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Amy Goodman Comes to Fresno
see page 11

Photo credit: Michael Keel

INSIDE:

Drug Bust=Jim Crow Page 3
Legalizing Marijuana - A New Republican Strategy? Page 4
Queer Eye Page 8
Stop the War in Iraq Page 9

SEPTEMBER 2006

COMMUNITY ALLIANCE

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

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

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

From the Editor

I hope you will join us on October 15 as we celebrate ten years of publishing the Community Alliance. Our first issue came out on September 20, 1996 when the paper was called the Labor/Community Alliance, a newsletter of the Fresno chapter of the Labor Party. The goal was to link organized labor and the progressive community into an alliance that would change the political landscape of this community.

The paper changed from a newsletter to a magazine with the artistic brilliance and guidance of George and Maia Ballis. As a magazine we reached a larger audience (about 2,000 each month), but the editorial board, staff, and volunteers decided to move beyond “preaching to the choir.” In December of 2004 we started printing a newspaper, with full color on the cover, and 5,000 copies. We are now printing 10,000 copies a month, have newsstands all over town, and are even delivering door to door in some areas.

Why has the Community Alliance been so successful?

I think it is because the pages of the Community Alliance tell the story of the extraordinary people in this area who are working for peace, social, and economic justice. The paper validates the work progressives are doing and goes beyond that to support and help build a movement that addresses fundamental social change. The calendar in each issue helps coordinate the work of the progressive movement, builds unity, and networks the groups engaged in similar work.

We also have information that you won’t find anywhere else. For example, you may have noticed several articles in this issue about the situation in Central Valley prisons. These unique first hand accounts inform us about the barbaric conditions prisoners are forced to live in. These articles tell us about a world which many of us are unfamiliar with - a world where there is no rehabilitation going on, where prisoners are dying from the lack of medical care, and where men are forced to sleep in coffin like beds stacked three high. These stories are unfiltered and un-sanitized by the corporate

CONTENTS

Drug Bust=Jim Crow	Pg 3
Legalizing Marijuana - A New Republican Strategy?	Pg 4
Queer Eye	Pg 8
Stop the War in Iraq	Pg 9
Special Section on Prisons	Pg 16-19
Helping the Homeless	Pg 28

media. In addition, we have recommendations on how to reduce the prison population (page 19).

You will also see articles in this issue about stopping the war in Iraq (page 9), environmental justice (page 5 & 6), and treating the homeless with dignity and respect (page 28). I hope that you will enjoy reading this months paper, become actively involved in the progressive movement, and join us for our ten year anniversary party. Here are the details:

**Sunday, October 15
6 PM**
The alternative/independent Community Alliance newspaper celebrates 10 year of publishing. There will be music, food & drink, a movie, and keynote speaker at the Full Circle Brewery, 620 F St. in downtown Fresno. \$10

- Keynote speaker: Journalist Conn Hallinan will speak on the importance of alternative/independent media.
- docu-poem video compilation of local actions for peace and justice by Elfie and Maia Ballis
- Movie: Independent Media in a Time of War (produced by Amy Goodman).
- Music: The Urban Nomads (Middle Eastern music)

Progressive community groups are encouraged to set up a literature table (no charge).



Letter to the Editor

The publicity for the August programs showcasing Rachel Corrie’s life and death suggested that “the faith communities” of Fresno sponsored the events. However, one faith community not invited to participate was the Jewish community.

Since the events in question occurred in the Middle East, there are many different versions of the facts surrounding Ms. Corrie’s death. Whatever the specifics, we all agree that her death was a human tragedy; this is a fact outside of politics, and civilized people respect and honor her family’s grief, as we respect and honor mourning for suicide bombers’ victims in Israel, for the dead in Iraq, for the casualties on both sides of the recent war in Lebanon.

We must ask however what message we in Fresno can take from the Corrie events. Many members of the Jewish community fear that the intended message is to bash Israel— it’s hard for me to see how the substance of the exhibit lends itself to its aim (as described in its title, “Alternatives to Violence and War”). However, its organizers had been working on the presentation for many months, well prior to the Israeli/Hezbollah conflict, and they changed the program to attempt to diminish somewhat its inflammatory potential.

I appreciate these accommodations and the spirit of collaboration they reflect. By the time this appears in print, we will have some idea whether the Corrie events were an opportunity for dialogue—or not. As a Jew, I do not expect to avoid controversy over events and politics in the Middle East, even passionate disagreement. I do expect we will all be able to treat each other respectfully in our own community, and that in future there will be a Jewish voice in the planning for such events, to ensure that the message acknowledges the grief on all sides, and is rooted in the common ground of peace-seeking people of faith.

Patience Milrod

Central Valley Progressive Political Action Committee

Special Upcoming Events	
<p>Saturday, September 9th at 3:30 p.m. CVPPAC Membership Meeting Fresno County Sheriff and Fresno City Council Interviews by the Membership The Fresno Center for Nonviolence 1584 N. Van Ness Ave. (at McKinley)</p>	<p>Wednesday, September 13th at 7 p.m. CVPPAC Fresno Unified School District Board Candidates Forum Co-hosted by the Unitarian Universalist Social Justice Committee The Unitarian Universalist Church 4144 N. Millbrook, Fresno (1/2 block south of Ashlan)</p>
<p>Thursday, September 21st at 7 p.m. CVPPAC Ballot Propositions Forum With emphasis on Propositions 87, 89 and Measure C Co-hosted by the Unitarian Universalist Social Justice Committee The Unitarian Universalist Church 4144 N. Millbrook, Fresno (1/2 block south of Ashlan)</p>	<p>Saturday, September 23rd at 3:30 p.m. CVPPAC Membership Meeting Propositions & Local Candidates Endorsements (Members Only) The Fresno Center for Nonviolence 1584 N. Van Ness Ave. (at McKinley)</p>

www.cvppac.orgP.O. Box 5845, Fresno, CA 93755(559) 435-7360

Drug Busts=Jim Crow

by Ira Glasser

I was born in 1938, grew up on the working-class, immigrant streets of East Flatbush in Brooklyn during World War II, and came to political consciousness during the postwar years. As children, we were told that World War II was a war fought against racism, against the idea that a whole class of people could be separated, subjugated and even murdered because of their race or religion. But back home in the United States, racial separation and subjugation remained entrenched by law in the Deep South and by custom nearly everywhere else.

This moral contradiction between what America said it stood for and the way it was actually organized was largely unrecognized by the American public as World War II drew to a close. The first major postwar event that challenged this contradiction and made it unavoidable was the coming of Jackie Robinson to the Brooklyn Dodgers in 1947. It engaged people, including children, in a drama of racial integration, and it created what may have been the first racially integrated public accommodation—at Ebbets Field, where the Dodgers played. The following year President Harry Truman issued an executive order desegregating the armed forces. In 1950 Brown v. Board of Education was filed, signaling the start of the modern civil rights era. Four years later a surprisingly unanimous Supreme Court struck down legally enforced racial separation in public schools, and seventeen months after that, Rosa Parks refused to give her seat to a white man on a Montgomery, Alabama, bus. Nine years later, after countless protests, marches, sit-ins and freedom rides, as well as murders and beatings of civil rights workers, the Civil Rights Act of 1964 was passed, outlawing racial discrimination in public accommodations, employment and education. A year later the Voting Rights Act of 1965 outlawed racial discrimination in voting, and three years after that, the Fair Housing Act of 1968 outlawed racial discrimination in the purchase and rental of homes. By 1968 the legal infrastructure of Jim Crow subjugation had been destroyed and a new legal infrastructure of federal civil rights enforcement was erected in its place. America had, for the first time, abolished legalized racial discrimination and replaced it with a system of formal legal equality.

As it turned out, actual equality of opportunity did not follow automatically, easily or quickly from legal equality. But over the succeeding decades it has been assumed that at the very least, no legalized racial discrimination remains, and certainly no new forms of legalized skin-color subjugation have arisen. This is true, with one substantial exception: the system of drug prohibition and its enforcement, which is the major, and still insufficiently recognized, civil rights issue of our day.

In the late 1960s, at the peak of the civil rights movement, there were fewer than 200,000 people in state and federal prisons for all criminal offenses; by 2004 there were over 1.4 million. Another 700,000-plus in local jails brought the total to 2.2 million. This explosion of incarceration has been heavily due to nonviolent drug offenses—mostly possession and petty sales, not involving guns or violence—resulting from the exponential escalation of the “war on drugs,” beginning in 1968 and accelerating again after 1980.

Since 1980 drug arrests have tripled, to 1.6 million annually—nearly half for marijuana, 88 percent of those for possession, not sale or manufacture. Since 1980 the proportion of all state prisoners who are in for drug offenses increased from 6 percent to 21 percent. Since 1980 the proportion of all federal prisoners who are in for drug offenses increased from 25 percent to 57 percent.

At the same time, the racial disparity of arrests, convictions and imprisonment for these offenses has become pronounced. According to federal statistics gathered by the Sentencing Project, only 13 percent of monthly drug users of all illegal drugs—defined as those who use a drug at least once a month on a regular basis—are black, about their proportion of the population. But 37 percent of drug-offense arrests are black; 53 percent of convictions are black; and 67 percent of all people imprisoned for drug offenses are black. Adding in Latinos, about 22 percent of all monthly drug users are black or Latino, but 80 percent of people in prison for drug offenses are black or Latino. Even in presumptively liberal New York State, 92 percent of all inmates who are there for drug offenses are black or Latino.

The fact that so many people arrested, convicted and imprisoned for drug offenses are black or Latino is not because they are mostly the ones doing the crime; it is because they are mostly the ones being targeted. This is not a phenomenon of the Deep South. It is nationwide. And it is not accidental. As the racial profiling scandals a few years ago showed, blacks are disproportionately targeted while driving cars on the highway; for example, in

a lawsuit challenging this practice, it was revealed that although only 17 percent of drivers on a stretch of I-95 in Maryland were black, 73 percent of all the cars stopped and searched for drugs were driven by blacks. Nor was this an isolated example. In Florida blacks were seventy-five times more likely than whites to be stopped and searched for drugs while driving. And it turned out that these racially targeted stops were the explicit result of a Drug Enforcement Administration program begun in 1986, called Operation Pipeline, that “trained” 27,000 state troopers in forty-eight states to spot cars that might contain drugs. Most of the cars spotted were driven by blacks. And this happened even though three-quarters of monthly drug users are white!

Similar statistics show that blacks and Latinos are also disproportionately stopped and frisked on the street and disproportionately singled out for body searches at customs points—two-thirds in both cases. The huge majority of these searches are fruitless. In New York City during the late 1990s, eight of nine recorded street frisks did not result in a conviction; in the customs searches, during the same period, 96 percent of the body searches turned up nothing. This shows two things: first, that there was no evidentiary basis for the stops and, second, that there is a comprehensive practice, if not policy, of selecting targets by skin color.

Despite these patterns of racial targeting, it has not been fashionable among liberals to see drug prohibition as a massive civil rights problem of racial discrimination. Perhaps it would be easier if we examined the way racially targeted drug-war incarceration has damaged the right to vote, a right quintessentially part of the rights we thought we had won in the 1960s with the demise of Jim Crow laws.

Until recently (there have been some changes in the past few years in some states), every state but two barred felons from voting—some permanently, some in a way that allowed, theoretically but often not as a practical matter, for the restoration of voting rights. Because of the explosion of incarceration driven by drug prohibition, more than 5 million people are now barred from voting. The United States is the only industrial democracy that does this. And the origin of most of these laws—no surprise—is the post-Reconstruction period after slavery was abolished. Felony disenfranchisement laws, like poll taxes and literacy tests, were historically part of the system that arose after slavery to bar blacks from exercising equal rights and, in particular, equal voting rights. Felony disenfranchisement laws were, to a large extent, part of a replacement system for subjugating blacks after slavery was abolished.

If you want to contemplate what this means, consider the state of Florida in the 2000 presidential election, where 200,000 black Floridians were barred from voting because of prior felonies in an election in which the presidency was determined by 537 disputed votes. If even one-third of these people had actually voted—say, 70,000—and if they voted in the usual proportions that blacks vote for the Democratic candidate—say, 80 percent, probably a low estimate—those 70,000 voters would have produced a 42,000 net gain for Al Gore.

This is a dramatic example, but hardly unique. A 2002 study in the American Sociological Review concluded that John Tower would never have been elected to the US Senate from Texas in 1978 but for racially disproportionate felony disenfranchisement; that John Warner for the same reason wouldn’t have been elected in 1978 from Virginia; and that despite the apparent rise in conservative Republican voting, the Senate would have remained under Democratic control every year between 1984 and 2003 if former felons had been allowed to vote. Indeed, if the same degree of racially disparate felony disenfranchisement that exists now had existed in 1960, Richard Nixon might well have defeated John F. Kennedy.

The kicker for all this is that all these black citizens who were disproportionately targeted for arrest and incarceration and then barred from voting are nonetheless counted as citizens for the purpose of determining how many Congressional seats and how many electoral votes states have. During slavery, three-fifths of the number of slaves were similarly counted by the slave states, even though slaves were not in any way members of the civil polity. This is worse. In the states of the Deep South, 30 percent of all black men are barred from voting because of felony convictions, but all of them are counted to determine Congressional representation and Electoral College votes. If one wants to wonder why the South is so solidly white, Republican and arch-conservative, one need look no further.

The fact is, just as Jim Crow laws were a successor system to slavery, so drug prohibition has been a successor to Jim Crow laws in targeting blacks, removing them from civil society and then denying them the right to vote while using their bodies to enhance white political power. Drug prohibition is now the last significant instance of legalized racial discrimination in America.

That many liberals have been at best timid in opposing the drug war and at worst accomplices to its continued escalation is, in light of the racial politics of drug prohibition, a special outrage. It is also politically self-destructive, serving to keep in power white conservatives opposed to everything liberals stand for. Liberals especially, therefore, need to consider attacking the premises upon which this edifice of racial subjugation is based. If they do not, who will?

###



Ira Glasser, the retired head of the American Civil Liberties Union, is president of the board of the Drug Policy Alliance.

This article is adapted from a speech Ira Glasser gave to the Correctional Association of New York and appeared in the July

10 The Nation magazine. For more information about The Nation, see: <http://www.thenation.com/>

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Legalizing Marijuana - A New Republican Strategy?

By Mike Rhodes

The attractive young woman says to me, “would you sign our petition to legalize marijuana?” I don’t have to think twice and say “sure, where do I sign?” That is when it got interesting. She says, “Do you have your ID with you?” “Well, yes I do, but what does that have to do with...” I say as she responds with “oh, we just have to verify your ID.” Thinking that this has something to do with making sure they have valid names for a ballot initiative I comply.

As I’m filling out my name and address on the petition I notice that the young lady is filling out a very official looking form. Probably just the ballot initiative form, I think to myself. Then, she says “is it OK if I register you as a Republican?” “What?!” I say “yes, I do mind! What are you doing?” She says that if I register Republican she will get an extra 10 cents. But, I complain, “I don’t want to re-register.” She explains that this is just to update the records for the County Clerks office. I repeat that “I do not want or need to update my records.” But, she is persistent and keeps telling me that it is OK - they just want to update my voter registration records. She also tells me that she is working for the Republican party, being paid hourly, and that the ploy about the “10 cent bonus” was not accurate.

This Republican party employee goes on to tell me that she is there to attract people to the table that is set up in Fresno’s Courthouse Park, and that the legalize marijuana petition is a prop. She confirmed that there is no ballot initiative to legalize marijuana. She said that the petition will be given to an elected official in Sacramento.

At this point in the conversation, she called over her “boss” who was talking with someone a short distance away. I introduced myself as the editor of the Community Alliance newspaper and said I was interested in writing a story about the petition campaign and their registering people with the Republican party. I guess that wasn’t the right approach to get him to open up to me. The “boss” gave me no information. He even refused to give me a copy of the marijuana legalization petition I had just signed.

Later that day (a Wednesday) I called Victor Salazar, the Fresno County Clerk. Salazar said that the process sounded deceptive and that I might want to call the Secretary of State Fraud Investigation Unit. I called the number for the SOS Fraud Investigation Unit for a couple of days and all I got was an answering machine. I then received a new phone number for the SOS Fraud Investigation Unit’s Sacramento office. Again, there was no answer. The Fresno agent finally returned my call on Friday at about 4 PM. Unfortunately, he was on vacation and would not be back in town for a couple of days. He said that he would get on the trail of these desperado’s first thing Monday morning.

On Monday morning I got a call from the Sacramento office. The agent said that he was reluctant to talk with me because I was a member of the press. Would a police officer be reluctant to investigate a robbery or assault case just because the victim was a journalist, I thought to myself? Ultimately, he decided to look into the situation and agreed to let me know if his office decided to pursue the case. After more than a week, I have not heard if they are going to do anything with

this case or not. On the other hand, I did see the Republicans at their booth in Courthouse Park, more than a week after the incident was reported.

While the SOL’s Fraud Investigation Unit was investigating the scene of the crime, I posted the story on Indymedia. See: <http://www.indybay.org/newsitems/2006/08/03/18294421.php> where it immediately received significant national attention. Here are some of the comments to the article:

////////////////////

First off, thank you for the article. As a former Fresno State Student I have seen luring techniques by Republicans and even people who were not Republican but simply doing this as a job for the Republican Party.

Who is going to protect the voting rights of our citizens if its not the State’s Attorney?

Fresno State needs to get off their butts too. They only randomly check to see if people are in accordance with the School Rules, or if someone complains. But that too would not stop these criminals from going elsewhere to break the law.

Rich

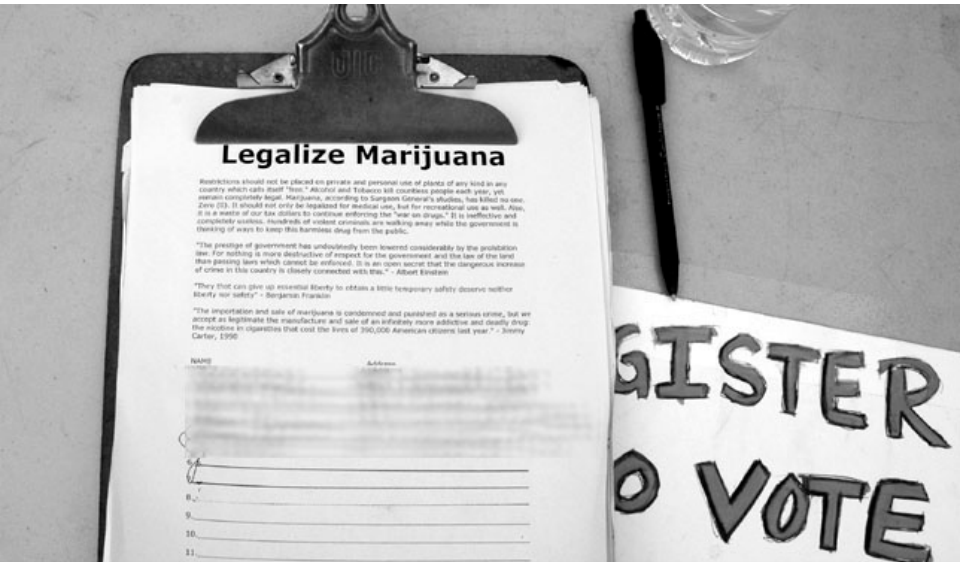


The woman in this photo (center) said she was working for the Republican Party.

////////////////////

This has been going in on inside Orange County for the last seven or eight months. The Republicans set up petition gatherers at grocery stores and colleges and pay them 10 dollars for every Rep. registration. A lot of times they didn’t even tell the person they were re-registering as a Republican. They were concentrated in the 34th State Senate District, which will be a close race this November. Of course the OC Registrar of Voters didn’t do squat to stop this from happening. Hopefully the Fresno County Registrar will, or the Sec. of State’s Fraud Division.

Jason



Republican Party employees used this petition to lure people to their table. Once there, they re-registered them with the Republican Party.

////////////////////

No, they won’t vote republican, but the electronic voting machines will say that they did, and the voter registration numbers will back up the voting numbers but both will be false. Or maybe I’m just paranoid.

Anonymous

////////////////////

They pulled this in Pennsylvania and several other states in 2004. They switched the polling place as well as party affiliation. <http://www.post-gazette.com/pg/04297/400512.stm> http://www.truthout.org/docs_04/102404Y.shtml

John

////////////////////

It doesn’t matter how they vote. High Republican registration numbers serve as cover for stolen elections. <http://www.cafepress.com/artfulgoddess>

Artful Goddess

////////////////////

I had the exact same experience as described. When I asked them why they were trying to re-register me as a Republican, the girl said that they were not trying to change anyone’s party affiliation, but that she was a Republican herself so she just always asked people if she could register them that way. Meanwhile, the guy behind the counter with her became really defensive and testy with me, saying that if I didn’t like what they were doing to take it up with City Hall. Meanwhile, a man in a suit with a briefcase who had been standing next to me began to question them about who they were working for and why they were conducting their operation in an obviously deceptive manner (I had not given anyone permission to re-register me and had told them up-front that I was already registered. She had also told me that they just needed to “update their records in case I had moved or something”, and, until pressed on it, made no mention of the fact that the form she was filling out was for voter registration). Again, the guy who was with her became belligerent and refused to tell the man who he worked for or how much, if anything, he was being paid to collect registrations (in fact, he said that he “didn’t know” who he worked for, but only who paid him— a person he would not identify). When he was informed that the man questioning him was an attorney, he basically refused to say anything more or answer any more questions. I asked for the registration form the girl had filled out, and he rather angrily handed it to me and said, “here, take it with you!” It should also be noted that she had not signed the receipt she had handed me, in violation of the law.

Rick Hodgson

////////////////////

Yep, signed a petition and ended up a republican.....shivers.....

This should be illegal!

Tara



This is the voter registration project that is taking place at Courthouse Park. First they lure you in by asking you to sign a petition to legalize marijuana and then they try to register you as a member of the Republican Party.

Save Jesse Morrow

By Kay Barnes

Jesse Morrow, a foothill mountain just east of Centerville and about fifteen miles east of Fresno, is the target of CMEX, the world’s largest cement company, as a site for the first hard rock gravel extraction operation in Fresno County.

The mining process, for which CMEX is seeking a conditional use permit from Fresno County, relies on blasting the granite loose from the mountain and then crushing it and washing the gravel so that it can be sold. In the case of this mine a portion of the gravel will be used at the site to produce asphalt and cement.

The opposition to this plant centers on two aspects. One is Jesse Morrow’s prominent position along with Campbell Mountain, as a scenic gateway to the Sierra. The second is the mining process itself which will produce a host of serious environmental effects most of which are of unknown magnitude.

1. Blasting using fuel oil and fertilizer will occur 2 – 3 times a week.
2. The company requests permission to operate 315 days per year 24 hours per day.
3. The plant proposes to use 150,000 gallons of water EACH DAY. The water is to come from wells on the mine property.
4. All traffic to and from the mine will travel on Highway 180 a two lane highway. CMEX estimates 800-900 round trips per day from Jesse Morrow.
5. This project is projected to be in place for 100 years.

Negative effects of this project are many, and there are probably others that are presently unforeseen that will occur if this proposal goes forward.

In response to the threat to this iconic landmark several organizations have been drawn into the protest and several events have been held to aid in the fight.

The friends of Jesse Morrow organized in 2002 with Jim Van Haun as president. Jim has provided expert leadership for the group as well as allowing the use of his winery buildings for meetings.

A group of well known local artists, organized by Reedley artist Paul Buxman hung an art show at the Sequoia View Winery in 2005. The artists showing their work donated a portion of the sale price to the F.O.J.M.

The Native American Choinumni tribe, led by Angie and Audrey Osborne has given valuable information on the importance of Jesse Morrow to their culture. They have also organized protests and continue to be an important resource.

The Fresno Poetry Center hosted a protest poetry reading on July 24, 2005 where money raised was given to F.O.J.M.

F.O.J.M. took part in an Earth Day Celebration in April 2005 at Avocado Lake where information was presented and donations to F.O.J.M. were accepted.

Members of F.O.J.M. purchased bumper stickers, yard signs and a large sign on Highway 180 expressing opposition to the mine. Both Fresno Audubon Society and Native Plant Society have written letters in opposition to the proposed mine.

The E.I.R. required by the county has been in the works for several years and the draft E.I.R. is supposed to be delivered to the county in September of 2006. We’ll see.

When the E.I.R. is delivered the process will accelerate as F.O.J.M., and others will help review the E.I.R. and prepare for County Planning Commission and Board of Supervisors meetings.

F.O.J.M. needs all the help it can get and as always money is a key. If we are to hire a good environmental lawyer we need funds. Mega companies always have enough money to pay hired guns to give “expert” testimony. We of F.O.J.M. need our own guns; and our guns are citizens willing to attend Planning Commission meetings and Board of Supervisor meetings and express opposition to this ill conceived site for a gravel mine and if possible make donations.

For more information contact:
Jim Van Haun 787-9412
Kay Barnes 787-2985



Angie and Audrey Osborne in front of Jessie Morrow Mountain. Photo by Dallas Blanchard

Donations may be sent to:
Barbara Gaudin
643 Trout Lake Drive
Sanger, CA 93657
(make check out to: Friends of Jesse Morrow Mountain)

MEASURE C

The Continuing Measure C is a balanced program with transportation choices. The Extension of Measure C will be on the ballot November 7th and will:

- **Not** raise the tax rate. This is an extension to an existing tax,
- Create a **Citizen Oversight Committee** to review yearly audits and ensure funds are spent wisely and on transportation only,
- **Support a local economy** by generating more than \$1.7 billion for Fresno County transportation projects over the next 20 years,
- Require that all funds raised stay in Fresno County and **cannot be taken by the State**, local dollars spent locally,
- Help **address transportation needs** given Fresno County’s expected population will increase more than 40% over the next 20 years,
- **Improve** freeway interchanges, **repair** local highways, **add** additional lanes, increase safety and improve major commute corridors,
- Repair potholes, synchronize traffic signals and make other improvements to local streets and rural roads for **safer and more efficient traffic flow**,
- Qualify Fresno County for our fair share of **state and federal matching funds** for local improvements that will otherwise be spent elsewhere,
- Improve the **safety and welfare of our school age children** by replacing 900 of the oldest school buses with new clean fuel school busses that will include child safety seat belts,
- Improve **public safety** and response times, improve **public transportation**, improve transit services for seniors and the disabled, improve **air quality** with new clean burning fuel school buses and public transit.

The Friends for Fresno County Transportation, the Committee to Re-Authorize Measure C is looking for supporters in its campaign efforts. Anyone interested in offering support, campaign donations or time, is asked to contact Al Smith at the Greater Fresno Area Chamber of Commerce by phone (559) 495-4800, fax (559) 495-4811 or by mail at 2331 Fresno Street, Fresno, CA 93721

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Stir it Up!

First Wednesday at 3 PM

The Community Alliance has these two radio shows on KFCF 88.1 FM.

Hear interviews, analysis, and call-ins about what is happening locally in the struggle for peace, social and economic justice.

Former Lobbyist Given “Dispensation” to Deal

By Lloyd G. Carter

I have concluded over the years that when writing about the complexities of California’s byzantine water world, it is easiest to write about water in terms of cold hard cash. A flowing, living river has aesthetic value to environmentalists and preservationists while a river of dollar bills appeals to a different set of values that even the most apathetic taxpayer can understand.

The dry statistics are that an acre-foot of water is 325,851 gallons, or enough to cover 93 percent of a football field a foot deep. It will meet the domestic needs of two families of five for a year, if used wisely. At this point, readers usually start getting glassy-eyed and losing interest in any further discussion of water. However, if you equate all those gallons to cash, reader interest perks back up.

Does a \$25 billion federal taxpayer gift to a few hundred people pique your interest? Read on.

Depending on where you are in the bucket line, California’s river water stored behind dams can be: (1) free; (2) cheap; (3) well below true retail value; (4) expensive; or (5) in the case of bottled water, extremely expensive. Public water that goes to farmers for free or at subsidized rates as small as \$20 to \$75 an acre-foot, when placed in plastic bottles with scenic labels and treated slightly, can go for up to \$2 million or more when sold by the pint or liter in the grocery store or fancy restaurant. For comparison purposes, that \$2 million acre-foot of bottled water can also be sold via ditch to Fresno Irrigation District growers for \$12-15 an acre-foot.

Thus, it is understandable that deal-making in California’s changing water world, particularly for irrigation water, is usually done behind closed doors and out of the public spotlight. A glaring example is the current secretive negotiations between Fresno County’s Westlands Water District and the United States Department of Interior. A key negotiator for the Department of Interior - and supposedly the general public’s advocate - is Jason Peltier, named assistant Secretary for Water and Science in July.

Peltier’s previous job was as a lobbyist for the Central Valley Project Contractors’ Association, which represents the irrigation water interests of growers from Redding to Bakersfield.

Westlands, not surprisingly, is the largest water district in the Contractors’ Association. Here’s how the spinmasters in the Department of Interior, in a recent press release, explained Peltier’s 13-year stint as a lobbyist.

“As manager of California’s Central Valley Project Water Association from 1988 through 2001, Peltier directed the public education and advocacy efforts of this not-for-profit membership organization,” the press release said.

The New York Times, in a March 3, 2006, article, described Peltier much differently. The Times reported, “Mr. Peltier’s role influencing decisions that could have a direct financial impact on his former employer is part of a pattern at the Interior Department over the last five years, critics say, with a revolving door between managers on the government side, and the people who buy or lease federal water, land or forests on the other side.”

Peltier told the Times that when he first came to the Bush administration in 2001, he recused himself from some decisions involving the water district he used to represent, but he said he was granted an exemption because of his expertise in California water issues.

“I was given dispensation early on because of my knowledge of these issues,” Peltier said, adding, “I have not had the strict bar of separation on certain issues, but I’ve been very mindful of the appearance of a conflict and operated accordingly.” Dispensation? Did the Pope grant that?

Interior officials told the Times Peltier had “cleared” his activities with the ethics office. Assistant Secretary Mark Limbaugh, Peltier’s boss, claims Peltier’s role is only “advisory.” Peltier “provides background, insight and advice. He is not in a position to make the ultimate decisions,” Limbaugh told the Times.

In other words, the fox can guard the henhouse as long as the fox is “very mindful” of the “appearance of a conflict.” At least it’s a family affair. Peltier’s wife, Jean-Mari Peltier, a former lobbyist for citrus growers, served as special adviser on pesticide issues at the EPA during the first Bush administration term before returning to being an Ag lobbyist.

Westlands, with their former employee on the other side of the table, is now putting the finishing touches on a new water delivery contract that could bring the 600,000-acre district of 400 to 600 growers as much as one million acre-feet of water a year for the next 50 years (a 25-year water delivery contract with a virtually automatic renewal for another 25 years).

Do the math.

The water, which comes from hundreds of miles away on Northern California’s Trinity River, is worth up to \$500 an acre-foot for urban developers in Central and Southern California. Five hundred million dollars a year of water for 50 years = \$25 billion. That averages out to almost \$42 million worth of retail water on average over 50 years for each of the 600 growers (less the purchase price which will be under 20 percent of retail value). Expensive water bought cheap and used in some cases to grow subsidized crops like cotton. And under current law the Westlands is free to sell any excess water to the highest urban bidder. Metropolitan Water District of Southern California is definitely interested.

The water delivery contract negotiations are being concluded as part of an overall settlement of the Westlands growers’ lawsuit against the U.S. Bureau of Reclamation for failure to provide a drainage system. Bureau officials recently unveiled a drainage “solution” for the Westlands’ selenium-laced problem farm lands that could cost taxpayers another \$1 billion.

The proposed drainage “solution” has provoked an outcry from national environmental groups who contend it is merely a re-creation of the Kesterson National Wildlife Refuge disaster in early 1980s when Westlands toxic agricultural drainage poisoned the food chain at the Merced County refuge, where the tainted water was funneled to evaporate in deadly ponds.

The Los Angeles Times reported July 8 that the proposed solution, including building over 3,000 acres of new evaporation ponds, has raised fears of another Kesterson-like environmental catastrophe.

“My God,” Ed Imhoff, a retired Department of Interior officials who headed a five-year, \$50 million study of the western San Joaquin Valley drainage problem in the late 1980s, told the LA Times. “Why would we be replicating something that caused all the deaths



Susana De Anda announces the formation of a new valley coalition that is demanding clean drinking water - A.G.U.A. (Asociacion de Gente Unida por el Agua). At a Press Conference held in Fresno on August 5, the coalition had one simple request: clean, safe, affordable drinking water. But their success is hindered by what AGUA calls the “cycle of poison:” as the Central Valley Regional Water Quality Control Board fails to properly regulate industry, groundwater is polluted, and communities are forced to pay for and drink contaminated water. For more information about AGUA, contact Susana De Anda at 1302 Jefferson St, Suite 2, Delano, Ca 93215 or telephone (661) 586-2611. Photo by Mike Rhodes.

and deformities at Kesterson? Why would we do that?”

When Imhoff’s study group released their final report in 1990, it recommended, among other water-saving measures, idling all the high selenium lands in the Westlands that were generating the poisonous drainage water - up to 300,000 acres.

Jason Peltier, who was then a lobbyist for the Westlands, told the media at that time, “The sooner this report gets put on a shelf and starts gathering dust the better.”

Under an earlier proposal as part of the drainage plan, Interior would have bought out the badlands and idled them. Westlands and Peltier see it differently. The last proposal calls for Interior to merely buy the federal irrigation rights to the badlands. In other words, Westlands growers will get to keep their high selenium lands and will be given well over three-quarters of a billion dollars to simply stop irrigation with federal water. However, they will still be able to use that land for other purposes, including irrigating with non-federal water.

When asked by the Los Angeles Times if this could be true, Kirk Rodgers, regional director of the U.S. Bureau of Reclamation, responded, “No decisions have been made on that.”

One thing is certain. America’s most expensive irrigation project in the middle of a salty desert is about to get a lot more expensive.

###

Lloyd G. Carter was a reporter for United Press International and the Fresno Bee for more than 20 years. He is now an attorney in Fresno.



Kesterson National Wildlife Refuge neighbors Jim Claus and Karen Freitas (now deceased) stand beside a dried out evaporation pond at the refuge in 1988. Both the Claus and Freitas families had cattle die from seepage at Kesterson, which is near Los Banos. They later moved from the area. The U.S. Bureau of Reclamation is now proposing to build an evaporation pond facility nearly three times the size of Kesterson. The accumulated toxic salts on the Kesterson pond bottoms were later buried under a million cubic yards of fill dirt but toxic selenium has been reaching the surface when groundwater levels rise.



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Green and Sustainable Building Practices For A Better Future— A Free Presentation

by Lorenzo Bassman

(Spanish for “a place that feels like home”) will have 28 homes and is now recruiting new member households.

Our cohousing community will cluster privately-owned, self-sufficient homes around common facilities to create the feeling of an old-fashioned neighborhood where neighbors know each other and kids safely run and play in between the houses. Shared facilities will include children’s play areas, a workshop, a pool and spa, an exercise facility and teen hangout, and a large common

La Querencia will function like condominium developments in terms of legal and organizational structure. There will be a homeowners’ association, shared grounds, and common facilities. By giving careful consideration to the placement of residences, parking, walkways, swimming pool, play and garden areas, open spaces, and the common house, cohousing maximizes opportunities for neighbors to cross paths throughout the day. Private residences will be clustered, leaving shared open space. The homes will face each other across a courtyard and cars will be parked on the periphery, allowing for a pedestrian friendly environment.

Many people have seen the recent film “An Inconvenient Truth” and have been inspired to find ways to minimize or eliminate their own personal role in global warming. Cohousing is one excellent example of environmentally sensitive living. On Wednesday, September 13, at 7:00 p.m. at the Woodward Park Library, Fresno Cohousing will be hosting a presentation by architect and cohousing pioneer Chuck Durrett, who will speak on the topic *Low Environmental Impact, Big Lifestyle: The Real Advantages of Cohousing and Green Architecture*.

Green and sustainable building practices are a response to concerns about global warming, our addiction to oil, and preserving our resources for future generations. More and more builders are moving toward “green” building, but while many say they are giving us green and sustainable houses, most merely give lip service to the concept. They use the terms as marketing tools, but in fact they are only incorporating the energy efficiency factors that they are required to use anyway.

Here are some questions to ask builders to find out if they are really building green: Do you use advanced framing techniques that substantially reduce the use of lumber? Do your homes exceed the California Title 24 energy requirements? Do you use recycled paint? Will the windows in your homes be fully shaded from the afternoon summer sun? Do you use insulation made from 100 percent recycled cellulose? Are *all* of your building materials nontoxic, low VOC (volatile organic compounds)? Are your roofing materials “Energy Star” rated? Are your air conditioning systems free of ozone-depleting CFC and HCFC refrigerants? Truly green building involves these techniques and a lot more, but these questions can give you a good idea if a builder *builds* green, or just *talks* green. You might be interested to know that for the Fresno Cohousing project, *La Querencia*, the answer to all of the above questions is YES, and our architect’s designs have received awards from the National Association of Home Builders (NAHB) for innovation and energy efficiency.

Cohousing has been popular in the Bay Area and in Europe for many years, and now cohousing is coming to Fresno. Fresno Cohousing has purchased 2.8 acres on Alluvial between Chestnut and Willow. The design process is complete and has received approval from the City Planning Commission and the City Council to proceed with the building process, with move-in anticipated in 2007. *La Querencia*

house with gourmet kitchen, large dining room for community dinners and other gatherings, sitting area, guest room, kid’s room, and shared laundry facility.

La Querencia will be a supportive, intergenerational community. In cohousing, residents know their neighbors very well and there is a strong sense of community that is usually absent in contemporary cities and suburbs. In addition to the obvious social advantages of living near friends, residents have more free time because many of the routine activities of life, such as meals and yard work, are shared. Expensive or rarely used tools and recreational equipment owned by the group are available to all. Carpooling and childcare are easier to arrange. A central feature of creating community in cohousing is “breaking bread” together, and we plan to share four dinners a week, with teams preparing each meal. Special food requirements will be respected.

There will be three home sizes—2-bedroom, 1¾-bath flats; 3-bedroom, 2½-bath townhouses; and 4-bedroom, 2½-bath townhouses. Prices are projected to range from the mid \$300,000s to the mid \$400,000s, competitive with new condominium construction costs. Each privately-owned home is an independent unit with kitchen, dining and living rooms, bedrooms and baths, large front porches, and individual back yards. We have worked with our architect to maximize efficiency of space and energy, and sensitivity toward the natural environment is also reflected in reduced home size, sharing of resources, and community recycling.



LA QUERENCIA COHOUSING - COMMON HOUSE
FRESNO, CALIFORNIA

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Our community has no political, religious, or ideological orientation, and respect for one another is an important priority. The only expectation is agreement with the principles of cohousing and with our vision and values. Members value privacy as well as social contact, and our neighborhood design reflects this.

Our “Green Building” presentation will take place on Wednesday, September 13, at 7:00 p.m. at the Woodward Park Library, 944 East Perrin Avenue near Champlain. Admission is free, and supervised children’s activities will be provided. Fresno Cohousing is now recruiting new member households. For more information about our community, visit www.fresnocohousing.org, e-mail us at info@fresnocohousing.org, or call (559) 272-2254.

###

Lorenzo Bassman is a musician who lives in Fresno. He can be contacted at lbassman@pacbell.net.

Yoga Sale!

End of summer sale!!!

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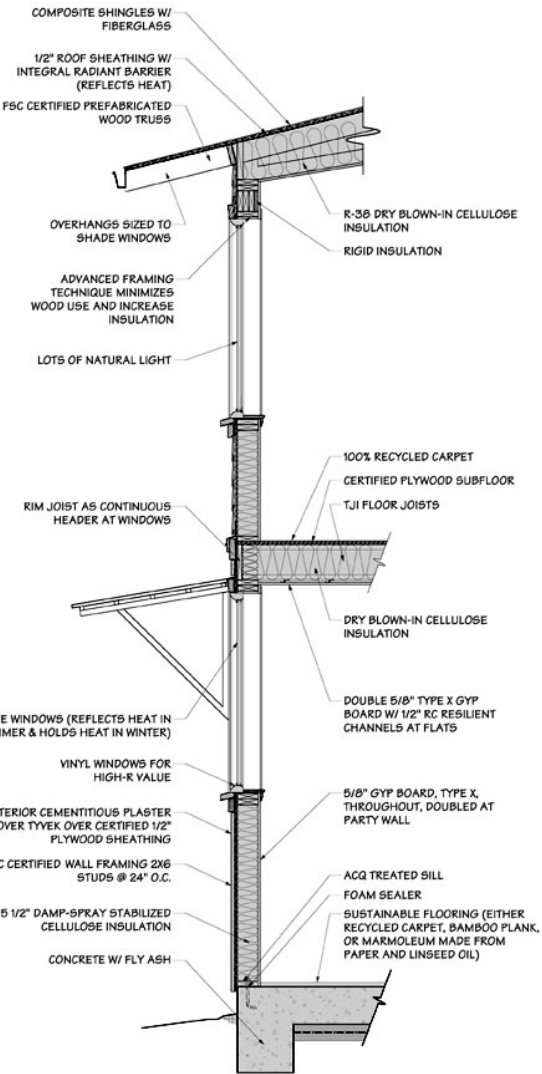
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QUEER EYE

“Panic Defense” Ban Bill Gutted

By Dan Waterhouse

A bill introduced in response to a Fresno murder case has been watered down.

AB1160 was proposed after Estanislao Martinez was sentenced in Fresno Superior Court to the minimum sentence—four years—for manslaughter in August of last year. Martinez reportedly stabbed transgendered Fresno Joel Robles at least 20 times in Robles’ apartment on Huntington Boulevard in 2004. After fatally stabbing Robles, Martinez crashed through a bedroom window and jumped a fence onto Freeway 41 where he was caught by California Highway Patrol officers. The officers arrested Martinez after seeing him running, bloodied and naked, on the freeway.

The Fresno County District Attorney’s Office accepted a guilty plea to manslaughter as the defense was preparing to use a “transgender panic” defense if the case went to trial. A representative later said that there were things about the case that they felt would’ve made it difficult to get a murder conviction from a jury.

Martinez was not charged with a hate crime in Robles’ death.

In the wake of the Martinez sentencing, Assembly member Sally Lieber introduced AB 1160, to ban the use of “panic defenses” in California courts. “Panic defenses” are typically brought up to show the defendant’s state of mind at the time of the killing—that the victim was killed in response to discovery of his or her gender or sexual orientation. A bill analysis conceded that it was doubtful that this type of evidence could ever be excluded constitutionally. The criminal defense bar argued, “the right to testify in one’s defense is constitutionally protected and is a cornerstone of a balanced administration of justice. As part of their testimony, criminal defendants regularly explain their mental state during the commission of offenses. This testimony is invaluable to juries who must decide whether the requisite elements of criminal intent existed at the time of an offense.”

The bill now would allow a party to request that this

instruction be given to the jury: “Do not let bias, sympathy, prejudice, or public opinion influence your decision. Bias includes bias against the victim or victims, witnesses, or defendant based upon his or her disability, gender, nationality, race or ethnicity, religion, gender identity, or sexual orientation.”

Community activists were told late last year that there isn’t a problem with hate crimes in Fresno.

However, between January 2005 and June 2006—the latest month data is available for—there were 15 hate crimes reported to the Fresno Police Department. In one-third—or five—of the incidents, gays or lesbians were targeted. The latest incident was reported on May 12th. A gay man was battered by three men outside the Red Lantern bar.

In 2005, 22 hate crimes were reported in Fresno County. Fresno led with 11. Clovis had seven reports, followed by Parlier and Reedley with one case each. Fresno State police also reported two incidents to the state Department of Justice. The 22 incidents do not include the disappearance of a gay man from a Fresno business where he worked. His badly decomposed body was found in the San Bernardino mountains last November. His death is listed as “suspicious” and is still being investigated by San Bernardino County sheriff’s deputies.

Fourteen hate crimes were referred to the District Attorney by law enforcement for prosecution in 2005. Hate crime charges were filed in 11 cases; the other three were not charged. Eight cases were resolved last year. Seven of them ended in convictions.

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U.S. Peace Community Sets September 21 Deadline

Dan Yaseen

The Declaration of Peace is a nationwide campaign (www.declarationofpeace.org) to establish by September 21, 2006 a comprehensive and concrete plan for peace in Iraq, including:

- a prompt timetable for withdrawal of troops and closure of bases
- a peace process for security, reconstruction, and reconciliation
- and the shift of funding for war to meeting human needs.

If this plan for peace is not created and activated by Congress by September 21, the International Day of Peace, Declaration signers across the U.S. will engage in nonviolent action in Washington, D.C. and in communities throughout the nation.

Week of Action Plan: September 21-28

From September 21-28, just days before Congress adjourns for the fall elections, Declaration signers will take action – and support a comprehensive peace process – by taking part in nonviolent action, marches, rallies, demonstrations, interfaith services, candlelight vigils and other creative ways to declare peace at the U.S. Capitol and in cities and towns across the country.

The Declaration of Peace campaign will continue after the September actions if no comprehensive plan to end the war is in place. Nationally coordinated nonviolent activities will continue until the United States withdraws from Iraq and supports a comprehensive peace process.

More than 180 antiwar, peace, and justice organizations are participating in the Declaration of Peace movement. To sign The Declaration of Peace go to: www.declarationofpeace.org – and take tangible, nonviolent action to end this war and to declare a new era of peace and justice.

Peace Fresno has endorsed The Declaration of Peace. If Congress fails to create a plan by September 21 for peace in Iraq, Peace Fresno along with peace and justice groups nationwide will be taking part in nonviolent activities. For more information please call 559-487-2515 or go to: www.peacefresno.org

Every Tuesday • 7 PM

Peace Fresno meets at the Fresno Center for Nonviolence at 1584 N Van Ness, south of McKinley. If you want to help stop Bush's endless war against the world, come to this meeting!

For an up-to-the-minute listing of all peace actions in the Fresno area, call the Fresno Center for Nonviolence at (559) 23PEACE (237–3223). For more information about Peace Fresno, call 487–2515 or visit their Web site at www.peacefresno.org



Dan Yaseen and Gloria Hernandez in October 2001 anti-war protest on Peace Corner (Shaw & Blackstone). Photo by Mike Rhodes

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.

Economic Costs of War

By Steve Ratzlaff

Ever since President Dwight Eisenhower warned the citizens of this country about the dangers of the rise of the military/industrial complex, we have seen its inevitable expansion and growth in our society. When he voiced his concern in 1956, defense spending in the US was \$52 billion per year. In 2006, defense spending has exploded to over \$1 trillion per year . . . if you count the \$439 billion spent on past military expenditures (veteran's benefits and interest on the national debt), the \$563 billion spent on current military operations, and the \$100 billion that the Bush Administration has announced it will need for the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan. That is 20 times larger than the military budget Eisenhower thought represented a grave threat to our liberty. To make matters worse, the coziness between this Administration and the military/industrial complex continues to grow. This collusion assures that the costs of defense will rise and threaten to put us in a state of perpetual war, because corporate defense profits depend on it.

The biggest problem with military spending is the fact that it kills twice . . . once when the bombs and missiles are dropped on opposing armies and civilians . . . and secondly, when this money that was spent to make the bombs and missiles cannot be used to fight hunger, poverty, and oppression here at home. War steals precious resources from safety net programs. It also inflicts further economic impact. In addition to the cost of fighting a war, there's the cost of burying the dead, caring for the wounded, and treating the traumatized.

Then there's the cost of rebuilding all that has been destroyed including local economies. In this age of increasing tax cuts for the rich and budget-cutting for health and welfare, think of the effect that \$1 trillion dollars could have on solving our healthcare or Social Security problems? Or hunger? Or our aging infrastructure?

In Iraq alone, the United States has already spent over \$300 billion. What would this same amount have done if invested in domestic and global programs?

- Sent 31 million children to attend Head Start for one year; or
- Provided 140 million children with health care for one year; or
- Added 4.1 million new public school teachers for one year; or
- Provided 11.4 million students with full scholarships to a four-year university; or
- Created 2.1 million new units of public housing; or
- Fully funded global anti-hunger efforts for nine years; or
- Fully funded global AIDS programs for 22 years; or
- Ensured that every child in the world received basic immunizations for 78 years.

Then there is this litany of statistics:

- The US has never grown as much food as it does today. Scarcity is down, food is cheap, and there is enough food for everyone. Yet, in the world's richest nation more than 36 million, including 14 million children, experience hunger every day. One in 10 households does not have enough to eat.
- In 2000, over 11% of the people in the US lived in poverty, earning less than \$19,000 per year for a family of four. Sixteen percent of all children live in poverty. People who don't have enough money to eat, go hungry in the world's richest nation.
- The gap between the rich and poor in the United States continues to widen. Statistics show that the richest 1 percent of the US citizens own 40 percent of the total property of the country, while 80 percent of US citizens own just 16 per-

cent.- In 2005, 41.8 million persons did not have health insurance. That's about 15% of all people in this country. Those numbers and percentages continue to grow as more and more businesses cut back on healthcare coverage for their employees.

- Ecological imbalance is another result of military spending. We become dependent on petroleum and fight wars over it. We fail to invest money in renewable energy, because we are so obsessed with maintaining our oil supplies. We refuse to take part in the Kyoto accords, because business leaders and this Administration believe doing so would hurt our economy and thus wouldn't be in our national interest. What economic and environmental consequences will we endure because of our focus on warfare and our neglect of viable alternatives?

The military/industrial complex and the Pentagon have made themselves an indispensable part of our nation's economy. They have worked their way into the highest echelons of government. They have lobbyists for every Representative/Senator in Congress and have established businesses that build military hardware in every Congressional district in this nation. To vote against defense in Congress now means that it will affect jobs in your home district. They have developed a stranglehold on our nation's economy. They have a guaranteed source of dollars – our tax dollars. And that is why it is so hard to root out.

So you can see that the costs of war continue to escalate and continue to keep us from dealing with other problems which we face in this country. Perhaps the only way to change this awful scenario is to find ways to starve the defense establishment . . . find ways to refuse to pay for war.

QUAKERS

FRESNO FRIENDS MEETING
Silent Worship Sunday 10-11 AM

ALL WELCOME

The Community Alliance takes pride in presenting the second installment of Valley Vistas. Sammie Spade is an investigative journalist for The Blade, a fictitious Valley newspaper. If you have a question for Sammie, please send it to AllianceEditor@Comcast.net or to the Community Alliance, P.O. Box 5077, Fresno Ca 93755.

Valley Vistas

As seen by Sammie Spade

Let me leave you with one more. I have a Lesbian friend, you know, a gal who digs girls. Now Margie and I go way back. Actually we met when she hit on me. I have to admit I look the type—short hair, pants and boots, more of a swagger than a stride. But I dig chicks only as friends. You know, once I almost got married, can you imagine. Even planned the date. He was a decent sort, but kind of a jerk, too and when it came down to it, I asked myself, “Are you really going to wear a dress and become Mrs. Jerkwater?” I just couldn’t see it, I value my freedom too much. And that was the end of it. I’ve had a couple of flings, you know, but always end up one morning alone with a hangover, and finally I just said enough is enough. So here I am, living with Pete.

But back to Margie. What amazed me was that she still belonged to this church that she grew up with. She didn’t figure herself out till she was married and divorced—no kids luckily—and she’d hung on to this Church for old times’ sake, even though she was pretty sure they wouldn’t want to hear about her new lifestyle. But then she fell in love. After a while she and Jenny moved in together, then got an official document that says they’re domestic partners, and then they began talking about adoption.

Just about that time her pastor joined in a campaign to oppose some gay-friendly legislation before the County Board of Supervisors, and preached some sermons that made my friend a tad uncomfortable. She called me up one day and said, “I just made an appointment with the Pastor. I need to tell him what’s doing with me. Jenny won’t come, will you? I could use some moral support, and maybe there’s a story in it for you.”

So before I know it there I am with Margie in the pastor’s plush office, and he’s sitting behind this mammoth desk smiling with all the glorious kindness God can instill in us. And he asks how he can be of service.

When Margie tells him what’s up with her life, and how she wishes he’d get to know Jenny and see how happy they are, the smile just falls off his face. To his credit, he didn’t get high-and-mighty, he just said, “Margie, I’m sorry I can’t do that. How you live is wrong, it’s in the Bible.”

Margie looks stunned, but she pulls herself together and says, “Why do you say that? Can’t you see that, finally, I’m out of my depression and feeling alive. Can’t you be happy for me? Can’t you use your God-given senses and look at me and judge for yourself?”

Me, I’ll never forget that next moment. That Pastor, who had seemed so sure of himself, kind of shrunk down. “No,” he said, “I can’t. I’m just a mere man, a sinful being, and I can’t go against God’s will.” So there I go off, you know I can’t keep shut at a time like that. “You can, but you won’t,” I say. “You know there are a dozen versions of everything in the Bible, and a dozen interpretations of each of them. You choose the ones that fit your purposes or that leave you comfortable. God gave us brains, too, you know, and the power to use them.”

At that he puffed back up, and began to speak, but I didn’t hear a word. And Margie, bless her heart, never went back to that church.

Now I hear that this Pastor is thinking about going into politics. Don’t get me started on church and state, that’s something I can write about for The Blade. What I want to say to you is that, just like with the mayor, seeing that pastor close up changed me. I can still get up a head of steam at how what he says can hurt Margie and countless others. But when I think of him, so afraid of himself and of making a mistake, so afraid of being a living part of life, I feel more pity than anger. That’s the truth.

Well, I hope I’ve given you something you can use for your assignment. Anyway, you get a taste of what my whole career is based on: ask the wrong person the right question and you’ll get the dirt.

Part II: Grand Theft

You’re right, you did see my mug in The Blade.. I’m the

one that writes Valley Vistas. But every January they furlough me a month— the personals go way down after Christmas and don’t pick up till Valentine’s. So my friend and I have this arrangement: start of the year he takes off on vacation and I drive his cab. So here we are, sweetheart, it’s you and me together.. Just joking, you told me already you’re on your way to meet your boyfriend.

But I tell you I’m lucky to have the cab right now. First thing New Year’s Day I went with my pooch Pete for his daily meander around the block, and when we open the door—voila! nothing’s there! My beat-up blue Corolla’s gone AWOL. It was parked right in front of the house, like always, but it’s vanished. So soon as we get back I call the cops and next day they come around to get the info.. Naw, I don’t blame them, it being a holiday and no emergency. I mean, the car was gone already for hours, what are they gonna do? What I do want to know is why my so-called watchdog, who’s there for just such occasions, sleeps through it all. Some help he is.

So the police say if it’s been abandoned they usually find it within a week, and they’ll let me know. Otherwise it’s likely in Mexico or some chop shop. Fortunately I’m pickin up the cab the next day, so I don’t think much about it, and before I know it two weeks have passed and I’m saying my last to the Toyota and looking in the want ads for a successor.

Then yesterday morning Pete and I set out for the morning jaunt, and when I open the door, there sits the car. Washed even, and parked neatly right where it was before, like it was a fish you’d throw back for being not worth the keeping. I didn’t know whether to be grateful or mad.

I call the police again to say, “You can leave off looking”, and within fifteen minutes a squad car rolls up, can you dig it? They had to see for themselves...never heard anything like it. Finally, just before getting back in his car, the one looks at me funny and says, “only thing I can think of, do you have a boyfriend that’s mad at you?” and we all crack up.

Green Party Runs Candidates in Local and Statewide Election

By Larry Mullen

The Fresno County Green Party and the Green Party of California have been busy in different ways. Once again the Green Party of California has a full, diverse and gender representative slate of candidates for state offices. Peter Camejo of Sacramento is running for Governor. The two female candidates are veterans from the 2002 campaign. Donna Warren from LA is running for Lt. Governor, and Laura Wells from Oakland is running for Controller. Also on the ticket is Forrest Hill for Secretary of State, Michael S. Wyman for Attorney General, Meuhul M. Thakker for Treasurer, and Larry Cafiero for Insurance Commissioner. Todd Chretien launched his Million Votes for Peace campaign in his bid to unseat US Senator Dianne Feinstein. Locally, John Miller from Porterville is running in the 21st Congressional District against Devin Nunez.

The big problem for third party candidates is media exposure. All candidates have a message and positions on issues. Getting the message out is difficult and expensive. That’s why it is essential for Peter Camejo to be included in any televised debates. One might think being a qualified candidate in the general election would qualify for a seat in the debate. But artificially high polling criteria historically have been used to discriminate against third parties. Republicans and Democrats won’t debate Greens because they have a terrible record of serving working people and don’t want to be exposed.

Green Party member and President of MAPA, Nativo Lopez, recently said it best in a June 30, 2006 speech, “The Republicans and the Democrats—these phonies will jostle and juggle over who will be the majority in Congress to continue to deny the rights of all working people. Because let us remember that with the Democrats controlling Congress and a Democratic president, they absolutely refused to reform federal labor law in America to allow workers to organize unions with no impediments.”

The Fresno County Green Party continues The Progressive Thursday video series. The videos shown at Round Table Pizza at First and Bullard on the third Thursday of odd numbered months feature a wide variety of top-

Then I call the insurance company and they say first time for them, too; and we better get it checked in case someone put sugar in the gas tank or something. But turns out it’s all clean and everything’s there except for this old afghan my mother made for me like twenty years ago. Odd reason to steal a car I think, but then maybe that explains it, maybe my mama’s curse got them to bring my baby home.

And speaking of felonies, I told this story to a rider yesterday, and right off he says, “I can top that.” Seems a couple of years ago he went on a church mission to one of those African countries during Easter time. In this place they have a 2-month Lent when they don’t eat meat, so this group of missionaries comes up with a brilliant plan. There’s another group about 100 miles away in a village on a river that goes into the Nile. They have a church sanctuary there for refugees coming in from the next country over. And in that village there’s a native fishing co-op specializing in these really big what-they-call “lion fish” The plan is that during Lent, my rider and his buddies would take over the butcher shops in their town, and meanwhile the mission on the river would have their folks borrow the co-op’s nets to fish at night with and next day send the catch by plane to be sold instead of meat.

They have it all arranged and are rubbing their hands thinking how to spend all the money they’re gonna make. So comes the first day of Lent and they’re all waiting for the car from the airport to get back. Sure enough the car arrives, but no fish, not a one. Everyone’s disappointed and puzzled, and then comes a telegram that says, “President of co-op absconded with the treasury and the nets. Sorry, no can do.” Thieves everywhere I guess.. globalization, is that what they call it?

Well here we... bus terminal. But the way I’ve been talking, you’d have thought we were going to the jail. Anyway, enjoy yourselves you two, and don’t mind me. Sometimes my vistas get a little bleak, but it’s love that makes the world go round. Only thing worth stealing is your lover’s heart.

ics of interests to progressive minded people. The Party has also been actively working with the living wage ordinance committee, which is preparing for an informational workshop at City Council on August 29. The Party is also working with the Community Benefits Agreement (CBA) Committee to examine ways to influence the types of development and how the community can best be served. The Party gave testimony at air quality and public television access meetings as well as attending housing meetings. There are a lot of interesting issues to work on and a lot of room for people to help. All Greens are welcome to attend monthly meetings held at 7:00 P.M. at the State Building in downtown Fresno on the second Thursday of each month. You can also stay abreast of state and local Green Party news on KFCF 88.1 FM. The local Stir it Up/Green Scene show airs the third Wednesday of the month at 3:00 P.M.

**Fresno County
Green Party
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IDENTITY BOX

Place of birth: Los Angeles
Ethnic or other identity: Irish/English, Humanist, agricultural entomologist
Religious affiliation: Unitarian
Political affiliation: Democrat
Frequented parts of Fresno: live in Northeast, tutor in Southwest, loiter in Tower and downtown
Motto: Have fun, do good
Non-work interests: play piano (ragtime and blues, classical)
Special pleasure: “entomology moments” (e.g. the thrill of watching tadpole shrimps in vernal pools)

Grassroots Profile

By Richard Stone

Q. How is watching bugs (creepy crawlies) related to protecting people from bugs (the medical kind)?

A: Devin Carroll does both.

Devin Carroll is an entomologist by profession, but comes to our attention as co-chair— along with Keith Ensminger— of Health Care for All Central California. (HCA is the group dedicated to bringing single-payer universal health care to California.)

Talking with Devin, it is obvious that, if not HCA, he’d be deeply involved in something to make this a better world...he is one of the few people I know who says it is “fun” to be socially engaged. As it is, he also teaches sexuality education for teens at his church (Unitarian Universalist), and has tutored first graders in Southwest Fresno for over ten years. But right now, HCA is his major focus, having picked up the fervor for the fight from his mother-in-law.

“It fills me with righteous anger,” Devin says, “that we haven’t solved this problem [of an uninsured citizenry] by now. Canada’s has had universal care for 30 years, and Truman proposed it 50 years ago...It is frustrating that politics and corporate greed trump reason.”

This is probably an appropriate place to note that the use of reason and working for “rational improvement” are key components of Devin’s approach to life. This is natural for a trained scientist, and is also consistent with his involvement with Humanism in general and Humanists of the San Joaquin in particular. Both interests are wedded to using logic applied to provable evidence on one hand, and eschewing supernatural explanations and belief-via-tradition on the other. Devin is quick to add, however, that “we Humanists do not judge people by their beliefs. We care about the ethics and outcomes of what people do, not their explanations.”

With no one in Washington D.C., certainly not the Bushites, taking the lead to achieve universal health care for Americans, HCA has focused on a state-wide solution. Right now the particular vehicle is SB 840, sponsored by Sen. Sheila Kuehl. This bill would set up a state agency to fund healthcare for all residents of

California, with free choice of providers, reduced bureaucratic overhead, and the ability to use mass buying power to bargain for reduced prescription costs. (SB 840 will probably have been voted on by the time this gets to press. If it has passed, the Governor will have to be lobbied for his signature. If it fails, HCA will be looking at a state initiative in the near future.)

Devin’s work with our local chapter of HCA rests on the pioneering work of such stalwarts as Bill Young (a fellow Humanist) and Dr. Liz Maury; and on the contributions of current members such as Vice Chair Lynn Jacobsson, Treasurer Larry Trullinger and Secretary Annie Durazo. Organizational support has come largely from labor: the two teachers’ associations (CSEA and FTA), the California Nurses Association, SEIU; and also from the League of Women Voters. An improbable key constituency in the endeavor is small business owners, who stand to benefit greatly by having their employees covered at reduced cost to them or—in many cases—covered for the first time. Devin says that getting businessmen, who often reflexively oppose “government involvement”, to actually look at the facts and see the benefits is the essential task at hand.

“We have just launched our One Care Now campaign, with a different city hosting an event every day for a year. We’ll have at least eight events in the Valley, and in preparation I’ve been talking to farmers and businesspeople all around the area. I believe this movement is growing, there is a real sense of solidarity that we need this and there’s no good reason not to have it...unless you work for an insurance or pharmaceutical company.”

Devin’s long-range vision of where this work is heading includes, of course, a national healthcare plan. But he also looks for equally rational, do-able projects (“I’m no Don Quixote”) for protecting the environment; and, in a still larger sphere of interest, he looks beyond nationalist thinking to a kind of global governance, where wars of aggression and dictatorial rulers would not be tolerated.

If readers are interested in supporting HCA and the One Care Now campaign, they can join, contribute financially, make phone calls, invite speakers to organizations and businesses, solicit endorsements. It all helps. Devin and HCA can be reached at: (559) 439-6368, or devinc@sbcglobal.net

Amy Goodman in Fresno

By Vic Bedoian

Get ready Fresno - the Democracy Now! road show is hitting town on September 24th. That’s right; internationally acclaimed journalist Amy Goodman will be here along with the Democracy Now! crew to do a benefit brunch for their local affiliate KFCF 88.1 FM. Their Fresno stop is part of a Pacific Coast tour of fundraising for community radio stations, and to meet and greet listeners of the remarkable radio program, considered an essential news source for a growing legion of progressives around the country.

Another facet of the tour is to introduce a new book written by Amy and her investigative journalist brother David entitled Static: Government Liars, Media Cheerleaders and the People Who Fight Back coming out in September. This work follows up on their first book, The Exception to the Rulers. In Static, the brother-sister team once again take on government liars, corporate profiteers, and the media that has acted as their megaphone. They expose how the Bush administration has manipulated and fabricated news and how the corporate media has worked hand in glove with the powerful to deceive the public. The Goodmans cut through the spin and static to offer the truth about war, torture, and government control of the media. Mixing investigative reporting and interviews, Static presents voices of dissidents, activists, and others who are too often frozen out of official debate, to shed new light on urgent issues of war and peace.

For several years a staple on Pacifica Radio, Democracy Now! was produced out of an ancient building dubbed “The Firehouse” just blocks from Ground Zero. But it was its coverage of the 9/11 events and the aftermath that made the program an icon. In the wake of 9/11, Democracy Now! began a cross-media collaboration that greatly expanded its footprint. In the years since 9/11, the show has shape-shifted from a popular niche radio program broadcast on some twenty- five

independent stations to a multimedia institution beamed each day to over 400 radio and television stations. The skeletal four-person crew has ballooned to twenty-seven full- and part-time staff, including seven radio and TV producers, two outreach organizers and a professional archivist. On any given day, the Democracy Now! website logs a solid 50,000 visits. “It’s the lifeline for a lot of people,” says professor and media critic Robert McChesney. “I think it’s probably the most significant progressive news institution that has come around in some time.” Amy Goodman has come to be seen by many as a kind of human megaphone for the collective progressive unconscious. To these supporters, the slight and intense Goodman—whose shows range from on-the-ground testimonials by Iraq War victims to debates on Social Security between Paul Krugman and Michael Tanner—is one of the lone disciples of a fiercely independent, muckraking brand of journalism practiced by I.F. Stone and George Seldes, Upton Sinclair and Seymour Hersh. “What Amy’s doing is trying to recreate a democratic society where you have varied, independent perspectives on the world,” says MIT professor and political activist Noam Chomsky.

Meet and greet Amy, David and the Democracy Now! crew at a Special Continental Brunch on Sunday, September 24th from 11 am to 1:30 pm at the Machinist’s Union Hall at 544 W. Olive Avenue, across the street from the DMV office near Highway 99. The cost is \$30 per person and is a benefit for local progressive radio station KFCF 88.1 FM. A healthy continental breakfast and beverages will be served. Anyone who purchases a ticket for the FFCF Banquet will get a \$10 discount on a brunch ticket. Tickets are available from the Movies video shop located at 1435 N. Van Ness or from KFCF at (559) 233-2221.

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*Sections of this article incorporated material from an article written by Lizzy Ratner and published in The Nation magazine May 6, 2005 and on the Common Dreams web site. FFCF Annual Banquet

Annual Banquet to be Held on October 1

Historian Matthew Lasar will the featured speaker at the 2006 Fresno Free College Foundation Annual Banquet held on October 1st. Matthew is author of the definitive history of Pacifica Radio. The first book, Pacifica Radio, the Rise of an Alternative Network covered the early years of the network and was recently followed by a second volume, Uneasy Listening: Pacifica Radio’s Civil War, which covers the period from the mid 1960’s to the present. Both books are very well written and impeccably researched. Matthew’s intellect and wit are impressive as he traces the cultural and political currents that shaped KPFA in Berkeley, and accompanied Pacifica’s gradual expansion to a five-station network. Lasar, an admitted partisan in the conflict, gives a first-person account, calling it “the worst crisis in the history of community radio”. Matthew Lasar cut his media teeth as a reporter for the KPFA news and a documentary producer before he obtained his PhD in History from UC Berkeley. He is an engaging speaker with a deep knowledge and historical perspective on community media and its importance. He is currently teaching at the University of California at Santa Cruz, appears frequently on KPFA and hosts the web site www.lasarletter.com .

The FFCF Annual Banquet will be held on Sunday October 1st beginning at 5:30 pm at Love & Garlic, located at 5351 N. Diana Street in Fresno. Tickets are \$40 per person for a dinner buffet that includes a fresh and locally grown gourmet cuisine. The FFCF will also present its annual Free Speech Award to a local citizen. People who buy a Banquet ticket will get a \$10 discount on the Amy Goodman brunch, as long as tickets last. Tickets may be purchased at the Movies video shop at 1435 N. Van Ness or at the Foundation office (559) 233-2221.



Central Valley Women’s Equality Day March and Rally

Several hundred women and their allies, from throughout the Central Valley, rallied to empower women and to get women to vote in the November 2006 elections. The event started with a march, led by Dolores Huerta, in downtown Fresno. The march, which was held on Saturday, August 19, 2006, concluded at the Free Speech area on the Fulton Mall where participants heard a series of speakers.

Organizers for the march and rally included:

- Planned Parenthood Mar Monte
- Women’s International League for Peace & Freedom
- National Women’s Political Caucus
- Fresno Progressive PAC
- Women’s Studies @ CSUF
- Roger’s Farms
- Fresno Barrios Unidos
- SEIU-UHW
- Dolores Huerta Foundation

Middle East Delegation Demands Freedom for Political Prisoners and Freedom of Movement for Palestinians

By Don Friesen

HEBRON—On Friday, 8 August Christian Peacemaker Teams (CPT) delegates and permanent team members from Sweden, Canada, England, Australia and the United States engaged in a public witness at the Beit Romano checkpoint in Hebron, Palestine to call for the opening of all gates that confine Palestinians under military occupation.

Joined by members of CPT Hebron and local Palestinians, the delegation held a prayer service and sang “Open the Gates” while armed soldiers observed from their watch tower above.

The group chose to witness at the Israeli military base in the Old City of Hebron because its military gates clearly represent obstacles to Palestinian freedom, such as prison fences, the separation wall, checkpoints and the obstruction of unbiased international media coverage of the occupation.

The Old City of Hebron is home to nearly 35,000 Palestinians and approximately 500 Jewish settlers. The Old City is located in a part of Hebron that is under the jurisdiction of the Israeli Defense Force (IDF). Over 2000 IDF personnel are present in the Old City with the express purpose of protecting the settlers.

The 500 settlers in Old city are scattered over four settlements named Beit Haddasseh, Avraham Avinu, Beit Romano, and Tel Rumeida. The Beit Romano settlement is the Yeshiva school which occupies the home built by a Turkish Jew in 1879.

Numerous acts of violence by both Palestinian and Jewish perpetrators have frequently heightened the levels of security imposed by IDF. The IDF often claims that this provides security for the Palestinians, but is always the Palestinians whose liberties are affected by the security measures.

For many years, one end of the street past Beit Romano settlement has had a military checkpoint. During 2006 the checkpoint has become a permanently closed gate known as Beit Romano Gate.

The closure of this gate is symbolic of the systematic

closing off of the Old City to both incoming and outgoing pedestrians. During this process, the Suq portion of the Old City has decreased in population from 9000 residents to fewer than 1000. In addition, nearly 1000 Palestinian shops are now closed, one third of these by decree of the military ‘for their own protection.’

The settlements make the lives of Palestinians very difficult. Palestinians are often subject to violence meted out by the settlers.

One of the frequent actions of CPT members is the accompaniment of Palestinian girls to school. Students must reach the school by walking along Shuhada Street near Beit Haddasseh Settlement. Settler youth regularly stone the students as they walk to school. Their accompaniment by CPT members lessens the likelihood of being attacked.

In both Beit Haddasseh and Avraham Avinu settlements, most settlers have built above existing Palestinian homes. Palestinians have had to construct metal mesh nets to protect themselves from garbage and dangerous objects that are thrown down on them by settlers from above.

Shuhada street itself, once one of the busiest streets in Hebron, has been closed by the military to all Palestinian automobile traffic. Once thriving businesses have been closed and their metal doors welded shut.

The August 8 CPT action at Beit Romano Gate was a symbolic action against all of these injustices to the people of the Old City. It took place at a time when the IDF was heavily punishing the people of Gaza for the killing and abduction of several IDF personnel.

Untold by most news agen-

cies is the fact that 10 to 15 Palestinians are abducted daily from their homes and communities. There are currently over 9,000 Palestinian prisoners, many held in ‘administrative detention’ with little hope of even being charged with a crime, let alone tried fairly.

James Thomas, a CPT delegate from the United States explained, “No prisoner’s life is more valuable than another’s. We are demanding the freedom of the women, men and children being held without due process and denouncing the hypocrisy of Israel for valuing the lives of 3 kidnapped soldiers over the thousands of Palestinian prisoners and all casualties of the war in Lebanon. By publicly demanding that these gates be opened, we are reaffirming our commitment to work in Palestine and our home countries for a just end to the Israeli occupation.”

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Don Friesen, a Reedley High School teacher, was on the Christian Peacemaker Team that was in Israel/Palestine in late July and early August. Don works with the Reedley Peace Center.



Food Not Bombs

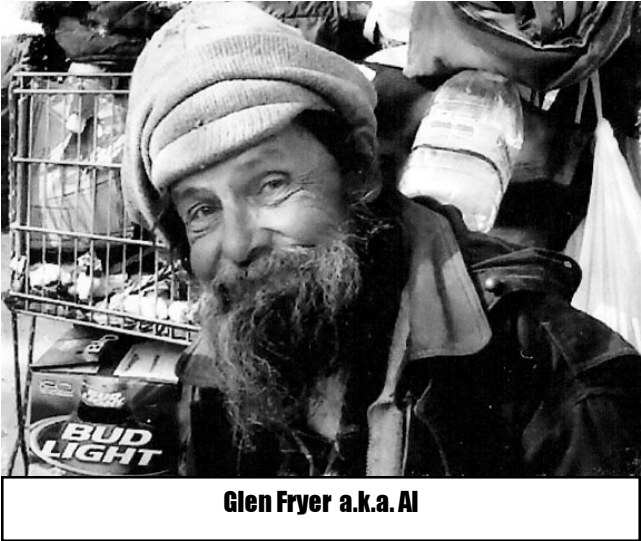
By Kelly Borkert

I really didn't know Al Fryer very well. If I had, I might have known his name was Glen, not Al or Osama, as he was often called at the park. Glen Fryer turned 60 in July, the last time we saw him, serving salad as he did every Saturday for years at Roeding Park, with Food Not Bombs. We sang and celebrated his last birthday a week and a half before we learned his was the murdered body found behind Al's Café at Olive and 99. A terrible loss to the family that assembles every Saturday at 1:00 PM on the north side of Storyland at Roeding Park, Al was a bigger part of the meal serving than we knew, until he was gone. Not the first murder in the area by far, as hard to accept as any, harder still if you saw Al playfully at work, doing what he clearly loved, serving food to scores of people until the last of everything was gone. Once the tables were cleared of pots and containers, Al was almost always the one to thoroughly clean and load them, working later and longer with septuagenarian Tom Machado, than other volunteers a quarter their age. No matter how difficult things were for Al personally, or in the rush of Food Not Bombs serving lines, he was jovial, a hard worker and eager contributor, quick to smile and joke, and a pleasure to know. When things got tense, Al was always the one to tone it down with his cry- "Easy! Easy!", a great way to put it, Al.

There is a growing list of names who have died of violence, people who are called many names, homeless being one of them. "Indian John", another long time Food Not Bombs participant left us unexpectedly not too long ago, under circumstances just as unacceptable. That any humans could do violence to the people who struggle daily to survive while the world turns its back, is something that can embitter those who work to make the daily struggle less difficult in some way or another. It seems likely that the cruel mistreatment of homeless downtown and near the park by the City of Fresno can only encourage the acts of murderous violence that is often part and parcel of Fresno homelessness. As we learn over and over, the people in power cannot be expected to behave humanely or in a respectful manner towards their fellow citizens, despite their frequent claims of Christian redemption. It seems as though these perpetrators of cruelty believe a country club exists for tyrants and torturers in heaven. Or perhaps they believe nothing, As they themselves are not to be believed?

On September 9th, a memorial service for friends lost to violence will be held at 12:45 PM, at Roeding Park between Storyland and the tennis courts. All are welcome to attend as we say farewell and mourn the departure of friends taken from us too soon. There will be coffee and cookies, as well as our typical meal of beans, soup, rice, salad, pastries, tea and water, while we join hands and strengthen the bonds within the community that attempts to form a safety net for the people who really need it.

On September 24th, another major event will take place, 5:00 PM at the Full Circle Brewery, a very enjoyable evening fundraiser for Fresno Food Not Bombs with



Glen Fryer a.k.a. Al

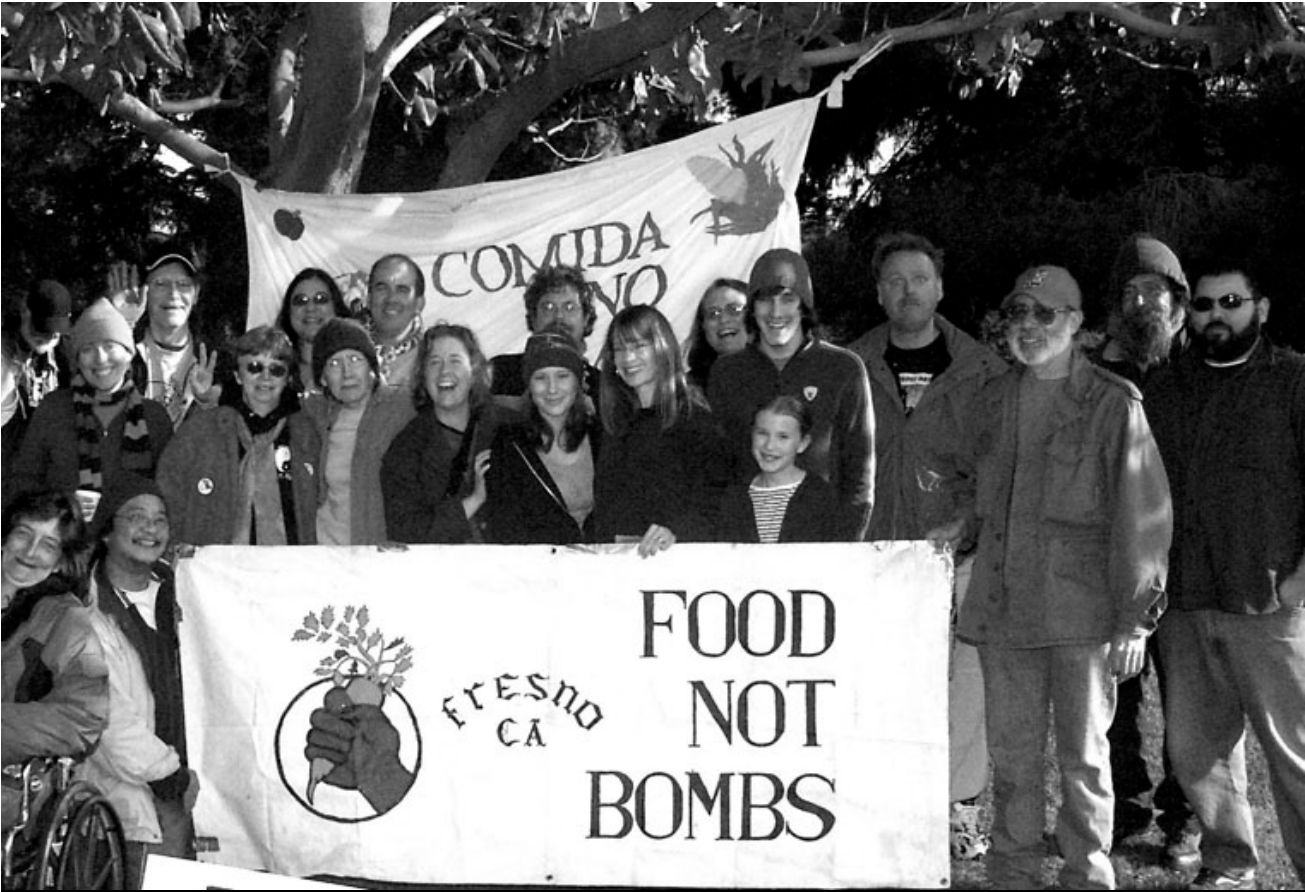
something for everyone to enjoy. Buoyant music by the unsinkable Blake Jones and the Trike Shop, and a very special musical guest, Fresno phenom Julia Dawn will weave her magic spell for the pleasure of all in attendance. In addition to top quality musical entertainment, there will be a vegan Chili cook-off, a cornbread extravaganza and plenty of satisfied attendees. This is going to be a huge party with amazing food, and you need to be there! Fresno Food Not Bombs needs you there as well, so be sure to spread the word of this event, the music, food and friendship will be top notch. In recent months there has been a paucity of funds for FNB activities, a shortage of participants which grows shorter still with tragic losses like Al, and a dwindling of donations due to other organizations collecting from the same resources. It appears that despite Measure Z, \$3 a car admission increases and letter writing campaigns started by little girls, organizations feeding the homeless must compete with the local gorillas and elephants in the room. For this reason, Fresno Food Not Bombs really needs your help, whether it be financial or physical, emotional or logistical, if you can assist us in our weekly efforts, please feel free to contact us at fresnofnb@hotmail.com, or call (559) 438-4088 and leave a contact number. We look forward to seeing our friends at both the 12:45 PM memorial service September 9th, and even more so at the Full Circle Brewery Sunday September 24th at 5:00 PM for a terrific time for all!

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Kelly Borkert usually serves the beans. He can be contacted at kellyborkert@hotmail.com

Every Saturday 1-2 PM

Food Not Bombs feeds the hungry near the Olive Ave entrance to Roeding Park. The location for cooking on Saturday is at the Wesley United Methodist Church, 1343 E Barstow, between First and Cedar, starting at 9 AM. They are always in need of servers at the park.



Glen Fryer is the second from the right, in this photo taken at the Food Not Bombs 10 year celebration, earlier this year. Photo credit: Howard Watkins

POETRY CORNER

This month's poem is direct from Corcoran State, part of California's other "university system". Gilbert "Puppet" Bao writes of himself: "Been down for eight years now and want to give a glimpse into the mind of 'The Product'"

I Am A Product By Gilbert (Puppet) Bao

I am a product
A product of Spanish rape
A mix of white, yellow, red, and black.
A brown product
Born from an act of destruction
Born to revolt

I am a product
A product of servitude
Remember your Mines, your Missions,
your Religion, your Railroads,
your Fields
....Worked to death....

I am a product
A product of your Manifest Destiny
How can I forget your trickery,
your violence, the lynchings,
your Texas Rangers,
your racist indoctrine

I am a product
A product of your politricks,
poverty, your justice....
The fuel of Capitalism

I am a product
A product of your wars
How easy you forgot the Pacific
North Africa, Sicily, France,
Germany, North Korea, Vietnam,
Kuwait, Afghanistan, Iraq
Yet you beat me in the streets
Remember the Zoot Suits?

I am a product
A product of your ethnocentric border
Exploited for cheap labor
Remember operation Wet Back?
And you call me Alien to a land I've
been migrating up and down for 60 thousand years

I am a product
A product of your drugs
Remember Nancy Reagan "Just say no"
While Ronald was busy saying "yes"
To "El Pericoo" Norwin Menenses
The king of Drugs
Your secret wars

I am a product
A product of your cover-ups
NSC, CIA, FBI, DEA, DOC, L.A. CO. Sheriff
And all the way down to the L.A.P.D.
My scars are deep. . . my bones hurt.
Remember when was 15?

I am a product
A product of your guns
How did so many mysteriously end up
on my streets?
AK's, Mac 11's, Tech 9's
Just to mention a few

I am a product
A product of your policies,
over crowded schooling,
your pollution
You've cursed me with Asthma
Etc....Etc....Etc

I am a product
A product of Gangs, Prisons,
and broken homes
A pawn . . worse off than a beggar
I've been conditioned, convicted,
and condemned....

You can take my life,
But you'll. never have my soul....
I am the product
Born to revolt!

Watch my spirit rise from the ashes....
Released from bondage, burden, and
anguish of mind

Corcoran State Prison

Fresno Police Kill Unarmed Suspect - Community Groups Express their Outrage

By Mike Rhodes



Mai Summer Vue said people in her community were having their rights violated by the police. She said “we need an Independent Police Auditor in Fresno to sustain the democratic system.”

We are not relieved that our questions have not been answered:

- Was the suspect the one who shot Officer Nieto?
- Was the gun recovered? Were his fingerprints on it?
- Did the police have a justified reason to use deadly force?
- How come other cities are able to bring in the suspect instead of shooting him dead? (Arizona serial killers captured on 8/4/06 instead of being shot to death).
- We are not relieved to know that cops in Fresno are using submachine guns against suspects, we are not at war with suspects. (Fresno Bee news briefs 8/08/06)
- Who will be accountable if all the cases are jeopardized because of the Fresno Police Department’s lack of training and control?
- Why were more than 200 officers involved in the search for a cop shooter, used to investigate the case of the woman who was wounded at Manchester Center? Does she not deserve the same level of attention that has been given to Officer Nieto’s case?

In addition to the information from the Press Release (above), community activists at the Press Conference cited statistics showing that the crime rate in Fresno is significantly higher than the national average. They say these statistics are evidence that the methods used by the FPD are not working. Some of the statistics:

* According to what was reported by Fresno PD to the FBI, Fresno had 53 murders (11.6 per 100,000 people), yet the national level was only 5.5.

* Fresno experienced 181 rapes (39.6:100,000) compared to the national level of 32.2:100,000

* Fresno had 2030 aggravated assaults (444.5: 100,000persons) with the national level being at 291:100,000 persons).

* We can also compare statistics with San Jose which has double the population of Fresno but only had 24 murders in comparison to the 53 in Fresno. One wonders if its because they have an independent police oversight mechanism that keeps the cops on their toes?

Groups at the Press Conference included the National Action Network, MEChA, Books not Bars, California Prison Moratorium, Peace Fresno, Fresno Copwatch, October 22, and the Hmong American Coalition for Justice and Human Rights. For more information, see: <http://cccjc.org/home/>



Gloria Hernandez holds the banner Stop Police Brutality/October 22. See www.october22.org for more information. All photos by Mike Rhodes.

Joaquin Figueroa was shot and killed by police on August 3, 2006. He was unarmed. At a press conference held on August 11 in front of the old Fresno City Hall, community activists condemned the shooting. A press release, sent to the media by event organizers, said that Joaquin Figueroa was “another stolen life taken by the Fresno Police Department.” The statement also said “the Community does realize that the only thing that changed in this officer involved shooting was that the suspect was shot only 2 times unlike the 20+ times in the previous incidents.”

Rev. Floyd Harris, State President of the National Action Network and a speaker at the Press Conference said that the police are sending a message to this community that they are going to be “the judge, jury, and executioner. You are not going to make it to trial. You are not going to make it in front of your peers, because they have a license to kill in this city.” Rev. Harris continued “until we get a police auditor in this community this is going to keep happening over and over again. Enough is enough! That could have been any one of us.”

The Fresno Police Department says that Figueroa did not have a gun when he was shot. The police also say Figueroa was the primary suspect in a shooting incident in which a Fresno Police officer was shot and wounded. Fresno Police Chief Jerry Dyer said the shooting of Figueroa was justified because he ignored commands to show his hands and that he had a reputation for being armed and dangerous.

At a Press Conference the day after Figueroa was shot, Dyer listed a number of crimes the suspect was believed to have committed. The list included carjackings, robbery, murder, and involvement in a high profile missing persons case. According to Dyer’s statement at the Press Conference, “Subsequent investigation determined that 25 year old Joaquin Figueroa was a validated gang member and convicted auto thief responsible for a series of violent crimes leading up to the shooting of Officer Brian Nieto.”

Dyer said “Additionally, the Hanford Police Department named Joaquin as a person of interest in the disappearance and murder of Debbie Hawk.” Several news reports have linked Figueroa, the shooting of officer Nieto, and the Debbie Hawk case. Dyer was quoted as saying “I am certain that there is a great deal of relief (in the community) that a very violent person has been re-

moved from the street.” (8/4/06 Fresno Bee)

Gloria Hernandez, a community organizer and one of the speakers at the Press Conference, said “we will never know if the cop’s latest statistic was in fact guilty. We will never know if this ‘person of interest’ was involved in the Manchester shooting or the Hawk woman disappearing. Both cases closed! Because it’s easier to blame it on the bad dead guy!”

Hernandez also announced that they were asking the Human Relations Commission to hold a Town Hall meeting to discuss this shooting. She then demanded that an outside agency investigate Figueroa’s death.

Many of the speakers at the press conference belong to the Central California Criminal Justice Committee (CCCJC), which has been working for years to establish an Independent Police Auditor (IPA) in this community. The concept for an IPA has received support from the Mayor of Fresno and Chief Dyer, but has been rejected by the Fresno City Council. Without an IPA it is up to the Internal Affairs Department to look at police actions.

Hernandez says that the “Fresno Police should develop use of force policies that address use of firearms and other weapons and particular use of force issues such as: firing at moving vehicles, verbal warnings, positional asphyxia, bar arm restraints, and the use of chemical agents. With proper training and planning Fresno Police Officers could demonstrate that the use of non-deadly force reasonably should be sufficient to accomplish an arrest or otherwise accomplish the law enforcement purpose, deadly force should not be necessary.”

The following is directly from the Press Release:

Jerry Dyer does not speak for the Community. We are not relieved to have to witness the use of deadly force on an unarmed man who was suspect of shooting Officer Nieto. The Community would have wanted the suspect to have the same access to the court system as Jerry Dyer’s niece has had when she was involved in a Fowler murder case.



Good Question



Rebeca Rangel (far right) read the statement at the Press Conference.



The Rev. Floyd Harris is organizing a statewide march in Fresno to protest the lack of police accountability.

The Word on the Street

By Wendy Russell

If you could be Fresno’s mayor for one day and could enact any law you wanted to - a law that could not be revoked - what would your law be?

Mmmmm... what would my own answer be? My husband, Mark Bernstein, said he would revoke that new law - that I think was ‘bought and paid for’ by the hardware stores in town; hiding our trash containers. Maybe, but we only get to enact ONE new law - shouldn’t I use it to legalize all Fresno County residents as U.S. citizens? Or to outlaw all military recruitment in the County? Or to move that dangerous airport away from the middle of Fresno?

Anyway, no one said that I could answer the Question, so I better get going.

My first stop was Jamaica My Weekend’s wild and happy crowd. I caught the stage manager, Brian Kenney Fresno (also the name of his crazed musical comedy act that - although banned in Fresno, he tours the nation with) as he ran around getting Green Machine on stage. “I would pass a law decreeing myself, Brian Kenney Fresno, as Mayor of Fresno for all of eternity, with perpetual irrevokable law-writing powers.”



On a long list of what Brian Kenney Fresno would do once he had his “one law giving him irrevocable powers forever” was this gem that I must include here: “then I would put CSUF students to work building a car that runs on raisins, since Henry Ford already designed one that ran on hemp but our stupid government is too stupid to allow industrial hemp to flourish.”

Next, I wandered into the crowd and was stopped by Jeremy Meyer’s parents, Terri & Mike Ford, so I asked them for their Law: I got one, complete and concise: “It is hereby proclaimed that any citizen of the City of Fresno shall be guilty of a misdemeanor by a willful failure to cease and desist any or all activities which demean, dehumanize or hassle any of our economically challenged citizens, also known as “street people” in the Tower District, Southwest, Southeast, Downtown or other public gathering places. They shall be afforded every measure of love, compassion, dignity and forgiveness that all people deserve no matter what race or creed.”



The next day found me and my camera at the Dollar Store in the Tower District, where I asked Anatolio, there with his two kids, cute little Avelina, (age four), and her 10 year old big brother Angel, as they shopped for back to school supplies. Their strong dad easily held up Avelina for their photo as he answered: “I would change how they keep raising the cost of our utilities. My law would be that your utility bill would not cost you more than maybe 5% of your paycheck. And I don’t think the City Council needs the big raises.”

Sounds good, Anatolio! Maybe we could even pay our City Council members minimum wage for one quarter of each year to better understand the need for livable wages. But, no, I better not use my one law for that - it should be something real BIG - like no pesticide use inside Fresno County, so that our pregnant women, children and the elderly can safely drink the tap water - which they are now warned from drinking. Or that all residents are treated equally under the law. Oh but this Question is not for me to answer, so I continue on...

Across from California State University, Fresno, I catch up with two young interns that wander the woods as Carnivore Monitors for the Forest Service, “saving the world one small mammal at a time,” quipped self-professed hippie, Evan Q. And as interns, he told me, “they are doing this #%&@ for free.” (They watched to see if I would actually write down the word #%&@. And I did).

Being an actual hippie - well, really I was under-age in ‘69’s Summer of Love so technically I was a teenybopper - I am real happy to hear the youth of today call themselves a hippie. We really NEED the hippies again - look what they did: Stopped the Viet Nam war, raised up women’s rights, held back the corporate carnivores and helped made the American dream of freedom of choice a reality.

So back to 24 year old Evan Q. and his answer to our Question: What would your law be? “I would build a giant, see-through, air-conditioned bubble dome over the entire city.”



But would we have clear sky inside it? Or would the dome trap our air pollution (judged to be almost the worst in the country)?

Evan’s good friend, Amber Bonilla, also a Carnivore Monitor, had this to say: “Well, my car just got towed today - so my irrevocable law would be to put a maximum \$100. cap on Fresno’s towing fees. I admit I did park illegally, but it just cost me \$265 dollars.” (and remember, Amber is an intern working for free).

That sounds good, too. My own car got towed while I was at Jamaica My Weekend and it cost me just under \$400. for parking maybe one inch into the red paint at the curb. Oh but I understand: it’s much easier to tow cars at a huge TDMC benefit full of peaceful people from all over the city, overflowing the Tower District’s streets parking their cars - thus bringing in easy money to city coffers - than it would be to actually fight crime by oh lets say, investigating en masse the almost-kidnapping of a young boy running with his teammates down a Fresno street. Or arresting the dangerous crack dealers dealing right in the open on our street corners or by simply parking policemen around town and in dangerous areas to prevent crimes before they happen. Yes, I see that it’s much safer for police to infiltrate and spy on nonviolent political activists than it is to infiltrate dangerous gangs or to listen in on greedy politics and power-grabbing - am I going on again? Stop me - that is, until next month.



Did You Know?
You can watch Fresno City Council meetings live (every Tuesday) on cable channel 96?

Community Alliance Special Section on Prisons

Fourth of July at CCWF July 2006

By Sara Jane Olson

On the fourth of July, the Central California Women's Facility (CCWF) prisoners had our "annual" BBQ. For those of us in housing unit 506 on B Yard, it was the worst BBQ we've ever had.

It took place on one of the Central Valley's hot, hot days. The first heat alert came early that day. When it's over 90 degrees Fahrenheit, women who take anti-depressants or similar psyche meds must limit their exposure to sun and heat. At 3:10 P.M. there were still a few such women outside so the entire yard, which usually locks down for count at 3:45 P.M. on a holiday, was recalled.

Prisoners in three of the housing units on B Yard can stay outside until 9:00 P.M. But 506 is the Close Custody unit. All Close A inmates are locked in the building after 6:00 P.M. every day. All Close B and Close A prisoners are locked in our cells at 8:00 P.M. For some of us, this goes on for years. Because of this, 506 usually goes first to eat at 5:00 P.M. That night, of the four housing units, we went last. None of us were allowed to eat outside, picnic-style.

The guards said, "You got nuthin' comin'!" They grouched, "Why do they still get that damn BBQ?" Once a year, we grudgingly get one grilled soy burger and one weiner on a bun. Once a year, we get a small wedge of watermelon on the state's dime and the guards complain that it's "too much."

On July 1, 2005 by legislative fiat SB737, the California Department of Corrections (CDC) added "and Rehabilitation," (CDCR) to its title. Several other interdepartmental name changes and an "on paper" reorganization occurred as a response to (from Prison Legal News, June 2006): "former Governor Deukmejian's 359 page June 2004 report to Governor Schwarzenegger, Reforming Corrections. The somber forewarning of the Deukmejian's report was that without a civilian oversight board, any reformulation of CDC would fail. Nonetheless, in enacting SB737, the California legislature omitted such oversight and instead left the reorganized prior bureaucracy to continue to run itself." Also lacking "is the absence of any measurable goals in actually achieving "correction" of "rehabilitation" of prisoners; . . . the financial incentive . . . for all staff is to increase the prison population."

Since reorganization took place, the only suggestions put forward by the Governor, the CDCR or the guards' union (CCPOA - California Correctional Peace Officers Association) and its front group, Crime Victims United led by pro-punishment Harriet Salarno, is to build more prisons. In his 2006 State of the State speech, the governor announced his intention to finance \$223 billion in state bonds over the next ten years for infrastructure and new construction in order to accommodate gross overcrowding in the CDCR's 33 institutions. There's no mention of decreasing the prison population through rehabilitative program interventions or streamlined parole policies.

Caren Hill, a three-strike prisoner at CCWF says,

One has to wonder what CDCR's definition of rehabilitation really is. Punishment has always been their motto and, from this side of the fence, I can honestly say that the punishment will always be their motto. When I say "their," I speak of the CCPOA, the men and women in green. The "free world" staff and the educators, for the most part, believe that their job is to rehabilitate. However, the custody staff often gets in the way. Custody is CCPOA and, as far as I can tell, the guards resent change and are not willing to work at rehabilitating inmates.

The treatment of women prisoners by custody would shock and appall the public's moral conscience. We are treated as less than human. We are demeaned, called names and left to "handle our business," that is - settle inter-inmate conflicts ourselves. If one of us has a problem with any of our seven roommates, guards tell us to "handle it", rather than move one of us. When someone is jumped in her room, staff turns their heads. Shell-shocked youngsters and the elderly are victimized regularly. Violence might be instigated by the guards or simply not attended to because they don't want to do "paperwork".

As the paper reorganization of the CDCR was going into effect July 1, 2005 so too were the prison medical services throughout the state. They were put under new super-

vision. Federal Judge Thelton Henderson put prison health care into receivership because it was so poorly run, with one inmate dying per week as a result of a non-functioning system. In February 2006, he appointed Robert Sillen to the post of federal receiver to implement reforms in a failed bureaucracy that houses 168,000 people with another 120,000 on parole. Medical costs have risen from \$153 million in 2001 to \$821 million in 2006 and costs will rise still higher. Sillen predicts that the medical care for prisoners may never be reintegrated under CDCR supervision.

Meanwhile, in CCWF, we don't see much in the way of change in our medical care. Our problems mainly stem from lack of access. We have to go through custody to get help and help is rarely immediate.

There are outside organizations from the Bay Area that have visited us for years. Some are Legal Services for Prisoners with Children (LSPC), California Coalition for Women Prisoners (CCWP), Critical Resistance (CR), California Prison Focus (CPF) and Justice Now. They have focused on specific projects.

CPF worked to end male staff pat searches of female inmates in 2005. For many women, that was a welcome change. Some told sad stories of humiliation and embarrassment. One stout young woman, who affected a sort of gender-neutral appearance, related how she'd been singled out behind Central Kitchen shortly after she came to CCWF. As she told me her tale, a blush rose from her neck to her cheeks and tears welled in the corners of her eyes. "He scared me", she cried, "and he told me no one would believe me".

Anyway, one must be careful about retaliation. The threat of retaliation stops many a whistle-blower in her tracks. Retaliation greases the social machinery in prison; retaliation and snitching.

LSPC produced a widely-read booklet, "Dignity Denied". It centers on the lives of women prisoners who are 55 years of age and older. It includes numerous interviews.

One woman, married, children, in her late 30's or early 40's had never committed a crime. She'd been in the wrong place at the wrong time with an old friend who behaved in a way he never had before. She was arrested, got a private attorney, a professional investigator, did all the right things and thought she'd never go to prison. The first offer, six months in the L.A. County Jail. "Oh, I could never do that," she said. Now she's convicted with a two-year sentence at CCWF.

"People in court, the judge, my lawyer, they told me I'd go to fire camp. I've got a sentence with 85%. Nobody with 85% goes to fire camp! Those people don't know anything about CDC! When you come into CDC, it's a whole different world. It's like a third world country. You're completely cut off from civilization. I was freaked out when I got here. I was sure some of the prisoners were men. 'Are they men?' I asked. I had no idea. You're isolated.

"I want to go to education. I go to my counselor for help. She doesn't know when and if I'm going. Yesterday, I waited an hour and a half to see her. I was late for work. She told me, 'you're on the list!' That's all she can tell me. They don't know from computers. There's no computers! It's sheer incompetence but it's 'planned' incompetence. These people are supposed to be our resources but they don't help us. And they don't have to."

Taxpayers for Improving Public Safety (TIPS), a Sacramento-based group that supports prisoners and their families, predicts that the entire state prison industry may be put into federal receivership soon, perhaps as early as October 2006. Judge Henderson's special master, John Hagar, has worked with him for several years, especially in cases concerning corruption and brutality by guards at Pelican Bay State Prison. In early July, he delivered a frank and scathing report of the Schwarzenegger administration's failure to implement any positive, money-saving change since it took office. Two CDCR head administrators, first Rod Hickman and later, Jeanne Woodford, were side-lined by the governor and CCPOA and resigned last spring. Together, the CDCR and the CCPOA will resist any move toward prison privatization, a threat recently thrown about by Schwarzenegger.

Politicians and the mainstream media, especially television news, have trained the public to fear "criminals", to look at prisoners as not-quite-human, a species apart. Crime is sexy, brings in viewers and sells advertising for T.V. stations. The brave, "get tough" legislators protect all the good people from the larcenously-inclined poor,

particularly the poor African Americans and Latinas, who get put into prisons. (CCWF statistics by race of inmates: Black 30%, Latina 29%, white 35%, Other 5%)

The public needs to be retrained to accept the idea of a rehabilitated prisoner. Politicians will have to put some effort into undoing their nefarious campaign of criminal injustice over the past 25 years. California, besides three strikes, has perhaps the most punitive, lengthy sentencing laws in the nation. There must be sentence reform. For rehabilitation to have a chance of success, parole must be severely reduced, if not altogether eliminated as it has been in other states.

The only hope for a true political overhaul of California's massive, costly, expanding prison industry is a federal takeover. As long as Californian politicians are beholden to the powerful prison bureaucracy, whether the CDCR's Sacramento headquarters or in the offices of the CCPOA, their predictable acquiescence to prison power is unshakeable.

California is breeding generations of prisoners. It's past time for an intervention and only its citizens can do it. Incarceration doesn't stop crime. A society that tackles its problem with social solutions provides hope to its people. Increased educational access, universal health-care and insurance, childcare, higher taxes on wealthy incomes, affordable housing, jobs plus public arts and sports programs are critical. Hope blends a positive outlook with personal responsibility, producing citizen optimism and a boost in civic involvement. Prisons kill hope. They are nothing but dead zones.

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



Who Are We to Judge?

By Jane Dorotik

I choose to define myself by my spiritual leanings, by my intentions, not by my surroundings. I am a psychiatric nurse by education. I have worked all my life in the health care field, the last twenty years in a leadership senior executive capacity for mental health organizations. I am a mother, a wife, an optimist, a nonconformist, and an animal lover. But now my surroundings threaten to swallow me up, engulf me in a sea of despair.

Six years ago my life was blown apart in a hurricane of events that I am just now beginning to put into some kind of perspective. My husband was brutally murdered by an unknown assailant while he was out jogging. Four days later, I was arrested and charged with killing my own husband - the man I loved and lived with for over thirty years, the father of our children.

Through an ego-driven trial lawyer, a seriously flawed defense strategy, and a sequence of judicial rulings that allowed the jury to hear less than half of the actual evidence, I am now serving a 25 years to life sentence at Chowchilla prison. Even to write the words "25 years to life" is unreal and chilling. It all still seems like a terrible nightmare, except that the nightmare is the daily existence that I wake up to. In my sleeping hours, my dream world is much safer... a kinder reality.

But I want to tell you much more than the story of the injustice done to me, for the story is much bigger than my plight. It is a story about society's prevailing need to find fault, to place blame somewhere, anywhere. It is a story about our inability to recognize the wisdom of rehabilitation as a viable consideration for troubled souls. The U.S. now incarcerates more than 2 million of its citizens. In total 6.7 million people are in jail, in prison, or on parole: 3.1% of all U.S. adults, or 1 in 32! And the number of women in prison is growing at a rate faster than any other group in the U.S. Almost 1.3 million are incarcerated for nonviolent offenses. What are we doing here? As a mental health care giver, I am horrified at the sheer numbers of women who should be in a treatment setting instead of a prison. It is a story I knew nothing about until I was sent here.

Here in this geographic location defining the twin prisons of Valley State Prison (VSP) and Central California

Continued on page 17



Women's prison in Chowchilla

Judge continued from page 16

Women's Facility (CCWF) exists the largest concentration of incarcerated women in the world: more than 7,000 women in a few square miles. We are packed in, eight women to each small cell, originally built to hold four. The enormous range in age, race, and temperament exacerbates the stress of this constant crowding, noise, and regimentation. Most incarcerated women smoke, so although smoking is supposedly forbidden in the building, nonsmokers must constantly choke on secondhand smoke. The correctional officers (COs) tell us they don't care; they will not group nonsmokers together in one cell.

There is never any privacy, no solitude; every day is filled with constant bickering, screaming, and racial agitation just from the severe overcrowding. We have to endure frequent and pointless cell searches for contraband, which includes scotch tape, paper clips, an extra state towel, etc. We are subject to "lockdowns" on the slightest pretext (like valley fog). We are lined up and marched over to the dining hall for meals, and four armed COs stand guard outside the door to make sure we don't take an extra 8-oz. carton of milk or exit with ice in our cups. We are treated like cattle, or worse, because cattle are generally well fed.

And what are we doing to "correct" these women? Even if we temporarily ignore the issue of whether these women should be here, removed from society, removed from their children, who then grow up in state systems, shuttled through foster homes... Even if we ignore the 1.3 million nonviolent people currently incarcerated... What are we doing with these 7,000 women? Couldn't they be doing something productive for society? Couldn't they be learning something of themselves, something about the patterns and choices that brought them here? What motivates them? What feeds their souls? What contributes to their real happiness so they may learn to work toward the betterment of themselves and their community?

Would it surprise you to learn that even the word "rehabilitation" has been removed from the California Department of Corrections (CDC)? Even that fragile hope of rehabilitating a human being who may have taken a wrong turn in life – even that illusion is gone. Don't we realize the future is a place we are creating, not a place we are going to? What will our future look like when we wake up and realize that we have traded educating our youth, our future generation, for incarcerating our troubled citizens? Nationally, university funding has decreased by \$945 million while prison funding has increased by \$926 million.

God knows I want to keep society safe as much as anyone else. Maybe more so because I know that the person who killed my husband is still out there. But locking away literally millions of U.S. citizens and then treating them like animals is not the way. Haven't we recognized that placing individuals in prison actually fosters criminal behavior instead of curbing it?

We are definitely not succeeding at keeping society safe; instead, we are creating an environment of fear and conflict, hatred and power. This prison industry is an industry gone awry – gravely compromised, rampant with abuses and hatred. It is a terrifying breeding ground for racism, sexism, homophobia, and dominating exploitation of other human beings. We are warehousing people, punishing them, and returning them to society worse off than they were when they entered the system. The violence that then comes out of these prisons is a much greater threat than terrorism.

Keep things quiet, don't talk about the abuses, the special treatment granted for sexual favors, the drugs supplied by the COs. I know an inmate who for six months could get any kind of liquor she wanted – not even repackaged to hide it. COs covertly supply inmates with a wide array of contraband from cigarette lighters to heroin in exchange for favors or payoffs. I know of COs who literally reek of booze all day long, often stumbling, slurring

through their work hours. Then they are "on leave" for several weeks. They return to work and the cycle starts all over.

Many of the COs (and most are male in this female prison) openly humiliate and denigrate these women and then laugh about it:

"Keep moving; you're attracting flies."

"Get your ass back in here and stop slutting around."

"Now what do you want? To put your mouth on my cigar?"

But to speak out against any of this guarantees retaliation in the ugliest of ways. One inmate was actually brave enough to report a sexual assault on her by staff. The incident was "investigated" and reasons were found to issue her a "115" (disciplinary action). Her telephone privileges were rescinded, cutting her off from her family and effectively preventing her from seeking legal help outside the prison for the assault she suffered. This is a horrifyingly difficult environment in which to try to survive; many compromise a great deal to assure survival.

Health care is similar to that in a third world country. Many needed diagnostic tests, or simply thorough assessments of symptoms, are needlessly delayed until a crisis situation develops, in some cases until the cancer is inoperable. Inmates are not routinely screened for hepatitis C even though the transmission in prison is practically epidemic and the Center for Disease Control has requested all states to screen total prison populations for hepatitis C infections. The Center for Disease Control further states, "The nation's prisons are primary incubators of the worst diseases affecting the national population."

One inmate in this yard tried for several days to access medical care for alarming symptoms. After waiting in the clinic line for hours, she was consistently refused care and derisively told to stop malingering and get the wheelchair she was using back to the clinic. The next morning she was dead. The inmates attempted CPR; the COs wouldn't touch her. You might assume that this degraded level of care at least carries a cheap price tag, but in fact the costs are staggering. California's starvation budget is disproportionately burdened by this corrupt system.

I am learning so many things in here. I am learning to rise above the stigma of being identified as a "criminal." I am learning to let go of the anger, the anguish. When I first arrived here, I was devastated, but it was a stunning and humbling experience to realize – these are also God's children. We are all souls trying to find our way in life. No person has any more or less value; no ethnicity, no occupation, no accomplishment has any greater or less intrinsic worth. Who are we to judge? Who are we?

Certainly my perspective has been radically changed by this experience. I am truly innocent. Yet I am not alone. According to the statistics published in the growing Innocence Projects and the Northwestern University Law School, anywhere from 10 to 25 percent of persons currently incarcerated are actually innocent of the crime for which they were convicted. In the cases its staff reviewed, Northwestern University revealed a 60% error rate.

How can our society tolerate this error rate? What do large companies like IBM or Microsoft tolerate as a margin of error? And they are monitoring only machines and business processes, not the freedom of human lives. And why is the success rate for appeals only 3 percent when the known error rate in convictions is so high?

I have finally been able to let go of some of the personal sense of injustice. It is a great injustice... but on some level – so what? Injustices happen all the time; people contract diseases, get hit by automobiles, suffer great tragedies. So what? We still have to get on with life. We still all have a responsibility to add some comfort, bring more kindness, promote integrity in our daily lives regardless of the circumstances in which we find ourselves. And in a larger context, we all also have a responsibility to speak out against a social wrong.

I am learning to live in the moment, to seek joy in small glimpses, to value the wisdom of the universe despite my surroundings and the constant fear. I am learning to look for the love and goodness in most people despite the façade or the anger they may exhibit.

I know in my heart I will eventually get out of here; the truth will come out and it will set me free. I hope it is

sooner rather than later. I hope I win the appeal even though the statistics are so discouraging.

Maybe in the bigger picture there is a purpose in all of this. As hard as it has been – and continues to be – to live through the horror of this great injustice that we impose on our fellow humans, I know without a doubt that the rest of my life is meant to be dedicated toward amending this arcane and destructive system. So I know where my future lies. But what of the rest of these women in here? Someone has to help them. Someone has to speak out against the atrocities. And then everyone has to listen.

As Dostoyevsky wrote, "The degree of civilization a society exhibits is best determined by how it treats its prisoners."

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Written by Jane Dorotik, W90870 CCWF 506-26-3L, P.O. Box 1508, Chowchilla, CA 93610-1508. This article was forwarded to us by Bonnie Long, psychotherapist, e-mail bonnie8888@aol.com. Bonnie Long is Jane Dorotik's sister; she serves as Chair of the Inmate Family Council at Central California Women's Facility and as a member of the Statewide Family Council.

They Don't Triple Bunk Dogs! Overcrowding and the Medical Crisis In California State Prisons

By Boston Woodard

Pick up a newspaper, turn on your favorite TV news station, tune into a local radio talk show and listen to the buzz. Everyone is talking about the "prison health care crisis" and the "inhumane prison overcrowding" bloating the California Department of Corrections and Rehabilitation (CDCR) prison system.

What you are reading, seeing, and hearing are a lot of charts, numbers, predictions and comments from dozens of disingenuous vote-seeking politicians and prison officials. They are promoting their "cure" for the out-of-control catastrophe happening right now behind the walls of the entire California prison system.

What you are not reading, seeing, and hearing about are all the personal horror stories of specific prisoners who are suffering while being misdiagnosed and neglected by prison medical staff. It is well documented that prison officials have allowed this mistreatment to go on intentionally for many years. The entire prison system has gone mad with deceit, secrecy, and greed at the expense of prisoners' health and California taxpayers' financial resources.

Now, just like previous state governors, Governor Arnold Schwarzenegger has promised fantastic prison reform. That was before he decided to crawl into bed with the state's powerful prison guard's union, the California Correctional Peace Officers' Association (CCPOA).

In February 2006 Robert Sillen, former director of the Santa Clara Valley Health & Hospital System, was appointed by U.S. District Court Judge Thelton Henderson to serve as federal receiver in charge of reforming the state's prison health system. Judge Henderson blamed an inept state bureaucracy, the governor, and lawmakers for the prison health care crisis and suggested he would send federal marshals to Sacramento to seize money if legislators and Schwarzenegger don't provide sufficient funding to improve care for the state's 173,000 prisoners.

Health care and overcrowding have been out of control for many years. The problems accelerated during the mid-1990s when (then) Governor Pete Wilson changed the policy that had allowed media access to individual prisoners with legitimate concerns regarding prison issues that included health care and overcrowding.

Governor Wilson also stopped a twenty-year-plus policy of allowing prisoners to write to the media confidentially in sealed envelopes, claiming that it was a matter of "institutional safety and security." His claim was baseless and without merit. He duped the public into believing absolute nonsense without a shred of evidence to support his lies.

During the mid-1990s the media ban served prison officials well, preventing public knowledge of many incidents. Consider the boiling alive of prisoner Vonn Dortch at Pelican Bay State Prison; the department's policy of

Continued on page 18

Community Alliance Special Section on Prisons

Overcrowding continued from page 17

encouraging the use of deadly force (high-powered rifle fire) to break up fist fights on prison yards; and the lack of overall medical and mental health treatment of prisoners, resulting in deaths, permanent injuries, and disabilities.

If a prisoner with a legitimate concern wants to inform the media of a problem behind the walls, he or she has only two options: to write the problem in an unsealed letter that will be heavily censored by prison officials; or to make a collect phone call that is recorded and monitored.

If either of these methods reveals a claim of prison staff misconduct or a serious unhealthy living condition, that piece of mail will be confiscated or that phone call will be abruptly terminated. The prisoner may be subjected to disciplinary action or confined to an isolation cell pending investigation of a fabricated rule violation.

The CDCR has an estimated \$8.7 billion budget and 173,000 prisoners. There are 33 state prisons that were designed for about half of the present population. Overcrowding has gotten so bad that more than 16,000 convicts are sleeping in gymnasiums and TV/day rooms. Another 117,000 are out on the streets, with 70 percent of them likely to return to prison within three years.

Solano State Prison in Vacaville California is an example of severe overcrowding and of medical health for prisoners at its worst. There are over 6,000 prisoners in Solano. The prison was designed for less than half that number. The prisoners are separated into four yards, numbers #1 through #4.

Yards #1 and #2 house "level three" prisoners and yards #3 and #4 house "level two" prisoners. A convict's level is determined by a point system. A convict must be involved for many years of "programming" in order to be placed in a lower security, level two institution.

Level two is supposedly for prisoners who have earned the right to more or better programming. You would have a hard time convincing the men in Solano's level two facility of that.

Yard #3 has six buildings that house approximately 1,600 prisoners. The older buildings were designed to hold 160 men. Today, there are 348 men crammed into tiny spaces so small that the Humane Society would order the facility shut down if animals were living there. According to the law, the space would be inadequate for dogs.

Full-grown men are forced to sleep in "triple bunks" that are welded into spaces designed for a single bunk. Triple bunks are small beds stacked three high with barely enough room for a man to turn over while lying down. They look like three coffins stacked one on top of the other with the sides removed. They don't triple bunk dogs!

The buildings are filthy, covered with dirt and thick dust all over the ceiling. Bird droppings abound and putrid smells waft throughout the building. There is no permanent airflow and summer temperatures rise to over 100 degrees inside the buildings. There is nothing a prisoner can do to cool down. With 348 bodies stuffed into a space designed for 160, it's mind boggling to consider how the convicts deal with these forced, deplorable conditions day in and day out. It takes a lot of courage.

Building #13 on yard #3 has 18 toilets for 348 men. There are no urinals. It's a men's prison. NO URINALS! Convicts have to wait in long lines to use one of the few toilets available. Mornings are the worst time. Some men have had to defecate into plastic or paper bags because they could not wait for one of the few toilets. Others have been forced to urinate into empty cans or plastic bottles because their bladders were about to explode.

In Building #13 four small shower areas contain a total of 15 showerheads, not nearly enough for the hundreds of men who live there. Men often have to wait for hours in order to bathe. Recently the prison's administration decided that the inadequate shower program wasn't bad enough, so they had shower timers installed to shut the water off at various times throughout the day. There is never enough time for everyone to shower.

Some convicts are made to work in filthy kitchen areas and in the prison's laundry, where temperatures can rise to 120 degrees during the summer. They wait for hours

to shower; that is, if the timers are on. Other prisoners have to stand in the toilet stalls and take what is called a prison "bird-bath," using a cup or an empty bottle to pour water over their heads from one of the small sinks that line the wall of the bathroom.

The gymnasium between yards #3 and #4 is no longer used for prisoner exercise. It now houses hundreds of men who are also stuffed into triple bunks. Like all housing units in Solano, the gymnasium is scorching hot in the summer. The ventilation is poor, mold and mildew grow throughout the toilet and shower area, and the noise can be deafening. There are plans to install additional beds in the gymnasium.

Solano's medical situation is as bad as it gets. It is out of control from negligence and incompetence. The prison's "Satellite Clinic" is located in a small alley between yards #3 and #4. Just outside the clinic door, literally a few short feet away, are the kitchen's garbage dumpsters, thick with flies and foul smells that permeate the inside of the clinic. At various times a waste disposal truck parks just outside the clinic door and sucks up all the filth and grease that collects in traps under the asphalt.

Consider the case of another young man who had tuberculosis when he arrived at Solano. He was ordered to work in the prison's kitchen around food that was being served to thousands of other prisoners. The medical department failed to do their job, allowing this man to be placed in the general population subjecting others to his illness. He too was rushed to an outside hospital but not before it was too late. He also died.

Prisoners have to wait for hours for their pain medications, psychiatric medications, and insulin. Those with open wounds requiring dressing changes wait up to five or six hours, standing with crutches in some cases, before they are attended to.

Water from a hose out back of the kitchen frequently floods the small ground-level waiting room in the Satellite Clinic. When the hose is used to wash garbage from around the dumpsters, the water flows into the clinic under the door. Foul-smelling water is squeegeed and mopped up by a clinic porter, and then everyone acts as if nothing had just occurred.

Many of the so-called medical staff in Solano's Satellite Clinic are uncompassionate and incompetent. There is a triage system to evaluate and determine the seriousness of a prisoner's complaint. If your blood pressure seems normal and your temperature seems okay, your file will be shuffled into a large stack of requests from other prisoners who have yet to be seen by a doctor.

Men with oozing infections, shortness of breath, swollen necks, obvious severe skin rashes, abscessed teeth, liver problems, and the list goes on, all have to wait exorbitant amounts of time before being seen by one of Solano's doctors, if they are lucky.

Many of the complaints regarding the medical process at Solano are not with the doctors personally; they are about the incompetent medical technician assistants, many of the nurses, and other prison medical workers who either do not do their jobs or ignore doctor's orders and medical policies.

Today, there are 348 men crammed into tiny spaces so small that the Humane Society would order the facility shut down if animals were living there. According to the law, the space would be inadequate for dogs.

In his first report to the federal court that appointed him, Robert Sillen stated that California's prison medical system, which previously had been criticized by federal court officials as so depraved "... inmates were needlessly dying," was in worse shape than first described and that his remedies would have to be more dramatic and far reaching than previously envisioned.

Take for example the recent case of a prisoner at Solano who was given the runaround after complaining about an abscessed tooth. He was neglected by the medical department to the point that he died shortly after being rushed to an outside hospital for treatment he had needed months before his death. Consider the case of another

young man who had tuberculosis when he arrived at Solano. He was ordered to work in the prison's kitchen around food that was being served to thousands of other prisoners. The medical department failed to do their job, allowing this man to be placed in the general population and subjecting others to his illness. He too was rushed to an outside hospital but not before it was too late. He also died.

"There is no way we're going to get the constitutional medical care standards with current overcrowding," said Sillen. "If the state wants its system back, it will eventually have to address that."

Schwarzenegger called a special legislative session to address the state's inhumane, grossly overcrowded prison system. The governor argued that severe overcrowding could lead to a federal takeover of the entire system and the early release of "thousands" of prisoners. Gubernatorial spokesman Adam Mendelsohn has said, "Under no circumstances is releasing felons before their time is served an appropriate method to address overcrowding."

Sillen said health care delivery in prison is without a doubt hampered by overcrowding but that it is "premature" for him to talk of drastic changes such as early release that confront political opposition. Sillen's report was described as "ominous" by one state senator for its implication that Sillen might demand major changes to state government.

Another scathing report was issued by John Hagar, a special investigator working for Federal District Court Judge Thelton Henderson on two prison-related cases.

Hagar said, "After two years of the most productive prison reform in state history, Schwarzenegger had begun retreating with his Chief of Staff, Susan Kennedy, and another top aide granting the guard's union, the CCPOA, a disturbing level of clout over prison management decisions." Hagar complained that the Schwarzenegger administration is cozier with the powerful CCPOA than with the governor's appointed prison director.

These reports describe, "a web of incompetence in the department [of corrections] that has simply chosen to ignore its problems," said Senator Gloria Romero, D-Los Angeles.

Solano State Prison could very well be the poster child for severe overcrowding and atrocious medical services for prisoners, but if the truth be known, there are other prisons throughout California that are certain to explode if relief does not come soon.

Writer's Note:

On May 9, 2006, I was rushed via ambulance to Queen of the Valley Hospital in Napa California from Solano State Prison in Vacaville. I had a serious bacterial infection throughout my entire body that was killing me, according to a doctor in Napa. After weeks of Solano's medical staff repeatedly telling me that there was "nothing wrong" with me and that I would be placed on a waiting list to see a doctor, I almost died.

While I was being told by these geniuses that I was "fine" and "okay," I had a bacterial poison festering in my body. Even after I made numerous requests to be examined, not one medical staff looked at me. If they had taken a simple blood test early on, oral antibiotics would have done the job, according to a doctor at Queen of the Valley Hospital. After many tests in Napa it is still a mystery how I became infected.

Days before I was admitted to Queen of the Valley Hospital, I was running a very high temperature. I could not walk or use my right arm. My shoulder swelled to twice its normal size and my left foot looked like a football with toes. The infection was trying to burst its way out of my body.

I had to piss in a bottle because I could not make the fifteen feet to the toilet that probably had someone sitting on it.

The day before I was taken to the hospital by ambulance, several of the guards made numerous attempts by phone to inform the medical department my situation was fast becoming very serious. Ultimately, the only way I was able to get some medical attention was that one of the

Continued from page 18

guards pushed his personal alarm and called in a “medical code.” This is absolutely the last thing that custody staff can do to make the medical department do its job.

After the alarm was sounded, I was carried by a half dozen convicts on a stretcher from the housing unit, placed on a small medical transportation vehicle, and brought to the infamous Satellite Clinic.

I lay on a gurney inside the clinic for many hours in severe pain. Later that evening, and after months of being shuffled around with no one in the medical department paying attention to my problem, I was seen by a doctor; Dr. Noriega. After examining me for a few minutes, Dr. Noriega told me that I was being transferred immediately to a hospital outside the prison. Dr. Noriega told me that my situation was “bad” and that I would be treated at Queen of the Valley.

I spent six weeks and a day at Queen of the Valley. It was determined by doctors there that three surgeries were required to drain the poison from my body. Massive amounts of a powerful antibiotic were pumped into me for over a month.

I could not walk and my right arm was pretty much useless. I spent four weeks in the Acute Rehabilitation Unit going through a very intense and painful rehabilitative process. I had to literally learn to walk all over again, with the help of many physical and occupational therapists. It took four weeks of therapy to regain some use of my right arm. I could not move my arm without experiencing pain throughout my entire shoulder, neck, and upper back areas.

It took six weeks, costing tens of thousands of taxpayers’ dollars, to clean up the incompetence of Solano State Prison’s medical department. It should never have come to that. Other medical cases similar to mine, and many even more serious, are going on right now throughout the California Department of Corrections and Rehabilitation.

It’s frightening to think that I could have been a statistic on Solano’s now infamous body count list due to poor medical conditions behind these walls. It is absolutely criminal that there are still many men suffering and fighting for their lives, struggling to get the proper, even basic, medical care they desperately need.

We can only hope that Mr. Sillen does the right thing as soon as possible. We prisoners need help and we need it fast before more prisoners needlessly die.

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



Monday, September 18
6:30 PM

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

1. Mandate parole, rather than prison, for people with sentences of 12 months or less.
2. Discharge people who have been civilly committed (“civil narcotic addicts”).
3. Remove state prison as a sentencing option for driving under the influence, hashish possession, receiving stolen property, drug possession, vehicle theft and grand theft.
4. Repeal the Three Strikes Law.
5. Amend the Three Strikes law so that the third strike must also be classified as a “serious or violent felony”.
6. Amend the Three Strikes law so that burglary does not constitute a strike.
7. Eliminate the disparity in sentencing between crack and powder cocaine by reducing seence lengths for crack cocaine to the sentence lengths for powder cocaine.
8. Mandate treatment in non-CDCR facilities, rather than prison, for people convicted of controlled substances offenses.
9. Mandate alternatives to prison for people serving a sentence for possession of a controlled substance, petty theft with a prior or receiving stolen property.
10. Make petty theft with a prior a misdemeanor.
11. Establish community-based restorative and transformative justice programs as an alternative to prison.
12. Mandate probation, rather than prison, for anyone serving a sentence of 12 months or less.
13. Discharge all people determined to be mentally ill from prison to treatment programs.
14. Increase good time credits for those who wish to participate in programming or education.
15. Discharge women who fall under the definition of “battered women.”
16. Provide alternatives to prison outside of CDCR custody for women who are pregnant.
17. Enact and implement policies, such as intermediate sanctions, so that fewer people are sent back to prison for violations for parole.
18. Expand eligibility for intermediate sanctions so that fewer people are sent back to prison for violations for parole.
19. Abolish return-to-custody as a sanction for technical parole violations. This could result in anywhere between 15,000 and 55,000 fewer people being sent to prison every year.
20. Fully implement the remedies contained in *Valdivia v. Schwarzenegger* to “reduce the number of returns to prison for violation of parole by up to 10 percent in 2004” and “by up to 30 percent by 2006.”
21. Discharge people from parole before their currently established discharge dates.
22. Legislatively mandate that California reduce its return to years.
23. Parole people serving indeterminate sentences who have
24. Directly discharge (eliminate parole supervision for) per-
25. Reduce the time served for parole revocations by 140 days.
26. Expedite parole revocation hearings, so that people are not
27. Eliminate the Governor’s discretion to veto parole recom-
28. Make providing services, rather than supervision, the pri-
29. Discharge people on parole who have served 12 months of
30. Discharge to parole people over 60 years of age.
31. Discharge to parole people convicted of offenses classified
32. Directly discharge people over 70 years of age.
33. Discharge people identified as terminally ill, permanently
34. Discharge selected people from parole after 3 months of successful parole supervision.
35. Provide every person with the opportunity to participate in education and/or job training while in prison.
36. Provide every person with the opportunity to participate in drug treatment.
37. Ban the box on employment applications that asks if the applicant has been convicted of a felony or has a criminal record.
38. Release from custody and provide non-CDCR operated transitional housing for people in prison six months prior to their release date.
39. Provide people coming home from prison with six months of housing.
40. Provide people coming home from prison with immediate access to identification documents.
41. Provide people coming home from prison with job training, drug & alcohol treatment, and public assistance.
42. Provide people coming home from prison with community college fee waivers.
43. Provide people coming home from prison with public transit vouchers.
44. Adopt the Bill of Rights for Children of Incarcerated Parents so that parents and their children are better prepared to reunite.
45. Rescind the lifetime ban on receiving assistance from the federal Temporary Assistance to Needy Families (TANF) block grant programs for people convicted of possession, use, or distribution of controlled substances.
46. Establish and enforce a limit on the capacity of the state prison system and an official state policy of no new prison construction.
47. Enact a moratorium on new prison construction.
48. Commit to reducing the number of people in prison sufficiently to close two state prisons (one men’s prison and one women’s prison) within the next five years.
49. Close one men’s prison within the next five years.
50. Close one women’s prison within the next five years.

50 Ways to
Reduce the
Number of
People in Prison
in California

prison rate for violations of parole to the national average within the next 3
reached their parole eligibility dates.
sons convicted of offenses classified as “non-serious” and “non-violent”.
imprisoned without a hearing.
mendations.
mary function of parole.
parole without a violation.
as “non-serious” and “non-violent” 12 months before their currently estab-
incapacitated, or having less than 1 year to live.

These proposals are drawn from the Legislative Analyst’s Office, the Little Hoover Commission, the Governor’s Corrections Independent Review Panel, the Blue Ribbon Commission on Inmate Population Management, measures taken by states across the country, and other experts. For more detailed analysis see also, “Lower Costs, Greater Safety” produced by the Coalition for Effective Public Safety (2004).
www.curbprisonspending.org

INSIDE/OUT

The Community Alliance newspaper is being read in prisons and jails throughout the Central Valley. Help us keep communications open between prisoners and the outside world by sponsoring a prisoner subscription. The Community Alliance sends a free subscription to any prisoner who requests one. You can help by sponsoring a prisoner subscription for \$35 a year.

Here is why you should sponsor a prisoner sub:

...as you know, prison is big business, a system where brutality, corruption and the wasting of billions of taxpayers dollars is routine. Publications such as the Community Alliance and its readers deserve to know accurately and fairly what goes on behind these prison walls. Only the unfettered voices from within can accurately and fairly help hold the people in power accountable for their words and their actions

Boston Woodard
Community Alliance writer from the State Prison in Vacaville

Many women in prison are indigent. Community Alliance offers free newspapers to prisoners supported by individual subscription sponsors. Please consider a subscription donation for a C.C.W.F. (Central California Women’s Facility) prisoner. Help us stay connected to the free world.

Sara Olson
Community Alliance writer from the Central California Women’s Facility in Chowchilla

It costs us money to print articles about what is going on inside the prisons and to send free subscriptions to prisoners throughout the Central Valley. Surprisingly enough, we don’t receive funding from the government or big corporations to do this work. We rely on you, our readers, for support.

Mike Rhodes
Editor, Community Alliance newspaper

Yes, I believe in free speech and want to sponsor _____ prisoner subscriptions.

Enclosed is \$_____

Your Name: _____

Address: _____

Community Alliance newspaper, P.O. Box 5077, Fresno Ca 93755

Fresno Center for Nonviolence



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

**dedicated to PEACE and SOCIAL JUSTICE through
SIMPLICITY ~ JUSTICE ~ INCLUSIVENESS ~ NON-INJURY**

HE CAN'T BELIEVE IT – NEITHER CAN WE!

Dr. Welch is on leave this month. We take this opportunity to say goodbye to Vincent Lavery, long-time Board Member and unofficial "Gadfly of The Left", who is retiring to Ireland. Vincent has had a long public career as teacher, soccer coach, Democratic Party stalwart, and letter-writer to The Bee. In his association with the Center, we remember him best for such activities as producing the TV shows "The Right Stuff from the Left" and "The Democratic Socialist Hour" and hosting our segment of "Stir It Up" on KFCF; creating The Great Fresno/Oxford Debates; co-founding Peace Fresno and the Central California Institute; and portraying Oscar Wilde in a fundraising one-man show for the Center. Of course Vincent is best known for his project pairing Northern Ireland Protestant and Catholic youth and Lebanese Muslim and Christian youth as depicted in the made-for-TV movie "Children in the Crossfire", which, incidentally, is available at "The Movies."



I interviewed Vincent at the Center in mid-August.

RS: What brings you to this move?

VL: I cannot believe I am doing this after living in Fresno 40 years. It is shot through with irony. I left Ireland for economic reasons; now I leave here and go back for the same reason. It's like returning to the womb to die.

More irony, I've done everything to be a model American--served 3 years as a paratrooper in the U.S. Army, four years in the U.S. Air Force, taught for 30 years in the Fresno Unified School District, 18 years as a substitute teacher, 12 years as a full time high school American Government teacher, and 25 years as a high school soccer coach but I was punished for defending the right of Free Speech. After I retired in 2000, I was reduced to living on \$229 a month Social Security.

RS: What do you think you have accomplished here?

VL: There have been occasions when, years later, people come up and thank me for touching their lives, be it on the soccer field or in the classroom or as a result of my political activities. I haven't moved mountains but I like to think I

have moved a few grains of sand in my lifetime. What more can one ask for? I am also proud of having tried to reconcile practical politics (where the real decisions get made!) and the idealism of peace work. People often tell me it is impossible – I believe it is essential to connect the two.

RS: What will you miss?

VL: The "challenge of Fresno" in general, where so many accepted ideas are totally foreign to my understanding; and specifically the impelling need to confront Fresno Unified School District, which to me symbolizes our nation's failure to live up to our ideals of respecting individual rights and fostering free thought. And I'll miss the many people I've been associated with in so many up-hill struggles, from farmworker rights to a rational district reapportionment of political boundaries.

RS: Any last words?

VL: I want to encourage all my friends to keep doing their work. I will get pleasure knowing that the likes of the Center, Peace Fresno, Food Not Bombs, and many other organizations are carrying on. Keep tuned to CNN for news from Ireland... and maybe you'll see me standing on a corner in O'Connell Street in Dublin with a peace message in my hands. Finally, everyone is welcome to email me at vlavery@yahoo.com. And if you visit Ireland, I will pick you up at the airport...provided you pay for gas, it's \$8 a gallon.

BOOK SALE

Books, CDs, & DVDs

October 7th: 8 a.m. – 3 p.m.

SW Corner of Van Ness & Olive

Donations still being accepted at the
Fresno Center for Nonviolence
(Monday – Friday, 11 a.m. – 3 p.m.)



Second Wednesday Video Series:

September 13th

The Take

In suburban Buenos Aires, thirty unemployed auto-parts workers walk into their idle factory, roll out sleeping mats and refuse to leave. They're part of a daring new movement of workers who are occupying bankrupt businesses and creating jobs in the ruins of the failed system. All they want is to re-start the silent machines. But this simple act - The Take - has the power to turn the globalization debate on its head.

Noon & 7:00 p.m. – FCNV

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



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 Annual Retreat and the New Face of Fresno

WILPF: On August 19th we held our annual retreat at the home of Pat Wolk. Thanks Pat for opening your beautiful home to us. The retreat was attended by 19 members and two guests. Vickie Fouts facilitated the agenda covering the past year with Joan Poss handling the discussion on the upcoming year. We covered the year-end branch report which showed all that Fresno WILPF has accomplished this past year. We thank all who helped make it all possible. We also had individual reports on the Raging Grannies, our local Save the Water Campaign, membership and our new Crafts Faire Handbook. Our treasury report showed that we ended the year with \$2092.97 in our education fund and \$2733.33 in checking.

Next we talked about the future of Fresno WILPF and how to keep our branch together. It was decided we

Wednesday, September 6, Noon: Women in Black Fresno County Courthouse Breezeway

Thursday, September 14, 7 PM: No WILPF Business Meeting - Meetings will move to quarterly with more information to come

Wednesday, September 27, 3 PM: WILPF Stir-It-Up on KFCF 88.1 FM

October 1-8: Keep Space for Peace Week (see below)

would not have a board like in the past but we would have a leadership structure that would include some of the past framework plus a new format for Fresno WILPF. From the past makeup we will have Elizabeth Swearingen as Secretary, Meta Schettler as Treasurer, Vickie Fouts as Membership and Past President.

The new face of WILPF will include Jan Slagter as the branch contact for National WILPF. Our new social work intern will be supervised by a committee of Catherine Garoupa, Lynn Jacobsson, Joan Poss and Rose Rowe. The monthly WILPF page in the Community Alliance will be done by a different volunteer each month. We still have openings for a couple of issues and if you are interested please contact us.

For local leadership we will have a coordinator who will hold the position for 3-4 months at a time. Our first coordinator will be Jean Hays. Information on the others will be forthcoming. Jean will be the contact person for members with questions, concerns, etc. and the local contact for different organizations in Fresno that we work with. Jean can be reached at: skyhorse3593@sbcglobal.net, 439-0280 or 5493 N Roosevelt Ave - Fresno, CA 93704. It was decided to hold branch meetings quarterly with the above members meeting in between via emails or conference calls.

We wish to thank our last board for all that

they did this past year. They were: President: Vickie Fouts, Secretary: Kris Smith, Treasurer: Natasha Fouts-Noble, Newsletter: Vickie Fouts, Legislative: Rose Rowe, Literature and Herstorian: Marilyn Byrne, Telephone tree: Ellie Bluestein, Publicity: Laura Fultz, Members-At-Large: Jean Kennedy, Joan Poss, Jan Slagter, Intern: Kris Smith, and Funding Raising, Membership & Program: Vickie Fouts & Kris Smith.

We wish to welcome the new leadership members of Jan Slagter, Jean Hays, Elizabeth Swearingen, Meta Schettler, Vickie Fouts, Catherine Garoupa, Lynn Jacobsson, Joan Poss and Rose Rowe and others to be determined. We wish you the best of luck and great success.

Keep Space for Peace Week October 1-8, 2006: Every year WILPF co-sponsors Keep Space for Peace Week nationwide. To learn more check out www.disarm.wilpf.org or space4peace.org.

Don't Spy on Us: On June 14, 2006 Women's International League for Peace and Freedom, its branches in the Philadelphia area, sponsors and staff submitted a Freedom of Information Request to the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) and the Joint Terrorism Task Force. WILPF joined over two dozen peace and justice groups in the Philadelphia region to launch the Don't Spy on Me Campaign to expose the government's war on dissent. The announcement of this campaign comes several months after a Freedom of Information Act Request exposed FBI spying on the Thomas Merton Center for Peace and Justice in Pittsburgh, PA simply because the organization opposed the war in Iraq. Although previously disclosed documents had shown that the FBI is retaining files on anti-war groups, these documents are the first to show conclusively that the rationale for FBI targeting is the group's opposition to the war.

Quote of the Month:

"Whenever you struggle, there exists the possibility of victory. When you surrender, you forfeit this inherent possibility."

-Jose Ramon Balaguer
(Cuban Communist Party)



WILPFers Nora DeWitt, Vickie Fouts and Joan Poss with prospective member Peggy Davis at the Women Votes March. Photo by Mike Rhodes

A Poem to Americans by A Palestinian Youth: The below poem was sent out on the International WILPF list-serve. In many ways it could have also been written by a Lebanese, Afghanistan or Iraqi youth.

Eye to Eye
By: Gihad Ali

Look into my eyes
And tell me what you see
You don't see a damn thing,
'cause you can't possibly relate to me.

You're blinded by our differences.
My life makes no sense to you.
I'm the persecuted Palestinian.
You are the American red, white and blue.

Each day you wake in tranquility.
No fears to cross your eyes.
Each day I wake in gratitude.
Thanking God he let me rise.

You worry about your education
And the bills you have to pay.
I worry about my vulnerable life
And if I'll survive another day.

Your biggest fear is getting ticketed
As you cruise your Cadillac.
My fear is that the tank that just left
Will turn around and come back.

America, do you realize,
That the taxes that you pay
Feed the forces that traumatize
My every living day?

The bulldozers and the tanks,
The gases and the guns,
The bombs that fall outside my door,
All due to American funds.

Yet do you know the truth
Of where your money goes?
Do you let your media deceive your mind?
Is this a truth that no one knows?

You blame me for defending myself
Against the ways of Zionists
I'm terrorized in my own land
And I'm the terrorist?

You think that you know all about terrorism
But you don't know it the way I do.
So let me define the term for you.
And teach you what you thought you knew.

I've known terrorism for quite some time,
Fifty- four years and more.
It's the fruitless garden uprooted in my yard.
It's the bulldozer in front of my door.

Terrorism breathes the air I breathe.
It's the checkpoint on my way to school.
It's the curfew that jails me in my own home,
And the penalties of breaking that curfew rule.

Terrorism is the robbery of my land.
And the torture of my mother.
The imprisonment of my innocent father.
The bullet in my baby brother.

So America, don't tell me you know about
The things I feel and see.
I'm terrorized in my own land
And the blame is put on me.

But I will not rest, I shall never settle
For the injustice my people endure.
Palestine is OUR land and there we'll remain
Until the day OUR homeland is secure.

And if that time shall never come,
Then they will never see a day of peace.
I will not be thrown from my own home,
Nor will fight for justice cease.

And if I am killed, it will be for Falasteen.
It's written on my breath.
So in your own patriotic words,
Give me liberty or give me death.

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PEACE AND SOCIAL JUSTICE CALENDAR OF EVENTS

Monday, September 4 • 4 PM

March for legalization! Join us with families and friends to the popular march on the Fulton Mall....bring your banners and flags, join the voices asking for a fair Legalization for all immigrants!!!

Organized by the Central California Coalition for Immigrant Rights. For mor information: (559) 266-5291....(559) 499-1178 or (559) 222-7678.

Friday, September 8 • 6:30 - 8:30 PM

The Reedley Peace Center presents the movie: Amistad. This Stephen Spielberg film is based on a little-known but important chapter in U.S. history. Amistad tells of a bloody revolt of African captives on a Spanish slave ship off the coast of America in 1839, and the investigations and trials that followed. It concludes with a precedent-setting argument by aging former president John Quincy Adams before the U.S. Supreme Court.

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

Friday, September 8, and Saturday, September 9 • 5PM and 8PM

Fresno Filmworks presents "A Prairie Home Companion" at the Tower Theatre. Exclusive area showings, sponsored by 90.7 KFSR. Director Robert Altman and writer Garrison Keillor join forces with an all- star cast to create a comic backstage fable about a fictitious radio variety show that has managed to survive in the age of television. Tickets can be purchased at the Tower Theatre Box Office, 815 E. Olive Ave., The Movies, 1435 N. Van Ness Ave., the Fig Garden Bookstore in Fig Garden Village, and at the door, for \$10; \$8, for students and seniors. For more information call the FFW info line, 221-0755, or go to www.fresnofilmworks.org

Saturday, September 9 • 7 PM

Community Dance. The next dance will be held at upstairs at Cynthia Merrill Performing Arts School, South of Shaw Ave. on Blackstone Ave, 4750 N Blackstone Ave Fresno, CA 93726

This is a really great room, air conditioned too. Beginners are welcome: please arrive at 6:30 for a warm up. If nothing else we do some clogging until others arrive. Donation at the door \$5 per person. This event is sponsored by the Fresno Folklore Society. Visit the web site and join up here: <http://home.pacbell.net/ckjohns/>

Saturday, September 9 • 7:30 PM

Fresno Folklore Society Presents: GEOFF MULDAUR who will open the FFS Fall Concert Series. This event will be held at the Bonner Auditorium at the Fresno Art Center. Tickets: \$15 advance; \$20 at door Advance tickets for FFS concerts available for purchase at the FAM Gift Shoppe

Much to Fresno's good fortune, Geoff Muldaur, one of the great voices and musical forces to emerge from the folk, blues and folk-rock scenes, is back touring. He's a favorite of Bonnie Raitt, Lovin' Spoonful, and Loudon Wainwright III and a regular guest on A Prairie Home Companion, featured on All Things Considered and Weekend Edition. Don't miss this performance. A full page of discography and accolades from around the world is listed on his website: www.geoffmuldaur.com

Wednesday, September 13 • 12 Noon & 7:00 PM

Second Wednesday Video Series - Film: "The Take." At the Fresno Center for Nonviolence Dedicated to Peace & Social Justice, 1584 N. Van Ness. Discussion follows the evening program only. All are invited to this FREE event. For information call the Center 237-3223 during open hours M-F 11 - 3.

Wednesday, September 13 • 7 - 9 PM

The Central Valley Progressive PAC will hold a forum with the candidates who are running for the Fresno Unified School District. The event, which is free and open to the public, will be held at the Unitarian-Universalist Church in Fresno. The Church's Social Concerns Committee as a co-sponsor.

Wednesday, September 13 • 7 PM

Fresno Cohousing to Host Green Building Presentation at the Woodward Park Library. Fresno Cohousing will host a presentation on green and sustainable building practices titled "Low Environmental Impact, Big Lifestyle: The Real Advantages of Cohousing and Green Architecture." The presenter will be architect Chuck

Durrett, who has received awards from the National Association of Home Builders (NAHB) for innovation in green building techniques. Cohousing is a way of creating environmentally sustainable communities where neighbors know each other and live in beautiful homes they have designed themselves, while sharing amenities and resources. Supervised children's activities will be provided at the presentation and refreshments will be served. For information and travel directions, go to www.fresnocohousing.org, or email info@fresnocohousing.org. RSVP to Pat at (559) 272-2254.

Friday, September 15

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

Friday, September 15 • 5:15 PM

Rojo Amanecer will be shown in Instructional Technology Bldg. 101 at Fresno State, entrance off Barstow near Cedar.

Jorge Fons. Mexico.1989. Rated R. Spanish only. No subtitles.

It's a feature about the Government's massacre of students at Tlatelolco (the Plaza of the Three Cultures) in Mexico City in 1968.

This film is sponsored by the Cineculture Club at CSUF. Cineculture seeks to promote cultural awareness and discuss issues related to diversity through film. For more information: President: Kumar NavaneethaKrishnan kum.nav@gmail.com Advisor: Denise Blum dblum@csufresno.edu

Friday, September 15 • 6:30 - 8:30 PM

The Reedley Peace Center presents the speaker: Mary Marjorie Bethea, Fuller Theological Seminary student from South Carolina. Topic: Mary Marjorie will talk about her experience with the recent Christian Peacemaker Team to Hebron and the journey that took her there.

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

Saturday, September 16

The Madera Tamejavi Festival will take place in Corte Madera Park, in the downtown area of the city. Because the principal organizers are indigenous Mixtec, Zapotec, and P'urhepechas, the overriding theme will be "Un Dia de Convivencia Indigena," along with the celebration of the efforts indigenous peoples are making to build a sense of community in the city of Madera.

The festival will begin with an opening ceremony presented by our Native American brothers and sisters, followed by a parade/march through the main streets of Madera. We will arrive at the marketplace in the park, a place in which crafts presentations will be held. Two indigenous musicians will be the headliners of the festival Rocio Prospero, the well-known P'urhepecha singer and Marta Toledo, the equally well-known Zapotec singer from Juxitan. We are also hoping to count on the presence of Alejandro Vera; a Mixtec mask sculptor, as well as other indigenous artisans living in the Central Valley. As in previous years, we will have platicas addressing issues impacting the Central Valley, photography exhibitions, and poetry sessions, we will conclude the mini-festival with music and a sampling of future presentations for the 2007 Third TAMEJAVI.

Thursday, September 21 • 7 - 9 PM

The Central Valley Progressive PAC will hold a forum on four of the 13 statewide propositions (85, 87, 89, & 90). The event, which is free and open to the public, will be held at the Unitarian-Universalist Church in Fresno.

Friday, September 22

The DoloresHuerta Foundation is scheduling its Second Annual Golf Tournament at the River Lakes Golf Course in Bakersfield, 5201 River Lakes Drive, Bakersfield. Individual Play \$100, Foursome \$380. We are also seeking sponsors. For more information contact Ldeleon@doloreshuerta.org

Friday, September 22 • 5:15 PM

Rain in a Dry Land will be shown in Instructional Technology Bldg. 101 at Fresno State, entrance off Barstow near Cedar.

Anne Makepeace, 2006, USA/Kenya, 83min. No Rating. In English, Mai Mai and Somali with English subtitles ***Selection from the Human Rights Watch Traveling Film Festival. In 2004, thirteen thousand Somali Bantu refugees realized their dream of coming to America. They are now living in fifty cities across the country, becoming the largest African group from a single community to settle in the United States at one time.

This film is sponsored by the Cineculture Club at CSUF. Cineculture seeks to promote cultural awareness and discuss issues related to diversity through film. For more information: President: Kumar NavaneethaKrishnan kum.nav@gmail.com Advisor: Denise Blum dblum@csufresno.edu

Saturday, September 23 • 7 PM

International Cine Forum presents the movie: Dias de Santiago. A Peruvian film about the troubles of adjusting to society that encounter members of the military forces after being deployed to war. The film will be presented at The Fresno Art Museum. For more information (559) 453-1984 or www.clublantinoamericano.org

Sunday, September 24 • 11 AM - 1:30 PM

A Special Continental Brunch with Amy Goodman, host of Democracy Now!, will be at the Machinist's Hall at 544 W Olive in Fresno. This is a benefit for KFCF 88.1 FM. \$30. For more information call (559) 233-2221 or go to: www.kfcf.org

Sunday, September 24 • Evening

The Trike Shop and singer-songwriter Julia Dawn play a benefit for the Fresno chapter of Food Not Bombs at Full Circle Brewery, 620 F St. in downtown Fresno.

Wednesday, September 27

Environmental Justice Tour. See: <http://ej4all.org/routes.west.php> for more details.

Wednesday, September 27

Commission on the Status of Women Public Hearing. The California Commission on the Status of Women will be holding three public hearings throughout California to learn what issues women and girls are facing and what role the state can play in addressing them, including legislation, administrative action, or studies.

Hearings will be held at the:

Fresno State Building
2550 Mariposa Mall, #1036 (Assembly Room)
Fresno, CA 93721

Friday, September 29 • 5:15 PM

Testify: Eco-Defense and the Politics of Violence will be shown in Instructional Technology Bldg. 101 at Fresno State, entrance off Barstow near Cedar.

Stephen Gamboa. 2005. USA. 52 min. Rated PG.

The film introduces the political and spiritual forces that drive revolutionary environmentalism.

This film is sponsored by the Cineculture Club at CSUF. Cineculture seeks to promote cultural awareness and discuss issues related to diversity through film. For more information: President: Kumar NavaneethaKrishnan kum.nav@gmail.com Advisor: Denise Blum dblum@csufresno.edu

Sunday, October 1 • 5:30 PM No Host Bar • 6:30 Dinner • 7 PM Speaker

KFCF 88.1 FM/Fresno Free College Foundation annual banquet. Historian Matthew Lasar will be the guest speaker. He wrote the two volume history of Pacifica Radio and is a frequent guest on KPFA speaking about Pacifica issues, community radio and what the FCC is up to. The event will be held at Love and Garlic, 5351 N Diana in Fresno. \$40. For more information call (559) 233-2221 or go to: www.kfcf.org

Sunday, October 15 • 6 PM

The alternative/independent Community Alliance newspaper celebrates 10 year of publishing. There will be music, food & drink, a movie, and keynote speaker at the Full Circle Brewery, 620 F St. in downtown Fresno. \$10

* Keynote speaker: Journalist Conn Hallinan will speak on the importance of alternative/independent media.
* docu-poem video compilation of local actions for peace and justice by Elfie and Maia Ballis
* Movie: Independent Media in a Time of War (produced by Amy Goodman).
* Music: The Urban Nomads (Middle Eastern music)

Progressive community groups are encouraged to set up a literature table (no charge).



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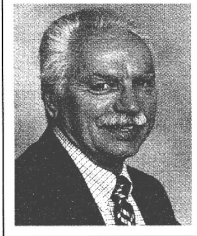


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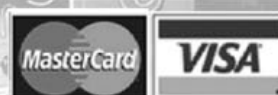
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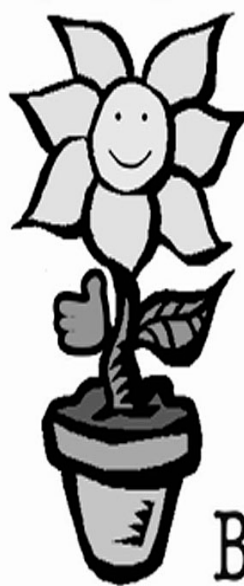
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OPINION AND ANALYSIS



Bring back the Cold War

By Patrick Young

Bring back the Cold War. Please. I mean it.

I miss Russia. I really do.

At least when the commies were around there was some kind of counter balance in the world. Someone with some horsepower to hassle the Yahoos in our government who think every other nation should just do what we tell them. Heck if we had our way, Vietnam would still be a French bistro and Cambodians would be still be living on croissants.

(Actually the Cambodians in Fresno do make one hell of a mean donut)

Yeah the Reds were pretty good about handling a few independence and liberation struggles of their own.

Who do you think took on the Muslim extremists in Afghanistan? They Did. Tried really hard too, bombed the hell out of the place. If we'd kept our Stingers in our pockets, and our noses out of where they don't belong, we'd have a regular semi modern group of Commies running the show, and letting women go out and party.

Heck they mighta put an Afghan lady on Mir, ya just don't know. Think how proud her family would've been. But it's too late, we forgot all the Good Things those Red Devils did.

They backed the totally legitimate black liberation movements in South Africa and Rhodesia, yet would never have helped American black revolutionaries develop rap music. They helped the rebels in nun murdering El Salvador, helped the Nicaraguans kick Somoza's soft and supple butt out of Nicaragua, and still managed to go to the Olympics and party with Reagan.

They helped throw the Portuguese, the French, the Brits and other shameless colonialists out of Africa, actually helped Cuba with high tech medicine and science (instead of those tacky assassination attempts) and were a worthy competitor of ideas and rocket ships,...even though they really couldn't rock like America rocks, when we rock All Night Long, (and party every day).

And I'd take any Soviet leader over Bin Laden's sour puss. Khrushchev was kinda cute, sorta like Poppin' Fresh but with an attitude. And while it's true several of their important leaders resembled grizzly bears, (and smooched other men in public) they at least knew how to make a decent cup of vodka, and let us keep track of their ICBMs.

They gave Gary Powers back instead of holding him hostage, and didn't go postal and try to bomb the Olympics when a bunch of Yankee undergrad hockey players wooped their National Team.

They didn't have to hijack airliners, they made their own. They shaved regularly, had a high literacy rate, enjoyed the ballet,..... but still managed to be different enough to fear and hate.

And although in the Soviet Union all power was concentrated in very few hands, the media willingly forwarded government propaganda, people were spied on, and their military prowess was celebrated a little "too well" (remember the nukes paraded in Red Square? What were they thinking?) what do you think we have

here,... a democracy?

The old commies were stable, the new boys are mafia. The old commies locked their nukes up at night, the new "go for broke" capitalists would just as soon sell an industry, a sub, or a chunk of uranium at those low low free market prices.

So c'mon folks, let's bring back the old Commies. Mao was a Good Red, straight up old school, and would never have tried to embarrass us with chiquer fashion, or a better economy. Boy, we could sure use a sweet dose of doctrinaire Marxist Leninist Stalinism right now. Gave us to reason to exist it did,..... and really, both the Russkies and us knew we just playing about the Global Annihilation thing.

These new Islamists are so much less fun that the Communists. Not EVEN a worthy opponent. No MIGs, no helicopter gunships, ...poor fellas, an RPG or an old artillery round is the best they can ever hope for.

In conclusion, if the Al Qaeda worldwide network can't produce burgers, bibles, bikinis, or beer, how can really take 'em seriously?

Voting - Women's Participation is a Part of our Herstory

By Ruth Gadebusch

On August 26, women in the United States will have had the vote for 86 years. The question is: "What have we done with it?" Please note that it was not given, but a hard won fight waged by women and sympathetic men.

Suffragist Carrie Chapman Catt said, "It took George Washington 6 years to rectify man's grievances by war. But it took 72 years to establish women's rights by law. At least one thousand legal enactments were necessary, and everyone was a struggle against ignorant opposition. Women's suffrage is a long story of hard work and heartache, crowned by victory."

In the early days of this nation's formation, Abigail Adams had asked husband John not to forget the women, but forget them they did. The fight began in earnest when Elizabeth Cady Stanton called together a small group in Seneca Falls, New York, on a hot July day in 1848. It was such a radical idea that Lucretia Mott's husband had to preside. No woman dared. Indeed, the minister had forgotten to unlock the church where they were to meet, leaving a brave soul to climb in through a window! Only one participant in this momentous event was to live to see its triumph. In 1873 Susan B. Anthony was tried for attempting to vote. In 1776 New Jersey became the first colony to allow the vote for females, but rescinded it in 1807. Some Indian tribes let women vote. In 1838 Kentucky allowed women to vote in school elections.

Then, as now, there was a feeling that schools were more in women's purview. The Fresno and Clovis school boards are the rare bodies in this area with a majority of women. Our Fresno City Council has only one woman of 7 members.

In general the Western states were more progressive with full rights for all established before they entered the union. Montana sent Jeanette Rankin to Congress before she could vote in the rest of the country. In 1911, by one vote per precinct, California passed a referendum allowing women the vote.

As a reminder of how important our vote is, other incidents of one vote making the difference were English chosen over German as the language of this nation, Hitler's assumption of leadership in the Nazi party, and that vote that Harry Burn gave in the Tennessee legislature that put the 19th Amendment to the U.S. Constitution over the top.

"THE RIGHT OF CITIZENS OF THE UNITED STATES TO VOTE SHALL NOT BE DENIED OR ABRIDGED BY THE UNITED STATES OR BY ANY STATE ON ACCOUNT OF SEX." What Joy! what promise! The nation could now enjoy the talents of that other half of the population. It was the promise of fair-

ness, the promise of additional intellect for directing a nation - in short the promise of a better United States of America.

What would those who sacrificed so much for this promise think of our dismal election turn out today? Wasn't it a mere 28% (men and women) at our last election?

Nationwide we still hover at around 25% of the elected offices held by females and it appears that the California Legislature will have less women next January than currently. Why should we care? Just as it took Congressmen Bob Matsui and Norman Mineta to introduce reparations for Japanese Americans interned during World War II and the black Congressional Caucus to introduce South African sanctions, it is women who have introduced most legislation regarding day care, child support payments, breast cancer research, etc., to say nothing of the above mentioned talent in general.

As an aside, the "Wets" kept Reedley's saloons until Valentines Day 1913 when, with women voting for the first time, Reedley was incorporated as a dry city.

Getting the vote in 1920 was only a beginning, not an end. As with President Wilson, needing the support of women in World War I, belatedly endorsing the 19th Amendment, World War II opened doors. After Rosie the Riveter, women were never to return to the old ways. Still we have not gained full equality.

Today the progress that has been made is threatened and the young, who do not know their history, may have to learn the hard way. Arguably, the advent of birth control (another hard fought battle) was as momentous as acquisition of the vote. In today's climate the right of women to control their own bodies is constantly assaulted. It is not a matter to telling another what to do. It is a matter of directing our own destiny. One size does not fit all.

This nation does not indulge in genital mutilation, breast pressing, or body hiding dress for females. On the other hand, progressive as we like to think we are, we have not had a woman President, Speaker of the House or Chief Justice of the Supreme Court. The same cannot be said of nations such as Great Britain, Germany, Norway, India, Turkey and even Pakistan; all of whom have elected women to their top office. Granted, this last one has taken a step back — way back. That alone should be a warning that it can happen, even in a nation like the United States.

Rights are ensured only when we take responsibility to guard and protect them. It is our responsibility to keep the faith with those who sacrificed to give us freedom. We must become knowledgeable active participants in the governance process. Our own fate, both personal and as a nation, depends on it.

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



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The Best Food for your Baby
By Candy Paulsen

I recently read an article that stated the children of women who develop diabetes during pregnancy (Gestational Diabetes Mellitus-GDM) have a higher rate of developing Type 2 diabetes. The American Diabetes Association encourages breastfeeding to reduce the risk of diabetes in all children, but particularly in the offspring of women who develop GDM. Protection from Type 2 diabetes is one of the many advantages of breastfeeding.



Breastfeeding significantly protects against acute and chronic diseases, including childhood cancers, middle ear infections, lymphoma, digestive conditions, and respiratory infections. Mothers' benefits include less postpartum bleeding, improved bone remineralization, resulting in fewer hip fractures in the postmenopausal period, reduced risk of ovarian and pre-menopausal breast cancer, and earlier return to pre-pregnancy weight.

Complementing the health advantages, breastfeeding provides social and economic benefits. These include reduced health care costs, reduced employee absenteeism to care for ill children, and decreased maternal abandonment and abuse. Breastfeeding is environmentally friendly. There is no manufactured packaging and other than mother's food intake no energy resources are required for production and distribution.

Researchers suggest a woman's breast is the external counterpart of the placenta, continuing the task of providing nutrients and hormones necessary for completing the infant's development. The breast extracts hormones from the mother's blood and concentrates them in the milk. New research indicates that in addition to those taken from the blood, some hormones are actually produced by the breast.

The more I learn about mother's milk and breastfeeding the more I am amazed. Had breastmilk been developed in a pharmaceutical laboratory, the discovery would have graced the cover of Time and Newsweek. The engineers would be world-renowned and wealthy. As breastmilk is produced by women, cannot be patented, and therefore, cannot be marketed or sold, it is grossly undervalued. Worse, it must compete with its inferior counterpart, infant formula. Formula is touted as equivalent to breastmilk and is marketed aggressively. Marketing includes promotional activities by manufacturers and distributors, such as deceptive advertising and free samples. Sales representatives also associate with healthcare workers and their professional organizations, providing incentives to doctors to encourage women to use their company's products.

2006 marks the 25th anniversary of The International Code of Marketing Breast Milk Substitutes. The Code is a public health recommendation seeking to help women make informed feeding decisions without the influence of aggressive formula marketing practices. The United States endorsed the Code and joined all member na-

tions of the World Health Assembly in consensus agreements in 1996 and 2001. Sadly, in the U.S. the Code is a voluntary agreement without sanctions for violating its provisions. Consequently, Code violations are rampant in America, placing corporate profits above babies' welfare. ALL formula manufacturers and many companies who market infant feeding products have violated one or more of the articles or resolutions of the Code.

As a breastfeeding counselor, I have seen what unrestricted marketing of infant formulas does. Often, women believe their milk, uniquely designed for their baby, is replaceable and insufficient. Lack of education, coupled with a free case of formula "just in case," undermines women's efforts to give their babies the best. I look forward to a time when every mother, who chooses to breastfeed, will have the information and support she needs. I look forward to a time when restaurant patrons smile at a mother nursing her baby in the next booth, a time when all doctors dispense accurate information to new mothers, a time when our children grow up in a society where breastfeeding is the norm.

For more information on the Code go to www.ibfan.org or www.naba-breastfeeding.org

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Candy Paulsen is a free-lance writer, breastfeeding advocate and homeschooling mother. She is married to Jim who is tolerant of her ventures into alternative healthcare.

The Prison Industrial Complex
By Debbie Reyes



As a community we must redefine PUBLIC SAFETY for these reasons: Escalating reports of abuse by law enforcement personnel in all areas of policing, probation, parole, suppression teams, etc. etc. are being reported throughout the valley. These abuses are being documented for violations in civil rights, mistreatment, racial profiling, petty harassment, unlawful search and seizure of property, intimidation of documented and undocumented citizens. Throughout the valley communities are demanding independent police accountability. Lawsuits have skyrocketed into the millions of dollars, leaving the burden on taxpayers to pay for police /law enforcement misconduct and abuse.

In turn, our community resources are STRIPPED and COMPROMISED for increase budgetary promises to these law enforcement agencies. Research proves that the high percentage of people locked up are PEOPLE OF COLOR and a high percentage are in for non-violent crimes. Since the passage of California's 3 strikes law there has been a devastating 450% rise in prison population in California.

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Furthermore, county, state and federal agencies are posturing for plans for massive jail and prison cell expansions throughout all law enforcement systems. Examples; The newly approved SUPER YOUTH DETENTION CENTER (1,400 new beds at final completion) located off the HWY 99 freeway at American Ave. in FRESNO, Ca. And, at this writing, the federal government is soliciting construction bids for 7,000 new prison beds for low security prison expansion, of course, for undocumented citizens.

The dangerous backlash of these types of developments have set the central valley back to ranking number 1 in poverty over the entire NATION. As incarceration increases in the State of California so does poverty in the valley. The prison boom brought out by 3 strikes law resulted in no economic value to our valley; instead our families have been broken by this system.

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Debbie Reyes is an OSI Fellow at the Ca. Prison Moratorium Project Center on Race Poverty and the Environment 559-916-4370 <http://prisonactivist.org/pmp/>

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A Good Day On E Street

By Mike Rhodes

The homeless encampment on E street and Ventura has been a war zone (see last months issue of the Community Alliance) as the City of Fresno tries to get rid of the homeless. The City of Fresno is not working to eliminate homelessness, they are waging a war on the homeless to make life so miserable for them that they disappear. Responding to these attacks, the National Action Network organized a clean up last month that could be seen as an example of how to treat the homeless with dignity and respect. Instead of invading the land like the Fresno Police Department does and destroying the

homeless peoples few possessions, the Rev. Floyd Harris and his crew first sat down and talked to the residents in the encampment. He explained that they were there to remove the trash that had accumulated and encouraged them to help. Supporters passed out bottles of water.

The crew of about 15 people that Rev. Harris had brought first removed the overgrown weeds. Before long, several of the homeless picked up rakes and shovels and started moving the trash to the side of the road where it could be picked up with the bulldozer. Several community activists joined the work, including Jean Chip from the Sleeping Bag Project, Gloria Hernandez from No Nos Vamos, and Ed Castro. Jean distributed a number of blankets to the homeless to replace the ones destroyed

by the FPD and the Sanitation Department in previous raids.

During the clean up I spoke with Bernard, a homeless African American man who was sitting and watching the work from on top of his car on the East side of E street. He asked "why can't the City of Fresno do this? Why do they have to come out here and destroy our homes? 90% of the problems would be solved if they (the City of Fresno) would just bring out some dumpsters and portable toilets. Why do the police have to come out here and destroy the few things we have?"

The clean up of this strip of land was well received by the residents of the homeless encampment and Rev. Harris has since returned with a couple of trash cans. He says he will return every week to empty the trash and to do a major clean up about every six weeks.

A half dozen activists from Food Not Bombs came toward the end of the clean up and distributed sandwiches. One homeless person told me, "you don't get this kind of food at the Poverello House." He took two sandwiches. The Poverello House is a non-profit agency that provides food and other services for the homeless. They are located about ½ block from where the clean up was taking place.

Rev. Harris said he is organizing a major event in Fresno to support the homeless on October 22



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2nd Annual Fundraiser
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