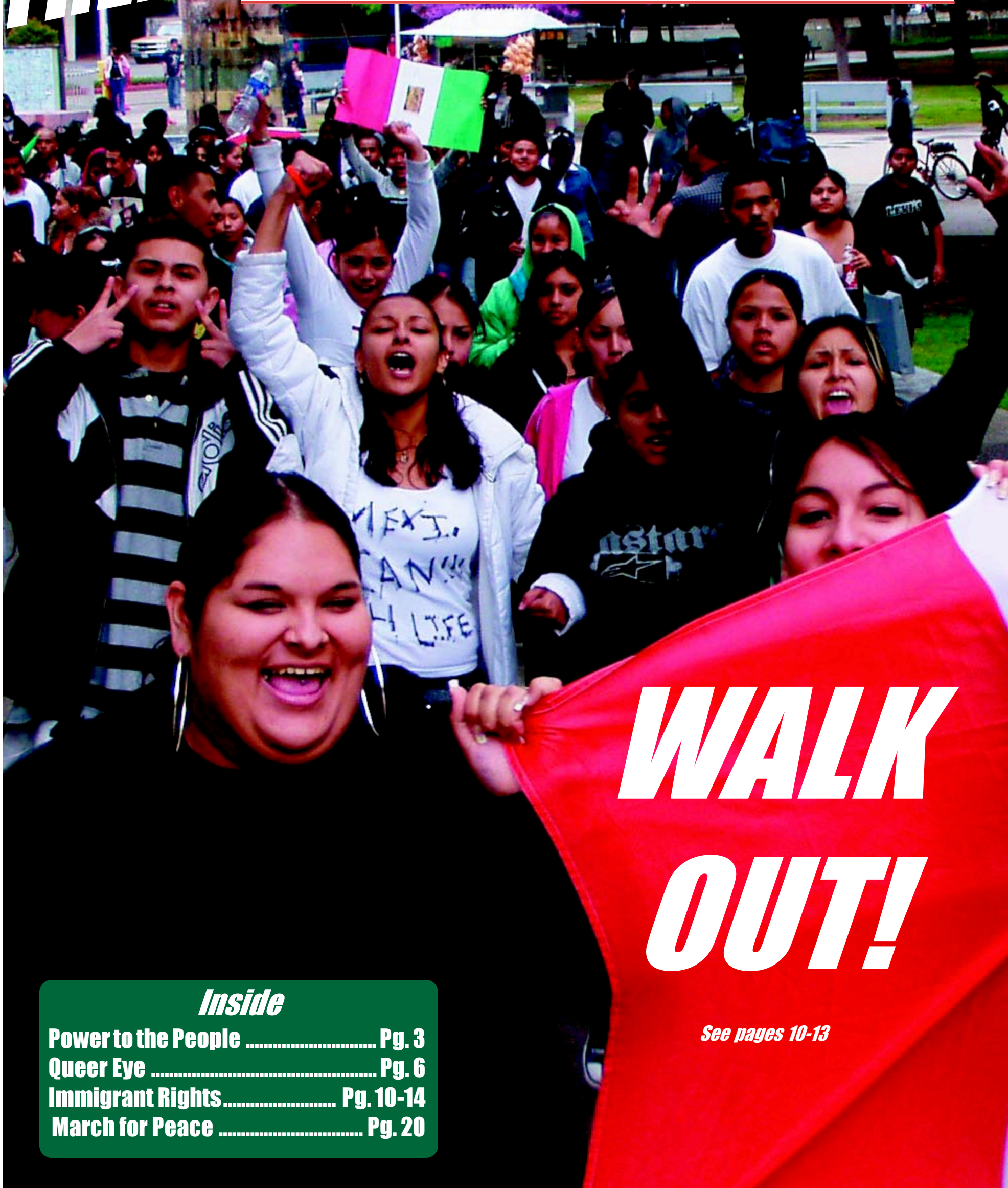


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MAY 2006

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

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

Correction:

The “Fresno State Fights Child Abuse” article in the April issue of the *Community Alliance* was written by Corky Stout.

Letter to the Editor

Most of America seems to be losing trust for President Bush and his administration, on many fronts. Recent testimony in the Zacarias Moussaoui trial reveals once again that the WTC attacks were anticipated and should have been prevented. FBI incompetence is unfortunately the tip of the iceberg. The truth is much more difficult to accept but sooner or later we will all face it. This was a deliberate sabotage, in fact a broad federal standdown, which also prevented interceptor jets from scrambling to the defense of the most heavily protected sites on the planet.

The depth of cynicism involved in this inside job is admittedly mind-bending, but the facts are easily available and speak for themselves. It took massive preparation and precise demolition to drop the world’s tallest buildings into their own footprints, in a manner utterly incon-

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sistent with impact and moderate fire damage sustained halfway up. Osama Bin Laden was trained, armed, and employed by the CIA for decades. What makes anyone think he is not still in the employ of our secret international police state?

The Project for the New American Century’s “Rebuilding America’s Defenses,” written by various neocons (Cheney, Wolfowitz, Rumsfeld, Bolton, etc.) a decade prior to 9/11 chillingly recognizes the potential usefulness of “a new Pearl Harbor” in expediting their agenda. They also spell out the need to conquer and occupy Iraq for geopolitical strategic advantage. Hence we have Halliburton stealing billions while building at least five permanent US military megabases in Iraq. Rather than investigating or countering this agenda of unprecedented war profiteering and executive power grabbing, Congress wants to give the administration new spying powers, no warrant needed.

We may choose to ignore these signs but I’d suggest watching our paperless electronic voting very carefully. If the neocons are forced from office, they all become vulnerable to international prosecution as war criminals for waging illegal aggressive war, torture, and multiple mass murders. If they can’t control the ballots by hook or crook, watch for suspension of the Posse Comitatus Act [an act prohibiting the military from engaging in domestic law enforcement –Ed] and the imposition of an emergency state of martial law courtesy of Homeland Security.

As global terrorists and gigapirates, these people have a lot to lose. At some point these so-called theories of con-

spiracy may become more plausible than theories of coincidence and the official climate of denial. The cold war provided great opportunity for defense sector growth and profiteering. Clearly the neocons have rejected a peace dividend of security and prosperity in favor of sinking our economy and looting the planet through blatant cronyism and conflict of interest on a hitherto unknown scale. Until we figure out how to undo the takeover of our government and resources, we are accomplices in crimes against our planet and its people.

A friend of mine tells me that no one can really understand until they experience for themselves. If this is true, understanding is on the way for millions of Americans who are losing their jobs, their health care, and their hard-earned pensions. Whereas in the past American workers and consumers enjoyed special protected status because of our skills and consumer purchasing power, we are now fully subject to slash, burn, and abandon tactics of the transnational corporations. We are being flung to the compost pile just like any third-world disposable work force. Our consumer power is soon to be rendered insignificant compared to that of Asian markets. We are about to learn firsthand what it means to be eaten up and spit out again by the fat cats. We are all on the way to Katrina survivor abandonment by the most cynical US administration in history. Awareness and action are growing elsewhere on the planet. People power is irresistible and we do have the ability to fix the overarching problem, with wisdom, compassion and nonviolence.

Jem Bluestein

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Power to the People— Elections 2006

By Mike Rhodes

[Commentary and analysis on the June 2006 elections by Community Alliance editor Mike Rhodes]

Were you outraged when you heard this country was using torture on prisoners, and the we were the ones using chemical weapons in Iraq? Have you called your elected representatives, attended marches, and worked to stop the Bush administration from shredding the constitution and violating our civil liberties? If you want to see an immediate end to the war in Iraq, don't want to see the use of first-strike tactical nuclear weapons against Iran, and think it is time to take this country back from the neocons that have taken it over, then read on.

In the Central Valley we face chronic double-digit unemployment, some of the worst air quality in the nation, and local elected officials who are all too often led around by the nose by builders and developers. If you want police accountability, a living wage, health care for all, and an end to urban sprawl, then you will want to pay attention to the upcoming elections.

Power at the local, state, and federal level is achieved (in part) by electing candidates that represent your interests. Rich religious fundamentalists and conservative interests mobilize their supporters to elect representatives who will carry out wars of aggression (making war profiteers lots of money); lower environmental, health and safety standards; and keep wages as low as possible. The rich look out for their interests, and they have done a very good job getting people elected to do their bidding.

But, there are a lot more poor, working-class, and middle-class voters than there are millionaires. It is time that this sleeping giant awakens and feels its strength in the voting booth. On Tuesday, June 6, voters will have a choice when they fill out their ballots. If they have the right information, voters will make intelligent choices and vote for candidates who will be on their side.

The June 6, 2006, Election

There are candidates running for local, state, and federal offices in the June 6 election. Some of the races will be decided upon in June, but many of the races will not be determined until November. Non-partisan races, like the Fresno City Council or the Board of Supervisors, will be decided in June if one candidate gets a majority of the votes. If no candidate gets a majority, there will be a run-off on November 7. For partisan races, like those for governor or the House of Representatives, voters will be electing which candidates will represent their political party in the November election.

Locally, there will be many races, but there are only a few progressive candidates. In many races the incumbents are not being challenged. This might not be because everyone is happy with the incumbents' performance, but because many people are disillusioned with the democratic process. They don't believe it is pos-



Charles "Chuck" Riojas is the candidate for City Council District 1 supported by organized labor and several progressive community groups

sible to elect a good candidate. The following section of this article will focus on electing progressive candidates in the local elections. The Board of Supervisors

The Board of Supervisors is perhaps the most powerful and influential government body in Fresno County. With only five representatives, the board is often split 3–2. Currently, there is a conservative majority on the board. Both of the two Board of Supervisor districts with elections this year (district 1 and 4) are held by the conservative majority. Therefore, there is a possibility to change the balance of power on the board in the June 6 election. Unfortunately, Phil Larson is running unopposed in district 1.

But district 4, located in the southern part of Fresno County, is currently represented by Republican Judy Case. She is being challenged by Cynthia Gonzalez, who describes herself as a progressive Democrat. The choice could not be clearer. Gonzalez said at a recent candidate forum that she would support a living wage for county workers. Case said she could not support such a proposal. The issue is important to workers and the Service Employees International Union–United Healthcare Workers (SEIU-UHW), who have been trying to improve wages and benefits for the approximately 10,000 home care workers who work for the county. In a prolonged struggle over their first contract, home care workers were frustrated with Case's refusal to support their efforts for a fair wage and benefits package.

Union members and their families were angry that Case did not sympathize with their need for health care and a living wage. As a result, the SEIU-UHW has endorsed Gonzalez. Their support, both by raising money and



Margaret Mims is the only Democrat running for sheriff. She has been endorsed by the Central Valley Progressive PAC, National Women's Political Caucus, and the Fresno County Democratic Women's Club.

by getting volunteers to go door-to-door, can play a decisive role in this race. In addition to SEIU-UHW, several other progressive community groups have endorsed the Gonzalez campaign. The Central Valley Progressive PAC (CVPPAC) endorsed and contributed \$4,000 to her campaign. Gonzalez is also supported by the National Women's Political Caucus, Central Labor Council-Fresno, the Madera, Kings, Tulare, Fresno Democratic Women's Club, and the Fresno Deputy Sheriff's Association.

At the CVPPAC candidate forum, Case and Gonzalez were asked about the war in Iraq. Gonzalez said she would support a resolution if it came before the board calling for the immediate end of the war and withdraw of troops. Case said she thought we should stay the course and support our troops. The choice is clear in District 4. You have the choice between a progressive Democrat who supports peace, social, and economic justice, and a conservative Republican who supports President Bush and the rich elite that is benefiting from the poverty in southern Fresno County.

Fresno City Council

The Fresno City Council races in June will include candidates in four districts. The races will be in districts 1, 3, 5, and 7. Two of the races are in uncontested races: Mike Dages in district 5 and Henry T. Perea in district 7.

The balance of power is a little more complex on the Fresno City Council than on the Board of Supervisors. All of the districts up for re-election in June are cur-



Cynthia Gonzalez describes herself as a progressive Democrat. She is running for the Fresno County Board of Supervisors in District 4

rently represented by the more "liberal" council members. Liberal is a relative term, in a city where the pendulum has swung pretty far to the right. District 1 is currently represented by Tom Boyajian, arguably the most liberal member on the city council. He is not running for re-election because of term limits. This seat on the city council is being sought by five candidates—three Republicans, one candidate who has declined to state his political affiliation, and a Democrat. Charles "Chuck" Riojas is the Democrat. Riojas is an electrician and a member of the International Brotherhood of Electrical Workers (IBEW). He has the support of the Central Labor Council of Fresno, Madera, Tulare and Kings Counties, a large number of individual unions, the Democratic Women's Club, and the CVPPAC. Blong Xiong, the candidate for district 1 who is not affiliated with any political party, is being supported by Democratic California State Assembly member Juan Arambula and Republican Fresno County Board of Supervisor Susan Anderson. Organized labor thinks it is possible to elect Riojas in June, avoiding an expensive runoff in November. They will put significant resources into this race.

City council district 3 stretches from West Fresno to the Tower District. Cynthia Sterling is the incumbent, generally viewed as an ally of the progressive community, and as being likely to win the June election. She is being challenged by Manuel Toledo and Ignacio Garibay, who say she is not doing an adequate job of representing the district. Sterling is the only African American woman on the city council and political observers have said she has not been invited to join the "good old boy" network that runs city hall. Sterling has been an outspoken supporter of police accountability and bringing an independent police auditor to this community. She supported the Human Relations Commission when it came under fire by the right wing, and she has been there when peace and social and economic justice groups need a friend. Sterling has been endorsed by the CVPPAC.

The Sheriff's Race

What are the criteria a progressive uses when supporting a candidate for sheriff? The CVPPAC, at their recent candidate forum, asked candidates about their position on infiltrating community groups like Peace Fresno. Are protecting civil liberties a priority? Candidate Margaret Mims said she would not monitor groups unless there was evidence of criminal activity.

Cal Minor is being supported by John Harris, one of the largest agri-business figures in western Fresno County. It was at the Harris Ranch where the sheriff's department installed a computer with access to law enforcement databases containing sensitive material. Harris Ranch security guards had access to the computer. After civil liberties concerns were raised, the computers were removed and the attorney general issued a report critical of the operation.

Mims is a Democrat. All of the other candidates for sheriff are Republicans. Mims is endorsed by the CVPPAC, the National Women's Political Caucus, and the Fresno County Democratic Women's Club. The Central Labor Council of Fresno, Madera, Tulare, and Kings Counties is supporting Colleen Mestas, who did not attend the CVPPAC candidate forum.

Continued on page 4

The Big Picture

In addition to the campaigns listed above, there are many other important races taking place in the Central Valley this June. Voters can change the balance of power on the Fresno County Board of Supervisors and they can send a clear message to Washington DC that we have had enough of the war in Iraq. By electing candidates like TJ Cox (19th Congressional district) and Steve Haze (20th Congressional district), voters can establish a different foreign policy for this country, a new domestic policy that favors working people over millionaires, and restores democracy to a troubled nation.

It is up to each of us to vote and participate in the democratic process. When elected officials are no longer put in office by the fat cats who currently underwrite their campaigns, they will be more responsive to poor and working- and middle-class voters’ interests. Contact information about progressive candidates and information on how you can become involved in the June elections is available on this page.

As the June election moves nearer, the *Community Alliance* will post information about the candidates at <www.fresnoalliance.com/home/2006_elections>. Progressive organizations’ endorsements, analysis about the campaigns, voter registration information, and more will be available. As the editor of the *Community Alliance* newspaper, I urge you to actively participate in the political process and by all means vote on June 6.

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- Arte Americas • 1630 Van Ness St
- Full Circle Brewery • 620 F St
- Fresno Community Market • 294 Fresno St
- Barrios Unidos • 4403 E Tulare Ave
- Homies Shoe Shine • 911 F St
- Stuffed Pipe • 2377 E Shaw Ave
- Kaleidoscope • 4565 N Blackstone Ave
- Tower Records • 4700 N Blackstone Ave
- OSA Center for Indian Education • 2224 N Fine Ave
- Fresno Art Council • 1245 Van Ness Ave
- Hume Printing • 3021 W Dakota Ave
- FCNV • 1584 N Van Ness Ave

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.

The Valley’s Water Future
By Lloyd G. Carter

As the San Joaquin Valley moves into the twenty-first century one thing is as certain as the winter fog and the summer heat: skirmishes, if not old-fashioned water wars, will continue and intensify over dwindling water supplies in a place that has been described as “Agropolis.”

As many as five million people are expected to move into the nation’s top farming region in the next few decades, most of them coastal refugees, and they will be seeking housing, jobs, and the most precious of all the Valley’s resources: potable water. This urbanization process will conflict head-on with agriculture’s needs and the ecosystem needs of wildlife refuges, wetlands, and the rivers feeding the Valley that have been all but bled dry.

Even without the pending influx of humanity, the Valley’s current water problems are persistent and complex: groundwater overdraft, groundwater pollution from urban sources and pesticides, persistent shortages of Northern California river water on the West Side, the failure to find an economical disposal solution for agricultural drainage water, infighting over water supplies available from East Side rivers, drinking water contamination in many of the Valley’s farm towns and rural areas, dairy contamination problems, and a deteriorating water delivery and waste water infrastructure (pipes and plumbing) in the Valley’s older cities.

There are a few bright spots. One is the apparent settlement of the 18-year-old court battle to restore the San Joaquin River. If the US Bureau of Reclamation agrees to the deal, putting some Millerton Lake water back into 60 miles of dry riverbed on the Valley floor will reduce supplies to East Side growers in Tulare and Kern counties. But at least the deal will provide growers some water supply certainty. And re-watering the riverbed, in addition to bringing back a fishery and riparian habitat, will recharge the depleted aquifer along the trough of the Valley, helping downstream farmers, and provide a boost to declining water quality in the Bay-Delta estuary, source of drinking water for 22 million Californians.

The other bright spot is the creation of a planning effort for a Valley regional water plan under the auspices of four Valley congressmen and CSU Fresno’s California Water Institute. Launched last year by Congressmen George Radanovich, Dennis Cardoza, Devin Nunes, and Jim Costa, the proposal calls for a cataloging of the Valley’s water needs over the next few decades.

The regional planning effort is focusing on four areas: water supply, water quality, flood control, and environmental water needs. Committees in each of those areas are seeking to gather information on the future water needs of the Valley and the potential costs. A target date of June 2006 has been set to compile the information and release a report. South Valley Assemblywoman Nicole Parra also has a bill in the Legislature, AB 479, which would require the California Department of Water to convene a task force to study the economic impacts of water supply reduction in eight San Joaquin Valley counties from Stanislaus south to Kern and report its findings to the legislature on or before December 31, 2008.

Parra’s bill states that the Valley supplies 45 percent of the nation’s fruits and vegetables and includes the three most productive farm counties in the nation. It also notes the Valley contains 12 groundwater basins, six of which are critically overdrafted, yet has a population that is projected to double by 2025.

The problem for Valley lawmakers, state and federal, is that the water supply needs of the rest of California are also growing dramatically. While there are five Congressmen representing parts of the San Joaquin Valley, there are 20 members of Congress from Los Angeles County alone. And Southern California’s water demand seems insatiable. The Valley’s future water needs may also be dampened by the perilous situation in the delta, source of drinking water for 22 million Californians. A collapsing fishery and recurring salinity problems, in addition to the expensive problem of a shoring up a decaying delta levee, could have priority over Valley wishes. Any proposals for dams for surface storage for Valley needs seem unlikely to succeed when compared with much cheaper groundwater banking operations, such as the Kern County Water Bank and a proposed groundwater bank in Madera County.

One likely source of new water supplies for the Valley’s mushrooming subdivisions will come from hard-pressed Valley growers of marginally profitable crops, who realize that water may be their most valuable cash crop. Idling of salt- or selenium-damaged lands in the western Valley will also free up water for other uses. Changing rainfall patterns due to global warming is the big unknown.

Lloyd G. Carter is a director of Revive the San Joaquin, a nonprofit group dedicated to restoration of the San Joaquin River.

May 16 is Hunger Action Day!

Your day starts earlier than usual but you know it’s for a good cause—so you roll out of bed, get dressed, and put on your best walking shoes. You know there will be breakfast on the bus ride up to Sacramento, so you’re out of the house and headed to Trinity Lutheran Church in no time (*bus leaves at 6:30 AM*). In the parking lot you meet people from all different walks of life, but with a similar goal: that no one goes hungry here in the land of plenty. Hunger is very real for many of these families.

On the ride up, over breakfast, you hear about legislation supported by the California Hunger Action Coalition and California Food Policy Advocates, aimed at supporting families. Bills like AB 2121 (Farm Fresh Schools), which promotes partnerships between schools and farmers so there are more fresh fruits and vegetables served in cafeterias; AB 2205 (3 Connections to Healthy Eating), which ensures that families who enroll to receive food stamps will automatically qualify for Medical and school meals; AB 2384 (Fresh Fruits and Vegetables in Low-income Communities), which gives food stamp users a bonus for buying fruits and vegetables and helps inner-city stores offer fresh produce to low-income customers; AB 1796 (Nutrition Support for Families in Recovery), which enables people with a prior drug felony to qualify for food stamps. On the bus the explanation of these bills is translated into Spanish and Hmong, so everyone is on the same page.

At 10 AM the buses arrive at the Capitol and you join hundreds of others from around California. At the rally and over lunch you hear about statewide efforts to fight hunger. Awards are presented to “Hunger Fighters.” After lunch, you head out in a delegation to talk to one of your State legislators. Sitting there in the office, side by side with recent immigrants and refugees, you realize just how important this opportunity to speak truth to power is. This is your chance to tell your story.... What will you say?

For more information, or to make a donation toward this effort, please contact Jeremy Hofer, Fresno Metro Ministry: (559) 485-1416 or Jeremy@fresnometmin.org.

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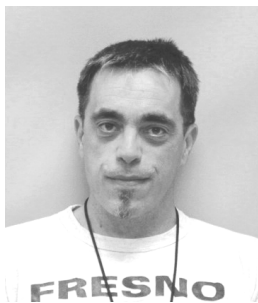
Al Franken
9am-12pm



Ed Schultz
12pm-3pm



Randi Rhodes
3pm-7pm



By Dan Waterhouse

QUEER EYE

Bizarre Worlds

In the wake of the "kiss-in" at Fresno State in February, it became quite evident that preacher Anthony Munoz and his advocates live in bizarre worlds.

For example, both Brother Munoz and Fresno State professor Bruce Thornton have the bizarre idea that free speech applies just to themselves. Dr. Thornton opined in a whiny March Internet column: "a firebrand evangelical preacher, who used the "free-speech area" (itself an illegal restriction of free speech, by the way) to hecktor students about the immorality of homosexuality, was run off campus by a flashy protest organized by the women's studies department. No one seemed bothered by the irony of one group using its right to free speech to make sure someone else stopped using his."

Dr. Thornton, in his strange world of neocon-ism, seems

to forget that Brother Munoz didn't stay off campus the day of the "kiss-in." He was filmed by Channel 30 while doing an on-air interview in another part of campus.

Brother Munoz complains about people trying to use what he claims is the "heckler's veto" against him, and complains those unhappy with him are violating his constitutional rights. Fact is, as long as no crime is committed, opposing viewpoints can be voiced at the same time and place. Although one of the *Collegian's* columnists decried the practice, heckling occupies a time-honored place in American history. The Sons of Liberty in colonial Boston were highly skilled practitioners of the art. The Sons of Liberty didn't stop at heckling; when some colonial official particularly provoked their ire, they weren't above totally demolishing the official's house, down to the foundation.

Brother Anthony also accuses everyone of lying about him. In a posting on the *Collegian's* online forum, he claimed among other things that it was a lie that "we condemn women in our preaching; we have left many in tears because of our preaching; we preach hate; we intentionally desecrated a campus monument to Mar-

tin Luther King Jr.; and we slam Muslims, Catholics, and Jews." Witnesses to his preaching affirm all the accusations against him.

In early February, Brother Anthony climbed upon what he claims he thought was a table after upset students began to crowd around him. The "table" turned out to be a monument to Martin Luther King that was placed shortly after King's assassination in 1968. He intentionally climbed onto the monument.

I asked Brother Munoz whether or not he was trying to create a situation where he could sue the university. He denied it. However, he refused to say he would not sue the school. I also asked him if he was just seeking publicity. He claimed that if he had wanted publicity, he would've shown up on campus the day of the kiss-in. He failed to mention that he was on campus that day and appeared on the evening news that evening, busily portraying himself as the "victim" of religious bigots. His mind seems to hold other bizarre notions. First, he said Christianity and other faiths are "mere religion" and evidently not the equal of "true Christianity"—whatever that might be. Then he insisted there could be no Christians on the Fresno State campus. A check of the campus Web site showed at least 11 Christ-based student groups on campus, including Campus Crusade for Christ, Catholic Students Association, Fellowship of Christian Students, Next Exit, and Revolution. Contrary to Brother Anthony's beliefs, Christians are well-represented at the university.



Students stand up for love and tolerance at this CSUF rally held in February 2006. Photos by Dan Waterhouse.

Community Link, Inc. presents Fresno Rainbow Pride 2006

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Grassroots Profile

By Richard Stone

Native American myth has Coyote. In Middle Europe there's Till Eulenspiegel. Among Fresno progressives, we have Dallas Blanchard. He is our irrepressible Trickster—undaunted by authority, always alert for ways to deflate those who assume an air of arrogance and self-importance.

Dallas says it must be in the genes: he's been questioning order-givers for as long as he can remember. But there was a turning point when he became an activist. It was 1981, in the wake of the Iran hostage crisis, and registration for the draft had been reinstituted. To forestall the Selective Service taking control of his life, Dallas looked into joining the reserves. "The recruiters told me I could get any job I wanted. I knew that the military can always put you where they want you. Their

flat-out lies disgusted and motivated me. Before long I was working with the Nuclear Freeze Movement."

As Dallas recounts his adventures, it becomes clear he is not an ideologue with an agenda. He describes himself as a defender of human rights in all forms, with a preference for leader-less cooperative actions. He's involved himself with causes including immigrant rights, electoral democracy, anti-war activism, and environmental protection. He affiliates with groups such as Food Not Bombs and Needle Exchange, which are organized by like-minded equals who share responsibility and camaraderie.

Dallas is inclined toward pragmatic services or actions that have practical and immediate impact. It might be feeding the homeless every Saturday at Roeding Park, providing clean needles for addicts to prevent the spread of HIV, or surveying logging to monitor the legality of corporate behavior. This is, in his words, a

"do-it-yourself, fix-it-up" attitude, along the lines of Scoop Nisker's memorable phrase: "If you don't like the news, make it yourself."

Dallas has also put his adventurousness to use in another way by combining travel with activism. In the past couple of years he has gone to New York to picket at the Republican Convention, and to Washington D.C. to participate in the Iraq war protests. He has also traveled out-of-town with Food Not Bombs to provide food at protests and political gatherings. His current aspiration is to make the G-8 protests planned in Germany next year.

In this free-spirited manner, Dallas enjoys working at the edges of legality when the laws seem absurd. For instance, why are there even questions about protecting people from AIDS? And he has a subversive sense of humor that is used to cause discomfort to deserving targets, and he takes special joy in using their own propaganda against them. Two examples from the past: "Re-decorating" Dole and Kemp billboards to read Dope and Hemp; taking fliers being distributed by Army Special Forces recruiters, scanning them and doctoring them to look at first glance like the originals but which contained phrases like, "See the world, and kill its inhabitants."

This interview took place at an auspicious moment for Dallas: He and a group of cohorts have just leased a large complex on F Street in Chinatown, with several apartments upstairs and an open space below for activities as they evolve (a coffee house? a meeting hall? an art gallery?). It is a large-scale challenge to the spirit of irreverence and cooperation that Dallas embodies, an attempt to move philosophy into a day-to-day way of life. This is quite a step forward in a concrete daily enactment of his beliefs. If it succeeds, this enterprise will bode well for the visibility of humor and humanity in Fresno.



IDENTITY BOX

Primary identity—Human being
Political affiliation—Green Party member, Peace and Freedom Party supporter
Religious affiliation—Christian
Most frequented parts of Fresno—Chinatown, the Tower
Inspirational figures—King and Malcolm, Che and Subcomandante Marcos
Personal motto—(when faced with institutional absurdity) Ignore and replace
Favorite author—Edward Abbey
Non-political interests—Travel, backpacking
Unlikely pastimes—Holding a job in Clovis

Contact information: fresnofnb@yahoo.com

Bush—OUT! May 7

It's time for the Central Valley to let Congress know that we have had enough of George W. Bush's crimes and his disastrous policies. It's time to impeach Bush and Cheney. However, despite record-low public opinion poll numbers for Bush, members of Congress appear reluctant to support the efforts of Russ Feingold in the Senate and John Conyers in the House to hold Bush accountable. Maybe they need to see people in the streets. So Peace Fresno is sponsoring a Bush—OUT! demonstration on Sunday, May 7, 2–3 PM in Fresno's Tower District at Olive and Wishon. Help make it known that Fresno says, "Bush—OUT!" For more information or to get fliers in English or Spanish, contact Peace Fresno at (559) 487-2515 or <www.peacefresno.org>.

Poetry Corner

Paul Jackson has had several articles in the *Community Alliance* as a legal analyst; now he adds "poet" to his resume.

Make-believe

What if "God" were an old, bearded man in the clouds
But were as fit as Jack LaLanne and wore a goatee?
If holiday sales drew blank stares but no crowds?
Or if China had all the world's china but no tea?

What if Teddy Roosevelt had stayed a Bull Moose,
And Jesse Jackson kept the Rainbow Coalition?
Or, what if all the crazies were let loose
Upon confession on their own volition?

What if Yoda had become an Amway sales rep
Who hypnotized his customers—and not a Jedi Knight?
What if those 19 hijackers had missed a step
And given up jihadism while on board a red-eye flight?

What if Westerners, following the two world wars,
Had tried to meet and striven to make peace with Arabs;
Had cultivated peace in Middle Eastern cultures
With interest greater than what's shown to scarabs?

What if the UN secretary-general
Gave the assembly a state-of-the-world address
And said the richest continent, because of minerals,
Is Africa—but others thwarted its success?

What if sports fans took time out to prepare
To cheer by studying the sport of ancient Romans?
Or if Americans knew it was FAIR
To debunk the right-wing talking heads as showmen?

What if indigenous peoples received respect
Beyond Oaxaca, deserts, and the Pyrenees?
Or if the legal system were designed to protect
Much more than private property and tyrannies?

Yes, what if corporations weren't fake "persons";
Their lawyers had to drive used cars, being underpaid;
What if—while the world tended by adults worsens—
The children met one another, dreamt, and played?

What if, on seeing Ronald in his yellow suit,
And hearing the familiar ditty-sounds,
As Ronald and his friends promote sales of fat foods,
The kids knew that he was just clowning around?

What if another world could be projected
From childlike imagination, touched by Love?
If all Americans who are disaffected
Could vote again by voting "none of the above"?

And, if adults unlearned things children know are bogus,
Would people play Monopoly for pure profit??
Perhaps a Higher Power, judging, would take notice
And send another wise and venerated prophet.

"How to Stop War" Forum

As the war in Iraq entered its fourth year, President Bush was asked when troops would come home, and he responded that this would be decided by the next president. While this shocked many people, more troubling was the renewal of the "preemptive strike" policy, which gives legitimacy to attacking before being attacked. The Administration seems to be identifying new targets, such as Iran and North Korea. There is a real threat of war without end.

What can you do? Join Peace Fresno and the Peace and Social Concerns Committee of the Mennonite Community Church for the "How to Stop War" forum on Saturday, May 20, 1–3 PM. Speakers will share valuable information and practical steps. Come, listen, ask questions, and leave prepared to act. The forum will take place at Mennonite Community Church, 5015 E Olive Ave. For more information, please contact Scott Key at 453-2070 or scottkey@fresno.edu.

Be informed and act!



Don't Attack Iraq/Iran recycled sign is used at the Rally in the Valley. Photo by Mike Rhodes

When Is Public Access Television Coming to Fresno?

By Mike Rhodes

Community media advocates attended the Fresno County Board of Supervisors meeting on March 28, 2006, where a proposed agreement to bring public, education, and government (PEG) access channels to the Fresno cable system was discussed. The proposed franchise agreement, presented by staff, would have provided one government and two education channels. The proposed agreement did not specifically designate a public access channel, although staff said the board would have the ability to establish one in 2009, or even earlier if Comcast's transition to digital conversion moves faster than expected.

The problem, as explained by general services director and chief county negotiator John Navarrette, is that "Comcast has a limited number of channels available." Navarrette said that with the current analog system, "Comcast can only provide the county with three channels." Sue Buske, who is a consultant working for the City of Fresno and Clovis in their efforts to negotiate a contract with Comcast disagrees and says the cable provider has the bandwidth to provide more than three channels for PEG access. Buske said, "I just negotiated five to seven channels in Humboldt County with a significantly smaller number of subscribers and a cable system that is not quite as technically advanced as the one serving Fresno. This is all about Comcast just not wanting to give up any more channel capacity for PEG."

The Buske Group, of which Sue Buske is the president, settled a franchise agreement earlier this month in Humboldt County, which is in Northern California. In addition to the five to seven channels for PEG access, the cable service provider is giving the community \$750,000. This money will be used for video and digital editing equipment, a Community Media Center (CMC), and the other items needed to produce locally originated programs. In contrast, the Fresno County agreement would have provided the government channel with only \$150,000. There was no funding for the education or public channels in the proposed Fresno County agreement.

Why would the staff for the County of Fresno propose an agreement they know is inferior to the franchise agreements being negotiated in other counties? Supervisor Judy Case provided part of the answer when she expressed her concern that cable consumers would have to pay more for their cable service if the county franchise agreement provided additional funding for PEG and a CMC. In the proposed franchise agreement, the county of Fresno agreed to allow Comcast to add a line item to the customer's bill, showing that they were being charged an extra 25 cents to cover the expense.

Buske says cable service providers don't always bill their customers for providing PEG and CMC funding. "The decision about how much to charge is driven by the market," Buske said. Cable providers are in competition with satellite companies and will make decisions about how much to charge based on

market conditions. "If a cable company buys a new fleet of trucks they may or may not raise their customers' rates," Buske said. The same thing is true when a cable service provider gives a grant to a community for PEG access channels or a CMC. Some franchise agreements, like the one in Humboldt County, specifically prohibit the cable company from billing customers for the grant. Fresno County staff has agreed to permit Comcast to bill county customers for the grant.

Another concern expressed about PEG access is that a public access channel might provide the public with the opportunity to criticize county government. Supervisor Bob Waterston brought this issue up three months ago when the item came before the board. At Tuesday's meeting he mentioned it again, saying he doesn't want to be responsible for allowing some hard core group to be on the air. Waterston specifically mentioned being concerned that a racist group, someone who would criticize Fresno County, or a religious group that is "anti-this or anti-that" might get on the channel. This concern resonated with Supervisor Case, who said she would be comfortable with a group like CSUF or the Fresno County Office of Education (FCOE) being in charge of who has access to putting programs on the PEG channels.

Randy Reed, who is the chairperson of the board of the newly formed Community Media Access Collaborative (CMAC), spoke at Tuesday's public hearing. Reed encouraged the board to extend the current agreement for 90 days and to specifically include a public access channel in the agreement. Other speakers called on the board to include a "most-favored



John Navarrette presented the franchise agreement proposal to the Board of Supervisors.

nations" clause in the agreement. This clause would ensure that the County of Fresno would receive the same benefits any other government entity received in their franchise agreements if they negotiate a better deal.

In an e-mail sent after Tuesday's hearing, Reed wrote that while he was pleased with the outcome, community media advocates face a real challenge based on the proposed Fresno County franchise agreement's inherent weaknesses. Reed summarized the CMAC's goals as:

- * dedicated access channels for public, education and government use;
- * two-way connectivity from PEG origination sites to Comcast for delivering program signals
- * county participation in



Supervisor Henry Perea was very supportive of including a public-access channel in the county agreement.

- and/or support for a shared community media center
- * cable service to schools and other public buildings
- * "most-favored nations" clause ensuring that any



Randy Reed asked the Board of Supervisors not to adopt the franchise agreement proposal.

enhanced benefits negotiated by City of Fresno, City of Clovis, or other jurisdictions within Fresno County are also made available to County residents.

The CMAC, which includes representatives from community, education, and government groups, has just incorporated as a nonprofit 501(c)3. The CMAC has been established, after years of work, as the body that would like to oversee PEG and CMC operations. The Cities of Fresno and Clovis are represented on the board and the County of Fresno has been invited to join.

Supervisor Henry Perea was very supportive of including a public access channel in the county agreement. Perea made the motion to extend the current franchise agreement for another 90 days and directed staff to include language that mentions making a public access channel a part of the agreement. The motion passed unanimously. Perea also suggested using some of the funding from the 5% franchise fee that the county of Fresno receives from Comcast to pay for the PEG channels. The county receives this money, which is 5% of Comcast's gross revenues in the county, as a part of the current franchise agreement.

At the end of the hearing, Supervisor Case wanted to know what was going on with the City of Fresno's negotiations with Comcast. Bob Hendricks, chief information officer for the City of Fresno, was at the meeting and said negotiations were under way with Comcast and that "great progress is being made." Hendricks agreed with Navarrette's assessment that there were a limited number of channels available for PEG access, and cited this as the reason all of the agencies (Fresno County and the cities of Clovis and Fresno) needed to collaborate in the negotiations. He said meetings with these agencies have been set up and that a 90-day extension of the current contract would be helpful in coordinating these efforts. Hendricks said that "the City of Fresno has a very aggressive schedule for negotiating this franchise agreement and we are hoping to have a signed agreement before July 1."



Supervisor Bob Waterston appears to be a little unclear on the concept of free speech.

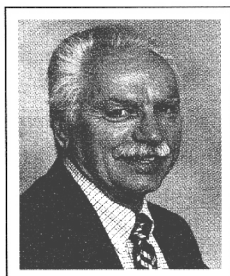


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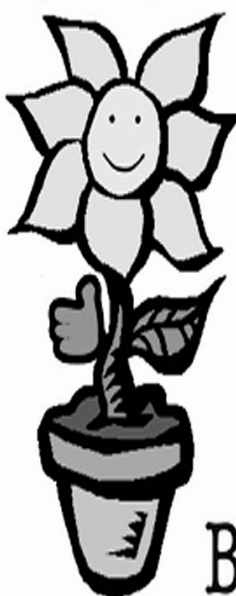
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Immigrant Rights March Begins With Student Walkouts

By Mike Rhodes

Monday, March 27, I got the call at a little after 10 AM: “Dad, there is a huge walkout at school, and I’m going over the fence with them!” My daughter is a student at Fresno High. By the time I grabbed my camera and got to the scene of the march, the students were halfway downtown. There was a fire truck, lights flashing, trying to catch up with the students, cops on motorcycles and in cars stopping traffic, and hundreds of students on their way to City Hall. They did not confine themselves to one lane or the sidewalk. These kids had taken over both lanes of the road to downtown Fresno.

At a pace three times as fast as any “peace march” I have ever been on, the students were chanting and sometimes running toward their destination. They chanted “Mexico, Mexico, Mexico,” then “The People United Will Never Be Defeated,” and also “Hell No, We Won’t Go.” I had to ask a couple of them what the last chant was about — was this an immigrant rights march or had they shifted gears to protest the war in Iraq? The answer was, “We won’t be sent back to Mexico.”

This was a fast-paced, student-led walkout to protest the proposed legislation that was being debated in Congress: HR 4437. As the students converged on Fresno City Hall, word came that this was not the only walkout by high school students: Students from two other schools were on their way to downtown Fresno. In addition to the Fresno High contingent, there were students coming from Roosevelt and Edison High. Later, students from Reedley and Buchanan High reportedly walked out too.

This was not a Latino-only march; there was significant participation by African American and Anglo students. At a short rally at City Hall students shouted (without a megaphone) to the crowd why they were there. They were outraged at the unfairness of the immigration bill. An African American student got on the impromptu stage and said, to thunderous applause, that he was in support of immigrant rights. “Immigrant Rights are Human Rights!”

Day 2—The Protests and Walkouts Grow Larger

Estimates of the number of students at the immigrant-rights marches and rally in downtown Fresno ranged wildly on March 28, the second day of student walkouts. The Fresno Police Department captain on the scene estimated 2,000. The Reverend Floyd Harris, president of the California chapter of the National Action Network, estimated 6,000. What was certain is that thousands of students made their way downtown, in the pouring rain, to protest the anti-immigrant legislation that was being discussed in Congress.

The march and rally were significantly larger than the spontaneous walkout and march of the day before. The students came from almost all local high schools and middle schools. The students gathered at City Hall, held a rally, and marched to the Fulton Mall and back to City Hall.

Shortly before noon there were several splinter marches heading in various directions and you could hear the chanting and the yelling from these massive marches all over the downtown area. Perhaps the largest contingent, once again, came from Fresno High. Their arrival was greeted with an uproar, which could be heard for blocks, from students who had already arrived. One of the last groups to arrive was from Hoover High, which is at least five miles north of downtown.

Day 3—The Empire Strikes Back

On March 29, students continued to walk out of school and head for downtown Fresno, in protest of the proposed immigration legislation in Congress. The Fresno Police Department



Fresno High students head to Fresno City Hall on the first day of student walk outs and protests against proposed immigration legislation. All photos on pages 10 and 11 by Mike Rhodes.

ment (FPD) and school administrators changed tactics and began detaining students. Some 200 students were detained, and most of them were taken to the Ted Wills Community Center, where they were held and released to their parents.

At a press conference called to discuss the detentions, Police Chief Jerry Dyer said police had used the Tactical Response Team, aerial surveillance, and targeted three Fresno high schools to contain the walkout. Dyer said the FPD did not see the same kind of mass rallies on March 29 that had taken



Two friends say NO to HR 4437

place on Monday and Tuesday. Instead he said there were smaller groups of protesters marching around downtown Fresno. Part of the reason for the smaller numbers, he said, was because the police had positioned officers around Roosevelt, McLane, and Fresno High Schools. At noon, the police maintained a high profile around Fresno High. Motorcycles and squad cars were positioned about every 200 feet around the perimeter of the school. Dyer said the police presence made students think twice before jumping the fence.

On a positive note, Fresno Unified School District assistant superintendent John Marinovich said at the same press conference that the schools were using the walkouts as an opportunity to talk about democracy. He said, “Social science teachers are using this to talk about democracy, schools have set up free speech areas so students can talk about immigration issues, voter registration materials are being

made available to students who are over 18, and we are giving students the opportunity to call or write their representatives.”

Marinovich also talked about progressive discipline and how the detained students would be handled when they return to school. He said that discipline would be handled on a case-by-case basis. If this was the first time a student was truant, he or she might receive a verbal warning. If this was not students’ first time, they could receive community service work or have to attend a class about the importance of attending school.

Even as the press conference was taking place, there were more reports of students arriving in downtown Fresno. Dyer said he had a report of 150 students who were on their way to Fresno from the South Valley. As I left the press conference, I saw a group of some 30 or 40 students marching down the Mariposa Mall. They were from Bullard High.

The organizing of these walkouts was coordinated by students text messaging each other, using “My Space” on the Internet, and by word of mouth at school.

Day 4—Cesar Chavez Day or Police State?

Friday, March 31, started with students being intimidated to attend school: Fresno police officers surrounded several schools and implemented a lock-down once the students were in class. Fresno High looked more like a prison than an institution for learning as the police helicopter circled overhead, dozens of police vehicles constantly drove around the school, and the students were locked inside their rooms.

About 150 students staged a protest inside Fresno High during morning classes. When they tried to jump the fence to join other protesters downtown, they were charged by the police and forced back on campus. There was a report of two students being hit with tasers and a parent being arrested for assaulting an officer. In all, 220 students were detained on Friday. That compares to 200 who were detained on Wednesday.

Most of the detentions took place downtown and at schools around town as students walked out of class to protest proposed immigration legislation in Congress. Many of the students were trying to get to City Hall, where Fresno police chief Jerry Dyer had told organizers they could



Fresno High students took over the entire street on their march to City Hall



Student leaders speak to crowd at Fresno City Hall.



Clockwise from upper left: Fresno High students arrive downtown on the first day of the walkout (Monday), young participants in the "officially sanctioned" Cesar Chavez march, some of the students who were "detained" one block away from the legal march, and the Fresno Police Department keeping a close watch on Fresno high school students on Friday.

go and not be arrested. But, when students attempted to get to City Hall, they were turned away or detained by police on truancy charges. They were then taken to a community center where they stayed until their parents could pick them up.

One group of about 150 students was confronted on the Mariposa Mall by the FPD's anti-gang unit (MAGEC) and prevented from reaching City Hall. Mark Schlosberg, from the Northern California American Civil Liberties Union, expressed concern that the students might have been inappropriately profiled as gang members. Schlosberg asked, "why were these students stopped by the gang suppression unit of the Fresno Police Department?"

After the confrontation with MAGEC, The students decided to go to an event honoring Cesar Chavez being held at the Convention Center. Upon arriving at the Convention Center, they were told by security guards that they could not attend the event. They were turned away and later detained by the police.

Following the "officially sanctioned" Cesar Chavez event at the Convention Center, there was a march through town. About 1,000 marchers, led by a mariachi band, walked about a mile through downtown with a police escort. The marchers seemed totally oblivious to the chaos that surrounded them. The marchers did not carry one sign mentioning the immigration issue.

In the afternoon, after most of the detainments of students had been made, the Fresno Police Department held a press conference. Channel 30 news reported that Police Chief Dyer announced that outside agitators were urging students to walk out. This led to concern that the police would target community activists who helped the students with logistical support (like providing megaphones, etc.) and those who monitored the police actions.

It was also disclosed at this press conference that law enforcement was able to keep ahead of the student protestors by intercepting text messages. When asked how the FPD came into possession of these text messages, Jeff Cardinale, Public Information Officer for the FPD, said "revealing how the Fresno Police came into possession of the text messages would jeopardize intelligence and reveal a confidential source."

Largest March in the History of Fresno

On Monday April 10, immigrants and their allies continued their recent historic mobilizations in cities all over the United States to oppose HR 4437. They were demanding real immigration reform that is comprehensive, respects civil rights, reunites families, protects workers, and offers a path to citizenship for the current undocumented and future immigrants to the United States. In California, organizations in cities across the state showed what California would look like if immigrants did not work in positions such as dishwashers, cooks, housecleaners, nannies, gardeners, office workers, and dozens of other jobs.

In Fresno, immigration rights supporters marched from Saint Anthony Claret church (near Jensen and Chestnut) and held a rally at Fresno City Hall. The line of marchers stretched out for miles and expanded as hundreds and then thousands of people joined the march as it made its way downtown. This was the largest march in the history of this city!

Next Step: May 1, International Workers Day

Following the massive marches and demonstrations for immigrant rights, a coalition of groups is calling for May 1, 2006, to be a day of action—no work, no school, no sales, and no buying—and also to have rallies on this day, around symbols of economic trade to protest the anti-immigrant movements across the country. On May 1, supporters are asked to wear a white T-shirt or white arm bands.

For more information about immigrant rights events in Fresno, contact:

Coalicion por los Derechos de los Inmigrantes del Valle de San Joaquin
453 N Fresno Street
Fresno, CA 93701
Ph. (559) 498-6033
Fax 497-0206
IWAPGH@aol.com

For student organizing issues, contact:

Californians for Justice
2014 Tulare Avenue, Suite 718
Fresno, CA 93721
Ph: 443-1394
Fax: 433-1343
bernardo@caljustice.org
<http://www.caljustice.org>



What is HR 4437?

H.R. 4437 (The Border Protection, Antiterrorism, and Illegal Immigration Control Act of 2005) was passed by the United States House of Representatives on December 16, 2005 by a vote of 239 to 182. It is also known as the "Sensenbrenner Bill," for its sponsor in the House of Representatives, (R) Jim Sensenbrenner.

The bill as passed by the House of Representatives contains the following provisions, among others:

- **Requires up to 700 miles (1120 km) of fence along the US-Mexican border at points with the highest number of immigrant crossings.**
- **Housing of anyone without documentation will be considered a felony and subject to no less than 3 years in prison. This would include family members.**
- **All children born to undocumented immigrants in the United States will become wards of the state.**
- **People could be denied entry based on their political views.**
- **It would be a crime to "assist" an illegal immigrant to "remain in the United States"**

source: Wikipedia - http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Hr_4437

Students: Know Your Rights

ACLU of Northern California Guidelines on Students' Rights to Participate in Political Protests

Q: Am I allowed to express my political views while I am at school?

Yes. The First Amendment of the U.S. Constitution and Article 1, Section 2 of the California Constitution guarantee freedom of speech and freedom of the press to all people, including students. In addition, two special laws in California specifically protect students' rights of freedom of speech and freedom of the press at school.

Section 48907 of the California Education Code gives a special guarantee that students have a right to express their political opinions. This includes, but is not limited to:

- * wearing buttons, badges and other insignia (including armbands or message T-shirts)
- * posting notices on school bulletin boards
- * distributing petitions
- * handing out other printed materials, such as leaflets
- * writing in public school newspapers and yearbooks
- * writing in "underground" (or unofficial) newspapers

Although Section 48907 applies only to public schools, Section 48950 (enacted in 1992) extends free speech protection to private high schools in most circumstances.

Q: Can my school place any limits on my ability to express my political views?

Yes. Even though you have broad rights to express your views in a variety of ways, your school can adopt reasonable rules that regulate the "time, place and manner" of exercising these free speech rights. For example, the school could adopt a rule that prohibits the distribution of leaflets during class time. On the other hand, a rule prohibiting the distribution of leaflets during lunch period would not be permissible.

The school is not allowed to prohibit or censor speech or press activities by students based on its content (what you are saying), unless what you are saying falls within one of these three exceptions:

1. it is legally "obscene";
2. it is libelous or slanderous (that is, it is untrue and harms someone's reputation, and you are careless, or you know, or should have known, that it is untrue when you write or say it); or
3. it creates the immediate danger of causing students to commit an act that is unlawful or in violation of school rules, or that would cause a substantial disruption of the orderly operation of the school.

So, even if your principal or teachers believe that something you say or write is controversial, divisive, in "bad taste," or expresses a political point of view that is against school policy, they still cannot censor what you say or write unless it also falls within the three exceptions above. The law is clear about one thing: outside the classroom itself, school officials cannot just impose their own version of good taste and decency on what students say or write. However, you can certainly avoid some problems if you can say what you want to say without using profanity or sexual references.

Q: Can school officials prevent students from expressing their opinions on a particular topic because they think the topic is too controversial?

No. School officials may believe that talking about such

topics as the war or the education budget cuts are too controversial. However, as described above, they cannot censor those topics unless there is clear evidence that the speech will incite students to commit unlawful acts or to disrupt the school. Even if discussion of the war would provoke strong disagreement or upset some students, school officials still cannot censor it. Criticism of your school, criticism of students, teachers or school officials, or discussion about serious problems either at school or elsewhere is generally protected.

Q: Can I be punished for saying or writing something provocative at school?

Sometimes school authorities will try to punish students who make provocative statements or joke about violence. They may argue that the student is making a "terrorist threat." In order to be considered a "threat," you must intend that others take your words as a threat. In addition, your words must be so clear and convincing that they would cause another person to really believe that you intend to carry out the threat - and therefore to have a reasonable fear for his or her safety.

Q: Can I write about my political views (for example, my views on the war or budget cuts in our district) in a school-sponsored publication?

Yes. In California, our law is clear that freedom of the press applies to official school publications that are written by students, even if the school pays the costs of producing the newspaper. (That means that only articles that are "obscene, libelous or substantially disruptive" can be censored.) The law also says that student editors, and not teachers or administrators, are the ones responsible for assigning and editing articles. However, the journalism advisor can require that the newspaper conform to professional standards of English and journalism.

Q: Can I organize a protest at school?

It depends on the specific activities you have planned and when the protest will take place. Remember that your school can adopt reasonable rules which regulate the "time, place and manner" of exercising your free speech rights. Thus, you cannot organize a protest if it will substantially disrupt the orderly operation of the school or if it will create the immediate danger of causing students to commit an act that is unlawful or in violation of school rules. But you can organize a peaceful, orderly protest at lunch or before or after school, for example. However, the size of the demonstration, as well as other factors, may affect when and where the demonstration may occur. If you are in doubt about whether your plans for a particular protest are permissible, you should check your school district's written rules around speech regulations. If you still have questions, you should call the ACLU at (415) 621-2488.

Q: What should I do if the school administration threatens to punish any students who participate in an upcoming walkout?

Because the law requires you to attend school, the administration can take corrective action against you for missing school, even if you miss school to participate in a political protest. However, the school cannot punish you for missing school to participate in political protest more harshly than it punishes students for missing school for any other purpose. For example, you might

have to serve detention for missing school to attend a protest if detention is the typical punishment for unexcused absences.

Q: Can I be suspended for walking out of school to attend a political protest?

Generally, no. The law is clear that suspension is not an appropriate punishment for unexcused absences. Section 48900(u) of the California Education Code states: "It is the intent of the Legislature that alternatives to suspensions or expulsion be imposed against any pupil who is truant, tardy, or otherwise absent from school activities." Furthermore, the law is equally clear that, except with certain serious offenses (which do not include unexcused absences), suspension may only be imposed as a punishment of last resort. Section 48900.5 of the Education Code states that "[s]uspension shall be imposed only when other means of correction fail to bring about proper conduct." Thus, assuming you do not have a history of unexcused absences, your school must take steps to correct your behavior rather than suspend you for walking out of school to attend a protest.

For more information, check out "School Discipline: A Guide for Students & Parents," an ACLU handbook on suspension and expulsion in California public schools. This publication is available on the ACLU-NC's website at www.aclunc.org/students/discipline.pdf

Q: What should I do if the school administration threatens to lock or block the school exits to prevent us from walking out of school in protest?

Locking exits to the school can pose serious health and safety concerns for students and staff. In one instance, a local fire department responded to teachers' complaints about locked exits at a school by insisting that the administration unlock the exits to avoid a fire hazard. If the school administration threatens to lock students in your school to prevent walkouts, students should immediately notify their parents and the district superintendent's office.

Q: What can I do if the school tries to censor me?

California Education Code Section 48907 requires each school district to put in writing the rules controlling speech and press activities. So, if you are faced with a school official who is trying to limit what you say or write, you should ask to see those written rules to determine whether the school official is following the rules they are required to follow.

But remember: sometimes exercising your free speech rights involves risks. Sometimes "reasonable people" — like you and the school principal, for example — can disagree as to what is "disruptive" or "libelous." And school officials do not always follow the law on this. You may be acting within your rights, but you may have a struggle in school or even need to go to court.

There are key steps you can take to fight censorship. Be sure to get in writing your school policies regarding banned expression. Show Education Code sections 48907 and 48950 to school officials and ask them for a written response as to why they still want to ban the expression. Get petitions signed by other students, parents and teachers (especially journalism or yearbook advisors, debate coaches, history and government teachers or others who really understand the First Amendment). Write an article in the school paper. Lobby at school board meetings and ask parents, community and youth advocates and First Amendment experts to join you. Tell your local newspaper about the controversy.



Protestors bury HR 4437 at the march on April 10. Photo by Mike Rhodes

American and Mexican flags could be seen everywhere at the march. Photo by Simone Whalen-Rhodes.



The banner says: "America, we are your Conscience. We Demand Residence" Photo by Mike Rhodes

12 Million Victims of Economic Terrorism

By Pam Whalen

In the past few weeks we have witnessed millions of people taking to the streets demanding respect and civil rights for the nation's 12 million undocumented workers. The demonstrations include the largest march ever in Fresno, with 10,000 participants, and the largest demonstration in the history of the state: half a million protesting in LA. This unprecedented wave of protests across the nation erupted in response to a House of Representatives bill, HR4437, which would make felons of these 12 million (and anyone who helped them) and have a 700-mile wall constructed on the US-Mexico border.

These undocumented workers are our friends, neighbors, co-workers, and fellow students. They work in the fields surrounding Fresno, they build houses in Fresno and Clovis, and they work in restaurants and hotels. They pay taxes and send their children to school. Many make minimum wage or less, with no health insurance or other benefits. Without legal status, these workers are at the mercy of employers who often violate wage and hour laws and require them to work in dangerous life-threatening conditions.

As a national debate swirls around us as to how to deal with this large and productive segment of our community, it is important to first look at why these workers have risked extremely harsh and dangerous conditions to come to the United States to perform such hard and poorly compensated labor.

For the past 25 years, we have seen the implementation of a package of economic policies that are sometimes referred to as the neoliberal project (also called "globalization" by some proponents). These policies call for a wide range of policies that favor businesses and corporations, with the justification that if businesses do well then all of society will benefit. Under this regime policy makers have pushed for lower taxes for businesses and the wealthy, fewer government regulations, free trade, privatization, and the shredding of the social safety net. Think NAFTA, welfare reform, the WTO, the World Bank, and the IMF.

These policies have created a brave new world of fabulous wealth for a few, rapid de-industrialization of the United States, the shrinking of the American middle class, and huge disruption, destabilization and impoverishment of many Third World countries including Mexico.

In Mexico millions of small farmers have been forced off the land by an influx of highly tax-subsidized agricultural products imported from the United States, and the expansion of large-scale agribusiness. The huge shift of wealth to the super-rich in Mexico and to US corporations has left millions of Mexicans with no choice but to follow the capital to the United States as payments of the debt to international financial institutions take precedence over social programs. Isabel Vasquez, a parishioner at St. Anthony Claret Church in southeast Fresno explains, "My situation was very bad: I didn't have a house; I didn't have a job. I come here to earn money to feed my three daughters. After several years of work, I brought my daughters here."

"In my village we used to grow corn, but after NAFTA the corn from the U.S. is very cheap so we had to find something else to do so that we could survive." Leoncio Vasquez, Member of Frente Indigena Oaxaqueno Binacional

This experiment with unregulated capitalism has created huge disruptions of national and local economies. Millions of workers have been forced to leave home to survive. According to Baltazar Avila, an activist founder of the organization People with Power, "Because of the neoliberal policies that were imposed on Latin America, we in Mexico have been forced to immigrate to survive. Before it was farm workers who came; now even professionals are coming."

American workers are, of course, also under extreme stress from the same economic pressures. Good union manufacturing jobs have virtually disappeared. The gap between the rich and the poor has grown exponentially in the past few years as unions have been decimated and families work two, three, or more jobs to make ends meet.



It was a flag waving day.
Photo by Simone Whalen-Rhodes

Employers of course benefit from the influx of millions of workers willing to work for rock-bottom wages. So how can we resolve this situation in a way that benefits workers and communities rather than corporations and exploitive employers?

Hints can be gathered both from history and from attempts in other countries trying to grapple with this problem. History tells us that some of the unsavory consequences of unregulated capitalism included slavery, genocide, child labor, monopolization, cartels, and economic depression. The New Deal humanized and civilized capitalism after its collapse in 1929. We the American people decided to tax the rich corporations, break up monopolies, guarantee workers the right to organize, and protect families from the economic perils of unemployment and old age. These policies built the great American middle class and made the US economy the strongest on earth.

A wave of electoral victories in South America have brought to power leftist governments that have rejected the neoliberal model and are grappling with solutions to the deep social and economic crises the have ensued in its wake. Venezuelan president Hugo Chavez is using his country's petro dollars to import 15,000 Cuban doctors to improve healthcare for the poor, to conduct campaigns to eradicate illiteracy, and to subsidize food. In Brazil, peasants are reclaiming fallow agricultural land from large landowners, and in Argentina workers are reopening factories that had been closed by their previous owners. Both countries have laws that recognize the rights of peasants and workers to claim unused land and factories to return them to production. Also, just last month in France, high school students, college students, and labor unions united to defeat a pro-business law that would have made it easier to fire workers under 26 years old.

All of these policies and actions seek to restrain capitalism and make it function for the well-being of the community and to empower workers and others to hold institutions accountable to the people. Victories have come when those at the grass-roots level have been able to organize and unite around their rights to a fair and just society and a future for their children. Right-wing politicians would like to see the victims of their policies blame and fight each other: native-born against immigrant worker—not to mention all of the other divisions that they seek to inflame each election cycle. The cure to the ills of capitalism is not more privilege for the wealthy but more democracy for the people, both in the United States and abroad, and more accountability for governments and corporations.



There were immigrant rights supporters of all ages at the April 10 march.
Photo by Simone Whalen-Rhodes



Banner in the April 10 march. Photo by Mike Rhodes



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7:00 p.m.
fresno art museum
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Susan Stewart

Poetry reading
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5:00 pm

Susan Stewart

Lecture on Anna Akhmatova
Monday, May 8, 2006
6:30 pm - Music by Carl and Kathryn Johnsen
7:00 pm - lecture

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A Passion for Film!

Fresno Filmworks Announces Lineup for 2nd Annual Film Festival

FESTIVAL SCHEDULE

Fri. May 5, 7:00 pm

The film festival kicks off with the animated short *Badgered*.

The Real Dirt on Farmer John, opening night feature film.

Fri. May 5, 9:00 pm

Champagne Opening Night Reception

Sat. May 6, 2:00 pm

The Fan and the Flower, a whimsical animated short film.

Duma, the latest from legendary filmmaker Carroll Ballard.

Sat. May 6, 5:00 pm

A Night at the Oscars, 4 Oscar Nominated Short Documentaries

- *The Death of Kevin Carter: Casualty of the Bang Bang Club.*
- *God Sleeps in Rwanda*
- *The Mushroom Club*
- *A Note of Triumph: The Golden Age of Norman Corwin*

Sat. May 6, 8:00 pm

The White Countess

Sun. May 7, 1:00 pm

Elevator to the Gallows

Sun. May 7, 3:00 pm

An Afternoon at the Oscars, 5 Oscar Nominated Animated and Live Action Short Films

- *The Mysterious Geographic Explorations of Jasper Morello*
- *The Last Farm*
- 9
- *Our Time is Up*
- *Six Shooter*

Sun. May, 5:00 pm

"My Favorite Flick and Why I Love It" A lively panel discussion for film lovers everywhere.

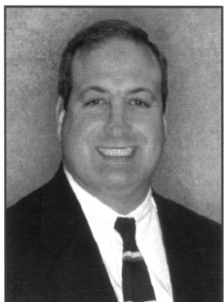
Sun. May 7, 7:00 pm

Sophie Scholl – The Final Days



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 - \$10 - Opening Night Champagne Reception (Friday)
 - \$10 - General tickets
 - \$8 - Student & Senior tickets
- Tickets available at all TicketMaster outlets, www.ticketmaster.com or at 485-TIXS, Tower Theatre, Fig Garden Bookstore and The Movies video store.



WOMEN'S INTERNATIONAL LEAGUE FOR PEACE AND FREEDOM

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

Graphic by Lincoln Cushing

WILPF DATES:

Wednesday, May 3, Noon: Women in Black, Fresno County Courthouse Breezeway

Thursday, May 11, 7 PM: WILPF Business Meeting, 1584 N Van Ness

Wednesday, May 24, 3 PM: WILPF Stir It Up on KFCF 88.1 FM

Saturday, May 27: Northern California WILPF Cluster Meeting, Women's Center UC Santa Cruz

July 20-23, 2006: Save the Date—WILPF-WEST Gathering, Portland, OR

International WILPF President in Fresno: Regina Bircherm, International President of WILPF, was in Fresno April 5-8 to take part in the CSUF Peace Garden Jane Addams Statue unveiling events. We feel very honored that she agreed to visit us and wish to thank her from the bottom of our hearts. Regina's visit started Wednesday at 3 PM with a KFCF interview with Pam Whalen and Joan Poss, with Mike Rhodes as engineer (all WILPF members). Then she shared dinner in the Tower District that evening with several members of the branch's board and a couple of WILPF members. On Thursday Regina attended the student preview of the statue at 1:30 PM. That evening Regina took part in the reception, dinner, program, and unveiling of the Jane Addams statue at CSUF, where she was a speaker. On Friday she was a speaker at a brown bag lunch at CSUF, which was attended by about 20 students and faculty. Friday evening Regina was guest of honor at a potluck attended by several WILPF members. Then it was back to Pennsylvania Saturday.

Thanks to Ellie Bluestein for first contacting Regina about the possibility of coming to Fresno for the events. Thanks to Joan Poss who worked out all the details for Regina's visit, helped organize several events for Regina, opened her home to Regina, and drove her to all the different events. Thanks to our WILPF intern, Kris Smith, for helping Joan. Thanks to WILPFers Pam Whalen and Mike Rhodes for having Regina on their radio show. Thanks to WILPFers Loretta Kensinger and Jan Slagter of the CSUF women's studies department for arranging the brown bag lunch. Thanks to WILPFer Sandra Iyall for hosting the potluck. Thanks to all the WILPF members who attended the many events in honor of our first international WILPF president, Jane Addams, and our current international president, Regina Bircherm.

Thanks also to our newest WILPF member, Elizabeth Swearingen, who joined at the play *A Single Woman*, for the herstorical costumes she made for the events, worn by WILPFers and CSUF faculty Ellen Gruenbaum, Jan Slagter, Loretta Kensinger, Elizabeth herself, and non-WILPFer's Kathryn Forbes and Melissa Knight, and the women who read Jane Addams's wise words. Anyone for getting Kathryn and Melissa to join WILPF? We need the whole women's studies department to be WILPFers, and we just can't leave Kathryn and Melissa out in the cold.

WILPF Elections: At our May board meeting, we will be putting together a Nominating Committee for the next WILPF board. The election will take place at our June meeting and the board will take office at our annual retreat in August. The positions for officers are president, vice president, secretary, and treasurer. There are also committee chairs of program, legislative, history/herstory, membership, literature, publicity, newsletter, telephone tree, and fundraising, with designated members at large. If you are interested in running for any of the positions, please let us know.



Jane Addams Statue Unveiling with WILPF members: Ellen Gruenbaum, Hiram DeWitt, Sophia DeWitt, Ellie Bluestein, Joan Poss, Regina Bircherm, Polly Victor, Jan Slagter, Loretta Kensinger, and Elizabeth Swearingen.

Photo by Howard Watkins

Uprooting Racism: Our first meeting of the *Uprooting Racism* book discussion group at Stone Soup on March 25 was a wonderful success. This was a get-acquainted meeting facilitated by Francine Oputa of CSUF's National Coalition Building Institute (NCBI). Francine led us in several exercises from NCBI's prejudice-reduction workshops. Twenty-eight women attended and all seemed to have nothing but positive comments about the session, especially about Francine, and all they learned from the exercises. We have 55 women who are interested in attending future sessions, and seven facilitators who will be helping at different times. Some 30 of these women are WILPF members, and 25 are from the community. It is a very diverse group, with women from the African American, Hmong, indigenous, Japanese American, Jewish, Latina, and white communities.

We wish to thank MaiKa Yang and Stone Soup for hosting our first meeting. We were well received and well taken care of by them. Thanks to Ellen Gruenbaum for working with MaiKa on the arrangements at Stone Soup and for lunch from May Flower Chinese Cuisine. Thanks to May Flower for the discount on our lunch. Thanks to Kris Smith for helping me with so many details, such as preparing the folders with handouts, shopping for lunch supplies, and so much more. Thanks to those who helped spread the word about the group and helped us recruit members from the community. A very special thanks to Francine Oputa for facilitating the meeting and doing such an excellent and well-received job. Thanks to all the women who attended and those who will be attending.

Our next meeting will be held May 13 with the location still to be determined. We will be reading and discussing the first two parts of the book *Uprooting Racism: How White People Can Work for Racial Justice* by Paul Kivel. We hope this will lead to alliances or coalitions to work on systemic, institutional racism in Fresno.

Fresno Raging Grannies and WILPF Web Site: Did you know that Fresno's Raging Grannies are featured on the home page of National WILPF's Web site? Check out the words and video by Elfie Ballis at www.wilpf.org.

WILPF WCUSP Campaign Update: The Women Challenge US Policy: Building Peace on Justice in the Middle East (WCUSP) Campaign has been reading about the Israeli lobby and US Middle East policy. John Mearsheimer of the University of Chicago and Stephen Walt of the Kennedy School of Government at Harvard University wrote a study of the Israeli lobby. An edited version appeared in the March 23, 2006, issue of the *London Review of Books*. This research has sparked debate from all parts of the political spectrum. While the WCUSP leadership team does not have a consensus opinion on the Mearsheimer/Walt research, we welcome the debate

on the causes of US policy in the Middle East. We believe it is important to recognize both the power of lobbying in creating government policy and the continuation of US hegemonic aggression since World War II. Please go to the News and Action Alerts Section of our Web page for more information:< <http://wilpf.org/campaigns/WCUSP/newsaction.htm>>.

The Wal-Mart Tax: Shifting Health Care Costs to Taxpayers—From AFL-CIO, March 2006

A 2004 study by the University of California at Berkeley Labor Center found that Wal-Mart employees' reliance on public assistance programs, including health care, costs California \$86 million annually, with health-related costs accounting for \$32 million. According to the study, 23 percent fewer Wal-Mart employees participate in the company's health care plan than is typical for employees of large retailers in general. And Wal-Mart families use 40 percent more in taxpayer-funded health care services and 38 percent more in non-health public services (food stamps, Earned Income Tax Credit, subsidized school lunches and housing) than the families of all large retail workers.

The study concluded that if other California retailers followed Wal-Mart's example when it comes to wages and benefits, it would cost state taxpayers an additional \$410 million annually to provide public assistance to workers. While the company evades costs for worker health care, Wal-Mart has benefited from at least \$48.5 million in taxpayer-financed economic assistance in California since 1991.

California has had to address significant budget shortfalls over the past several fiscal years, and future gaps are predicted through 2010. Medi-Cal spending has been on the rise over the past several budget years, and more than 1 million additional people have enrolled in the program since the 2000-2001 fiscal year. Spending on the program increases by 10 percent per year as a result of increased costs and enrollment. Over the past two fiscal years, California has cut Medicaid benefits and taken a variety of other steps to control costs.

Quote of the Month:

"We cannot despair when there is conflict. Our solidarity must be affirmed by shared beliefs in a spirit of intellectual openness that celebrates diversity, welcomes dissent, and rejoices in collective dedication to truth."

- Bell Hooks



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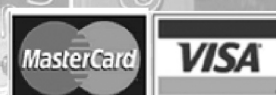
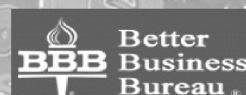
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SW corner of Bullard and 1st
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This event is hosted by the Fresno County Green Party and is free, wheelchair accessible, and open to anyone interested in discussing progressive topics.


Contact: Larry Mullen 559 227-0293

QUAKERS

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PEACE AND SOCIAL JUSTICE CALENDAR OF EVENTS

19 COMMUNITY ALLIANCE MAY 2006

Monday, May 1 • 5:30 PM

Several local organizations and activists join a national boycott on May 1, 2006, in support of comprehensive immigration reform. These groups are calling for a rally at 5:30 PM in front of Fresno City Hall for a collective dialogue with the community. The intention of the boycott is to make the economic impact of immigrants' roles as laborers and consumers felt. The organizers are inviting the community—when possible—not to go to work or attend school and, particularly, not to purchase anything.

Monday, May 1 • 7:30 PM

The Community Alliance newspaper will show the movie *THE REVOLUTION WILL NOT BE TELEVISED* at the Full Circle Brewery, 620 F St. in Downtown Fresno. Tickets are \$10 but nobody will be turned away for lack of money. For more information about this event call 559 978-4502. For more information about the movie, see: http://www.chavezthefilm.com/index_ex.htm

Thursday, May 4 • 7 - 8 AM

The Interfaith Alliance of Central California will host a National Day of Prayer for All Faiths gathering. The gathering will be held on the east side of the Fresno County Court House near the Clement Renzi statue of the three interfaith clergymen who created the Forum for Better Understanding radio program. This gathering will attempt to honor the spirit of the declaration that "People of all faiths might take time on that day to pray to God as they understand God". For further information, contact Rev. Bryan Jessup, co-chair, Interfaith Alliance of Central California 227-6146

Thursday, May 4 • 5:30 PM

As a part of the 5th Annual Bike Month activities, the Fresno County Bicycle Coalition invites you to an Art Hop bike ride. Meet at Recycled at 5:30 (1461 N Van Ness, #C, across from Club Fred). Art Hop is sponsored by the Fresno Arts Council, first Thursday of each month—free admission. For details visit their Web site: <www.fresnoartmuseum.org/cal_arthop.php>.

Friday, May 5 • 6:30–8:30 PM

The Reedley Peace Center presents Alesandra Halkin, a representative for the Chiapas Media Project. The CMP has been working as a bi-national partnership providing equipment and training indigenous and campesino communities in Chiapas and Guerrero, Mexico. Light potluck at 6:30. Program begins at 7. 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 at dfriesen@telis.org.

May 5, 6, and 7

Fresno Filmworks 2nd annual film festival. Three days of films. Opening night party, discussion every day at Fresno's historic Tower Theatre. See page 14 & 17 for more information.

Sunday, May 7 • 2–3 PM

Bush—OUT!

It's time for the Central Valley to let Congress know that we have had enough of George W. Bush's crimes and his disastrous policies. It's time to impeach Bush and Cheney. However, despite record-low public opinion poll numbers for Bush, members of Congress appear reluctant to support the efforts of Russ Feingold in the Senate and John Conyers in the House to hold Bush accountable. Maybe they need to see people in the streets. So Peace Fresno is sponsoring a Bush—OUT! demonstration on Sunday, May 7, in Fresno's Tower District at Olive and Wishon. Help make it known that Fresno says, "Bush—OUT!" For more information or to get fliers in English or Spanish, contact Peace Fresno at (559) 487–2515 or <www.peacefresno.org>.

Sunday, May 7 • 1 PM

Imagine Change - We Choose to Stay & Fight. Live music, performance, spoken word, live painting. Activist booths, arts & crafts, short films, kiddie corner.

Location: Planned Parenthood, 650 N. Fulton

Wednesday, May 10 • 11:30 AM–1 PM

Kaiser Permanente Fresno Medical Center will hold its first "Celebrate You—Live Well and Thrive Luncheon" at TorNino's Banquets in Fresno. The event will feature culinary delights from a team of Fresno's top-rated chefs, followed by a motivational address and book signing by Marci Shimoff, co-author of *Chicken Soup for the*

Woman's Soul. Shimoff delivers an uplifting message for women, addressing self-esteem and empowerment. She is co-author of five New York Times bestsellers: *Chicken Soup for the Woman's Soul I and II*, *Chicken Soup for the Mother's Soul I and II*, and *Chicken Soup for the Single's Soul*, as well as the recently released *Chicken Soup for Every Mom's Soul*. Tickets are \$15 per person and will be available for purchase in February. For more information, contact Peter DeYoung, Alliance Advertising and Public Relations at (559) 994–9292.

Wednesday, May 10 • 12 Noon & 7:30 PM

Second Wednesday of each month free Video Program The film is "Oil on Ice" May 10th Noon & 7:30 at FCNV About Oil on Ice Oil on Ice is a one-hour documentary that examines the battle over oil development within the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge. This is a classic struggle in a stunning place, featuring the dramatic wildlife that adapted to this environment and the cultures of the Gwich'in Athabaskan Indians and Inupiat Eskimos that rely on this wildlife for their subsistence.

12 Noon and 7:30 PM showings at the Center, 1584 N. Van Ness (SE corner Van Ness and McKinley). A discussion will follow 7:30 PM showing.

Wednesday, May 13 • 7 PM

As a part of the 5th Annual Bike Month activities, the Fresno County Bicycle Coalition invites you to Bike Swap Meet. This event is sponsored by the Fresno Cycling Club. Meet at University Center parking lot, 550 East Shaw. Bring bikes, parts, tools, checkbook.

Saturday, May 13th • 3:30 PM

Central Valley Progressive PAC holds its regular general meeting to review the GOTV activities and share the progress on precinct walking as well as phone banking. Preparations for an Environmental Issues Forum for July are under way. Join the discussion at the Center for Nonviolence, 1584 N Van Ness at McKinley. For information call Lydia Flores 435–7360 or see <www.cvppac.org>.

Sunday, May 14

Bike Shop Safety Checks are a part of the 5th Annual Bike Month activities, the Fresno County Bicycle Coalition. Bike and helmet safety checks at participating bike shops.

Tuesday, May 16 • 6:30 AM–5 PM

Hunger Action Day trip to Sacramento

Fresno Metro Ministry and California Hunger Action Coalition are sponsoring a bus trip to talk to our legislators in Sacramento about what we know about Hunger in the Valley. This will be in place of our regular forum for May. We'll have special presentations and advocacy training, and meet with our Valley legislators. Be prepared to share your story! Space is limited; please, no children under 12 years of age. School-age children must have permission from their school. Pick up and dropoff in the Trinity Lutheran Church parking lot, 3973 N Cedar). For further information: Edie Jessup or Jeremy Hofer at Fresno Metro Ministry, 485–1416.

Thursday, May 18 • 5:30–8:30 PM

Mujeres de Conciencia/Women of Conscience—A Book Project, authored and photographed by Victoria Alvarado from Berkeley, California, will feature black and white photos and biographies of 75 Latinas from the state of California—including eight women from the Central Valley. The women from the Central Valley include Carmen Cristina, musician/folkloric singer; Sarah Reyes, CEO Community Food Bank and former assembly member; Patricia Wells Solorzano, instructor and musician; Matilde Hicks, public radio host and community activist; Eva Torres, nonprofit fundraiser; Irma Luna, Mixteco farmworker liason; Josie Mena, MSW, community activist; Dolores Huerta, farmworker advocate.

The Fresno Mujeres de Conciencia Committee and Arte Américas will be hosting a reception to raise funds for the publication of the book at Arte Americas Cultural Center, 1630 Van Ness, Fresno. Tickets for the event are \$30. The first year's profits from the sale of the book will provide scholarships for Latino students.

Thursday, May 18 • 6:30 to 9:30 PM

Progressive Thursday presents Loose Change. This documentary is an in-depth investigation of the events of September 11, 2001. 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.

Thursday, May 18

The Tenth Great Fresno/Oxford Debate The motion before the house is: That agribusiness has served the people of the San Joaquin Valley very well. Location and panel members to be announced. If you are interested in serving on either panel, pro or con, or for further information, please call Vincent Lavery at (559) 455–0821.

Friday, May 19

BIKE TO WORK DAY!!!

BIKE TO SCHOOL DAY!!!

Join cyclists and politicians for a public ride from Manchester Center to Kern Street Café for free coffee and bagels. Gather at 8 AM for 8:30 ride, near Manchester's Fresno Area Express. Clovis cyclists, meet at Old Town Trail rest stop near Ashlan and Clovis at 7:15 AM for ride to Manchester. Edison High School Annual Bike to School Ride. For more information see <www.fresnobike.org>.



Saturday, May 20 • 8 AM–4 PM

The Central California Environmental Justice Network (CCEJN) Conference will be held at the Big Red Church in Fresno.

Saturday, May 20 • 1–3 PM

"How to Stop War" Forum

As the war in Iraq lumbers into its fourth year and new targets are identified, there is a real threat of war without end. What can you do? Be informed and act! Speakers will share valuable information and practical steps. Come, listen, ask questions, and leave prepared to act. The forum will take place at Mennonite Community Church, 5015 E Olive. For more information, please contact Scott Key at 453–2070 or scottkey@fresno.edu. The forum is co-sponsored by Peace Fresno and the Peace and Social Concerns Committee, Mennonite Community Church.

Saturday, May 20 • 7 PM

International Cine Forum presents Samy and Me, a colorful comedy from Argentina (2002). The film will be shown at the Fresno Arts Museum, is in Spanish with English subtitles, and admission is \$5. The showing of this film is co-sponsored by the Community Alliance newspaper.

Sunday, May 21 • 1 PM

Dan Yaseen will report back from the World Social Forum in Pakistan. This report back will be held at the Humanists of the San Joaquin Valley regular meeting, which is held at the Unitarian Universalist Church, 4144 N Millbrook.

Saturday, May 27

KFCF 88.1 FM special event

Join us in North Fork to hear Pratap Chaterjee, producer of KPFA's environmental program Terra Verde and president of CorpWatch, an organization that investigates multinational corporations that profit from war, fraud, and environmental and human rights abuse. This annual event is held in the North Fork Town Hall and features live music, dinner, and beverages along with our featured speaker. Details soon. For information call (559) 233–2221.

Tuesday, May 30 • 7–9 PM

An open Forum with the five candidates running for the district 1 city council seat will be held in the Fellowship Hall of the First Congregational Church of Fresno, 2131 N Van Ness. The moderator will be Bill Murphy. The public is invited to attend and ask questions of the candidates. The forum is free and is co-sponsored by the League of Women Voters and the Community Outreach Ministry of FCCF. For more information, phone Nora DeWitt at 225–1894.

A Father's March for Peace from Tijuana through California

By LiAnn Ishizuka, Ivette Lopez, and Mark Hernandez



March for Peace organizer Stan Santos and National Action Network California chapter president Rev Floyd Harris speak at the press conference. All photos on this page by Mike Rhodes

Solar and three ex-soldiers—Pablo Paredes, Camilo Mejia, and Aidan Delgado—mapped out and planned the 241-mile march starting in Tijuana, Mexico, just fifteen days before their stop in the Central Valley.

Fernando Suarez Del Solar's son was one of the first Latino Americans to die in Iraq. Solar was misinformed and lied to about his son's death, until finding the truth in Iraq with help from the co-anchor of ABC's World News Tonight, Bob Woodruff (himself a recent victim of the war). According to reports, Jesus Suarez Del Solar stepped on an illegal US cluster bomb seven days into the invasion of Iraq in 2003.

In an interview with Fernando Suarez Del Solar, he hopes "more than anything to bring the message of peace and education to others."

The entire march has passed through many cities, including San Diego, Escondido, Camp Pendleton, Los Angeles, San Jose, and San Francisco.

A service was held on Monday, March 27 (the anniversary of Jesus Suarez Del Solar's death), after an estimated 3,000 protesters completed the final leg of the march, walking throughout the San Francisco's Mission District.

The stop in Fresno included a peace route that gathered at the corner of Chestnut and Butler and headed toward west Fresno, went past the gates of Edison High School, and ended at the office of Representative Radanovich.

Lupe Lujan, a respiratory therapist, volunteered to march and help the other protesters in their journey to San Francisco. Lujan states, "My contribution to this march is taking care of peoples' feet, to have a safe journey to San Francisco."

While rallying through downtown Fresno in the second leg of the Peace March, Solar and Paredes made a turn to visit the offices of local congressmen, Jim Costa. As protestors waited outside the building, Solar and Paredes delivered a message to the congressional representative asking his proposed action to end the war in Iraq. Ultimately, the marchers felt that through their personal letters, words and actions could help spotlight the issue further. Solar and Paredes requested thirty days for a reply to their concerns. It is still unknown whether Costa responded to the letter.

The efforts for reform are predicted to be an ongoing battle as Solar and other members make preparations for future protests.

According to Solar, "It is important to stop this war, but possible to stop future wars."

The support from local residents as well as other communities has had an impact on various leaders of the movement. Protester Juan Del Rio was astonished at the fact that close to 2,500 people came out to support the cause in Watsonville and close to 3,000 people came out in San Francisco.

"We never expected this much support. This is beyond our expectations," Rio exclaimed.

The Martin Luther King Leg of the March for Peace went through West Fresno.



Sounds of protesters could be heard from the march of some thirty students and adults from high schools and peace organizations throughout downtown Fresno, on Friday, March 24. High schoolers from Dinuba High School and seven local Fresno organizations joined Fernando Suarez Del Solar, an activist and the father of a fallen marine, to rally against the war in Iraq. Having traveled nearly 190 miles before arriving in Fresno, Solar and other activists are determined to peacefully have their voices heard.



The historic March for Peace moves through Fresno.

As the march progressed through California, the number of supporting organizations continued to increase. Organizations that participated on March 24 included the National Action Network (NAN), an organization founded in 1991 to empower people by extending voter education and confronting violations of human rights; PEACE, Justice for All, a criminal justice reform organization founded to protect the lives and property of citizens; Peace Fresno, an organization for social justice and alternatives to war; American Service Committee (ASC), an organization of various faiths committed to peace and humanitarian service; and Code Pink for Peace, a grassroots peace and social justice group working to end the war in Iraq, stop new wars, and redirect our resources into health care, education, and other life-affirming activities.

Yasmin Viney, a native of Fresno and NAN activist, openly expressed her opposition to the war. She feels America has been wronged and the time is now to fight for her rights, and the rights of her country.

Organization members have come together to demand change and revolution.

The Reverend Floyd Harris, local NAN predisent, states, "I feel if all people unite and protest against the war and promote peace and anti-poverty, we [Americans] will become stronger as one. We deserve a right to peace, and do not want our sons and daughters dying for no reason."

The entire march began March 12 to commemorate the 76th anniversary of Mahatma Gandhi's nonviolent Salt March in the pursuit of social justice against British imperialism. Gandhi marched 241 miles and his legacy has been noted to be vibrant in all Latino social justice movements. Peredes and Solar both wish to put Gandhi's spirit into practice rather than wait for the next milestone to honor his memory.

Solar's "March for Peace" is planned to be an ongoing yearly event in California. There are plans, however, to make small local protests in San Diego and in Fresno. For more information on protests, donations, or protest leaders, visit the March for Peace Web site at <www.guerreroazteca.org>.

The contributing writers of the article includes senior LiAnn Ishizuka and juniors Mark Hernandez and Ivette Lopez from Edison High School in Fresno. All students are currently staff members of the Edison Illuminator (school newspaper). Stemming from a desire to explore and experience journalism outside of their school setting, the three students interviewed and researched to find the story behind the March for Peace. For more information regarding the students or this article, please contact Chief Editor LiAnn Ishizuka through email at: ehsilluminator@yahoo.com

Compassionate Correspondents are Needed

By Maria Telesco

Compassionate Correspondents are urgently needed to join the Central Valley Compassionate Correspondence group. We have received requests for a pen pal from more than 100 women at the two Chowchilla prisons—Central California Women's Facility (CCWF) and Valley State Prison for Women (VSPW). They seek new friends who will correspond with and possibly visit them. Some are lifers, others are short-termers. All are lonely, and many have been abandoned by their families and former friends. Some just want a person to chat with by mail, others are in need of a mentor, a spiritual advisor, or just a plain old-fashioned friend.

It's heartbreaking when we have to tell a prisoner that nobody will be there for her because there are not enough volunteers to accommodate all the requests. Befriending a prisoner is an act of love and compassion that is rewarded a thousand-fold by having embraced a fellow human being.

Mature women are needed to befriend the ladies at Chowchilla. Also, a few mature gentlemen are needed to correspond with and befriend some older men prisoners at New Folsom, near Sacramento.

All prisoners whom we match up with free people are screened, and there is positively no danger or risk of any sort to the Compassionate Correspondent. Everyone who has befriended a prisoner says it has given him or her feelings of great satisfaction and joy. If interested, or for further information, please contact Maria Telesco at (559) 255-9492 or maria.telesco@att.net.